

"Cathy Vasco." Dr. McCoy called when he spied the young blond woman ahead of him in the corridors of Starbase Sixty Eight. Cathy stopped where the corridor opened onto the base's recreational area and turned towards her best friend's father. They were on the level above the park on the walkway that ringed the area that housed the play ground and gardens of the station.

"Dr. McCoy." Cathy smiled. She spoke with just the barest hint of a Russian accent. "It's good to see you. I didn't know Enterprise was here."

"That makes us even." McCoy leaned on the railing that overlooked a neatly trimmed park. Flowers from Earth and other Federation planets sweetened the station's recycled air. "I did not realize that Vasco did business out this way."

"Where Star Fleet goes, business follows." Cathy said with a shrug. "Mom is trying to establish some kind of trade with the Della Mir, not that it is going well. I just dropped by to talk to her."

"Problems?"

"You wouldn't believe the red tape." Cathy dismissed his question. She changed the subject to something more fun and light hearted than business with the Della Mir. "Wasn't the No Ranks wonderful? Jimmi is very happy with the way things are going. She claims she slept for a week solid after all the ensigns left."

Dr. McCoy started giving her his assessment of Jimmi's new bar, but Cathy's attention was drawn away by Pavel Chekov. He was walking on the path just inside the park. Her heart beat a little faster. She stopped her conversation with Dr. McCoy to watch him. He continued talking, pretending not to notice her preoccupation.

"Don't you agree, Cathy?" Dr. McCoy asked.

"I'm sorry Doctor." Cathy smiled and blushed just a bit. She turned her attention back to the doctor. "I was thinking about something else. What did you say?"

"It wasn't important." McCoy smiled at her. He couldn't remember seeing Cathy blush since she was fifteen. "I didn't know you knew Mr. Chekov."

"I just met him at the No Ranks Cafe." Cathy said self-consciously. "We've kept in touch these past few weeks."

McCoy patted her on the arm in a fatherly manner. He smiled when he said, "Don't let me keep you, dear."

But after the doctor left and Cathy turned back to the railing and looked down, she saw Pavel hugging a woman in a Starfleet uniform. She was pretty, with short dark curly brown hair and a very big smile as she talked to him. Cathy watched them for a moment. When Pavel looked up and saw her, she turned and left.

"You know her?" Regina asked when she saw the surprise on Chekov's face. "I think she may have just gotten the wrong idea."

"Yes, but I did not know she was here." Chekov nodded thoughtfully. Abruptly he smiled at her and returned to their original subject of conversation. "So Gina when is the wedding day?"

"We both have leave time coming." Regina Piesto said. "So we're going home next month. Let the family shower us with gifts, have the wedding, then it's off to the beaches of Rigel for three weeks of heaven."

"Sounds wonderful." Chekov grinned. "I hope you and Sam are very happy."

"Thanks, Pavel. I'm glad I got a chance to tell you in person." Regina said.

"There is an engagement party tonight at the officer's club. Can you come?"

"I wouldn't miss it." Chekov laughed. "But Gonzoles said it was to be a surprise."

"You think you can keep a secret on a station this size? But don't worry. I'll be surprised." Regina laughed. "I'll see you later."

After they parted, Pavel went to the hanger deck to look for Cathy. He found her ship there but it was locked and no one answered the chime. Chekov looked around. There were four or five small civilian ships on this flight deck. The Starfleet runabout and shuttles were on a separate deck. A couple of engineers were working on the propulsion unit of one of the ships. Chekov walked over towards them.

"Can I help you, Sir?" a young crewman asked.

"That ship..." Chekov nodded over his shoulder to Cathy's ship. "Have you seen the pilot? Young woman, blond hair."

"Not today, Sir." The crewman said. Chekov hesitated. He had no idea where else to look and no desire to use official means to locate her. The crewman continued. "The Vascos are in and out of here a lot, Commander. I believe they keep a corporate apartment on the base."

"Thank you." Chekov nodded and left. He accessed the computer to find that Vasco Enterprises did have an apartment on deck twenty seven. He went directly there and rang the bell. When the door opened he was leaning against the door jam. But it wasn't Cathy that opened the door.

"May I help you?" The door was answered by an attractive Human woman in her early sixties. Her clothes, hairstyle, and jewelry were all sophisticated and understated. Her demeanor was pleasant but business like. Chekov couldn't help but notice her pale blue eyes, they looked just like Cathy's.

"Excuse me," Chekov straightened up quickly. "I was looking for Cathy Vasco."

"May I say who is calling?"

"I am sorry." Pavel stumbled over the words. He recovered his composure and introduced himself. "I am Lt. Commander Pavel Chekov."

"It's nice to meet you, Mr. Chekov. I am Katerina Vasco." She smiled graciously. "Please come in."

The apartment was decorated simply but beautifully. Obviously a professional job. A few pieces of art, a small collection of books, functional and fashionable furniture. It all fit together perfectly, but without any personal touches.

"Is Cathy here?" Chekov asked. He didn't know what else to say.

"Yes." Katerina said. "She is talking to the home office on subspace. She'll be done shortly. Please sit down. Can I get you anything?"

"Thank you, no." Pavel sat gingerly on the beige couch. Katerina settled herself on the matching chair across the glass coffee table.

"I understand you are stationed aboard the Enterprise." Katerina said.

"Yes ma'am." Chekov said surprised. But before he could even wonder what

Cathy had said about him to her mother, she walked into the room. She was studying a computer padd in her hand and didn't notice Chekov at first.

"Mom, do you have the adjusted figures on...." She stopped in mid-sentence and stared at him. "Pavel?"

Chekov stood up. "Hello Cathy."

Cathy's mother saw the looks that passed between them and found an excuse to leave them alone. She took the computer padd from Cathy on her way out. They waited until she had left the room.

"What are you doing here?" Cathy asked coolly.

"You did not stop to say hello in the park." Chekov said ignoring her question to ask one of his own. "Are you avoiding me?"

"Of course not. But you were busy." Cathy said trying to sound nonchalant. "And so was I."

"Ah." Chekov nodded. "Yes, Regina was telling me about her wedding plans."

"Wedding plans?" Cathy searched his beautiful brown eyes for any signs of deceit.

"Yes, she and Lt. Iwuoha are getting married next month." Chekov said simply. "There was no cause for concern."

"Concern?" Cathy was annoyed that Pavel assumed she cared and embarrassed that he was right. "What you do is your business, Mr. Chekov. I have no right to ask for an explanation."

"That's true." Chekov smiled at her. When Cathy did not respond, he added sincerely. "But I did not want you to misunderstand."

"Well...." Cathy sighed. "It did look like you knew each other very well."

"When this base first opened, the Enterprise patrolled in the area for nearly a year." Chekov explained. "Regina and I dated during that time. It was about three years ago that she and Sam started getting close. So she and I settled for friendship."

"No fights? No accusations?" Cathy couldn't help but tease him. She did not want to fight with him. She wanted to trust him. "Just a minor adjustment?"

"It was not an easy adjustment." He wasn't sure if she was seriously asking or just teasing him. Or maybe her eyes just sparkled like that all the time. "But I was on Enterprise."

"And Sam was here?"

"Yes." Chekov nodded.

"I'm sorry." Cathy said slowly. "I seem to have over reacted."

"It has been awhile since I caused such a reaction." Chekov smiled at her. "I am flattered."

Cathy did not return his smile. "At the Café you had said you weren't involved with anyone. I thought you lied. I thought maybe it was all a lie."

"I have not lied to you."

"Ok." But she didn't look him in the eye.

"You do not believe me." Pavel said. He closed the short distance between them and took both her hands in his. She couldn't help but look at him.

"I want to." Cathy's voice was barely above a whisper. "But with my past experience... well. It's hard Pavel."

"No matter who has lied to you in the past." Pavel spoke slowly in Russian. Cathy hung on his every word. "I will not."

She didn't know how she could believe him, but she did.