

Captain Sulu leaned against the wall of the turbo lift as it sped towards the bridge. The shot Dr. Patrick had given him would enable him to complete his duties, but he was far from feeling good. As the lift slowed to a stop, Sulu straightened up.

When he walked onto the bridge, he saw Chekov in the center seat going over a report with Ensign Mirek. Chekov handed the computer padd to Mirek. She returned to her station. Chekov smiled as he stood up. "About time."

"Good to see you too." Sulu grinned. "Bring me up to speed."

"We secured the Dycam in hopes of finding a way to gain remote control of the Truuk." Chekov said. "That did not work. However a telepathic officer from the Lexington did gain information on their shields modulation frequency. Ensign Mirek used that to devise a method to transport through the shields. After we beamed you home, the Primot sputtered for a minute or two then broke contact. I have just finished informing Captain Piazza of your return. Now, do you want command of your ship back?"

"Seems to me you've been doing a pretty good job." Sulu shrugged. "Computer, transfer command to Sulu, Captain, Hikaru. Authorization code Sulu emergency alpha."

"Command of U.S.S. Excelsior has been transferred to Captain Hikaru Sulu." The computer responded. "Command emergency alpha one-A is cancelled. New command codes series 99-C are now in effect."

"Do we still have people on the Dycam?" Sulu asked as he sat down gingerly in the command chair.

"Mr. Johnson is there with a security crew." Chekov said. "We are allowing them to continue repairs. They should have warp drive in two hours. They say their cloaking device is not repairable."

"Do we believe them?" Sulu asked. Chekov shrugged. "All right. Rand, hail the Truuk."

"Aye Captain." Rand said. "Channel open."

"Primot Retnec." Sulu smiled. "What is your ship's status?"

"We will be operational in less than one Federation hour." Retnec did not smile. "We still can not reach the Dycam. Commander Chekov promised it would be released as soon as you were back on Excelsior."

Sulu glanced at Chekov, who shrugged again. The Captain said, "Commander Rand, recall Lt. Johnson and his crew."

"Aye Sir."

"Now Primot Retnec." Sulu said. "I understand the Dycam will be operational in two standard hours. At that time you will leave Federation space. The Lexington will provide escort back to Breen territory. You will not use your cloak and you will not alter course or speed without permission from Captain Piazza. Understood?"

"I am on a mission to take the First Ambassador to Della Mir space." Retnec said.

"That mission has been aborted. And your safe passage to Della Mir space has been rescinded." Sulu said. "If you do not obey my orders your ships will be destroyed without further warning."

"My government would consider that an act of war." Retnec said softly.

"There is an old human expression, Retnec. Perhaps you've heard it." Sulu tried to remain calm, but was having difficulty keeping the edge out of his voice. "Don't press your luck. Excelsior out."

"Hikaru." Chekov said softly. "Why don't you get some sleep?"

"Soon, Pavel." Sulu sighed. "The Lexington, Janice."

"Aye Sir." Rand nodded. "Channel open."

"Hikaru." Captain Piazza smiled. "It's good to see you."

"You too, Taziana." Sulu returned her smile. "I assume you monitored my discussion with Retnec."

"Yes." She nodded. "I will be happy to escort our friends, but you could have asked first."

"Thanks." Sulu said. "I have a bunch of civilians on board that need to get back to their own lives. And I don't want to take Mr. Lenin any closer to Breen space than necessary."

"And since the Breen don't believe that women should be command officers, it will hurt their pride a bit to have me follow them home." Piazza smiled. "I like that."

"You would." Sulu laughed. "But I'll talk to you more later. I am in desperate need of my own bunk."

"I understand, Captain." Piazza said. "Lexington out."

"Pavel, you look like you could use some sleep yourself." Sulu slowly stood up. "Gonzoles, you have the bridge."

"Aye Sir." Lt. Gonzoles said as she stood and faced him. "It's good to have you home, Captain."

"Thanks." Sulu nodded. But instead of leaving by the turbo lift, Sulu headed for his ready room. Chekov followed. The Captain leaned on his desk and eased himself into his seat. "I know what you are going to say. As soon as I report to Admiral Reese, I'm on my way home."

"Do you mind if I stay?" Chekov asked.

"No. I don't mind." Sulu sighed and opened the comline to the bridge communication station. "Janice get me Admiral Reese."

"Yes Sir."

"How is Jimmi holding up?" Pavel asked while they waited. "You should have seen her face when she came onto the bridge. She was ready to kill."

"She's upset." Sulu nodded. "I'm sure I will hear more about it when I get back to my cabin. I'm sorry if she was a problem."

"No problem." Chekov scoffed and poured himself a cup of lukewarm coffee. "You forget, I've known the girl longer than you have."

Sulu's desk terminal displayed Starfleet Command's official seal. The Captain activated the console's communication net and Admiral Reese appeared on the screen. "Captain Sulu, it's good to see you back on Excelsior."

"Thank you, Admiral." Sulu said. "I must report that the Breen cloaking device was not retrieved before the transport was destroyed. However we did download the schematics for the device. I have also rescinded the Breen's safe passage to Della Mir space and have asked the Lexington to escort them back to their own space."

"Under the circumstances, I have to agree with your decision." Reese said. "I have been in touch with the Lexington several times during your absence. Captain Piazza has commended your crew's handling of the situation, especially Commander Chekov. Although he has not bothered to keep me informed."

"He has had his hands full, Admiral." Sulu said.

"Either that or he was on Enterprise too long." The Admiral smiled. "I thought he may have picked up some of Kirk's bad habits."

"That's possible." Sulu laughed. "But you won't find me complaining."

Admiral Reese turned serious. "Now. Tell me about being on the Breen ship."

Captain Sulu sat back and took a deep breath. He couldn't help but wince from it. "Mr. Lenin and I received distinctly different treatment. He was beaten excessively and denied medical treatment. He has been found guilty of crimes against the Breen ruling family and sentenced to death. The Ianis family seemed intent on causing him as much pain as possible before that sentence was to be carried out."

"What is Mr. Lenin's condition now?" Reese asked.

"He's in sick bay." Sulu said. "I have not yet received a report from Dr. Patrick."

"All right. That's Lenin." Reese nodded. "What about you?"

"I was questioned initially by the Ambassador. When I declined to answer he simply stopped the session. Then I was questioned more vigorously by Primot Retnec. When he did not receive the answers he wanted, I was turned over to a Perviso Tega." Sulu stopped and collected his thoughts. Admiral Reese waited patiently. "Tega used an interrogation device he called a pressure field. A force field that encased the body. The pressure could be increased slowly or quickly producing a number of uncomfortable effects."

"Captain, I'm sure your realize that I have to ask." Reese said. "What did you give them?"

"I was lucky, Admiral." Sulu said. "They were not expecting me and so they were not prepared to question me. Although they were intent on taking advantage of the opportunity. Tega asked me everything he could think of but kept coming back to my orders regarding them and any Starfleet policy regarding their war. I did not give them any classified information."

"Very good, Captain Sulu. Is there anything else?"

"No Sir."

"Then get some rest." Reese said. "Starfleet Command out."

Sulu raised his eyebrow at Chekov. "You didn't call command for instructions."

"As you said, I was busy." Chekov stood up and started for the door. "Besides, I did not want to disobey any orders."

Sulu followed Chekov to the turbo lift. "And how could you disobey something you never heard?"

Jimmi was starting to pace the length of the Captain's cabin. She felt that she had been waiting for hours. Still no one had told her what was going on. When Sulu finally walked into the cabin she was near tears again. "Finally!"

"Damn it, Jeanie. Don't give me a hard time. Please!" Sulu pleaded as he started to undo his jacket. His unusually harsh tone stopped her. He sighed and spoke more calmly. "I am dead on my feet. I need to sleep. Where's Harry?"

"Still playing with the other kids." Jimmi helped him off with his jacket and hung it in the closet. When she turned back to him, Hikaru was sitting on the edge of the bed struggling to lift his leg high enough get his boot off. "Let me help you."

She helped him undress, inspecting him as she took off each piece of clothing. Still irritated, he asked. "What are you looking for?"

"The bruises." Jimmi said and helped him to get into his starfleet issue pajamas. "You are moving like an old man, but they didn't leave any bruises. What did they do to you?"

"It's called an interrogation." Hikaru pulled the blankets down and eased himself slowly into the bed. "Don't worry about it. A little rest and I'll be good as new."

"But I do worry about you." Jimmi insisted. She sat on the edge of the bed. "And I want to help. But I don't know how."

"There is nothing to do." Hikaru closed his eyes. "Please. Let me sleep."

"Sure." Jimmi got up and turned away from him. She did not want him to see the tears. "Do you want me to wake you for dinner?"

"What?"

"Dinner." Jimmi sniffed. "You promised Harry."

"Right." Sulu was already drifting off to sleep. "Wake me."

"Computer lower lights to fifty per cent of normal." Jimmi sighed. She sat at the desk listening to Hikaru breathe. When she was sure he was sound asleep, she called the bridge. Audio only. "Janice, is this a good time? Can you connect me with my father?"

"Sure Jimmi." Janice Rand said readily. "It might take a few minutes. Stand by."

"Thanks." Jimmi touched a pad on the control panel of the desk. The light directly above the desk chair came on. After a few minutes, Rand called and told Jimmi to activate her screen. When she did, Dr. McCoy was waiting. Jimmi recognized the living room of his beach home just outside San Francisco. "Hi Dad. God, am I glad to see you."

"Hard day, Dear?"

"Dad." Jimmi sniffed. "Hikaru was held prisoner..."

"I know." McCoy nodded. "Dr. Patrick has already explained the situation. How is Hikaru doing?"

"I don't know, Dad." Jimmi said just above a whisper. She wiped a tear from the corner of her eye. "He won't tell me."

"Jimmi, your husband has just been through something that every Starfleet officer trains for. Most never experience it." McCoy spoke quietly and he hoped soothingly. "Regardless of any physical trauma, the mental strain is great. All control is ripped away. And you know control is very important to Hikaru. You've complained about that to me before. Many times. But it was a short term experience. Give him a couple of days."

"I just feel so helpless." Jimmi wiped another tear from her cheek. "No one even told me he was gone. A crewman thought I knew and tried to offer some comfort. I felt so stupid. Why didn't they tell me?"

"There is no protocol for family members being on board when something like this happens, Jimmi." McCoy said. "I'm sure they were all concentrating on getting him back."

"I know, Dad. I know." Jimmi sighed. "But wouldn't it be better for Hikaru if he talked about it? How can I help him if I don't know what happened?"

"Jimmi, listen to me." McCoy said patiently. Jimmi recognized his bed side manner tone and she took comfort in it. "Hikaru will feel better when he is physically well and when he feels in control. What you have to do is let him have that control."

"He's the captain of the ship." Jimmi said. "He took control the minute he walked onto the bridge."

"I know." McCoy sighed. "But... don't pressure him to talk to you. That is exactly what an interrogation is... pressure to talk. If you back off and wait, he will talk to you."

"I'm not sure..."

"I am." McCoy assured her. "Just be there for him. Let him do it in his own time."

"I'll try Dad."

"I understand you need to talk about it, Dear." McCoy said. "But until Hikaru is ready, talk to someone else. Pavel or Pat. Whoever you feel comfortable with."

"All right, Dad." Jimmi nodded. He had made her feel better. She sighed when she added, "I guess I have ruined the experiment."

"What do you mean?"

"After I stormed onto the bridge and yelled at Pavel, I doubt I'll ever be allowed back on any Starfleet ship." Jimmi shrugged.

"I hadn't heard about that." McCoy laughed. "But I wouldn't worry about it."

"I don't think it was proper behavior for a captain's spouse, do you?" She managed a short mischievous grin.

"Probably not." McCoy smiled. "But understandable."

"Thanks Dad." Jimmi rubbed her eyes. "I've got to go. I have to pick up Harry. I love you."

"I love you too, Dear." McCoy said. "Call me if you need me."

"Bye Dad." Jimmi said and terminated the connection. But she did not really need to go get Harry yet. It was early and he was happily playing with the Verset kids. She sat for a long time just watching and listening to her husband sleep.

When she finally did leave the cabin to return to the gym, she took the long way around. Walking helped. She chose the least densely occupied areas of Excelsior to walk and breathe deeply. She tried to clear her mind. The last thing she wanted was for Harry to see her crying. After a while traffic in the halls increased. The shift had changed. Several crew members said hello or expressed relief at the Captain's return. Jimmi smiled, nodded, and kept going. Eventually she saw Lt. Gonzoles come out of a turbo lift with Ensign Mirek.

"Ms. Sulu." Gonzoles always used her title on the ship. At the Café they were always more informal. "Do you know Ensign Mirek?"

"Of course Lt. Gonzoles." She nodded to the two officers. "She spent a good amount of time at the Café. Nice to see you, Ensign."

"She is also the science officer who found the way to bypass the Breen shields."

Gonzoles explained. "Making it possible to bring the Captain home."

Jimmi really looked at Mirek now. The petite blond woman seemed so very young. Jimmi's eyes were wide and moist when she said, "I don't know how to thank you."

"I was just doing my job." Mirek said as she smiled at the captain's wife. "I am very glad that my assignment made a difference."

"Thank you." Jimmi said again. She closed her eyes. "Thank you."

"I'll see you tomorrow, Mirek." Gonzoles dismissed the junior officer. Jimmi could hear her walk away. "Jimmi, I have a box of chocolates in my cabin that I save just for days like today. Would you like to share a couple with me?"

When Jimmi opened her eyes, a tear spilled out. "I think I'd like that, Rosita."

They got into the turbo lift. Gonzoles ordered it to deck nine. "It's really hard to stand by and do nothing. Isn't it?"

"God yes." Jimmi sighed.

"But it is over now."

"Is it?" Jimmi asked. The turbo lift doors opened. Gonzoles led the way to her cabin. Inside she took out her chocolates and offered the box to Jimmi. After they each took a piece, they both sat down on the bunk.

"There have been days when Jenna Lee and I have skipped dinner all together to demolish this box." Gonzoles smiled. "Then I refill it and we do it again."

"Does it help?" Jimmi asked.

"Yeah." Rosita nodded. "Sometimes I just need to talk to a girlfriend. Captain Sulu told me that every command officer has to find her own outlet for stress. This is mine."

"Oh?" Jimmi asked. "What's his outlet?"

"You don't know?" Rosita asked. Jimmi shrugged and helped herself to another chocolate. "Exercise, friends, you."

"Well I'm not much good to him right now."

"What do you mean?"

"I shouldn't." Jimmi shook her head. She had to remember that he was still captain of this ship. Jimmi had to be careful about what she said. She couldn't feed the rumors mills.

"It won't leave this room." Gonzoles promised. It only took Jimmi a moment to make up her mind to talk to Rosita. She knew much of the history between her husband and Gonzoles, although he would never tell her. Pavel had filled in the blanks for her. Pavel had said that Hikaru saw much of himself in the young woman and had become her mentor shortly after she graduated from the Academy. He had made a point to tell her that Gonzoles had saved Hikaru's life.

"There's nothing I can do for him." Jimmi said. "It's hard to explain. Every other time I've been on the ship he has wanted me here. But today when he came home, he wanted me gone. He pushed me away. I've known him for over fifteen years. I've never felt so isolated in the same room with him. Does that make any sense?"

"On one of my earliest missions, I managed to crash land my ship in the middle of a war zone. Enterprise answered our distress call." Rosita said. "Commander Sulu was in charge of the search and rescue teams. It was exciting and scary. I saw an officer get shot with a primitive

gun. A metal projectile ripped into his shoulder."

"That's when you started with the chocolate?" Jimmi asked.

"No." Rosita smiled. "But Mr. Sulu told me it was a mistake to think I should not be affected. He said I should analyze it, learn from it. But not to let myself become jaded by it."

"I'm sorry, Rosita, I don't understand what you are saying." Jimmi sighed.

"He has been affected by the experience. So have you." Rosita said. "You can't change that, but you can learn from it."

Jimmi thought about that for a minute. She wasn't sure what she was suppose to learn from the terror and uncertainty of her husband's ordeal. Finally, she asked, "Do you listen to everything Hikaru says?"

"Jenna laughs at me." Rosita said. She smiled self consciously and blushed a bit. "She says I quote the Captain far too often. But, as a teacher, he's always there for me. Always challenging me. So, yes, I listen very closely."

"Good thing I'm not the jealous type." Jimmi smiled. For the first time in hours she did not feel like crying.

"I hope chocolate is ok for the baby." Rosita said.

Jimmi rubbed her belly affectionately. "She loves it, thank you very much."

"A girl?" Rosita grinned. Jimmi nodded. "Congratulations."

"Oh my." Jimmi said suddenly. "Look at the time. Harry must be starving. Thanks so much, Rosita. I feel better."

"I'm glad." Rosita closed the box. Jimmi got off the bunk as gracefully as her pregnant body allowed. "Any time you need a chocolate..."

"Thanks." Jimmi smiled and left.

Jimmi and Harry walked hand in hand into the dark cabin. "Computer increase lights by ten percent."

"Daddy's still asleep." Harry whispered loudly in the dim light. "Can I wake him up?"

"Yes." Jimmi said. "But no jumping on Daddy. He's... sore."

"Daddy. Daddy." Harry crawled up onto the bed and shook his father's shoulder. "Time to wake up."

"All right, Harry." Sulu mumbled. "I'm up."

"Computer increase lights by ten percent." Jimmi said again. The lights came up a bit again. "Mr. Banks is bringing dinner in a few minutes. Do you want to get up? Or do you want to eat in bed?"

Sulu sat up and rubbed his eyes. "Harry, can you get my robe please?"

"Uh huh." The boy said and jumped off the bed. He ran into the bathroom and after a few minutes came back with his father's robe. "Are you sore, Daddy?"

"Yes." Sulu nodded. He smiled at Harry and took the silk robe Harry was dragging behind him. "I was hurt at work today. But Dr. Patrick says I'll be ok if I rest for a couple of days."

"Harry." Jimmi said. "Get washed up for dinner please."

"But Mom."

"Now." Jimmi ordered. He stomped off to do as he was told. Jimmi turned to her husband who was now sitting on the edge of the bed. "How are you feeling?"

"A little better." Hikaru said.

"Do you need help to get to the table?" Jimmi asked.

"No." He snapped. Standing up, Hikaru gingerly put on the robe. He walked over to his desk and sat down. Jimmi retreated to the bathroom to check on Harry. Captain Sulu opened the comline. "Sulu to sick bay."

"Patrick here."

"Seems to me you should be off duty by now, Doctor." Sulu said.

"Just catching up on record maintenance." Patrick smiled. "And I thought I told you to go to bed."

"I did." Sulu said. "How is Mr. Lenin?"

"Recovering." Patrick said. "I'm going to keep him here for a couple of days. How are you feeling?"

"A little stiff." Sulu admitted. Jimmi and Harry returned from the bathroom. The little boy was jumping up and down reciting rhyming words. His mother sat on the couch and played the game with him. Hat, bat, fat, cat.

"Any other side effects?" Patrick asked. Sulu did not answer. His attention was drawn away by Harry now dancing around the room. Door, store, four, more. "I'll stop by with something for the stiffness."

"I'll be here." the Captain said. "Sulu out."

When the family was on board, the Sulu's often had dinner in the Captain's quarters. It was easier than taking a rambunctious four year old to the dining hall. Their dinner table was an extension that fit on the edge of the Captain's desk. Jimmi secured the extension and set the table. Yeoman Banks brought the family dinner to the cabin.

"Thank you, Mr. Banks." Jimmi said. He simply nodded and left.

"Mommy." Harry laughed as Jimmi filled his plate with macaroni and cheese. "What rhymes with elephant?"

"Fox." Jimmi said.

"No!" Harry laughed. He loved it when his mother gave the wrong answer.

"Then what?" Jimmi asked.

"Stelegant." Harry said triumphantly.

"I can't argue with that." Jimmi smiled. "Eat your dinner."

Hikaru did not join in the rhyming games. He slowly picked at his dinner. He should have been starving but found he had little appetite. Jimmi participated in and even encouraged the word games. They went on through most of the dinner.

"Harry!" Sulu finally snapped. "Can we give the rhyming a rest?"

Harry stopped laughing at his father's raised voice. He looked from one parent to the other and answered meekly. "Yes Daddy."

"It's ok, Harry." Jimmi stroked the boy's cheek gently. His father so rarely spoke harshly to him, he was near tears.

"I'm sorry, Harry." Sulu said. "Can you play the rhyming game later?"

Harry nodded, his expression very serious. The door signal chimed. Jimmi said. "Harry, why don't you answer the door?"

Harry jumped down from his chair and walked into the door's sensor range. When it slid open, Harry tilted his head all the way back to look up at that tall doctor. Dr. Patrick grinned and tousled Harry's hair as he walked in. He said, "Hello Harry. Can I talk to your Daddy?"

"I guess." Harry said.

"Sorry." Pat said when he saw them at the table. "I did not mean to interrupt dinner."

"Come in, Pat." Jimmi said. "Sit down. Would you like some coffee?"

"Thanks." Dr. Patrick nodded and took Harry's seat. Jimmi moved Harry's plate and gave the doctor a cup of coffee. "Jimmi, do you mind if I have a few minutes alone with the Captain?"

"No problem." Jimmi said. She held her hand out to her son as she started towards the door. "Come on Harry. Let's take a walk."

"Am I mistaken?" Pat asked and sipped his coffee. "Or is it a little chilly in here?"

"It is." Sulu grumbled and poured himself a cup of coffee. He was angry at her for not having poured him one. And angry at himself for being angry. He pushed his plate away and sipped the hot coffee.

"You know, it has only been a couple of hours." Pat observed. "It's still pretty new for both of you."

"I know." Sulu sighed.

"Come on, Hikaru. What's going on?" Pat asked.

"I want to be alone." Sulu shrugged. "I want to be selfish and sleep for two days straight. Without the questions and the offers of help. And certainly without the strained silences or the rhymes."

"Rhymes?" Pat asked.

"Harry likes to rhyme words lately." Sulu explained. "Constantly."

"Want me to put you back in sick bay?"

"No." Sulu did not like to feel that he was running away.

"Want Jimmi and Harry to move to the VIP quarters for a couple of days?" Pat asked.

"No."

"Want me to talk to her?"

"No."

"Well, I'm sorry Captain." Dr. Patrick said. "But I don't believe you."

"What?"

"You are not telling me the whole story." Pat said. "What else is going on here? What is the rest of it?"

Sulu put his coffee down and leaned back in his chair. Regulations required that he answer the chief medical officer's questions. "I can't stand the way she looks at me."

"Excuse me?"

"She doesn't trust me any more." Sulu tried to explain. It was not easy to put his feelings about his relationship with his wife into words. "She used to be sure of me. Sure that when I left

her, I'd come back. She's no longer sure."

"Do you think it would be different if she hadn't been on board?"

"Yes." The Captain nodded. "By the time we got back to Starbase 12, I would be able to talk to her about it. But she would not have to live with the healing process."

"I think you are selling her short here." Dr. Patrick said. "It is your ego that can't accept being vulnerable in your wife's eyes."

"Really, Doctor, I don't think." Sulu started.

"That you want to hear the truth." Patrick shrugged. "I can understand that. But the truth is part of my job description."

"And you think the truth is that I am imagining the effect on Jimmi." Sulu said. "You think that only my pride is wounded."

"Jimmi has been effected." Pat assured him. "She also experienced intense helplessness. For one thing, she only found out you were taken captive by accident. No one told her. And when she did find out, well, there was nothing she could do."

"No one said anything to her?!" Sulu leaned forward. "Why not?"

"I should have told her." Pat said. "Or maybe Chekov should have. But we were both busy, and frankly I never even thought of it. Perhaps we should discuss protocol regarding families on board during a crisis at the next staff meeting."

"Definitely." Sulu nodded slowly, wondering why she had not said anything to him about it. She had always been an open book emotionally. She told him everything she was feeling, sometimes more than he wanted to know. Almost to himself, he added. "I had no idea. She did not tell me."

"Because she is worried about you and she doesn't want you to worry about her." Pat took out his medical tricorder and scanned the Captain. He adjusted his hypospray to the proper dosage. Reaching across the table, he administered the hypo. "Now, get some sleep. And when you feel like taking a walk tomorrow, come down to sick bay. The stiffness should be greatly reduced by then."

"I'll be there, Doctor." Sulu nodded. Patrick started for the door. "Thanks Pat."

When Jimmi and Harry returned to the cabin it was near Harry's bed time. The dinner dishes were gone and Hikaru was in bed reading the department heads daily reports. He looked up when they came in and smiled.

"Harry. Come here a minute." Hikaru put down his computer padd. Harry went over to his father's bed side. "I'm sorry I snapped at you. I wasn't feeling good and that made me grouchy."

"Do you feel better now?" Harry asked.

"Dr. Patrick gave me some medicine." Sulu said. "And I feel a little better. Can you come up here and give me a hug?"

"Yes." Harry grinned and climbed into bed with his father. After Hikaru hugged and kissed him, Harry sat next to his father and told him about the games he played with the Verset children.

While they talked, Jimmi started the evening rituals. She readied Harry's bath and took

fresh pajamas out of his drawer. Jimmi stood in the door to the bathroom and called. "Come on, Harry. Bath time."

"But Mom..."

"Go on Hikaru." Sulu winked at his son. "We can finish later."

Jimmi put Harry in the tub then left him to play with his water toys. She picked up her computer padd when she returned to the cabin's main room. She settled on the couch and accessed the novel she had been reading.

"You're not talking to me?" Hikaru asked.

Jimmi looked up from her reading. "I was told to give you time. I am trying to do that."

"I see." Hikaru said. "Who told you that?"

"Dad." Jimmi said. "I called him while you were sleeping."

"Could you do me a favor?" He asked. She nodded. "Come over here and lay down next to me."

Jimmi immediately got up and joined him in bed. He tossed the extra pillow on the floor and laid down. Jimmi propped herself on her elbow and said. "You seem to be feeling better. Reality or show?"

"I don't know what Pat had in that hypospray, but it made life a lot easier." Hikaru smiled at her. "But it is also making it hard to stay awake."

"Go to sleep then." Jimmi smiled. He closed his eyes. She brushed his black hair back off his forehead with her fingertips. He reached for her hand and brought it briefly to his lips. He opened his eyes and smiled. She hesitated "I'm afraid to touch you. I don't know where you are hurt."

"It doesn't hurt right here." Hikaru kissed her hand again. "But that's practically the only place. Just about every muscle in my body hurts more than I thought possible."

"Then close your eyes, Hikaru." Jimmi said. "Let yourself go to sleep."

"Look at me! Look at me!" Harry ran out of the bathroom holding his towel up like wings. He ran around the room a couple of times then climbed up on the bottom of the bed and lept onto his parents. Hikaru winced as Jimmi caught the boy and set him between his parents. Harry explained. "I'm a Tiberian bat."

"Tiberian bats do not run around the cabin naked." Sulu laughed and wrapped Harry's little body in the towel. "Go put your pajamas on."

"Can I sleep with you?" Harry asked.

"Big boys sleep in their own beds. Remember?" Hikaru said.

"Please! Just for ten minutes?"

"Go put your pjs on." Jimmi said. "You can lay here for ten minutes. Then you have to sleep in your own bed."

After Harry went to put his pajamas on, Hikaru looked at her. "I thought you weren't going to compromise on this any more."

"So, I'm weak. Sue me." Jimmi shrugged. Then she mimicked Harry's pleading and added. "It's just ten minutes."

"Jeanie."

"That's right. Tell me you don't like laying in bed with his warm little body next to you."

Jimmi smiled. "I know how much you miss him when he's not here."

Harry came back dressed for bed and crawled between his parents. His father covered him and warned. "Just ten minutes young man."

"Knock knock." Harry said.

"Who's there?" His father asked.

"Boo."

"Boo who?"

"Don't cry, Daddy.!" Harry giggled loudly at his own joke.

"You had to teach him knock knock jokes?" Hikaru asked his wife over Harry's head.

"Don't blame me." Jimmi said. "He came home from school with those."

"I know more, Daddy."

"It's late, Harry." Jimmi said. "You lay down and close your eyes."

Harry closed his eyes. In less than ten minutes both father and son were sound asleep. Jimmi got up and carried the four year old back to his own bed. She picked up her novel, lowered the lights, and left the cabin. Curled up in a comfortable chair in the corner of one of the smaller rec rooms, Ms. Sulu passed the evening with her book.