

Captain Sulu walked into the No Ranks Café at eighteen hundred hours. It was the first time he had been back since he left to take command of Excelsior the morning after his wedding. It did not look any different. There was a small dinner crowd and a few people sitting at the bar. But to Sulu, it felt different. It wasn't a feeling he could explain. Just different.

When he did not see his wife, Sulu walked up to the bar. The tall sandy haired bartender greeted him with a warm smile. As always, Randy's clear blue eyes were open and friendly. "Captain. We weren't expecting you."

"Hi Randy." Sulu returned the smile. "Where's your boss?"

"Upstairs." Randy said. "She tires easily these days and is only working a couple of hours a day. Can I expect a crowd from Excelsior tonight?"

"I gave them shore leave. I imagine a few will show up." Sulu said as he headed off for Jimmi's apartment. He passed through her empty office and quickly climbed the spiral stairs that opened onto her common room. Captain Sulu stopped. A wooden rocking chair sat in the corner facing the couch and coffee table. The vaguely familiar thin pink floral pad on the back and seat seemed at odds with the rest of the furniture in blues and greens.

Not bothering to look in the kitchen, he found her in the bedroom. She was laying on her side with her back to him. Hikaru smiled down at her. She was the picture of contentment lying on the white comforter with the ivy pattern trailing across it. "Jeanie."

"Harry!" Jimmi sat up suddenly. She grimaced and put her hand on her side. "Ooh. That wasn't a good idea."

"Are you all right?" Hikaru sat down quickly on the bed next to her. He had no idea what if anything he could do.

"Yeah." Jimmi smiled at the sudden concern in his voice and on his face. "I just haven't moved that fast in weeks."

"Is that normal?" Hikaru asked.

"Yes." Jimmi laid a hand on his cheek and assured him, "I am fine. The baby is fine. But this last month is moving so slowly. And so am I."

"It won't be long now." Hikaru smiled. Shifting closer to her, he kissed her and rested his hand on her belly. Jimmi took his hand and moved it to the side. After a minute he felt a strong sudden kick. Hikaru grinned. "Wow!"

"That was a good one. Maybe he knows his daddy is home." Jimmi smiled.

"Is it a boy?" Hikaru asked.

"I still don't know. I just don't like to call him or her 'it' all the time." Jimmi said. "Does it matter?"

"A boy would be nice." He lightly rubbed her belly. "But, it doesn't really matter."

"Yeah." She laughed. "You keep telling yourself that. So, what are you doing here anyway? I thought you were on your shake down cruise."

"I am." He smiled. "And the course for the shake down was entirely up to the captain. So once I was sure everything was going all right, I came to see you."

"You gave the crew liberty?" Jimmi asked.

"Yes."

"Then I better get down there." She said and grabbed his hand to steady herself as she climbed off the bed. Jimmi adjusted the soft material of her maternity coveralls and stepped into

her shoes. "Randy is going to need help."

"Are you sure you should go to work?" Hikaru lay down on the bed and watched her move slowly around the bedroom.

"I told you before. A ship comes in, everyone goes to work." Jimmi picked up her silver brush to fix her hair. "Don't worry. I won't overdo it."

"You are awfully stubborn." Hikaru smiled and patted the bed next to him. "You should be resting."

"I'm fine. You worry too much." Jimmi turned away from her mirror. Hikaru got up and put his arm around her. She kissed him then led him out of the bedroom.

"Jeanie." Hikaru stopped at the top of the steps. She stopped and waited. "Where did you get the rocking chair?"

"Oh, didn't I tell you? Your mother sent it." Jimmi said and started down the steps ahead of him. "A wedding present. She said she rocked all her children in it. She also said it had been a wedding present from her mother-in-law."

"Now do you believe my mother likes you?" Hikaru asked as he followed her down to the office. Jimmi didn't answer; she just smiled.

When Captain and Mrs. Sulu walked into the Café, it was filling up fast with Excelsior officers. Jimmi went behind the bar to help Randy. He had already called the rest of the staff in to handle the unexpected crowd.

Hikaru walked through the crew he was still getting to know. This was a first active duty assignment for some of them, but most were experienced hands. As the captain, Sulu felt comfortable with them. He found a seat at the bar with Dr. Patrick. By the time he sat down, Randy had Sulu's favorite beer in front of him on the bar.

Jimmi served several customers before coming up to Lt. Gonzoles. The year the Café had opened Gonzoles had spent a good deal of time there, most of it flirting with L.J. But she hadn't been back since then. Jimmi smiled at her. "Rosita Gonzoles. Weren't you an ensign the last time I saw you?"

"That was over two years ago, Jimmi." Rosita smiled back. "You certainly have changed since then."

Jimmi rested her hand on top of her expanded belly and laughed. "What makes you say that?"

Rosita laughed. "How much longer?"

"About two weeks." Jimmi said. "And I can't wait. What are you drinking tonight?"

"Trillian, please." Gonzoles said. Lt. Lee sat down next to Gonzoles. "And one for my friend, Jenna."

"There you are, Lieutenants." Jimmi smiled. As soon as Gonzoles paid for both drinks, Jimmi walked down to her husband. Randy brought her a barstool so she could sit and talk to him for a while.

"So that's the captain's new wife, huh?" Lt. Lee said. Gonzoles just sipped her ale, nodded, and waited for Jenna's typical appraisal of the situation. "You can't get anymore pregnant than that. He certainly took his time marrying her."

Gonzoles smiled and reminded her friend. "I believe he was on assignment."

Lt. Lee leaned close to her friend and lowered her voice. "And up for court martial with

the rest of Enterprise's senior staff. No one brings that up any more."

"The charges were dropped, Jenna."

"Only because Kirk brought those whales forward in time." Lee said. "Not because the charges weren't true."

"They saved the planet." Gonzoles said. "Including you and me."

"And broke every rule in the book while doing it." Lee said.

"Would you rather--"

"Of course not." Lee cut her off. "But let's just stay in the real world here, Rose."

Contrary to what you think, the man does not walk on water."

"I never said he did." Gonzoles shrugged.

Further down the bar, Jimmi sipped her papalla juice while talking to her husband and Dr. Patrick. She observed. "Your crew is extremely polite, Hikaru."

"You sound like that is a bad thing." Hikaru laughed.

"With the exception of Rosita, they all are calling me Ms. or even Mrs. Sulu." Jimmi said. She couldn't keep the smile off her face as she teased him. "I think they are all afraid of you."

"No." Sulu spoke quietly and looked her in the eye. "It's not fear."

Dr. Patrick looked from husband to wife. He wasn't sure what the joke was, so he asked.

"What do you want them to call you?"

"What they've always called me. Jimmi or Boss." Jimmi smiled at the tall blond doctor she had just met then turned to her husband. "After all I would like your crew to feel more at home here than any crew in the fleet."

"They'll figure it out." Hikaru smiled and sipped his beer.

"What are the chances of you staying around for a couple of days?" Jimmi asked.

"Slim." Sulu said. "It is called a shake down cruise. The idea is to test the ship in flight not in orbit around a starbase."

"Then how about flying around in circles for a couple of weeks." Jimmi suggested.

"Jeanie, you know I can't make any promises." Hikaru shrugged. Randy walked up and handed Jimmi a small padd. "I am expecting to get my orders any day."

Jimmi read the information, made a couple of notations and handed it back to Randy.

"Ok. No problem."

"Thanks Boss." Randy nodded and went back to work.

"Have you considered planning your labor, Jimmi?" Dr. Patrick asked.

"Dr. Gawung prefers to let nature take its course." Jimmi said.

"What do you mean, Pat?" Hikaru asked.

"Letting nature decide the time of birth is preferred." Pat explained to his captain. "But there are many reasons to induce labor. Some strictly medical. Some practical. Like allowing the father to be present at the birth."

"It's safe for the baby?" Sulu asked.

"Of course."

"Jeanie?"

"Hey, I'm ready now." Jimmi tried to make a joke, but she suddenly felt uncomfortable talking about the upcoming birth with the Excelsior's top doctor. "But my OB tells me I'll go

when I go."

"Pat, could you talk to this doctor?" Sulu asked. He glanced at his wife, but did not notice the corners of her mouth turning down. "What's her name?"

"Beth Gawung." Pat answered. "I know her. I could talk to her."

"It's not necessary, Dr. Patrick." Jimmi said a little more stiffly than she had wanted.

"Ok." Pat said.

"Jeanie, I just want to explore the options." Hikaru said. But as he was talking, Jimmi slipped off her bar stool and started walking away. "Damn."

"I'm sorry, Captain." Pat said. "I didn't mean to cause a problem."

"It's not you, Pat." Sulu said as he watched her walk slowly towards the other end of the bar. Hikaru got up and started after her. He slowed to match her pace. They moved together with just the bar and the people sitting at it between them.

"Jeanie." Hikaru said softly when they were almost at the end of the bar and there was an empty space between them. Without stopping, Jimmi said something under her breath in Russian. He took a few quick steps so he could block her way at the end of the bar and spoke calmly in Japanese. "If you are going to fight with me, at least use a language I understand."

Jimmi stared at him for a minute while she translated. Then she switched to Standard. "I don't speak Japanese well enough to fight with you."

"Then stick to standard." He smiled.

Jimmi stared at him. His smile only infuriated her. Had they been alone, she would have snapped a quick answer and it probably would have been in a language he did not understand. But she was very aware of his crew in the bar and her father's admonishment not to undermine her husband's authority. "Perhaps we should talk in my office."

"Good idea."

While the Sulus retired to the No Ranks' office, Dr. Patrick joined Lee and Gonzoles further down the bar. With a wink to his two friends, he called the bartender over and asked, "Randy, do you know what she said?"

"Not exactly." Randy said.

"Come on, Randy." Gonzoles leaned across the bar and urged. "You can tell us."

"Well." Randy couldn't help but grin as he wiped the bar as he confided to Rosita, "I know L.J. has taught the Boss few phrases in Russian and none of them are nice."

"Ok, what's the problem?" Hikaru asked after he made sure Jimmi was comfortable on the love seat. He sat next to her and stretched his arm along the back of the dark blue couch.

"Just because you are now a captain does not mean you are in command here." Jimmi leaned forward. She did not want him to think she would sink comfortably into his arms right now.

"Meaning?"

"Meaning you walked in here and just took over." Jimmi said. "I've been carrying this baby for nine months. There have been decisions every day that I've had to handle without any help from you. My doctor and I have talked over the options. I don't see where you and your doctor get to come in and start making demands."

"Demands?" Hikaru said. "Jeanie, you asked me to be here. I just wanted to see if it was possible. And as for those nine months, you didn't even tell me for the first six. I don't see how you can now hold my ignorance against me."

"I trust my doctor." Jimmi insisted. "I don't even know this other guy."

"This other guy is my CMO." Sulu said. "And I am not trying to override your doctor. It's part of Pat's job to give me medical information."

"This baby is not part of your job."

"Ok. You have a point. This is not work." Hikaru took a deep breath and took her hand in his. "But I just took command. I can't take a long leave right now."

"Harry." Jimmi sighed.

"I know, Baby." Hikaru put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her to him. She relaxed against him and let herself cry. It seemed as if there was nothing else she could do. After a couple of minutes, he asked softly. "Do you want me to be here for our child's birth?"

"What a stupid question." Jimmi said without looking up. "Of course I do."

"What did you think?" Hikaru asked. "That you could send a message on subspace to say it was time and I could just turn the ship around and be here?"

"You're the captain now." Jimmi pulled back from him and brushed a tear off her cheek. She knew it wasn't realistic, but she wanted it to be simple and easy. "The ship goes where you tell it to."

"Sometimes. I do have orders to follow." Hikaru smiled because she was pouting. And she always pouted when giving in to him. "But if I knew ahead of time, I could probably arrange it."

"Oh Harry." Jimmi sighed and leaned against him again. She laid her head against his chest. "I don't know."

Hikaru played with a strand of her hair, curling it around his fingers. "I thought you were tired of being pregnant."

"I am."

"Want me to be here?"

"Yes."

"Let Pat talk to your doctor?"

"Ok."

"Hungry?"

Jimmi laughed. "Yes!"

"Me too." He stood up and offered her his hands. "Let's get dinner."

"Well," Lt. Lee said quietly to Patrick and Gonzoles after the Sulus had returned to the bar and taken a table for dinner. "That fight didn't last long."

"Jenna, Jenna." Pat shook his head. "Were you hoping for a screaming match?"

"Something interesting." Lee shrugged. She smiled at Pat and said. "You were over there, what was the fight about?"

"I knew you liked gossip, Jen." Pat said. "But why do you care?"

"It's not really any of our business." Gonzoles agreed.

"Don't you think it would give us a better sense of the man to know what he fights about with his wife?" Lee asked.

"No." Pat and Gonzoles said together.

Jenna Lee sat up straight and surveyed her friends curiously. "Ok, I know what Rose's problem is. What's the deal, Timmy?"

"Don't call me Timmy." Pat made a face at her.

"You've never been above a little good gossip. I personally know of three rumors you started just to see what would happen." Lee observed. When Patrick started to protest she added. "Don't worry, I won't elaborate further."

"It's a medical matter. Ok?" Pat said. "I can't talk about it."

"Let it go, Jenna." Gonzoles said.

"Ok. Ok." Lt. Lee sipped her drink. "Forget I said anything. Let's eat."

Later in the evening, Jimmi was back behind the bar. Many of Excelsior's off duty personnel had come in for dinner and were staying for a night of serious relaxation. Six lieutenants commandeered the poker table. All the holographic games were in use. When they saw there was no band, several officers who played together on ship retrieved their instruments and took to the stage. They played a variety of music with a Latin beat.

Captain Sulu sat alone at the bar sipping his beer. Lt. Gonzoles and Lt. Lee joined the poker game. Dr. Patrick strolled over to the Captain. Pat sat on the stool next to Sulu. "Lonely at the top?"

"Definitely different than being here with the Enterprise crew." Sulu nodded. "It's just odd being in a bar without Pavel Chekov."

"Good friend?"

"Yeah." Sulu nodded. "We were on Enterprise together for...I don't know how many years. Seems like forever. Last time I saw him was at my wedding. He was my best man."

"You've had a lot of changes in your life in the last couple of months." Pat said. "A familiar setting is going to emphasize those changes."

Sulu smiled and shrugged off the doctor's concern. "It's not a problem, Pat. By the way, I would like you to talk to Jimmi's doctor about this planned labor."

"She's ok with that?" Pat asked.

"She's fine."

"Ok." Pat nodded.