

When Randy yelled across the bar that Jimmi had a call from the Enterprise, she almost dropped a plate of pasta in a customer's lap. She quickly served the dinners on her tray and hurried to the office. Jimmi sat down at her desk, pushed her hair out of her face, and accessed the subspace call.

"Hi Baby." Hikaru smiled at her.

"Where have you been?" Jimmi demanded. "I've been trying to reach you for weeks."

"I know." Hikaru nodded. "I'm sorry I couldn't call you sooner. Things have been very busy this last month."

"Is everything ok?" Jimmi asked. "Everybody?"

"We're all fine." Hikaru assured her. "And in a couple more weeks, I'll be there to see you in person."

"I know." Jimmi smiled. She could relax now that she knew that her shipboard family was all right. "I can't wait. The new ensigns have already started coming to the base. They are so anxious to get to their assignments. And Mike Woo let Mikey come to work for me for the summer. He's staying with me again. I hope you don't mind."

"That's great, Jeanie." Hikaru said quickly then got right to the point of the call. "Listen, I wanted to talk to you about the time Enterprise is in port."

"What about it?"

"If you recall, last year did not go so well." Hikaru said.

"I had a great time." Jimmi laughed. "Except, of course, when James T. threatened to declare the Café off limits."

"That was the least of it." Hikaru said. He had not enjoyed the time once Enterprise had left Starbase Twelve after the Café opening and he was not about to go through it again. "And I simply can't have a repeat of that incident. I have to take steps to deal with the problem."

Jimmi's smile disappeared when she asked; "You mean you aren't going to stay with me while you're here? You aren't going to come to the Café?"

"No, Baby. That's not what I mean." Hikaru smiled at her. Her obvious disappointment made him want to make things better for her. "But."

"But?"

"Pavel and I have come up with a plan." Hikaru said. "A way we can spend the entire evening in the Café and still report in good working order in the morning."

"So what's this plan?" Jimmi now smiled at him.

"Poker." Hikaru said.

"Poker?"

"As I recall, you have a nice round table back by the wall just outside your office door." Hikaru said. Her smile faded again as he talked. "We'd like to use that table to play a little poker. It will give me something to do while you are working. And something to think about so I don't drink too much. And...aren't you going to say something?"

"Poker?" Jimmi was now frowning. This was not what she had been looking forward to for the last year. She wanted him to give her his complete attention. "You and your buddies want to play poker? What about me?"

"You will be working." Hikaru reminded her. "But we'll still have time together. We'll find time for a few dances during the evening. And of course we'll have the night."

"Can't you play poker on the ship?" Jimmi asked.

"I do." Hikaru said. The signal light on his console told him he was running out of time.

"That's not the point. I just need to take control of the situation. Understand?"

"I guess."

"I've got to go." He smiled. "I'll see you soon."

"Bye." Jimmi said quickly and terminated the connection without waiting for his response.

"Bye?" Hikaru asked the blank screen. No 'I love you'? No 'Be careful'? Sulu sat back in his chair and scratched his chin. "Damn."

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Two weeks later, the Enterprise came into orbit around Starbase Twelve right on schedule. Commander Sulu and Lt. Commander Chekov were on their way to the No Ranks Café. The Starbase was crowded and they were walking slowly behind a group of ensigns.

"Are you sure she will not mind?" Chekov asked.

"I've already explained it to her." Sulu assured him. "She wasn't thrilled, but she understands."

"Uh huh."

"I'm going to go talk to her." Sulu said as they came to the bar. "You make arrangements with Randy. This will work."

They walked into the bar. Most of the crowd was made up of the newly commissioned ensigns who were waiting for their ships to pick them up. The Enterprise was one of the first ships to arrive this year. Chekov headed towards the bar. It was still early and the crowd was only starting to switch from eating to drinking. Randy and L.J. were busy but not overwhelmed behind the bar.

Sulu saw Jimmi talking to a group of ensigns at a table. He walked up behind her and waited patiently while she finished taking their order. Several of the ensigns at the table looked at Commander questioningly. Jimmi saw the looks and turned around. She practically jumped into his arms when she squealed, "Harry!"

"Hi, Baby." He said as he took her in his arms then kissed her. "Oh, it feels good to hold you."

"I missed you, too." she smiled up at him.

Sulu held her to him as the crowd milled about them. His face was only inches away from hers as he asked quietly, "You aren't mad at me?"

"Should I be?" Jimmi asked. She tried to stop smiling at him, but was unable to come up with an effective pout. It was so hard to stay mad when he was so close. Hikaru kissed her again. She sighed a happy sigh and asked, "So, just who is playing in this poker game?"

"Chekov, Uhura, Admiral Kirk, your father." Sulu explained. "Pavel is making arrangements with Randy right now. The others will be here momentarily."

"I'd rather you were spending the night with me." Jimmi said. This time she managed a very effective pout.

"I am." He whispered in her ear. "Just not until later. You are going to be busy anyway. How much time would I spend just waiting around for you?"

"I'm not worth waiting for?" Jimmi asked.

"Don't put words in my mouth, Little Girl." Hikaru said. "I have merely devised a way to wait for you that will keep me out of trouble on the ship. If you weren't worth it, I would not have set up the game to begin with."

"Very smooth, Harry." Jimmi smiled. "How long did it take you to come up with that?"

"I had a year." Hikaru grinned. "The game will start in a minute. But first, dance with me."

"Is that an order or a request?" She asked.

Commander Sulu stepped back from her and offered her his hand. "Would you do me the honor of dancing with me, Ms. McCoy?"

"I'd love to."

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While they were dancing, the rest of the poker players came into the bar. They joined Chekov at the end of the bar closest to Jimmi's office. Randy was giving out poker chips and collecting thumb prints on the payment padd. After the dance, Jimmi ran to her father and hugged him. She greeted and hugged them all.

Jimmi led them to the table just outside her office door that from that time forward became known as the poker table. She had no idea what a precedent they were setting that night. Base personnel and ship crews alike all used the table to play poker and other games of chance. Once they were seated, she took their order and brought them a round of drinks.

After the first couple of hands had been played, Mikey came over to the table. The sixteen year old had grown a couple of inches since Sulu saw him last year. His black hair was shaggy and the bangs hung in his eyes. He had a small box in his hands. He placed it on the table in front of Sulu. "My Dad sent these, Uncle Hikaru. He thought you'd like them."

"Thank you, Mike. Thank your dad for me." Sulu said and opened the box of Cuban cigars. He offered them around the table. Chekov took one immediately.

"Cubans?" McCoy asked with a smile. Sulu nodded. His brother-in-law would not have sent anything else. "You know Sulu, smoking is not only against regulations, it is deadly."

"One cigar a year won't kill you, Doctor." Sulu said and lit up. "And it is only against regs on board ship."

"Well, in that case." McCoy took one of the cigars. So did Kirk and Uhura. "There is only one thing missing to make this 'real' poker."

McCoy went to the bar returned with a bottle of bourbon and five shot glasses. He poured one for each. This was not what Sulu had in mind. The idea of the game was to give him something to do in the bar besides drink. He did not want a repeat of last year. But poker was also a matter of pride, so he drank the shot and hoped the doctor did not pour too many more. The poker game got under way.

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When Commander Scott walked up to the bar, Jimmi did not wait for him to say hello or order. By the time he sat down, there was a glass of scotch on the bar. He smiled at her and teased, "That better be the good stuff, Lass."

“Only the best for you, Scotty.” Jimmi said with a smile. “Sixty years old. How is it?” Scotty sipped the drink and smiled appreciatively. “Grand.”

“Why aren’t you in the big poker game?” Jimmi asked.

“I promised Chekov I’d take his seat by midnight.” Scotty said. “I don’t understand why he is even playing. Isn’t his girl friend on the base?”

“She’s here.” Jimmi nodded. “But I haven’t seen her yet tonight.”

“Hey Boss.” An ensign called her.

“Duty calls.” Jimmi smiled at Scotty and walked down the bar to the ensign.

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The game had been underway for little over an hour when Jimmi looked up to see C.J. Vasco sit down at the bar. The blonde Russian wore a sleeveless blue velvet dress that seemed to match the sapphires at her ears and throat perfectly.

“Hit me, J.M.” C.J. said with a big smile.

“I had almost given up on you.” Jimmi said as she set two glasses of ice on the bar between them. She poured a generous amount of vodka in each.

“Pavel told me about this poker game.” C.J. said. “I did not see any point in rushing over here just to watch that.”

“Ok.” Jimmi said and sipped her vodka.

“Don’t these guys ever rotate home?” C.J. asked with a sigh. “What’s so great about being on a star ship anyway?”

“You did not say the dreaded words ‘ground assignment’ to Pavel, did you?” Jimmi asked with a laugh.

“It was only a suggestion.” C.J. shrugged and sipped her drink.

“They are afraid.” Jimmi said. C.J. gave her a questioning look, so Jimmi explained. “Afraid that if they transfer off that ship even for a minute that they will never get back on one. Star ships are the best duty. You see the most action. These guys can not stand to be left out of that.”

“And there are only so many Star ship assignments available.” C.J. nodded. She had heard similar statements from Pavel, although he would never admit to fear. “And the promotions come faster. I know, I know.”

Jimmi smiled as she looked past C.J. She said, “Don’t look now, but here he comes.”

C.J. turned on her bar stool just as Pavel walked up behind her. She smiled at him and said “Hi.”

“Hi yourself.” He said with a smile. He pulled her off the bar stool, into his arms and kissed her. He whispered in her ear in Russian as Jimmi went to serve another customer.

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The evening went by quickly. At midnight, Scotty took over Chekov’s seat and Pavel spent an hour or so at the bar with C.J. They disappeared without saying goodnight to anyone and before Jimmi knew it, it was last call. Once she and Randy had served everyone their last drink, Jimmi walked through the crowd saying goodnight and gently suggesting it was time to go.

“Ok boys.” Jimmi walked up to a group of ensigns that seemed to be having trouble

leaving. It was late and she was tired. She put her hand on Ensign Kulayev's shoulder and leaned into the group. "Time to go."

"Why close, Boss?" Kulayev asked. "If the Café stayed open all 3 shifts, think of all the money you would make."

"I need to sleep sometime." Jimmi grinned. He was not the first to suggest it. But she liked running the place herself. She would have trouble leaving the party to go to bed. "And if you need another drink that bad, the Officer's Club never closes. It is across the park and two decks up."

"But the Officer's Club is not nearly as much fun as the Café." Ensign Barak said.

"You have good taste, Mr. Barak." Jimmi said with a grin. "But it is still closing time. Good night guys."

After all the customers had left the poker game slowly broke up. Dr. McCoy cashed in first. He handed his chips over to Randy, who entered the amount that would go back into McCoy's bank account into the padd. Randy turned the padd towards the doctor for his thumb print.

"How'd you do Dad?" Jimmi asked him.

"I held my own." McCoy said. He turned towards his daughter as Randy cashed Uhura's rather large pile of chips in. "How are you doing, Dear? Business seems good. But you look tired."

"It's just my busiest time of the year." Jimmi explained away any possible concerns her father might have. "I'll be able to catch up on my sleep in a couple of days."

McCoy wasn't convinced. He and Jimmi slowly strolled towards the door together. He said, "Come up to my office tomorrow. We never get a chance to just sit and talk anymore."

"Ok, but it will have to be before lunch." Jimmi said McCoy nodded and said goodnight.

Kirk had finished cashing out. Scotty, Kirk and Uhura joined Jimmi and McCoy by the Café door. They said a quick goodnight, and the four of them left together. One by one, the Cafe staff checked out. Only Lenny remained in the bar besides Jimmi and Sulu. She returned to the bar and asked, "So did you win or lose at your game?"

"I did ok." Hikaru smiled taking the beer she offered across the bar. She poured herself a glass of wine. It was a deep amber and a little sweet. It was one of her favorites.

"What is it with this game?" Jimmi asked. "No one ever wins or loses. It always, I held my own or I did ok."

"Haven't you ever played poker?"

"Not really. Lenny wanted to teach me back in high school, but..." Jimmi started.

"She had no patience for it." Lenny interjected. He threw a bar towel into the kitchen and called over his shoulder as he headed towards his apartment, "I'm going to bed. Lock up would you, J.M.?"

"Sure thing. See you tomorrow." Jimmi said to his back. After he was gone, she smiled at Hikaru and sipped her wine. "Alone at last."

"Let's go to bed." Hikaru said. "I have to work in the morning."

Jimmi told the computer to lock the doors and lower the lights. She met him at the end of the bar. He put his arm around her and they went up together.

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The next morning, Sulu reported for work in a much better condition than the year before. Chekov materialized on the base's transporter pad just a few minutes before eight. He had the list of ensigns reporting that morning.

"You disappeared early last night." Sulu said as he read over the list. Chekov could not help grinning as he shrugged.

Mikey showed up with coffee for them. As the ensigns started reporting in, he took coffee orders. He did a good business selling coffee and various other caffeinated drinks on these mornings. The ensigns and the senior officers all seemed to appreciate it the morning after the big parties.

It was about ten hundred hours when Jimmi took a break from readying the Café for the lunch rush and headed towards the base's main transporter room. She was wearing her favorite forest green knee length shorts with a multicolored tank top and comfortable athletic shoes.

She had her hands in her pockets when she walked into the transporter room to beam over to Enterprise. Sulu and Chekov were just standing by the control board talking. A dozen young ensigns stood around waiting. It was the smallest number of new ensigns that either Sulu or Chekov could ever remember reporting to Enterprise in any July.

"This doesn't look much like work to me." Jimmi said and smiled at them.

"The transporter is off line." Pavel explained.

"Damn." Jimmi said. "Is there a reason we can't use Enterprise's transporters?"

"Also off line." Pavel shrugged.

"You're kidding." Jimmi laughed.

"Scotty will only voluntarily take the transporters off line at a Starbase." Sulu explained. No need to add that the engineering crews were always busy while at the bases fixing the hastily made repairs done in the heat of battle. "Why? You going somewhere?"

"Dad wanted me to come by." Jimmi said. She walked over to the transporter control console and smiled at the operator. "Any idea how long it's going to be, Chief?"

"Ten, fifteen more minutes." The chief said. "Maintenance shut down the power."

Jimmi sighed. She had so much to do to get the Café ready to open for lunch. It was taking enough time out of her day to go see her father; standing around waiting for the transporter to come back online was not helping. She went back over to Sulu. He asked. "What are you going to see your father about, if I may ask?"

"According to Dad I look tired." She told him. "I'm not sure if I'm in for a lecture, a checkup, or both."

"You look beautiful to me." Hikaru said softly.

"Are you trying to get on my good side?" Jimmi asked with a smile.

"I speak only the truth." Hikaru winked at her. "Do you doubt me?"

"Of course not." She laughed. "But I thought maybe you were trying to soften me up so you could play poker again tonight."

"No poker tonight." Hikaru laughed too. "How about dinner and dancing instead?"

"Now that sounds good to me."

The transporter chief interrupted them. "We are back on line and ahead of schedule."

In sickbay her father waited for her. It was busy. The new ensigns all had to check in with

the chief medical officer. Jimmi walked into sickbay with several officers that had beamed up with her. They each reported to the head nurse.

Jimmi walked up to the CMO, hugged him and said "Hi Dad. I see you're busy, so I won't stay long."

"I'm not that busy." He said and led the way into his office. There was a portable medical scanner sitting on his desk. He picked it up and passed it across her body without asking permission. The readings were exactly what he was expecting. "You are exhausted."

"I know, Dad." She said. "But I've already explained. When the last starship leaves, I'll sleep for a week. I promise."

"Well, you're young." He put the scanner on the desk and sat down. "So, that's the physical. How are you doing otherwise?"

"I'm doing fine." Jimmi smiled. "The bar is working out better than I ever thought. And I love it, Dad. I am having the time of my life."

"Don't you ever think about more than the bar?"

"Of course I do, Dad." Jimmi said. She knew what he wanted her to say. He had been talking to her about the problems of subspace relationships for years. "Why do I get the feeling we are talking about marriage?"

"And if we are?" McCoy asked

"I'm not a kid anymore, Dad." Jimmi said. "You can't just drop by once a year and demand an accounting of my life."

"You may not be a kid." McCoy smiled. "But I am still a father. Which means I am still concerned about you. You'll understand when you have kids of your own."

"Right." Jimmi laughed. "Can you see me with kids?"

"Yes."

"Really?" Jimmi asked. "I don't think kids would exactly fit into my lifestyle."

"Life styles change." McCoy said with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Dad, I know that you know that Hikaru and I have talked about marriage." Jimmi said. "And we're still talking. But I'm not ready."

"And he understands that?"

"Yeah."

"And you understand that he plans to spend his entire career on a starship?" McCoy asked.

"Of course." Jimmi smiled. "Hikaru has never wanted anything else. I don't know why you think that's a problem. After all where have you spent most of your Starfleet career?"

"I just don't want you to wake up one day and find you spent your life waiting for him to come home." McCoy said. "I want you to be happy."

"I am happy, Dad. Take my word for it." She stood up and kissed her father on the cheek. "I've got to get back. We'll be open for lunch in a little while."

McCoy walked her out of sickbay. "I'll be down as soon as I take care of this crew."

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They opened to a larger than usual lunch crowd. It was quite a busy day. Even though the Enterprise ensigns were no longer there, the regular crew had shore leave and the other

ensigns were still coming in. And that evening Ensign Harrison was back. He walked up to Jimmi at the bar.

"Hi Beautiful." He smiled.

"Well, Mr. Harrison." Jimmi smiled politely. "You're back."

"Did you miss me last night?" He asked hopefully.

Jimmi just laughed. She could turn around without bumping into him all night. How could she not notice? "You've been in here every night for ten days, then you suddenly disappear without a word. Yes, I noticed you weren't here last night."

"But, did you miss me?" Harrison asked.

Jimmi smiled at him. "What can I get you, Mr. Harrison?"

"Kovan on the rocks." Harrison ordered. Jimmi poured it for him. And he followed her around just like he had the other nights he was there. When she came off stage, he was there. When she came out of the ladies room, he was there. Randy had started calling him Jimmi's puppy.

"Where's the puppy?" Randy would ask her if he wasn't there for a minute. When Jimmi would shrug, Randy would look up and warn her. "Here he comes."

She came off stage after singing a set. She found an empty barstool and sat down. Randy brought her a large glass of water. After drinking it down, Jimmi handed it back to Randy for a refill.

"How about a dance, Beautiful?" Harrison asked.

This guy was getting tiresome. Jimmi flirted constantly with all the customers, but this ensign did not seem to understand that it was a game. He never moved on. So Jimmi was blunt. "Listen, Harrison. You are adorable, but I am just not interested."

"Adorable? That's a word used to describe babies." He protested. She raised an eyebrow at him. He laughed. "Dance with me and I'll show you I'm no baby."

"No thank you." Jimmi tried a different approach. "I don't have the time to dance with the customers."

"You don't look that busy right now." He smiled

"But she is." Commander Sulu said from behind Jimmi.

Jimmi turned to Hikaru and smiled. "You're late."

"Couldn't be helped. Sorry." He returned her smile. "I believe I owe you dinner and dancing."

"That was the deal, Commander." She stood up. "My table?"

"Randy." Sulu called. Randy came and gave him a beer and Jimmi a glass of wine. They went over to her table together.

"Give me a refill, Randy." Harrison said. Randy poured the drink. "So you have to be a commander to get anywhere with her, huh?"

"No," Randy laughed. It amazed him how much some of the new ensigns made of rank. The more seasoned officers didn't seem to notice it, at least in the bar. "Not a commander, just that commander."

"So, you have an admirer." Hikaru teased her

"Mr. Harrison. He doesn't take no for an answer." Jimmi laughed. "Thank you for rescuing me." She leaned over and kissed Hikaru. She found herself hoping that Harrison was

watching. Maybe he would get the message.

Sulu pulled a small box out of his pocket. "I have something for you." He slid the box towards her on the table. She looked at him questioningly. It was a little bigger than a ring box. He smiled at her. "Open it."

She opened the box and found a pair of dangling jade colored earrings. She picked one up. The jade crystal reflected the light into a multitude of colors. "Harry, they're beautiful. Thank you." She replaced her current gold hoops with the gift.

"You wear a lot of green." Sulu said as an explanation as to his choice.

"I love them. But what's the occasion?" She asked.

"Poker winnings." Sulu shrugged off the question. He was glad this gift had been accepted without hesitation unlike the engagement ring he had offered a few months earlier. "It has to be spent, or it will bring bad luck."

"Since when are you superstitious?" She asked. But Jimmi did not expect an answer. It was Sulu's way of saying he didn't need an occasion. And she loved that he did not need an occasion.

The band switched from loud and rowdy music to slow and romantic. Hikaru nodded towards the dance floor. "Let's dance."

"Let's." Jimmi agreed.