

Ensign Gonzoles stretched in her bunk. She had no place to go but Ensign Merrick had woken her up when he was getting ready for work. She was just thinking about getting up for breakfast when her name was called over the comline.

"Spock to Ensign Gonzoles."

She rolled out of the top bunk, landing on her feet to answer the call. Pressing the control on the desk top, she said, "Gonzoles here."

"Ensign." Spock's calm deep voice came over the line. "I have broken the Klingon code. There are several hours of log entries to go over. If you are interested, I could use some help sorting through them."

"Yes Sir, I am interested." She was already getting a fresh uniform out of the closet.

"Good." Spock said. "Report to research lab three."

"I'm on my way Sir." Ensign Gonzoles dressed and reported to Commander Spock in less than ten minutes. This small lab consisted of four computer stations along the wall that duplicated the science station on the bridge. In the center of the room was a small conference table that was bare except for a tray with a decanter and several coffee cups. Spock sat at the station against the far wall. The station next to him was active and waiting for her. She sat down "Good morning, Sir."

"Ensign." Spock nodded. "I have divided the logs in half. We need to check each entry."

"What are we looking for Mr. Spock?"

"First we want an overall understanding of the logs themselves. The ship's mission." Spock explained. "Pay particular attention to anything involving the Della Mir, especially anything that might be considered a treaty violation."

"Or could lead to a change in the balance of power?" Gonzoles asked.

"Indeed." Spock nodded and turned his attention back to the log entries he had been reviewing when she walked in. Gonzoles started watching the entries Spock had brought up for her. Most were normal and uninteresting ship's business. Course corrections and near contacts with uncloaked ships. She watched as the crew of the Bird of Prey reported deleting all classified information from the ship's computers as the neared the ship yards.

Gonzoles stretched after a half hour and inspected the contents of the decanter. It smelled good so she poured a cup. It was a slightly sweet and somewhat thick steaming liquid that Gonzoles had never tasted before. "This is good. What is it?" ;

"Nysoon." Spock said without looking up. "A Vulcan tea."

"Very satisfying." She took her cup and returned to her station. The morning past slowly. Gonzoles was starting to regret not having taken the time for breakfast. Finally she had something to report to Commander Spock. She played the entry twice to be sure.

"Mr. Spock. I have a conversation between Captain Tenn-drah of the Della Mir, Commander Duunbek, and Commander Kreek. I think you should hear it Sir."

"Play it, Ensign." Spock said.

Kleek was in command of the now destroyed ship that the Federation officers had

commandeered from the Repair Station. He was talking to Duunbek and Tenn-drah on another ship, presumably the Ga'pak.

"Report Kleek." Duunbek growled.

"The ship is ready." Commander Kleek said. "When we dock at the repair station the last of essential systems can be removed."

"You are sure that the weapons interfaces and deployment systems can be adapted to our systems?" Tenn-drah asked. "I do not want to be without defensive systems even during test flights. Starfleet is always near by."

"Once you've adjustments for the phased difference in the energy source," Kleek said. "Your pulse initiated system should integrate without problem."

"Good." Tenn-drah said. "Just how confident is your government that the Federation has no similar technology?"

Both Klingons laughed. Duunbek answered. "We have had enough confrontations with Starfleet to know. They have no cloaking device."

"It is the cloaking device that makes the Bird of Prey a useful scout ship." Kleek added. "Without it we could not navigate through Federation space without challenge. They can not detect it."

"Good." Tenn-drah nodded. "Then it will serve my needs well."

"Proceed to the ship yards, Kleek." Duunbek ordered. "We will follow."

"Acknowledged." Kleek said and ended the transmission.

"That's the first entry I've come across with the Mirta captain." Gonzoles said. "Everything else has been normal log entries."

"Yes." Spock nodded. "I've noticed that Commander Kleek was keeping detailed records of everything involving Captain Tenn-drah."

"Is it my imagination, Sir, or is Tenn-drah's attitude somewhat contemptuous of the Federation?" Gonzoles asked. "I wonder if that's the attitude of the entire Mirta high command."

"We know very little of the inner workings of the Mirta military." Spock said. "It would not be wise to draw such broad conclusions from one overheard conversation."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles nodded. "I suppose his attitude could be for the benefit of the Klingons."

"That is a possibility." Spock stood up. "Continue monitoring. Mark all entries involving Captain Tenn-drah for further review. I must report to the Admiral."

"Yes Sir."

"Admiral." Spock joined Kirk on the bridge. The morning had passed without incident on the bridge although they were keeping a watchful eye for any possible problems.

"What have you got, Spock?" Kirk turned the command chair towards Spock.

"Ensign Gonzoles is still reviewing some of the log entries." Spock started.

"However I am starting to see a pattern. I believe Captain Tenn-drah was planning on using the refitted Bird of Prey for espionage against the Federation. However at least one

of the Klingon commanders did not trust him."

"What do you mean?" Kirk asked.

"In addition to normal log entries, Commander Kleek included any contact he had with the Mirta commander in his log." Spock said.

"Nice of him." Kirk nodded. "How long before you've gone through it all?"

"Another ninety minutes." Spock estimated. "I have Ensign Gonzoles pulling all entries with Tenn-drah so we can review it from beginning to end."

"Good." Kirk nodded. "Let me know when you're ready."

"Yes Sir." Spock nodded and left the bridge.

"Ensign." Spock came into research lab three and immediately resumed his station. "Report."

"I have reviewed two more entries involving Captain Tenn-drah, Sir." Gonzoles reported. "They discussed weapon systems and tactical information. Apparently the Mirta believe in patrolling in force. The Klingons seem to be having a hard time explaining the concept of a sneak attack."

"Interesting." Spock commented. "How many entries are left in your file?"

Gonzoles touched a couple of controls and reported "Fifteen. Commander Kleek seems to have had a lot to say."

"Indeed." Spock raised his eyebrow at her and went back to reviewing the log entries in his files. When she was done reviewing all her log entries, Gonzoles showed the marked entries to Spock. He thanked her for her help and dismissed her. Gonzoles headed directly for the dining hall. "Spock to bridge. I am ready, Admiral."

"On my way." Kirk answered and left the bridge. As he was walking down the hall towards research lab three, Kirk was surprised to see Cathy Vasco coming towards him.

"Admiral Kirk." She smiled. "If I could have a word?"

"Of course, Cathy." Kirk returned her smile. "What can I do for you?"

"Well Admiral, I've enjoyed this little adventure." Cathy said. "But I do have to get back to work. When can I get out of here?"

"Really Cathy, I wasn't aware that you wanted to leave." Kirk put on in his most charming manner. "I had heard that you were enjoying Mr. Chekov's attentions."

"Oh I am." Cathy blushed slightly. "But I am needed at home."

"You can leave now. It's not a problem." Kirk said more seriously. "But we are on course to Starbase 12. If you can wait one more day, we will drop you there."

"I can wait." Cathy nodded. "Thank you Admiral."

Kirk proceeded to research lab three. Spock played every entry including or regarding Captain Tenn-drah. When the last entry had played, Kirk sat back and looked at his first officer.

"It won't be enough for command." Kirk said.

"Agreed." Spock nodded. "Although Tenn-drah's intentions seem clear."

"Yes." Kirk nodded. "According to Sulu's report, Duunbek claimed to be tracking us since we left the repair station. Was there any indications of how the

Klingons could track a cloaked ship?"

"None." Spock shook his head. "It seems unlikely. If they were tracking us, why did they not challenge us either on the ship or the planet?"

"My thoughts exactly." Kirk agreed. "I was just hoping to track down the Ga'pak and ask this Trenn-drah some questions. Do I remember his name from the run in we had with the Della Mir a couple of years ago?"

"Yes." Spock said. "Captain Tenn-drah was the Della Mir officer who made the original bargain with the leader of Tellus regarding the pulse beacon. And it was four years ago."

"What do you think would happen if we made an official inquiry of the Mirta high command?" Kirk asked ignoring Spock's correction on his estimate of the time gone by.

"That would depend on the question." Spock said.

"I was thinking on asking what a Mirta captain was doing aboard a Klingon Bird of Prey." Kirk said.

"They may ask how we know he is there." Spock countered.

"Sulu reported it." Kirk shrugged. "We are merely following up on that report."

"Perhaps it would be wise to bring in the diplomatic corp for such an inquiry." Spock said. "Either of our names may cause problems after recent events at Kali Guari."

"Maybe." Kirk nodded. "However there is no guarantee the diplomats will answer our questions even if the Mirta answer theirs. Where is the Mirta's closest base? Other than the ship yards, of course."

"They have a space staion that serves as a border patrol base." Spock said. "They call it Strummcor. Translation unknown."

"Kirk to bridge."

"Bridge." Uhura answered.

"Uhura, contact the Mirta border partol base of Strummcor." Kirk ordered. "I want to talk to the highest ranking official stationed there."

"Aye Sir." Uhura said. "Stand by."

"The chances of a commander of a border patrol knowing what the high command is doing are slim, Jim." Spock said.

"True. And they may not have heard our names either." Kirk grinned. "But I'm sure the commander will pass the question on to the proper authorities. Should stir things up a bit."

"Admiral." Uhura called over the comline. "I have Commander Minor Vann-bre standing by."

"Vann-bre?" Kirk looked at Spock. "Wasn't Commander Vann-bre in command of the repair staion?"

"Yes." Spock agreed. "According to a Barchin girl I met on the station it is a very important family."

"Put the commander through, Uhura" Kirk said over the comline. Almost instantly a Mirta officer appeared on the small screen of the station in front of Kirk. Her skin was a dark shade of green and although she had the characteristic high forehead, she had more hair than most Mirta officers Kirk had encountered. "Commander Vann-bre,

this is Admiral Kirk of the United Federation of Planets."

"Admiral Kirk." She nodded briefly. "What is your business?"

"I don't know if you can help me." Kirk smiled. He was used to the abrupt style of the Mirta officers. "I am following up on a report from a commander of mine regarding a Mirta captain named Tenn-drah. It seems he was reported as being aboard a Klingon ship that had a brief altercation with one of my starships."

"Why would Starfleet be concerned with the whereabouts of one Mirta captain?" Commander Minor Vann-bre asked.

"Starfleet is concerned with the spread of aggression by the Klingon Empire." Kirk said. "If Captain Tenn-drah has been taken captive, perhaps there is something we can do to help. If he is there voluntarily, that also would concern us."

"I have no knowledge of the location of Captain Tenn-drah." The Mirta Commander said. "However I will relay your concerns to the Community's high command. Strummcors Station out."

"Thanks." Kirk said even though the connection was already terminated. He turned to Spock. "Think that will get a response?"

"Undoubtedly." Spock said. "But I do not think they will make Captain Tenn-drah available for questioning."

"Maybe not. But at least they will know we are watching them." Kirk said.

"Admiral Kirk to the bridge." Sulu's voice came across the com line.

"On my way." Kirk and Spock immediately stood and hurried toward the lift. Once in the turbo lift, Kirk opened the comline to the bridge. "Report Sulu."

"Commander Uhura has monitored a coded message from an apparently cloaked ship not far from our position to the repair station at Kali Guari, Admiral." Sulu said. By the time he had finished, the turbo lift reached the bridge.

"All stop." Kirk ordered as he took the center seat. Sulu relieved Lt. Dierkop at the helm. "Shields."

"All stop." Sulu answered. "Shields up, reading full strength."

"Can you pin point the location of the signal's origin?" Kirk asked Uhura.

"Yes Sir." Uhura nodded. "Off the port side, z plus 30 degrees. Distance point six light years."

"The message Spock?" Kirk turned towards the science station.

"A Della Mir code, Admiral." Spock said. "Translating now." Spock watched his readouts and listened. "Decoding may take a little time."

Kirk turned back to Uhura. "Has there been an answer from Kali Guari?"

"Not yet." Uhura said. Dr. McCoy came onto the bridge. He immediately joined the Admiral at the command station.

"Sulu." Kirk turned again. "Let's see the area the signal originated from."

"Aye Sir." Sulu changed the main view screen to the port view and magnified to bring the area into focus. He knew what Kirk was looking for. The slight distortion in space caused by the bending of light from the cloaking device.

"What are we looking for?" McCoy asked as Kirk, Chekov, and Sulu stared intently at the star field. "A cloaked ship?"

"Very astute, Bones." Kirk said without taking his eyes off the main screen. Spock continued to attempt to decode the message. With a jerk of his head towards the science station, Kirk added. "Chekov. Sensors."

"Aye." Chekov replied on his way to the sensors at the auxiliary science station next to Spock. Lt Dierkop immediately manned the navigation station.

"Shouldn't he have moved on by now?" McCoy asked.

"No telling." Kirk said still studying the screen. "The Mirta and the Klingons evidently have very different ideas regarding strategy. We don't know who is really in charge on that ship."

"Another transmission, Admiral." Uhura announced.

"From Kali Guari?" Kirk asked.

"No Sir." Uhura worked her controls to get a fix on the point of origin. "On a direct heading from the Kalan system, but nine parsecs closer."

"Another ship?" Kirk asked.

"Nothing on long range sensors." Chekov reported.

"Can you boost the range?" Kirk asked.

"I could divert power from the other sensor arrays to the aft sensors to boost range about eight percent." Chekov said. "But I would not recommend it with a Bird of Prey in the immediate area."

"Agreed." Kirk said. "Anything Spock?"

"The second message was not coded." Spock said "It translated as an order to the Bird of Prey to wait."

"Wait?" Kirk asked. "For what? For how long?"

"Unknown." Spock said. "The first message from the Bird of Prey apparently reported our inquiry of Strummcor Station and asked for instructions. However not all of it translates."

"Why not?"

"There are some words in the Mirta language that simply don't translate to Standard." Spock explained. "Experts suggest the references are cultural. Perhaps mythological or religious."

"Sending prayers across subspace?" McCoy raised his eyebrow at Spock.

"That is one possible explanation, Doctor." Spock said. "However in such a highly structured society, a single word may carry the meaning of an entire proverb."

"Not that they are going to explain it to us." McCoy said just above a mumble. Spock looked at McCoy but did not bother to answer.

"Admiral." Chekov said. "I have sensor contact on the ship coming from the Kalan system."

"Can you identify?" Kirk asked.

"Della Mir military scout ships." Chekov said. Spock manipulated his controls so that he could study the same readings Chekov was getting.

"Ships?" Kirk asked.

"Multiple ships coming into range." Chekov reported. "Flying in a pyramid formation."

"How many?"

"Nine..." Chekov said tentatively.

"Ten." Spock corrected. "Traveling at warp seven."

"Then it won't take them long to catch up to us." Kirk observed.

"Less than ten minutes, Sir." Chekov said.

"Uhura, as soon as they are in range hail them." Kirk said. "Perhaps this commander can answer my questions."

"Aye Sir." Uhura acknowledged the order. They waited while the ships drew steadily closer. But before Uhura could hail them, she reported. "Admiral. The lead ship has sent another message to Captain Tenn-drah on the Ga'pak."

"Translation?" Kirk asked.

"To decloak." Spock answered. They watched while the Bird of Prey decloaked still at the same location from which it had sent the first message.

"Their shields are down." Chekov reported.

"Down?" Kirk asked.

"Down." Chekov nodded looking over at Kirk.

The ten ships came out of warp and took positions to surround the Bird of Prey. Without any further conversations between the Della Mir and the Klingon ship, three of the Della Mir scout ships opened fire on the Ga'pak. The Klingons never had a chance to return fire. The Bird of Prey exploded in a large fire ball.

"My god!" McCoy whispered.

"Uhura!" Kirk said quickly "Open a channel!"

"Channel open Sir."

"This is Admiral Kirk on the Starship Enterprise." Kirk said. "The Federation demands an explanation on this action in our space!"

"Federation Starship." A Mirta officer they had not seen before came on their screen. "This is an internal matter of the Della Mir Community. In accordance with the treaty, do nothing. Now that the sentence of the renegade has been carried out, we will return to our own space without further incident."

"Renegade? What are you talking about?" Kirk demanded. But the screen had gone blank. The Mirta officer had terminated the connection. "Uhura, get them back."

Uhura tried several times to reestablish the connection. She looked over at Kirk and shook her head. "They are not answering, Admiral."

"What was that all about?" McCoy asked. "Why destroy a ship with their own people onboard?"

"Either Trenn-drah did not have the backing of his government as he claimed." Spock started.

"Or they took him out before we could ask him any real questions." Kirk finished.

"There's nothing else we can do?" McCoy asked quietly.

"I'm open to suggestions, Bones." Kirk looked over to McCoy, but the doctor just shrugged helplessly. It was a feeling that none of the bridge officers liked.

They watched in silence as the Della Mir ships returned to their formation and warped back in the direction of their own space. The bridge crew just looked at each

other for a couple of minutes. Finally Kirk sighed and said. "Resume course for Starbase 12, Mr. Sulu. Warp four."

"Warp four, Sir." Sulu turned back to his station. "Aye."