

Captain Sulu sat at his desk in his ready room on the U.S.S. Excelsior. When the communications officer signaled, he turned on the desk top view screen. The standard Starfleet welcome screen was soon replaced by the image of his father-in-law, Dr. Leonard McCoy. Sulu recognized McCoy's office in the sick bay on Enterprise. "Hi Doc. How's it going?"

"About as you would expect." McCoy smiled.

"Looking forward to retirement?"

"Tried it once." McCoy said with a shrug. "It's not for me. The Surgeon General's Office has made an offer. I'm considering it."

"Good for you, Doc." Sulu said. McCoy's response was not exactly unexpected. "I guess you know why I called."

"Our experiment." McCoy nodded. He leaned back in his chair and waited for Sulu to continue.

"I am reluctant to take Jimmi on the ship this far along in her pregnancy." Sulu said. "But I know she is expecting to come. What do you think?"

"The point of the experiment is to see how families function on ship in established patrol areas." McCoy reminded his son-in-law. "If future star ships are to be built with families included, there will be pregnancies, babies, arguments, divorces. There are still a full two months before the baby is due. I don't see this as a problem, Hikaru. Unless."

"Unless?"

"Unless you are looking for a reason not to take her on board?" McCoy asked.

"You're barking up the wrong tree, Doc." Sulu smiled. "I love having Jeanie and Harry on board. And I hope your experiment leads to families aboard certain ships at certain times."

"But not all ships?" McCoy asked even though he knew the answer. They had talked about this many times before in the last few years.

"Certainly not during times of war." Sulu said. "And not on ships exploring new territory. The risk is just too great."

"One step at a time, Hikaru." McCoy would not concede even the smallest point regarding his crusade. "I'll see you on Starbase Twelve."

"See you then, Doc." Sulu nodded and broke to connection to Enterprise.

Three days passed before Excelsior pulled into orbit around the space station that was Starbase Twelve. The large base in the Gamma System had become home to Captain Sulu since his wife had opened her café several years before their marriage. And he came home as often as he could.

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Captain Hikaru Sulu sighed and tenderly caressed his wife's pregnant belly as they lay together in her large comfortable bed. In the dim light she touched his cheek to turn his face towards her. She kissed him again. Her warm body rested gently against him.

"I can't remember the last time we were so decadent." He said as he pushed her long auburn curls off her face. "Making love in the middle of a work day."

"We should do this more often." Jimmi laughed softly. "I can't think of a better way to wake up. I am so glad you're home."

"Home." he agreed. "But still on duty. I have to get back to the ship. Why don't you go back to sleep?"

"No." Jimmi stretched. "The idea is tempting, but I've got to go pick up Harry down at Primary Care. And between the newly commissioned ensigns and the Excelsior crew, there will be a lot of work to do in the Café tonight."

"Lights." Sulu called. When the computer increase the lights, Hikaru sat up and reached for his pants. "Why don't you let your staff handle things tonight. We'll stay in."

"Right." Jimmi pushed herself up and kissed him on the back. Laughing, she got out of bed and started dressing. "It's not only my biggest night of the year, but it is your big poker night. And this is the last time Enterprise will be through here."

"Yeah." Hikaru stood up and fastened his black uniform pants. "That's hard to believe."

"I know. I guess it's time, but..." Jimmi opened the closet. She selected a flowing maroon flowered dress and put it over her head. Standing in front of the mirror, she frowned at her image and sighed. "Damn."

Hikaru smiled over her shoulder and fastened the back of her dress. "You look beautiful."

Jimmi's hazel eyes met his brown ones in the mirror. She smiled. "Liar."

Wrapping his arms around her from behind, he hugged her. "No. I mean it. You are so beautiful to me now."

Jimmi sighed. She took his hand in hers and said. "Come on. I want to show you something."

She led him out of the bedroom and down the short hallway towards Harry's bed room. Just beyond his door was a small room that Jimmi had used to store the left overs of her husband's many abandoned hobbies. They went in. Hikaru saw a white crib with matching changing table. The crib linen was pink and white with little bits of pale green. Ballerinas twirled and danced up and down one wall. The other three walls were white with a border of the twirling dancers.

Hikaru smiled at her. "A girl?"

"Yes."

"Last time you didn't want to know." Hikaru said.

"This time I did." Jimmi shrugged. She watched his face for reactions carefully and asked. "What do you think?"

"I think it's wonderful! A beautiful little girl." Hikaru hugged her. Suddenly he stepped back and asked. "Does your father know?"

"Not yet." Jimmi said. "Why?"

"He once told me that when we had a daughter, he would have his revenge against me." Hikaru said. Jimmi laughed. They left the room together. "Have you thought about names?"

"I was thinking Maggie." Jimmi said. "After my mother."

"That's a thought." Hikaru shrugged.

Jimmi stopped them and looked him in the eye. His response seemed to be noncommittal

but she knew her husband well. "But you have another idea."

"Well, I have always liked Demora."

"Demora?" Jimmi frowned. "Never heard of it."

"It was my grandmother's name."

"Oh. The one you were so close to when you were little?" Jimmi asked. He nodded. As she started down the steps to from her apartment to her office, she added. "Hikaru and Demora. What do you have against Irish names?"

"You call Hikaru, Harry." Her husband reminded her as he followed her down the steps. "Sounds Irish to me."

Jimmi laughed. "That's only so I can tell you two apart."

"Jeanie." Hikaru laughed and put her arm around her waist. "You call me Harry too."

Jimmi laughed as well, then asked. "Demora, huh?"

"Think about it."

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When the Captain and Mrs. Sulu walked into the Café together, Randy was behind the bar pouring drinks and telling jokes. Waiters rushed back and forth to the tables filling orders. A late lunch crowd merged with an early dinner crowd. The stage was empty, but background music muffled the sounds of clinking dishes. Civilians and Starfleet officers gathered around the holographic games.

Three ensigns at the bar simultaneously raised their glasses in a race to empty them. Lt. Rosita Gonzoles sat a few bar stools away from the rowdy crew sipping a cup of coffee. Jimmi walked up to Excelsior's navigation officer. "Coffee, Lt. Gonzoles?"

Gonzoles smiled and returned Jimmi's formal greeting. "I'm still on duty, Ms. Sulu."

"Well then you are not here to see me." Jimmi said. She looked up at her husband.

"Harry and I will see you for dinner?"

He just nodded and she left them to check the kitchen. The Captain turned to Gonzoles. "Well?"

"Commander Williams reports the damage is greater than originally estimated." Lt. Gonzoles put down her coffee and stood to give her report. She tossed her long black hair over her shoulder. "However he believes he can have the warp drive back on line in thirty six hours. Shields and weapon systems are already back on line. Ensigns Kee and Maxwell are recovering.

Lt. Muccino will require long term physical therapy to fully recover. Dr. Patrick has authorized his transfer to the base medical facility."

"Good. Let's get back to work." Sulu nodded. Lt. Gonzoles followed him out of the bar and through the park. Many of the flowers bloomed in the well maintained beds. Sulu recognized several of his officers with visiting family members. "I'll stop and talk to Muccino. What's his first name?"

"Tony."

The captain nodded. He saw Dr. Beth Gawung in the park and changed direction to meet the base's chief medical officer. Gonzoles followed him. Dressed in duty coveralls, the doctor

crouched in one of the flower beds patting the dirt around a small green shrub. "Doctor. May I have a minute?"

"Of course." The Starfleet doctor stood up and took off her gardening gloves. She brushed her light brown hair back off her face and smiled. "If it wasn't for the garden, living on a space station would surely drive me mad. What can I do for you, Captain Sulu?"

"I just saw my wife." Captain Sulu said. "She looks very tired to me."

"Fatigue is normal at this point." Dr. Gawung said. "Jimmi is a very healthy woman and she is having a normal pregnancy. However..."

"She is pushing." Sulu said.

"Yes." Dr. Gawung said. "Jimmi tells me she will be spending a little time on Excelsior."

"Yes." Captain Sulu nodded. "And Dr. McCoy thinks it will not be a problem. Can you see any reason I should change this plan?"

"None. I think it will be good for her to get away." Dr. Gawung said. "I'll forward Jimmi's records to your CMO just to be sure."

"Thank you, Doctor." Sulu nodded and continued on his way to the transporter room. With hands clasped behind her back, Gonzoles silently followed. They beamed up to Excelsior.

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When Captain Sulu walked back into the No Ranks Café most the tables were taken. He abruptly stopped just inside the door when a waiter he did not know swept past him with a full tray. He slowly made his way through the crowd of young officers who had already switched from eating to drinking. Sulu had not made it half way across the room to the bar when Harry ran to him yelling. "Daddy!"

"There's my boy." the Captain said scooping the four year old up. Harry giggled loudly when his father turned him upside down. Righting him, Hikaru hugged his son tightly. "How are you?"

"Fine." He hugged his father.

Jimmi joined them. She still marveled at how much Harry looked like his father. Same black hair. Same dark eyes. Same smile. Jimmi assured everyone who would listen that there was no maternal bias when she said her boy was beautiful.

"Hi." Jimmi smiled and leaned past Harry to kiss Hikaru. "We're having dinner upstairs. It's already getting crazy down here. You know how this place gets in July."

"I know." Hikaru said. The family moved through the crowd slowly. "Come on, Harry. Are you hungry?"

"Uh huh." The four year old laid his head on his father's shoulder.

As they walked through the Café, a young man in a brand new ensigns uniform stepped back from his friends and bumped into Captain Sulu. The ensign said nothing. Sulu shifted his son to the other arm and said. "Excuse me, Ensign."

The young man glanced over his shoulder. When he saw the captain, he spun around and came to attention. "I'm sorry, Sir."

"As you were." Sulu said and kept going. He looked at Jimmi and said. "I hope he's not one of mine."

"He's not." Jimmi laughed.

They went through Jimmi's office and upstairs to the family's apartment. Their family dinners were rare and Harry had a hard time containing himself. He stood on his chair rocking back and forth. Even though he spoke to his father often by subspace, he had to tell him every detail of his life all over again. Jimmi didn't have much to say during the meal except to remind her son to eat. They sat at the table for close to an hour enjoying the family time.

While Harry was taking a bath, Hikaru and Jimmi shared a pot of herbal tea. Hikaru smiled. "He sure can talk."

"He's just excited to see you." Jimmi poured herself another cup. "Your coming home is all he's talked about for days."

"And what about you?" Hikaru asked. "How are you feeling? Really?"

"I'm ok." Jimmi dismissed his concern with a slight shake of her head..

"You are not over doing it?" Hikaru asked.

"No one let's me do a thing around here." Jimmi laughed. "How could I possibly be overdoing?"

"You seem to find a way." He laid his hand on her cheek. "I wish you would slow down. Take care of yourself."

"I'm really fine." Jimmi put her hand over his. "Really."

"All right." He nodded. Instead of worrying about things he could not change, he turned his attention to the precious time he had with his son. "I promised Harry a bed time story. Think he's ready to get out of the tub yet?"

"Probably. It's pretty late for him." Jimmi nodded. "Don't make the story too scary please."

"Promise."

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Jimmi returned to work to find some of the Enterprise crew had come into the Café. She scanned the crowd for familiar faces. At the bar, Pavel Chekov sat so close to his long time lover, Cathy Vasco, that her blond hair rested on his uniformed shoulder. Jimmi saw Scotty, Uhura, and Chapel all talking together at one of the tables.

Her attention was drawn by Captain Kirk, Captain Spock, and Dr. McCoy coming through the crowd. She had to smile as the young ensigns made way for the legendary officers. Kirk always seemed to accept their deference as his due. Jimmi met them in front of the bar.

Dr. McCoy bent slightly to let his daughter hug him.. "Hi Dad."

"Hello Dear." McCoy smiled his most charming southern gentleman smile. His clear blue eyes sparkled as he looked her over. "You look wonderful. How are you feeling?"

"I'm good." Jimmi held onto him for a moment. "How about you?"

"Couldn't be better."

Jimmi turned to Captain Kirk and hugged him without waiting for an invitation. "And you, James T.? Looking forward to retirement?"

"I am looking forward to tonight's poker game." Kirk kissed her on the temple. He turned, searching the crowd with his eyes. "Where's your husband, Jean Marie?"

"He's reading Harry a bed time story. He'll be down soon." Jimmi said. She looked up at the Vulcan captain. "Are you playing poker tonight, Spock?"

"Yes." Spock nodded his head just once. "Since we are returning to Spacedock tomorrow, I find myself with time on my hands."

He sounded sober, almost sad to Jimmi. Had they been alone she would have asked him about it. But here in the crowded bar, a Vulcan would consider the question bad manners. Jimmi just smiled and said "Well then, let's get this game under way."

Randy loaded up her tray with five shot glasses and the ritual bottle of bourbon. Jimmi shooed several ensigns from the poker table. Kirk, Spock, and McCoy were already at the poker table when Captain Sulu returned to the Café. He stopped at the poker table to greet his former ship mates.

"Harry sleeping?" Jimmi asked after they had all said hello.

"Like a baby." Hikaru rubbed her lower back. "Shouldn't you be sitting down?"

"Shouldn't you be getting your chips?" Jimmi asked. Hikaru just smiled and gave her a quick peck on the cheek before walking away.

At the bar, Commander Pavel Chekov laughed at one of Cathy Vasco's jokes. Her hand rested lightly on his knee. His fingers played idly with the midnight blue silk where the plunging back of her dress met the small of her back. Her pale blue eyes glistened warmly. Cathy's smile faded when Captain Sulu came up behind Chekov. She turned towards the bar and sipped her drink.

"Hello Cathy." Sulu nodded to her. She returned the polite greeting with a forced smile. Sulu lowered his voice and asked. "Pavel, can I talk to you before we sit down?"

"Of course, Hikaru." Chekov ignored Cathy's finger tapping on the edge of her glass and turned his back to her to give them a little privacy in the crowded bar. "What is it?"

"Commander Kyle informed me this morning that he is taking a teaching position at the Academy." Sulu said.

Chekov smiled and picked up the poker chips Randy had laid on the bar. "His wife finally talked him into that, huh?"

"Evidently." Sulu nodded. "But he is leaving me very short of command personnel. There is no one now on Excelsior that is ready to step up to first officer. I'd like to see you in that position."

"Me?"

"You haven't taken another assignment yet, have you?" Sulu asked.

"No." Chekov said slowly. He had only confided to Cathy that he was actually thinking of leaving Starfleet. "With Captain Kirk retiring... well, I was not sure what I would do."

"I understand." Sulu said picking up the chips Randy laid in front of him. "The job is yours if you want it. Think it over."

"When do you need to know?" Chekov asked.

"Repairs to Excelsior's warp drive will take another thirty hours." Sulu said as they started slowly for the poker table. "But if I need to get a replacement from elsewhere, I'll need to

know early tomorrow."

"I'll let you know." Chekov nodded. When they reached the table Dr. McCoy had already poured the first ritual round of shots of bourbon. The game got underway. As with every July, the senior officer game drew a lot of attention from the newly commissioned ensigns. A group immediately gathered to watch.

Jimmi checked on her bartenders before pulling stool up across from Cathy. Her Russian friend downed the rest of her drink and slid her empty glass towards Jimmi. "Hit me again, J.M."

Jimmi picked up the glass and added ice. Cathy twisted the end of her ash blond hair around her finger while Jimmi pour the vodka. She placed the glass on the bar. "Problems?"

"That damn poker game." Cathy complained. Jimmi poured herself a tall glass of Altair water. "I haven't seen him in nearly a year and he's playing poker."

Jimmi nodded and sipped her drink. "What are you going to do about tradition?"

"I shouldn't complain." Cathy took a drink of vodka and closed her eyes for a moment. When she opened them she managed a smile. "Because Pavel will be home for awhile."

"Really?" Jimmi leaned on the bar. "With his experience, he hasn't gotten a new assignment?"

"He hasn't taken one yet." Cathy said. "And I hope he doesn't."

"C.J." Jimmi said. "With all his years on Enterprise, he has more experience than just about anyone who isn't a captain already."

"You are assuming he's staying in Starfleet." Cathy said

"I have known Pavel Chekov since he got out of the Academy." Jimmi said. "He hasn't even thought about doing anything else."

"Starfleet is not the whole galaxy." Cathy sighed. She looked over her shoulder at the poker table even though the crowd blocked her view of Pavel. "And if he's home... "

"Yes?"

"We could get married."

"He's asked you?" Jimmi smiled.

"More than once." Cathy laughed self consciously.

"And you haven't told me!" Jimmi demanded. Cathy just shrugged. "You haven't said yes? Why not?"

"Damn it, J.M. You know why." Cathy said. "I want to actually live with my husband. I want us to raise a family together."

"What if he stays in the service, C.J.?"

"I can't live with seeing him a couple times a year. I don't know how you do it." Cathy said and sipped her drink.

"You do it right now." Jimmi reminded her.

"I don't have any kids right now." Cathy said.

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Later that evening Commander Uhura and Captain Scott joined the poker game. Pavel gathered his chips and joined Cathy at the bar. There were no empty stools. Music from the band filled their ears. He leaned against the bar and smiled at her.

"About time." Cathy smiled.

"It is not even midnight." Chekov said. Randy brought him a beer and took his stack of poker chips. "I am much earlier than usual."

"So," Cathy leaned close to Pavel. With two fingers she lightly traced the details of his uniform jacket. Watching her fingers, Cathy asked. "What did Captain Sulu want that was so important?"

"He offered me a job." Chekov said in Russian.

"What?" She pulled her hand away from him and jerked her head up to search his deep brown eyes. Cathy switched to their native language when she asked. "What job? When?"

"First officer of Excelsior." He said. "Now."

Cathy suddenly felt cold. Their faces were only inches apart. She was barely able to whisper. "What did you say?"

Pavel had barely heard her. He pushed her hair back from her ear and lean close to answer. "That I would think about it."

Cathy pushed his hand away from her and turned back towards the bar. She grabbed her drink and downed it in one movement. Without another word, she got up and left the bar.

Commander Chekov sat on the bar stool she vacated. Resting his elbows on the bar, he folded one hand over the other in front of his face. Jimmi walked over to him and leaned her elbows on the bar. Lacing her fingers together, she rested her chin on her hands.

"Can I help, Pav?" Jimmi asked quietly.

"I don't think so, Princess." Pavel did not look at her.

"Aren't you going to go after her?" Jimmi asked. "I'm sure she wants you to."

"I'm sure she does." Chekov agreed.

"Don't want to give into her?" Jimmi asked. Chekov shrugged. Jimmi straightened up. "Ok, Pav."

Pavel Chekov straightened up too. He sighed and stood. "See you later, Princess."

"Later, Pavel." Jimmi smiled as she watched him leave.

When she couldn't sit behind the bar another minute, Jimmi walked through the crowd talking to her customers. She cleared a couple of plates that the bus boy had missed. When she returned to the bar and handed the plates to Randy, the baby gave her a swift kick.

"Oh my." Jimmi leaned on the bar to catch her breath. "That was a hard one."

"Are you all right?" Captain Sulu asked from behind her. He laid his hand on her back. Jimmi hadn't noticed him coming over from the poker game. "Ensign, your seat."

"Aye Sir." The ensign jumped off his bar stool to let Jimmi sit down. She smiled gratefully at the young man.

"I'm fine." Jimmi insisted. "Your child just chose that moment to take up gymnastics. Kicked me right in the ribs and I wasn't ready."

"You're sure?" Sulu asked. Jimmi took his hand and placed it where the baby was kicking. His furrowed brow relaxed and the turned down corners of his mouth slowly rose into a grin. "Feels like this one will be a kick boxer. Still, I think you should take a break."

"Really Harry." Jimmi protested. "It is the busiest night of the year."

His smile disappeared. "Perhaps I should ask your father's opinion."

"All right." Jimmi sighed. "I'll go to my office and sit down for a few minutes. Will that make you happy, Captain?"

"I'll make sure you get there." He said putting his arm around her waist. She put her arm around him and allowed him to take her to her office.

She settled onto her comfortable old love seat. Jimmi relaxed against the high back and ran her finger over the threadbare spot on the arm. "I really need to redo this. What do you think? Something a little less flowery?"

"I think you should put your feet up and close your eyes for awhile." Hikaru stood in front of her with his arms folded across his chest.

Jimmi smiled at him as she put her feet up on the love seat. She leaned back against the throw pillow and sighed. "This is lovely, but if get too comfortable I might not ever get up."

"Would that be so bad?" He sat on the edge of the couch by her feet "I think your staff has everything covered."

"Oh Harry, it would be giving in." Jimmi shifted herself onto her side and yawned. "These two weeks in July are the reason I opened the Café in the first place."

"I know." Her husband sympathized as he slipped off her shoes and placed them on the floor. "But I read that at this point you shouldn't be spending so much time on your feet."

"You've been reading about pregnancy, Hikaru?" Jimmi asked. The image of her Starfleet captain reading about the minor inconveniences of the third trimester made her smile.

"Dr. Patrick suggested a few articles." Sulu nodded.

"Well, I have my doctor's approval to continue working as long as I don't overdo and I get a nap in the afternoon." Jimmi laid her hand on his knee. "Of course I don't think she knew you were going to come wake me up."

"I don't think we have to tell her about that." Sulu smiled. He leaned over and kissed her. "You rest a few minutes. I'm going to go back to the poker game."

"All right." Jimmi sighed and closed her eyes. "Just a few minutes."

At the door, Sulu ordered. "Computer. Lower lights to sleeping level."

Pavel had no doubt where to find Cathy. He went directly to the civilian section of the main landing bay. He passed several small ships before stopping outside the Valhalla II. The sleek personal transport was painted shiny black and metallic blue. Her name and commercial registry number stood out in bold green block letters half the height of the ship. Chekov laid his palm gently on the sensor panel next to the door. The door slid open. She was expecting him.

"Catrina?" Chekov leaned through the door into the cockpit. It was empty and dark. The door to the passenger section stood open with light shining in on the dark control panels.

"I'm here, Pavel." Cathy called in a calm steady voice. "Come in."

"You are angry?" He asked as he cautiously stepped into the room. She was sitting at her desk checking in with the home office for messages. Cathy had taken off her shoes and jewelry. The sapphire earrings had been a gift from him. Pavel didn't bother to look around the room, it never changed. The bed was covered with a plain rose colored comforter. Throw pillows of

roses climbing a trellis on the couch and bed matched the upholstery of her desk chair.

Cathy turned off computer screen and turned towards him. "Are you seriously considering taking this assignment on Excelsior?"

"Yes."

"Yes?" Cathy asked. "That's it? No discussion?"

Pavel walked over to her bed. She turned the desk chair slowly as she watched him. He sat on the edge of the bed directly in front of her. Leaning his elbows on his knees he reached out and took both her hands in his. "Catrina. This is a very good opportunity for me."

"But you said you did not want to go on another ship." Cathy squeezed his hands tightly. "With another captain. You said..."

"But this is not just another ship. It is Excelsior. And it is Sulu." Chekov said. "Why do I have to explain this? I thought you knew me by now."

"But what about me?" Cathy asked bluntly.

"My sweet girl, this is my career." Chekov smiled at her. "I don't ask you to make business decisions based on me."

"That doesn't mean I don't consider you." Cathy said. "I arrange my schedule to meet you when you have leave."

"That is just scheduling." Chekov nodded. "This is First Officer. It is a command position."

"So?"

"I have never been on command track, Cathy." Pavel said. "I was beginning to think I had gone as far as I could go. But this changes everything."

"You've made up your mind."

"First officer is a stepping stone to captain." Chekov said. It wasn't like they hadn't talked about it before. But Cathy never had understood why command wasn't an option for everyone in Starfleet. Or why it had slipped by him. But with Sulu's offer, he had that option back. He would not let it slip by him again.

"What's so wonderful about being captain?" Cathy pouted and pulled her hands away from him.

"Are you serious?" Chekov asked.

Cathy got up and opened her bar. It was a delaying tactic that often worked well for her in business negotiations. She poured them each a glass of vodka. She walked over to him and handed him a glass. "Don't you care what I want?"

Pavel took a drink of the clear liquid. The familiar burning in his mouth quickly turned to a pleasant warmth. He put the glass down on the desk and looked up into her pale blue eyes. "What do you want?"

"I want..." Cathy sighed. She ran her fingers through his hair just above his ear. Then she abruptly turned away and drank some of her vodka. "Never mind."

"Damn it!" Chekov stood up and grabbed her by the arm. When he spun her around to face him, her drink spilled. Pavel took the glass from her and set it on the desk with a thud.

"Don't try to play me, Catrina. Talk to me."

"Let go." Cathy demanded. The blue of her eyes had turned to ice. Pavel dropped her

arm.

"Fine." Pavel said. He turned away from her and walked toward the door. "I thought you wanted to talk."

"I want you to come home."

Pavel stopped just inside the door. He slowly turned to face her. "Is that all?"

"All right. Damn you!" Cathy snapped. "I want to get married. I want to have a family. There! Are you happy?"

"Yes." He smiled at her and leaned against the wall between the passenger compartment and cockpit. "I don't know why you won't just tell me these things."

Cathy picked up her glass and walked back over to the bar. She poured herself another drink. With her back to him, she said. "Because it never makes any difference."

"You know I want to marry you." Pavel walked over to her and gently laid his hand on her almost bare back. "Tonight, if you wish."

"No." Cathy resisted leaning into him. She took a drink of vodka. "I don't want my children to see your ship explode on the news."

"Catrina." Pavel gently turned her around.

She look at him. The ice in her eyes was melting. "That was too hard, Pavel. When Enterprise exploded, I didn't know if you were dead. I didn't know ... anything."

"Baby." Chekov whispered soothingly wrapping his arms around her. He tried to kiss her but she turned her face away. He kissed her neck. "I know it scares you. And I am sorry about that."

"But?" Cathy asked his shoulder, unable to look him in the eye.

"But it is my job." Pavel stroked her hair and laid his cheek against the back of her head.

"I hate your job." Cathy said softly. Pavel smiled to himself and held her tighter. Cathy closed her eyes and let herself enjoy the warm comfort of his arms. After a few minutes, Cathy whispered. "Pavel?"

"Yes, my sweet?"

She took a deep breath and whispered the truth to him. "I want a baby."

Pavel tilted her face up so he could kiss her. A long slow loving kiss. When their lips parted, he said. "We could start work on that right now."

"I want it the old fashioned way." Cathy said. "I wanted us to raise our baby together. Like my parents did. And my grandparents."

"So, what you really want is for me to give up my dream so that you can have yours." Pavel sighed.

"You've already told Sulu you'll take the job, haven't you?"

"No." He said. "But I will tell him in the morning."

"There's nothing else I can say?"

"I love you, Catrina." Pavel said. "And I want to make you happy. But I will stay in Starfleet. On Excelsior. This is where I belong."

"I love you too, Pavel." Cathy took a deep breath and broached the subject she couldn't get out of her mind since he had told her of the job possibility. "Can you answer one question?"

"What?"

"What happened to Sulu's last first officer?" Cathy asked softly. "Is he dead?"

"No, my sweet." Chekov smiled and took her face in his hands. "Commander Kyle just took a teaching job at the Academy. It was a personal decision. Nothing more."

"You are sure?" Cathy searched his deep brown eyes.

"I am sure." Pavel kissed her again. "You worry too much, my sweet girl."

She clung to him. "How am I suppose to stop worrying about you?"

"Trust me." Chekov smiled. He slid his finger under the thin strap of her midnight blue dress and slowly pulled it until it was off her shoulder. He kissed her delicate pale skin where the strap had been.

"So that's it?" Cathy sighed. It had been far too long since she felt his arms around her and his gentle kisses that always started their love making. "Am I suppose to just accept your decision?"

He stopped undoing the back of her dress. Pavel laid his hand on her cheek and turned her face towards him. "Do you want me to go?"

"No." A tear ran down her cheek. "Stay."

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Jimmi opened her eyes and closed them again. She shifted her weight and tried to stretch her legs out, but the love seat in her office just wasn't long enough. She sat up slowly and called for the lights. Rubbing one eye, she yawned and asked. "Computer, what time is it?"

The computer responded in its artificial monotone. "The time is 02:23 hours."

"Damn." Jimmi stumbled across the office into the powder room. She grabbed a barrette and pulled her hair into a pony tail. After washing her face, she went to check that every thing had been properly locked up. The bar was empty except for the five officers that sat around the poker table.

A large pile of chips and a few discarded cards filled the center of the round table. A half empty bottle of bourbon and several upside down shot glasses sat on the edge of the pile. Except for Captain Spock, every player had opened or discarded their uniform jackets.

"Playing a little late tonight." Jimmi pulled a chair up to the table and sat between Captains Kirk and Sulu.

Kirk leaned back in his chair and smiled at her. He wasn't holding any cards. "No one's tried to throw us out yet."

"There's not much to get up for in the morning." McCoy added placing a few chips on the edge of the pile. "Your ten, and I'll raise you ten."

"Call." Uhura spread her hand on the table. "Two pair. Kings and eights."

"Three nines." McCoy smiled as he showed his cards. He gathered the chips from the middle of the table and added them to his substantial pile.

"Your luck is exceptional tonight, Doctor." Uhura shook her head.

"Skill. It's skill." The rest of the players said in unison. It was an old joke but at this table it never failed to get a laugh. Spock gathered the cards and shuffled.

"Sleep well?" Sulu asked his wife.

"Yes. I guess I needed it more than I thought." Jimmi looked at her husband slightly annoyed. "There's no need to gloat, Hikaru."

"I wasn't..." Sulu protested.

Spock started dealing. "The game is five card draw."

"So what are you going to do now, Spock?" Jimmi asked.

"I am considering an offer from the Vulcan Diplomatic Ministry." Spock said as he arranged his cards.

Captain Sulu spoke softly to his wife in Japanese. Jimmi turned to him with her head cocked to one side as she translated. Without answering him, she got up from the table saying, "I'm hungry. Anybody else hungry?"

Everyone answered with an emphatic yes. Jimmi laughed and went off to the kitchen to put together a snack for them all. By the time she had put a deli tray together and on the bar, the game was breaking up. Jimmi was putting plates on the bar when her father joined her. He started making himself a sandwich.

"Well Dad, have you made up your mind?" Jimmi asked. "Will it be the Surgeon General's Office or Starfleet Medical School?"

"Both." McCoy said.

"Both? Really?"

"The surgeon general's office only wants me in a consulting position. They want my opinions on the effects of long term space travel on humans." Her father explained. "And the medical school wants me to work on collaboration of Federation and Klingon databases. They want one database that contains basic medical knowledge of all the species we have encountered."

"Sounds ambitious." Jimmi said.

"Yes." McCoy agreed. "But Starfleet medical has gathered an impressive list of doctors to work on the project. It won't take up all my time. I plan on having plenty of time to see my grandchildren."

"That will be nice." Jimmi was making herself a sandwich. She glanced over at the poker table to make sure they would not be interrupted when she asked, "Dad, is James T. upset about giving up Enterprise?"

"Giving up command is never easy. Especially for Jim Kirk." McCoy answered softly. "Why do you ask?"

"When I asked Spock what he was going to do, Hikaru suggested I change the subject." Jimmi said.

"Ah." McCoy nodded. "You looked like you didn't understand him."

"Japanese is very different from Standard." Jimmi said. "It always takes me a minute to translate."

"Is Hikaru still sending Harry letters in Japanese?" McCoy asked.

"Yes." Jimmi nodded. "He wants Harry to grow up bilingual like he did."

Uhura joined them and made herself a sandwich. "Are you ready for the new baby, Jimmi?" she asked.

"Depends on your definition of ready." Jimmi smiled.

"And what is your definition?" Kirk asked as he joined them at the bar.

"I know when they put the baby in my arms everything will be ok, James T." Jimmi said.
"But until then I keep thinking of things I need to do."

Captain Sulu joined his wife behind the bar and started cashing in the players' chips. Commander Uhura cashed in first, followed by Captain Kirk. Jimmi filled a bright yellow tea pot with Valerian root tea and put it on the bar. She had added several tea cups of bright primary colors when Captain Spock came over and helped himself to a cup.

"Art Deco?" Spock asked with an arched eyebrow.

"This set comes from Tau Ceti III." Jimmi explained, "But it sure does look like Earth's art deco. Doesn't it?"

"Just how many tea sets do you plan to acquire, Dear?" McCoy asked.

"As many as I have room for, Dad. Sugar, Spock?" Jimmi asked even though she knew the answer. Dr. McCoy left his seat to go cash in his chips. He had heard this conversation before.

"Really Jimmi." Spock shook his head. "Either you appreciate the taste of the tea or you do not."

"I do. Just with sugar." Jimmi smiled pouring herself a cup of tea. She stirred in some sugar. "You know Spock, if you become an ambassador that should make your father very happy."

"Vulcans are not motivated by a need to please parents." Spock explained. "A diplomatic career seems a logical out growth of my experience in Starfleet. As such my father will understand my decision."

"But you don't want your own command?" Jimmi asked. "I mean as a Vulcan you could continue in Starfleet for years."

"No." Spock said. "My time in Starfleet is done. I have felt a pull towards diplomacy for several years. It is time to move on."

"But it's still hard to say good bye." Jimmi said.

"Yes." Spock agreed. "It is hard. And it is getting late. You must be tired."

"I am." Jimmi nodded and spoke quietly. "But don't tell Hikaru. He worries too much."

Before Spock could respond, Uhura announced to no one in particular, "I don't know about anyone else, but I am ready to call it a night."

Every one expressed general agreement and slowly started towards the door. Dr. McCoy hugged his daughter, warning her to get more rest. Captain Sulu and Captain Kirk followed behind the rest of them, talking quietly.

"I've offered Chekov the position of First Officer, Jim." Sulu said. "I thought I should let you know."

"Good choice." Kirk nodded. "He should have moved up before this."

"He didn't want to leave Enterprise." Sulu said simply. "And his experience there will pay off for me."

"When do you need him?" Kirk asked.

"He hasn't said yes." Sulu shrugged.

"Really?" Kirk asked, his eyes wide open and surprised. "Is he hesitating because of

Cathy Vasco?"

"He didn't say." Sulu said. "I've asked him to let me know by tomorrow. I need him right away."

When the two Captains caught up with the rest of them, Jimmi asked. "You aren't leaving first thing in the morning, are you James T.?"

"No, Jean Marie." Kirk said. "I still have a few things to clear up before I go. Why?"

"I was counting on a big lunch crowd tomorrow." Jimmi smiled.

"We'll be here." Kirk smiled and hugged her. "Good night."

After they had said good night and locked the front door, Hikaru said. "I'll put the food away if you want to get to bed."

"We'll do it together." Jimmi said putting her arm around her husband's waist. "It will only take a minute."