

"Hair brain scheme." McCoy fumed to himself as he leaned on the rail between Uhura's station and the command chair. He didn't like being left behind. Cathy had reported that everything had gone according to plan. But now three Della Mir ships approached Enterprise.

"Shields?" Chekov asked.

"Not yet. We're all friends here." Sulu said from the command chair. He forced himself to sit back and assume a relaxed air. "Uhura, hail them."

"Channel open, Sir." Uhura said.

"This is Sulu, commanding the Federation Starship Enterprise." Sulu said. "Please identify yourselves."

A Mirta woman appeared on the main view screen on the Enterprise's bridge. "I am Repin-treh, commanding the Della Mir patrol ship Haulta. Have you had any sensor contacts in the last hour, Captain?"

"No, Captain Repin-treh." Sulu said. "We've just left Starbase 68 and have had no contacts at all. Is there a problem?"

"We are searching for a ship that was stolen from the ship yards at Kali Guari." Repin-treh explained. "A small scout class ship evidently taken by a Vulcan terrorist.."

"Vulcan terrorist?" Sulu asked.

"You seem surprised, Captain." Repin-treh noted.

"From what I know of Vulcans, the term terrorist is inconsistent." Sulu said. "Did this Vulcan have a name?"

"He called himself Spock." The Mirta captain said. "He was on the repair station for a day or two spreading his propaganda. When one of the Rati challenged his heresy, he stole a ship and left the station."

"Since he is a citizen of the Federation." Sulu offered. "We will join you in your search."

"That will not be necessary." Repin-treh said quickly. "We are not sure he came this way. All patrols are on alert."

"Then we will keep our eyes open." Sulu smiled. But Captain Repin-treh stared at him blankly. Sulu rephrased. "We will maintain alert status and inform you if we make contact with the terrorist."

"Thank you Captain Sulu." She said. "Haulta out."

"Well." Sulu said after the three Della Mir patrol ships had continued on their way. "At least we know Mr. Spock has left the ship yards."

"She sounds like she thought he was alone." McCoy observed. "Could Jim and Gonzoles still be on the repair station?"

"Mr. Spock would not leave them." Chekov said.

"Not without good reason." Sulu agreed. "But we'll have to be sure."

"How do you intend to do that without arousing anyone's suspicion, Mr. Sulu?" McCoy asked.

"Cathy was scheduled to pick them up tomorrow." Sulu said. "We'll send her in a day early. They won't question it if she inquires about her associates."

Chekov turned his chair around to face Sulu. "You were not considering sending her into a potentially dangerous situation alone."

"Her civilian status will protect her, Chekov." Sulu said. "If all goes well, she'll be back

on the Enterprise with in a few hours."

"What if something goes wrong?" Chekov asked. "Request permission to accompany the Valhalla."

"Request denied." Sulu shook his head. With deliberate slowness, Chekov turned back to his station. Although controlled, his anger was obvious to those who knew him. But Sulu would not take the time to explain his decision. Not now. Not on the bridge.

"Chekov has a point." McCoy said quietly. Sulu turned his attention to the doctor. "Someone should go with Cathy. If something has gone wrong they may need a doctor."

"So you think I should send you?" Sulu asked. He felt like asking if anyone else wanted to go, but restrained himself.

"Yes Sir." McCoy nodded, speaking without a hint of sarcasm. "The situation has changed. I suggest we need to change with it."

"Uhura, have Ms. Vasco meet us in the briefing room." Sulu stood up. "Doctor. Mr. Chekov." McCoy and Chekov followed Sulu into the turbo lift. They rode silently down a few decks. When the turbo lift opened, Sulu said. "We'll join you momentarily, Doctor."

McCoy nodded and continued on to the briefing room. Sulu and Chekov waited until he was gone. Chekov looked Sulu in the eye, "Yes Sir?"

"Pavel." Sulu said quietly. "You are too close to this."

"You do not trust me to handle it."

"Nonsense." Sulu shook his head. "I trust you with my life. I trust your judgment. But you are involved with Cathy. If you were in command would you send me out with Jimmi?"

"No." Chekov admitted somewhat reluctantly. He added pointedly. "But I would not put Jimmi in danger."

"Don't be so sure." Sulu said and headed down the hall towards the briefing room. Chekov followed him. Cathy and McCoy were talking when they walked in.

"I've explained the situation to Cathy." McCoy said when all were seated.

"Thank you, Doctor." Sulu said. He turned to Cathy. "We know Mr. Spock has left the ship yards. He evidently commandeered a ship. But what I don't know is what has happened to Admiral Kirk and Ensign Gonzoles. Would you be willing to make the inquiries for us?"

"You want me to return to Kali Guari and ask about them?" Cathy asked. Sulu nodded. "What if their identity has been discovered? Then I'm in trouble, right?"

"I would send Dr. McCoy with you." Sulu said.

"Dr. McCoy?" Cathy stared at him wide eyed. She looked at McCoy and said "Forgive me Doctor." Then turned back to Sulu. "But what good is that going to do?"

"There are several reasons why he is the best person." Sulu explained. "The most important for this mission is his experience with the Admiral in similar situations. I can trust his assessment of the situation. Are you willing to go?"

"Now?"

"Yes." Sulu said. "Now."

"Well." Cathy looked at each man. Her gaze lingered on Pavel. "I guess I better see this thing through. I'm ready whenever you are."

"Mr. Chekov, please accompany Ms. Vasco to her ship. Dr. McCoy will join you shortly." Sulu ordered. Chekov nodded. He and Cathy left them alone. "No heroics, Doc."

"Heroics are not in my nature." McCoy shrugged off the comment.

"I'm serious, Doc." Sulu ignored his answer. "This is a recon mission only. Cathy's ship isn't up to anything more."

"I hear you, Hikaru." McCoy said. "We will take no chances. And I better get out of this uniform and into something more subtle. Just in case."

"Good idea, Doc." Sulu nodded.

"You do not have to do this, Cathy." Pavel said as they walked into the hanger deck. Her ship stood ready to go at the center of the bay. "We could send someone else in your ship. The Kalans would believe it was an employee of yours."

"But Pavel, they know me." Cathy said. "If it could make a difference in Admiral Kirk's and Ensign Gonzoles's safety, how can I say no?"

"Easily." Chekov stopped at the hatch to her ship. "You are not Starfleet. This is not your job. No one expects you to risk your life."

"Can't you come with me?"

"No. With Mr. Spock off the ship, I am the science officer." Chekov explained. "But I want you to take no chances. Understand?"

"Aye aye sir." Cathy winked mischievously. Chekov couldn't help but smile at her. Ignoring the other crewmembers on deck, he took her face in his hands and kissed her. Cathy sighed. "It's been wonderful being able to spend some time with you here."

"Yes. I also have enjoyed that part of this mission." Chekov agreed. He looked up to see Dr. McCoy coming towards them. Self-consciously Chekov stepped back from her. "It must be time to go."

"Why Dr. McCoy." Cathy smiled as he joined them. McCoy was wearing brown slacks with a forest green crew neck shirt and a vest of muted autumn colors. "I can't recall the last time I saw you out of uniform. You look dashing."

"Thank you ma'am." McCoy smiled and bowed slightly.

"Do I detect Jimmi's taste?" Cathy asked touching the Doctor's vest lightly.

"The vest was a gift from my daughter, yes." He grinned. "Are you ready?"

"Ready as I'll ever be." Cathy smiled. She turned to Pavel. "Don't worry. I'll see you soon."

"I will be waiting." Chekov nodded and left them.

Cathy and McCoy went into the small ship where Cathy immediately started the preflight checks. McCoy settled into the copilot seat. It was only a few minutes before they were clear of Enterprise and on course for the shipyards at Kali Guari.

"Chekov seems quite taken with you, Cathy." McCoy said. She concentrated on her readouts and tried not to blush. "And it's been awhile since he's been seeing anyone seriously."

"Do you keep track of the love life of the whole crew?" Cathy asked.

"A good doctor knows the whole person." McCoy shrugged. "Besides long stretches in space can get rather boring. Sometimes gossip is all that keeps us going."

"Anything juicy?"

"There is a love triangle going on in the Bio lab that has caused a lot of problems."

McCoy laughed. "Someone is going to get transferred over that one."

They passed the time on the short trip pleasantly. The confines of the small ship made intimate conversation seem natural. Cathy had always found her friend's father charming and disarming. She often confided thoughts to him she never meant to share. But as they flew closer to the shipyards at Kali Guari, the conversation turned to more serious matters.

"We have to find a way to ask about the Admiral and Rosey without bringing the Mirta down on us." Cathy said. "Was there anything that search party said that we can use?"

"They called Spock a terrorist." McCoy said. "And a heretic."

"Maybe we can use the terrorist angle." Cathy said. "The Della Mir is a tight knit community. If we convince them that Kirk and Spock have a personal conflict, they may just leave it alone."

"After they've stolen a ship?" McCoy asked with raised eyebrow.

"You said commandeered before." Cathy smiled.

"Whatever."

"Terrorist use desperate, sometimes suicidal methods." Cathy said. "I seem to remember the miner terrorists on the planet Ardana using kidnaping as a weapon to get a more equitable deal from the mine owners."

"That was a long time ago." McCoy said. "How did you know about that?"

"Some letter you sent to Jimmi back in high school." Cathy shrugged. "It stuck in my mind. Maybe because we thought the images of the cloud city were so romantic."

"There are the ship yards." McCoy indicated the viewer as they drew near. "Ready?"

"I don't know about this, Doctor." Cathy said warily. "The station's shields are up."

"Ask them what the problem is." McCoy advised.

"This is the Valhalla. CRN 73-465 requesting permission to land." Cathy hailed the station.

Instead of the dockmaster, the answer came from station operations. A Mirta soldier appeared on her screen and said, "Request denied. This station is closed to any ship from outside the Della Mir Community."

"I see." Cathy said slowly. "This is C.J. Vasco of Vasco Enterprises. Who am I speaking to?"

"I am Minor Commander Gren-dreh." The Mirta man answered.

"Commander, I was scheduled to pick up an associate who was doing business with Rim Sasal." Cathy said. "I will admit I am a day early, but I did not expect that to be a problem."

"This is not my concern." Minor Commander Gren-dreh stated flatly.

"May I speak to Rim Sasal?" Cathy asked. "I have other business to attend to and I would like to make sure my associate will be able to make other arrangements."

"One moment." The officer said with just a hint of annoyance. Cathy Vasco and Dr. McCoy just looked at each other and waited. There was nothing to say. When Rim Sasal finally appeared on the ship's small screen, he was in the operations center.

"Ms. Vasco, this is a terrible turn of events." Rim Sasal said nervously glancing over his shoulder as he spoke.

"What is Mr. Sasal?" Cathy asked.

"Terrorist and spies aboard our station." Sasal lamented. "It is very bad for business."

Very bad indeed!"

"Yes, I agree." Cathy said. "But what about Mr. Kirk? Were you able to come to an agreement with him?"

"Mr. Kirk has disappeared." Sasal confided. "No one is talking officially, but I understand he was transported off the station from the Commander's office. It is an outrage!"

"Oh my God!" Cathy said. "What about his pilot?"

"I have not seen Ms. Rose." Sasal took out a colorful handkerchief and wiped his brow. "But then I have been in Commander Vahn-Bre's office answering questions."

"Do you think this terrorist you spoke of has abducted Mr. Kirk?" Cathy asked Rim Sasal.

"Commander Vahn-bre is of the opinion that they were working together." Sasal confided.

"I find that hard to believe." Cathy shook her head. "Mr. Kirk is an important business man. I have known him for years. He has no political agenda that I know of."

"What would a terrorist want with him?" Sasal asked.

"Who can explain what terrorist want?" Cathy asked sadly. "Perhaps he wished to spoil Kirk's ambitions to do business with the Community. Their sole goal seems to be disruption."

"True." Sasal said. "This one is a Vulcan. Did Mr. Kirk have a problem with the Vulcans?"

"Well, he had business on Vulcan not to long ago." Cathy said. "I was not involved, so I don't know the details. Perhaps he made some enemies."

"Or maybe a friend." Sasal said.

"I don't know." Cathy sighed. "I suppose anything is possible. If you see Ms. Rose, have her contact Vasco Enterprises and we will arrange to have her picked up. Since I can't land, I'll have to take my business elsewhere. Goodbye, Mr. Sasal."

Cathy terminated the connection. McCoy breathed a sigh of relief and said "Let's get out of here."

"Agreed." Cathy said turning the ship around. "But casually. I don't want to alarm anyone. How far away from here do you think we should be before we dare contact Enterprise?"

"Out of their sensor range at least." McCoy said. "What are you thinking?"

"I don't know." Cathy shrugged. "But if they want us to fly point on a search, I don't see any reason to delay by returning all the way to Enterprise. Do you?"

"I see your point." McCoy said slowly. "But I don't know that Commander Sulu will. He was very specific about the parameters of this mission."

"Well, I guess we'll find out soon enough." Cathy said adjusting their course to meet the Enterprise. After a few moments she asked softly. "Do you think Rosey is with them, Dr. McCoy?"

"If Spock transported Jim off the station, I'm sure he got Gonzoles too." McCoy assured her. "If she's alive, she's with them."

"I hope so." Cathy said. They flew on silently until they were out of the shipyards sensor range. The Enterprise was still out of visual range but they had her on long-range sensor when Cathy sent the hail. "Federation Starship, this is the Valhalla. I have you on long range sensors."

"Valhalla." Pavel Chekov answered in his distinctive Russian accent. "This is the

starship Enterprise. What are you doing so far from home?"

"I had business at Kali Guari." Cathy said. "But there was nothing there I wanted."

"Then return to your home base." Chekov ordered.

"Negative." Cathy said. "I'm still looking. Any suggestions where I should look?"

"I repeat." Chekov said slowly "Return to home base!"

"That seems like a waste of time to me." Cathy said. "If I can be of any help out here, I am willing."

"Ms. Vasco." It was Sulu speaking this time. "You are not in Federation space. I can not guarantee your safety."

"I'm not asking you to." Cathy said.

"We will rendezvous with you in thirty minutes at the agreed upon coordinates." Sulu said emphatically. "Be there."

"Aye aye Sir." McCoy answered. "We are on our way."

"Valhalla out." Cathy added. After she adjusted her course and speed, Cathy looked over at McCoy. "Damn, he irritates me!"

"Why's that?"

"It's that annoyingly superior attitude of his." Cathy scowled. "I always feel like he's looking down at me."

"Why would he be doing that?"

"I don't know why." Cathy said with irritation. "But he has never liked it when I am around. Maybe because he can't control Jimmi so much when I'm there."

"That's interesting." McCoy smiled. "I never thought anyone had much control over Jimmi."

"Well, maybe." Cathy returned his smile even though she was still irritated. "But sometimes it almost feels like a tug of war."

"Hmm. I wonder how it feels to Jimmi?" McCoy mused. But Cathy did not have an answer. They met Enterprise as scheduled and reported directly to the briefing room to meet with Sulu and Chekov.

"Well that was a waste of time." Cathy said as she sat down. "They wouldn't even let us dock."

"I wouldn't call it a waste of time." McCoy said. "They told us Jim was transported off the station from the station commander's office. Cathy managed to plant a little disinformation. I don't know if they bought it."

"What kind of disinformation?" Sulu asked.

"I suggested that as a terrorist Mr. Spock was kidnapping my associate in an attempt to disrupt business." Cathy said. "Although the officer I talked to was of the opinion they were working together."

"Perhaps it gave them something to think about." Sulu nodded. "What about Ensign Gonzales?"

"They didn't seem to know anything about her." Cathy said. "I told Rim Sasal that if he saw her to have her call Vasco Enterprises."

"If Mr. Spock was able to get the Admiral off the station." Chekov said. "They wouldn't leave Gonzales behind."

"Agreed." Sulu said. "Until we know differently, we will assume they are all together. Was there anything else?"

"No, that's all." McCoy said.

"Sulu to bridge." Sulu called on the comline.

"Uhura here." Uhura answered from the command chair.

"Set course for the planet Frenndrah. Warp two." Sulu ordered.

"Aye Sir." Uhura answered "Warp two."

"We're not in a hurry?" McCoy asked.

"We do not want to appear to be in a hurry." Sulu countered. "Cathy, thank you for your help. Until we are sure how this will work out, I prefer you remain on board. We'll get you back to Federation space as soon as possible."

"I still have a business to run." Cathy protested. "I can't just let things slide."

"I will instruct Commander Uhura to give you every communications access possible." Sulu said standing up to signal the end of the briefing. He and McCoy left the room together. Sulu headed directly for the bridge. McCoy went to change back into his uniform.

"What was that suppose to mean?" Cathy asked Chekov. "Every access possible?"

"There are times when we maintain communication blackouts." Chekov explained. "It just means you will have to clear any out going communications with Uhura. And she will give you whatever she can. Are you angry to be staying with us a little longer?"

"Not angry." She smiled at him. "Frustrated maybe. I do have things to do. But I will put up with the inconvenience since I get to stay with you for a little while."

"I have to return to the bridge." He smiled at her.

"When will you be off duty?" Cathy asked wrapping her arms around him.

"Normally at sixteen hundred hours." Chekov said. "But with Admiral Kirk and Mr. Spock both off the ship and in danger, I will be needed on the bridge until we find the bird of prey."

"Then I won't see you tonight?" Cathy pouted.

"I will come see you when I get a dinner break." Chekov smiled at her. "That is all I can promise."

"I guess I'll survive." She teased. He kissed her and left to return to the bridge.