

When Captain Sulu opened his eyes the brightness of the overhead light made him close them quickly. He rolled to his side. The cool metal felt good on his cheek. Sulu opened his eyes a crack. The Breen detention cell was small, barren, and gray. He was laying on a shelf that served as a bunk. Directly across from the bunk a ring of lights at the door marked the active force field. On the other side of that force field a guard sat at a desk.

Slowly, Sulu sat up. His head throbbed. The guard walked over to the force field control panel with his disruptor in his hand. The ring of lights flashed off. The guard stopped just inside the cell and motioned to Sulu to get up. Sulu looked up at the featureless helmet of the guard. All Sulu could see was his own reflection in the polished metallic finish.

"Give me a minute." Sulu said holding his head. The guard grabbed Sulu with his gloved hand and pulled the Starfleet officer to his feet. He shoved Sulu towards the door. The captain reached out to the wall to steady himself. "All right. I'm going."

The guard never said a word. He delivered Sulu to another small almost empty room and left him there. There was a chair facing a large view screen on the wall. Sulu sat down and waited. He closed his eyes and took measured breaths to try to gain control over the pain in his head.

"Captain Sulu." Sulu jerked open his eyes. First Ambassador Binor Ianis was on the view screen. "I hope you are feeling better."

"Better than what?" Sulu asked.

"A sense of humor." The Ambassador leaned back in his chair. He studied Sulu openly before continuing. "Good. Then let's get started. Your name and rank."

"Hikaru Sulu. Starfleet captain."

"What were you doing aboard the transport owned and piloted by the Human terrorist, Michael Lenin?" Ambassador Ianis asked.

"Where is Lenin?" Sulu asked.

"He is no longer your concern. Answer the question."

"Am I being charged?" Sulu asked.

"You do not ask the questions here, Captain." Ambassador Ianis leaned closer to the screen. "If you do not answer voluntarily, you can be compelled to answer."

"Are we still in Federation Space?" Sulu asked anyway.

"What were you doing on that ship?" The Ambassador insisted.

Sulu shrugged. "Starfleet regulations require that I decline to answer any and all..." The screen returned to black. Sulu was left alone for a few moments. His mind raced with possible interrogation scenarios.

The guard reappeared and motioned to Sulu with his disruptor. Sulu immediately got up and went with him. Again the guard did not say a word. The short corridor was empty. There were no doors or other openings. No place to run.

Back in the detention area, the guard stood Sulu against the wall. He held the disruptor to the Human's chest with one hand while he lowered the force field with the other. He grabbed Sulu by the shoulder and shoved him into the cell. Once the force field was reactivated the guard left the detention area.

Sulu leaned against the wall. The cell was not empty. Michael Lenin was laying on the

bunk. Captain Sulu slid his back down the wall until he was crouching next to the bunk.

"Lenin." When Lenin did not respond, Sulu touched his shoulder softly. "Mickey?"

Lenin turned towards Sulu and opened his one of his eyes. The other was swollen shut. The bruise spread from his eye half way down his cheek. With great effort he sat up. He wiped a trickle of blood from his lower lip with the back of his hand.

"Ouch." Sulu reached out to touch the swollen face. When Lenin pulled back from him, Sulu let his hand drop. "What questions did you refuse to answer to get that?"

"No questions." Lenin tried to smile. "I don't know why Layg stopped. He seemed to be really enjoying himself."

"Maybe it was business before pleasure." Sulu said. "This ship took a hard hit just after we transported. It is possible he was needed elsewhere."

"Lucky me." Lenin sighed. He slowly leaned back against the wall behind the bunk and closed his eyes.

"Stay with me, Mickey." Sulu said. "I need to know everything you know about the Breen."

"That's not much." Lenin kept his eyes closed and tried to ignore the stabbing pain from his broken ribs.

"So you did not know what you were getting into when you got involved with the bride to be?" Sulu asked.

"Seriously?" Lenin laughed then winced in pain. "I had no idea. She was just a pretty girl that wanted out."

"Damn." Sulu sighed. "I was hoping you knew more about them than I did."

Captain Sulu stood up and walked over to the force field. The guards station was empty and the computer screen blank. He could see the force field controls on the wall outside the cell. He examined the force field emitters for any possible weakness.

"Give up, Sulu." Lenin sighed. "The ship is probably cloaked and headed for home."

"Then we'll have to find a way to knock out that cloak." Sulu said. "Even at top warp, they can't make it out of Federation space in less than a week."

"Not possible." Lenin shook his head slightly. "What are you going to do for oxygen off this deck?"

"I'd like to examine one of those helmets." Sulu said. "Maybe..."

"You're dreaming." Lenin said. Gingerly, he laid back down on the bunk. He closed his eyes and said, "They are probably listening to every word you are saying."

"Perhaps." Sulu said and continued examining the cell.

It wasn't long before the guard came for Sulu again. The Captain attempted to engage him in conversation, but that was obviously against his orders. The guard stopped and motioned Sulu through a door. Sulu walked into another small room. Primot Retnec sat at a small desk at the far end. He wore a clear mask over the lower half of his face that allowed him to function in the oxygen atmosphere.

"Sit down, Captain Sulu." Primot Retnec's voice sounded artificial as it came through the

mask. The guard pushed Sulu towards a single chair that stood in the center of the room. Once the Starfleet officer was seated, the guard posted himself just inside the door.

"I must protest the treatment of Mr. Lenin, Primot." Sulu said. "He is in need of medical treatment."

"There is little reason for medical treatment." Retnec replied calmly. "Mr. Lenin has already been found guilty of his crimes. The sentence is death."

"A trial has been convened here on this ship?" Sulu asked.

"No." Retnec scoffed. "The trial was held at the Brendeen Justice Complex well before the initiation of this voyage."

"Without Lenin?" Sulu asked. "In the Federation any one accused of a crime has the right to challenge the evidence against him."

"Interesting." Retnec said. "Does that change the evidence?"

"There is an old saying on my home world. There are two sides to every story." Sulu shrugged. "You condemn Lenin without hearing his side."

"That is immaterial." Retnec said. "We have a unique opportunity here, Captain. There is much you can tell us about your Federation and Starfleet."

"And you of course will share Breen military information with me." Sulu smiled.

"Are you going to deny that you were attempting to steal Breen technology when we rescued you from the transport?" Retnec asked.

"Rescued?" Sulu asked.

"The ship exploded moments after we transported you off." Retnec said.

"I see." Sulu shrugged. "I was on a ship with Federation registry in Federation space with the permission of the owner and pilot. We were effecting repairs when you attacked without warning. Therefore I must insist you return us both to the Excelsior immediately."

Retnec laughed heartily at Sulu's calm assertion. "You were stealing from a Breen ship. The transport Aces Over Trays was confiscated during the trial."

"I was acting according to the facts as I knew them." Sulu countered. "And if this confiscation is legal, why did you not mention it earlier? It would have made your case for custody of Lenin stronger."

Retnec sat back in his chair. "And you would have turned him over to us?"

"No." Sulu smiled. "But we would have kept him in custody until the diplomats had worked something out."

"Now that will not be necessary." Retnec smiled. "Lenin is no longer an issue."

"But I am." Sulu said.

"You are a complication." Retnec admitted. "But you are also gramada."

"Gramada?"

Retnec shrugged off the questions with a slight shake of his head. "An unexpected advantage."

Sulu heard the door behind him open. An officer dressed in a standard Breen duty uniform and wearing the same helmet with full face mask that the guard wore, walked past Sulu.

He handed a small data padd to Primot Retnec. Sulu could see Retnec's lips move, but heard nothing. The new officer nodded and turned to face Sulu. Retnec stood. "Proceed Perviso

Tega."

Tega did not sit down after his primot had left. He walked a slow circle behind his captive. Sulu resisted the urge to turn his head to watch him. Tega held a control pad in his hand. Using the pad he lowered the peripheral lights in the room. A cone of light directly over Sulu's chair intensified. Sulu could now feel Tega more than see him.

"Name." Tega's voice was deep and harsh.

"Sulu." He answered calmly.

"Assignment."

"Captain, U.S.S. Excelsior."

"How many warships does Starfleet have with in twenty five light years of Breen territory?"

"I have no idea."

Tega leaned close to the back of Sulu's head. "You do not know the deployment of your own fleet?"

"It's not my department."

Tega walked slowly around Sulu again. He lifted his hands so that the control pad was inside the circle of light. He adjusted the controls. A force field surrounded Sulu. It felt like a pressure suit and held Sulu motionless in his seat. He could move nothing but his head and even that movement was limited.

"The fleet?"

"I don't know."

"Then let's try something you do know." Tega said. "Your ship, Captain. What is the shield modulation?"

"I am not an engineer." Sulu said. Tega tightened the pressure field. It pressed his arms to his body and his legs tight together. Sulu found it hard to breathe. Tega crouched in front of Sulu. The helmet hid his face. Again all Sulu could see was his own reflection in the polished brass of face guard.

"How many torpedoes does Excelsior carry?" Sulu only shook his head. Tega tightened the field again. He could not expand his lungs to take in enough air. "What are the configuration of command codes and protocols?"

Suddenly Tega released the field back to the original pressure. Sulu gasped for breath. All the muscles of his body throbbed. Tega stepped back into the darkness. Sulu could hear the Breen commander's footsteps behind him. Sulu consciously slowed his breathing. Controlled. Measured. As long as he lived, Sulu would have control of his own breath.

Behind him, Tega spoke slowly. "The human body is a fragile thing. Klingons can stand at least three pressure settings higher. I wonder what goes first in humans? Do the lungs collapse? Or the blood vessels pop? Or do bones break? Now Sulu. Let's try again..."