

"Pavel." Patrick said. Chekov snapped awake to see Dr. Patrick sitting on the edge of Captain Sulu's desk. Straightening up in his chair, Chekov rubbed his eyes. Patrick slid a cup of coffee slowly across the desk to him. "Black with sugar."

"Thank you, Doctor." Pavel yawned. "I did not think I would sleep, but... Has Commander Dole returned from the Dycam?"

"Yes." Pat nodded. Chekov sipped the hot coffee. "Mirek and DiMario are working on the information right now."

Chekov entered the science station code into the desk terminal. The information from the Dycam came up. He studied it for a few minutes before opening the comline. "Mirek, report."

"Sir." Mirek looked up from her work to the station's view screen. "We are still going through the information, Mr. Chekov. But as I read this so far, the command codes are synced to a DNA scan as well as service ID codes. We have not been able to find a way around it yet."

"Keep on it." Chekov said. He closed the comline but kept the raw data on his screen. "Maybe the Ambassador is feeling more accommodating now."

"We have another ten minutes." Pat shrugged. "And they are still staring at two Starships. Not to mention that we've taken the Dycam."

"That may be our ace." Chekov said. "We have access to their computers. They maybe willing to trade our captain for their ship and crew."

"Shouldn't you run that by the Admiral first?"

"Not necessarily." Chekov shrugged and sipped the hot coffee again.

"I thought you said he was very interested in Breen technology." Patrick said. "He might like to see this ship and crew before they are released through proper diplomatic channels."

"There are no proper diplomatic channels, Doctor." Chekov reminded him. "No formal relations. We have some leeway here."

"You are sure?"

"If we turn this crew over to the diplomatic process, we will not see Hikaru until that process is complete." Chekov said. "I am not willing to settle for that."

"I know." Patrick nodded. "Ready?"

"Yes. Just let me wash up first." Chekov said. "I'll meet you on the bridge in two minutes."

Commander Chekov walked onto the bridge and directly around to the science station. "Anything more?"

"No Sir." Mirek shook her head. "There isn't anything that corresponds to our prefix code that we can identify. Without the right DNA scan, we can't access their computers by remote commands."

"What is all this extra information?" Chekov asked.

"Lt. Orrint said the Breen Captain attempted to resist the telepathic connection by crowding his thoughts with extraneous information." Mirek said. "It's mostly minor subsystems. Even maintenance procedures."

"All right. Keep after it. Look for anything we can use. Anything." Chekov said. Mirek nodded and returned to work. "Commander Rand. A secure channel to the Lexington, please."

"Channel open and secure, Mr. Chekov."

"Commander Chekov." Captain Piazza's image came on the screen. Chekov walked down the two steps to the lower bridge. "Has your crew had any luck with the Breen information?"

"No Captain." Chekov stood next to Gonzales at the navigation station. "I believe we are going to have to try to a prisoner exchange."

"I should think they will be looking for a way to return Captain Sulu." Piazza said. "I hope war with the Federation would be the last thing a divided Breen empire would want. Unfortunately, Mr. Lenin is another matter."

"We can not just let them take him without due process." Chekov said as he returned to the command chair. "But he has ruined an opportunity to mend that division. And they will not let him go easily."

"Agreed." Captain Piazza was about to continue but Chekov's attention was suddenly drawn to a civilian who had come onto the bridge. The Lexington captain waited while Chekov dealt with the interruption.

Jimmi stepped off the turbo lift. She had only been on Excelsior's bridge once before. Hikaru had taken her on an extensive tour of the entire ship the first time he brought Excelsior into Starbase Twelve. He had been so proud. He showed her every little detail. But now Chekov was in the center seat, the command station. Dr. Patrick stood next to him. On the view screen was another Starfleet officer. A woman, a captain. Jimmi ignored the view screen.

"Pavel!" Jimmi barely managed to keep from yelling. Her voice was hard and demanding. "What is going on here?"

Jimmi started towards Chekov. Dr. Patrick came over and stopped her. "Not now, Jimmi!"

"Excuse me, Captain." Chekov said then turned to Patrick. "Doctor, please take Ms. Sulu to the ready room. I will join you as soon as I can."

"Aye Sir." Dr. Patrick took Jimmi's arm and tried to turn her in the direction of the ready room.

"Wait." Jimmi pulled away from him. "I need to know. Pavel!"

"You have your orders, Doctor." Chekov said and turned back to face the view screen.

"Come on, Jimmi." Pat said quietly. "Everyone here is doing their best to bring Hikaru home. Let's get out of their way. I'll explain everything."

Jimmi let Dr. Patrick lead her into the ready room. There was a tray with coffee sitting on the captain's desk. Dr. Patrick poured Jimmi a cup. While she added sugar to the cup, she said. "Ok. Explain."

"Well." Pat scratched his temple and tried to think exactly what to say.

"If you say classified one time," Jimmi threatened. "I will go out there and drag Pavel Chekov in here by the ear. And I won't care who is watching."

Any other day would have found Patrick laughing out loud at the image. Today he did not crack a smile. "Command wanted the captain to bring back the Breen cloaking device on the transport. Chekov wanted Captain Sulu to send someone else, but he went himself. The Breen opened fire and eventually collapsed the shields around the transport. They beamed Captain Sulu

and Mr. Lenin to the Truuk. That's the Breen's command ship. We are now trying to rescue them."

"And no one bothered to tell me?" Jimmi asked louder than she intended. She didn't know if she was more angry or afraid. She wanted to scream and yell and throw things. Instead she paced the length of the room. She took deep breaths, searching her mind for the next step, the next question. Finally she asked in a surprisingly calm tone, "So, what's the plan?"

"We are proceeding on two fronts." Dr. Patrick watched her walk. She was still stirring the coffee. Pat was surprised it hadn't spilled. "There is an ambassador on the Truuk and he seems to want a diplomatic solution. Chekov is pursuing that. At the same time, the science officers have located human life signs on the Breen ship. And they are working on a way to knock out the shields so they can beam them out."

"How long is this going to take?"

"I don't know."

"Damn it, Pat." Jimmi sat in the chair in front of the Captain's desk. She put the coffee down without having tasted it. "Why did he have to go?"

The doctor leaned against the desk. "Do I have to answer that?"

"No." Jimmi sighed. She looked up at Dr. Patrick. "What are these Breen like?"

"We don't know a lot about them." Pat shrugged. "They've been involved in a civil war for a long time. Their technology is on par with ours."

"Do they torture prisoners?"

"I don't know." Pat said. "But the chances of them hurting Captain Sulu are small."

"Why?"

"Because they are deep in Federation space staring at two starships." Pat smiled. "And their ships are badly damaged. They have to talk to us. They can't get away. So they won't want to hand Hikaru back to us injured."

Jimmi looked back down at the floor. "Maybe there is a good reason why families don't live on starships."

"Jimmi." Dr. Patrick sat in the chair next to her and took her hand. "Keep a good thought. Say a prayer if you believe. That's all you and I can do right now."

"Mr. Chekov." Commander Rand said. "Ambassador Ianis is hailing us."

Chekov took a deep breath. "Put the Ambassador on screen, Rand."

"Captain Chekov." First Ambassador Ianis said. "I must protest being held in targeting computers weapons lock while your crew boards another Breen ship. The damage on the Dycam prevented her from protecting herself. I can only imagine the atrocities now being committed on Breen citizens."

"The Dycam was boarded to secure it from another unprovoked attack. The crew has been disarmed and repairs are underway under my security officer's control." Chekov said. "I will remove my officers from your flank ship without hesitation when Captain Sulu and Mr. Lenin are again on board the Excelsior."

"Impossible." The Ambassador said. "Lenin has been convicted of crimes against the

Breen ruling family. He must face the consequences of his crimes."

"You may have a legitimate right to arrest Mr. Lenin." Chekov said. "If you do, I am sure that the Federation council will negotiate an extradition treaty."

"There is no need for that." The First Ambassador said. "We will return Captain Sulu to you and you will remove your crew from the Dycam."

"And Lenin?" Chekov asked.

"Is no longer your concern."

"I am afraid that is not good enough." Chekov said. Ensign Mirek left her station and hurried to Chekov's side. "A moment, Ambassador."

Chekov motioned to Rand to cut the audio. When she had, Mirek said. "We have a possibility, Sir. The information contains Breen field modulation data. It may be possible to synchronize the transporter to their shield modulation frequencies and transport right through their shields. Of course we'd only get one chance. They would have to change the frequency once they realize we have it. I have sent the data to Mr. Williams, Sir."

"Good work Ensign." Chekov smiled. Mirek nodded and returned to her station. "Bridge to Engineering."

"Williams here."

"Willie, can you adjust the transporter frequency to match the Breen shields?" Chekov asked.

"Yes Sir." Williams answered. "But it will take a few minutes."

"Good. Signal me as soon as you are ready. Bridge out." Chekov nodded towards Commander Rand who reconnected the audio transmission. "I am sorry for the interruption, Ambassador. Can I assume that Mr. Lenin and Captain Sulu are in good health?"

"Of course." The First Ambassador insisted indignantly. "Would you suggest that we are barbarians?"

"Of course not." Chekov said. "But before I can even consider removing my crew from the Dycam, I will need to see and talk to Captain Sulu and Mr. Lenin."

"For what purpose?"

"To know that they are not dead." Chekov said

"How many were killed when you boarded the Dycam?"

"None." Chekov said. "Although a few did end up in sick bay. And several are spending time in their own brig. Your captain and first officer are seeing to the repair of their ship. I will allow you to see the Dycam bridge if you wish."

"Yes." Ambassador said.

"It will take a moment. Stand by." Chekov got up and started for the ready room. He issued orders to Rand as he went. "Contact Lt. Johnson on the Dycam. Be sure that only a visual signal is sent to the Truuk. I will return in a minute."

"Aye Sir."

"Jimmi." Chekov grinned as he walked into the ready room. "In less than fifteen minutes Hikaru should be back on board. We have found a way to bypass their shields and beam him out."

Jimmi stood up. She felt as if her heart was in her throat. "Is he all right?"

"All that I know right now is that he is alive." Chekov said. "Go to sick bay and wait. I will have him beamed directly there."

"Thank you, Pavel." Jimmi hugged him tightly and whispered in his ear. "Thank you."

Back on the bridge, Chekov resettled into the command chair. "A secured channel to the Lexington please, Commander Rand."

"Channel open and secure." Rand reported.

"Captain." Chekov reported. "We have found a way to bypass the shields. I do not have time to explain. We will be attempting a rescue in a matter of minutes. I will keep you informed. Excelsior out. Now the Truuk again, Rand."

"Aye. Channel open, Mr. Chekov."

"All right, Ambassador." Chekov said. "You have seen the bridge and command crew of the Dycam. Are you satisfied regarding their condition?"

"I would like to be able to speak to Captain Eloc." The First Ambassador said. "That signal could be time delayed. I have no guarantee they are well unless they tell me themselves."

"I understand your concern, Ambassador." Chekov smiled. The signal on the arm of the command chair lit. "So you will understand that I now require to see Captain Sulu and Mr. Lenin. After that I will be happy to let you speak to the Dycam's captain."

The First Ambassador hesitated a moment. Finally he said. "I will have Captain Sulu brought to a view screen. It will take a moment. Stand by."

After he passed out during Tegra's interrogation, Sulu was returned to the detention cell. When he regained consciousness he was alone. Lenin was gone. It wasn't long after he was awake that the speechless guard again took him to the small room. Sulu was glad to see Primot Retnec sitting at the desk. The guard put Sulu in the chair in the center of the room.

"How are you feeling, Captain?" Retnec asked.

"I've been better." Sulu tried not to breath too deeply.

"Your second is a cautious man." Retnec said. "He wishes to know you are well before negotiations proceed."

"And Mr. Lenin?" Sulu asked.

"He will have to settle for you." Retnec said.

"Perhaps I can see and talk to Lenin." Sulu suggested. "Then I can assure Commander Chekov of his good health."

"This Chekov has taken command of your ship." Retnec said. "Perhaps he does not want you back alive."

"He has acted in accordance with Starfleet regulations." Sulu smiled even though it hurt to smile. "Mr. Lenin is still alive, isn't he?"

"Of course." Retnec touched a control pad on his wrist. "Bring him in."

Sulu stood up when the two guards dragged a barely conscious Lenin in and dropped him on the floor. Slowly, Captain Sulu bent down and touched Lenin's shoulder. He had been badly beaten. His clothes were ripped. There was no place on his body that Sulu could see that wasn't

bruised or bloodied. Lenin opened his eyes and looked at Sulu but said nothing. Then he closed his eyes and took full advantage of the time on the floor to rest.

"This man needs a doctor." Sulu insisted to Primot Retnec.

"That would be a direct contradiction of the First Ambassador's orders." Retnec said "And the Ianis family is very powerful."

"This is what you consider justice?" Sulu asked angrily. "Beating a helpless prisoner within an inch of his life?"

"We will contact the Excelsior." Retnec said calmly. "You will say precisely what we tell you to say and nothing more. Do you understand?"

"No, I do not!" Sulu countered. Between the frustration and the pain, he was having trouble maintaining his normal control. "Is there something more here? Does he have something you want?"

"As I have said, he is none of your concern." Retnec was also starting to show the strain. He pushed a few more controls on the wrist control band. "While you are on my ship, you will follow my orders. Believe me, you do not want to experience the punishment for disobeying orders on a Breen ship."

Another officer came hurrying in. Retnec turned and looked at him. The new officer shook his head. "Another hour at least, Primot. I have every hand on it. I can't push it any faster."

"Top priority." Retnec said. The officer nodded and left. "Sulu, right here."

One of the guards pushed Sulu towards the desk. Primot Retnec came around the desk, stood next to Sulu, and faced the view screen on the wall. The bridge of the Excelsior appeared on the screen. Chekov sat in the command chair. He stood up when he saw Sulu. There was no audio transmission.

"Listen Sulu." Retnec warned. "One word answers. Yes. No. Understand?"

"Yes."

Retnec signaled the audio reconnected. "As you can see, Commander Chekov, your captain is in good health."

"Captain Sulu." Chekov smiled. "It is good to see you. Are you all right?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen Mr. Lenin?"

"Yes."

"Are you aware of the situation?" Chekov asked.

"No."

"That is enough." Retnec said. A guard grabbed Sulu and pulled him out of the range of the view screen. "Now Captain Chekov, are you prepared to remove your crew from the Dycam?"

"I am prepared to take action." Chekov said. Sulu couldn't help but smile when he felt the transporter beam start to dematerialize him.

When Hikaru Sulu materialized in the Excelsior sick bay, he was surprised to find Jimmi waiting for him. She was biting her lower lip. A sure sign she was trying not to cry. Hikaru opened his arms and Jimmi walked into them. They hugged each other tightly. Jimmi buried her face in his shoulder. Neither of them paid any attention to the medical crew taking care of Lenin.

"Jeanie." He whispered.

"I was wrong. So wrong." Jimmi said lifting her head to look him in the eye. The tears were threatening to spill out of hers.

"Wrong?" Sulu asked softly. "Wrong about what, Baby?"

"It was better not to know what danger you were in." Jimmi said. "I don't ever want to know again."

"It's ok." He whispered soothingly. "I'm ok."

"Captain." Dr. Patrick interrupted from a discreet distance. "I want to check you out just to be sure."

"Of course, Doctor." Sulu nodded. But Jimmi was reluctant to let go of him. He let her hold him a moment longer then disengaged himself from her. She felt him wince as he let go. "Where's Harry?"

"In the gym. Playing." Jimmi said.

"Can you go get him?" Hikaru asked. "I'd like to give him a hug about now."

"Sure." Jimmi said. Her husband smiled and watched as she walked out of sick bay. As soon as the door closed his smile disappeared.

Dr. Patrick took the Captain's arm and helped him to the exam table. Once he was laying down he let go of the breath he had been holding. "It hurts to breath?" Patrick asked as he scanned the Captain. Sulu nodded. "What else hurts?"

"Just about everything." Sulu admitted. "Get me back on my feet, Doctor. This day isn't over yet."

Patrick administered a hypospray. "This is good for two hours. After that I want you off your feet for three days. No arguments."

"None from me, Doctor."

By the time Jimmi returned with Harry in tow, Hikaru was back on his feet. Dr. Patrick scooped up the little boy and tickled him. "How you doing, Harry?"

"Fine." The four year old giggled and squirmed.

"Hi big guy." Sulu said as Dr. Patrick handed Harry to him. "I have to go back to work for a little while, but will you wait and have dinner with me?"

"Can we have macaroni and cheese?" Harry asked.

"You can have macaroni and cheese." Sulu laughed. "I think I'll have something else. Ok? Now you take care of Mommy for me and I'll see you later."

"Ok." Harry nodded. Jimmi took him out of Hikaru's arms. She had noticed the Doctor stepping in so Sulu didn't have to bend down.

"You're going back to the bridge?" Jimmi asked.

"Only for a few minutes." Sulu said. "There are a few things to clear up. Then I'm going to take a couple of days off. I'll see you later."

"All right." Jimmi said slowly. She knew an order when she heard one. It was her signal

to leave. "Come on Harry."

After she was gone, Captain Sulu also left. On his way out, he said. "Thanks Pat."

Dr. Patrick turned to give Dr. Ghali a hand with Mr. Lenin's injuries. As Dr. Ghali worked, she said. "Ms. Sulu was not fooled. Why did you not tell her the truth of the Captain's condition?"

"That's his problem." Patrick said. "Besides, I've seen her mad. And I don't want her mad at me."