

"Commander Sulu. Report to the Admiral's quarters."

Sulu excused himself from his friends at dinner. He stopped briefly on his way out to respond that he was on his way, then headed off to meet the admiral. Kirk asked him to sit down.

"I've received new orders for Gonzoles." the Admiral said. He tossed a lieutenant's insignia on his desk. "I thought you'd like to tell her."

"Yes Sir, I would." Sulu smiled as he picked up the insignia. "What are the lieutenant's new orders?"

"She's to report to Captain Styles on Excelsior." Kirk said. "He'll take her out for her first trials."

"Which means he'll probably take her on her first mission." Sulu said.

"Not necessarily." Kirk said. "Howard Styles is a good man, but he's spent most of his career in R&D. I imagine he'll be in command of Excelsior for another year or so."

"That's a lot of trials." Sulu observed.

"It's the new warp drive. It will require a lot of testing." Kirk explained. He stood up "Lt. Gonzoles should be waiting for us in conference room three by now."

"And Enterprise, Sir." Sulu asked as they walked down the hall together. "Have we received new orders?"

"We're not out of it yet." Kirk sighed. He would have liked to add that they would stay on active duty as long as he could manage it, but he didn't know how much longer he could put the order off.

"Lt. Gonzoles." Commander Sulu said as he and Admiral Kirk walked into the conference room where she waited.

"Sir." Gonzoles answered automatically. She stood to face the two senior officers. Sulu grinned at her. Then it dawned on her what he had said. "Lieutenant?"

"Lieutenant." Sulu nodded. Gonzoles squealed with delight. Without thinking she grabbed Sulu and hugged him. And he hugged her back. Sulu said in her ear.

"Congratulations."

"I can't believe it!" She grinned.

"Believe it." Admiral Kirk said.

Horrified that she had acted so unprofessionally in front of the Admiral, Gonzoles quickly stepped back from Sulu. Blushing, she stammered. "I'm sorry, Sir."

But Admiral Kirk smiled and said. "Lt. Gonzoles, the next time you get a promotion, I'm going to tell you myself."

Gonzoles smiled back. She was finally getting use to Admiral Kirk's sense of humor. And he had the same gleam in his eye her father would have when he teased her. So she answered him as she would Papa. "I hope that will be soon, Sir."

"Keep an eye on her, Sulu." Kirk laughed. "She'll catch up to you before long."

"Aye Sir." Sulu said. Kirk turned and left the conference room. Sulu looked at Gonzoles. "Well, it's about time."

"It certainly is." Lt. Gonzoles agreed as Commander Sulu pinned the new rank insignia to her uniform.

"You have new orders to go with the new rank." Sulu said. "We are on our way to Starbase 12 to drop you off."

"And then?"

"The ship yards at San Francisco." Sulu grinned. "And Excelsior."

"Excelsior?"

"She's ready for trials."

"What about you, Sir?" Gonzoles asked. "Is Enterprise really being turned over to the Academy?"

"We haven't gotten the order yet." Sulu said. "But it's only a matter of time. When that happens, I'll return to Earth with the ship and await reassignment."

"There have been rumors that you would get Excelsior." Gonzoles said.

"Captain Styles has her for the trials." Sulu said. "If all goes well, he'll take her out on her first mission. There are other commands available."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles said. She was sure he was disappointed but he did not show it to her. Unsure how to ask him any more about it, she changed the subject. "When will we arrive at Starbase 12?"

"Sixteen hundred hours. Plans are already being made for a going away party. Should be a big one. We've got about twenty people shipping out." Sulu said. "I guess you better pack again."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles nodded as Sulu turned and left her standing there. She tried to control the silly grin that was on her face as she turned towards her cabin. When she walked in her bunk mate and three other ensigns were sitting around a small table playing poker.

"Hey Rosita. Want to sit in?" Stephen asked.

"Thanks, but not tonight." Gonzoles grinned. "I don't honestly think I could sit still for very long tonight."

"Good god!" Ensign Jose Cubano said. "She's made lieutenant!"

The four ensigns stood up and came to attention. Lt. Gonzoles laughed. "Give me a break."

The ensigns sat back down. Paul Deitz asked. "How long did it take?"

"Four years." Lt. Gonzoles said. "Four long years."

"Your friendship with Commander Sulu wasn't of any help?" Jun Yamato asked.

"What do you mean?" Gonzoles asked.

"I saw you talking to him in the mess hall today." Yamato said. "Everybody say he'll make captain soon. That would make him a good contact to have. Right?"

"Yeah." Gonzoles shrugged.

"You don't mind if I ask, do you?" Yamato continued. "I mean, I'm not really sure how that works. Everybody says it's an informal thing."

"It is." Gonzoles nodded. "And yes, Commander Sulu has given me some advice and shared his experience with me."

"Is that why you got the special assignment?" Dietz asked.

"In part." Gonzoles shrugged. "It was through Mr. Sulu that I first met Admiral Kirk four years ago. But who you know doesn't mean anything at all if you aren't up to the job."

"But that doesn't really explain it." Cubano said. "And at the Academy they were rather vague about the whole mentor idea."

"I know." Gonzoles nodded. "I think it's a little different for everybody. But basically

it's up to the senior officer. After we had been in a battle situation together, Mr. Sulu said he thought I had a future in Starfleet. Since then he has offered support, advice, and challenged me to think things through in new ways."

"So we can't choose someone?" Cubano asked.

"I won't say can't." Gonzales shrugged. "But I haven't seen it work that way. Just do your best and let things happen. And don't be afraid to say what you think. Listen guys, I've got to get out of here for a while. Maybe go down to the gym and work off this energy."

"Thanks Lieutenant." Yamato called as she left the cabin.