

The Sulus had a family breakfast in the cabin. First shift was already under way when Mr. Banks brought the tray. When he was finished his coffee, Captain Sulu put on his uniform. Jimmi sipped her second cup of coffee and watched him. Harry was entertaining himself with a computer game aimed at strengthening his reading skills.

"Has Pat taken you off sick call?" Jimmi asked.

"I am going to see him in a few minutes." Hikaru explained. "I am optimistic that he will certify me fit for duty."

"And if you show up in uniform you can go directly to the bridge. Right?"

"Yes." Hikaru said. He sat back down and poured himself a second cup of coffee.

"Jeanie, putting aside the fact that I need to get back to work. I am the Captain. And my crew needs to see me on the bridge."

"Morale?" Jimmi asked.

"It is important." Sulu said.

"Ok. Just don't push it." Jimmi said. "Come home early."

"I promise." He smiled and sipped the coffee. "What are you doing today?"

"I'll take Harry down to the gym to play with the other kids." Jimmi said. "What's going to happen to them?"

"We will drop them off at Starbase Twelve." Sulu said. "Pavel has notified their parents and they will make arrangements to get them home."

"Is it far?"

"The planet they call Methre Three we know as the third planet in the Kelrabi System." Sulu said. "It is an uninhabited class M planet near Cardasian space. By transport it will take them a couple of weeks from Starbase Twelve."

"That long?" Jimmi was surprised.

"Excelsior could be there in a few days." Hikaru explained. "Most transports don't travel faster than warp five. Some keep it to warp two under normal circumstances."

"Oh. What about all their things that were on the transport when it was destroyed?" Jimmi asked. "Can you imagine if Harry lost Mr. B.?"

"Teddy bears are replaceable."

"Sure, you can get another stuffed animal." Jimmi countered. "But to a child, losing that special toy is like losing a friend."

"I'll see what I can do." Sulu said. "Lenin must have filed a manifest with someone. When you see the Donnar sisters, ask if they have a list of what was lost."

"Is that an order, Captain?" She teased.

"Make up your mind." Sulu returned her smile. "Either you are going to complain because you have nothing to do, or because I give you something to do. Which is it going to be?"

Jimmi laughed. "I'll try not to complain. When will we reach the Base?"

"Tomorrow."

"I guess that cuts our visit short."

"I'm sorry." Sulu finished his coffee. "But that's the way it has to be. And I have to go. Dr. Patrick is expecting me."

"Please let me know if Pat has any concerns."

"I will." The Captain got up easily and kissed her. He bent down to kiss Harry before leaving the cabin. Jimmi couldn't help but marvel at how much better he seemed.

Captain Sulu walked into sick bay briskly. He grinned at Dr. Patrick. "Come on, Pat. Get the formalities over with. I'm ready to get back to work."

"Didn't I say three days?" Pat asked. "And didn't you say you wouldn't complain?"

"I must have been feeling really bad if I said that." Sulu said as he got up on the exam table. "But I heal quickly. Always have."

The doctor scanned the captain thoroughly. "I can't see any reason to keep you off duty any longer. There doesn't appear to be any lasting side effects."

"Good." Sulu smiled. "How is Lenin doing today?"

"He's still sore. He's got a lot of bruising." Patrick reported. "But he'll be fine with time. Since we'll be at the Base tomorrow, I'm just going to keep him in recovery. Keep my eye on him."

"Fine." Sulu nodded. He left the exam room of sick bay.

Captain Sulu walked into the recovery room to see Mickey Lenin reclining in his bed talking to the Donnar sisters. Omar and Leko sat on the bed next to his. The three of them were smiling and laughing.

"Sounds like fun." Lenin laughed. "Although I am not sure I will be able to follow you to the colony."

"Won't you get another ship?" Leko asked.

"Won't Starfleet replace it?" Omar asked.

"What do you think Captain Sulu?" Lenin looked over at Sulu coming in the door. "Will Starfleet replace my ship? After all it was destroyed during a battle."

"Not my department." Sulu said. "However I doubt you will be leaving Starbase Twelve immediately. I believe Intelligence may have a few more questions for you."

"Well." Lenin shrugged. "Can I at least contact my partner? I wouldn't want him to promise my services to any one else."

"I can arrange that." Sulu said. "Who is this partner?"

"His name is Ricardo Dahl." Lenin said. "He can usually be found in the Hawk and Dove on Space Station New Freedom."

"I've been to the Hawk and Dove." Sulu said. "Didn't have much luck at the tables though."

"They're rigged." Lenin said simply.

Sulu laughed at the thought, then said. "I will have my communications officer contact your partner and connect you as soon as possible. Now if you will excuse me, I am due on the bridge."

"Good morning, Mr. Chekov." Sulu smiled as he came onto the bridge.

"Good morning, Captain." Chekov stood up from the command chair. "We are on course for Starbase Twelve. Present speed warp five."

"Good." Sulu nodded and took his seat. "Commander Rand. Contact Space Station New Freedom. Lenin wants to speak to his business partner, a Ricardo Dahl at the Hawk and Dove."

"Aye Sir." Rand nodded.

"The Hawk and Dove." Chekov still stood next to the command chair. He smiled and said. "It's been a long time."

"Johnny almost missed his wedding because of that night." Sulu grinned at his first officer. The bachelor party had become a legendary story among the Enterprise crew. "And according to Lenin, the tables are rigged."

"That is what I have been saying all these years." Chekov said. Their rotten luck at the tables had also been to topic of discussion for years. "I believe they saw us coming."

"Anyway." Sulu chuckled to himself. Chekov's assertion was not news to the captain. "Check this partner out. Ricardo Dahl."

"Of course." Chekov nodded. "Do you think the partner is involved in Lenin's problems with the Breen?"

"It could be nothing." Sulu shrugged. "But it's worth checking out. You know how close business partners can be."

"I've been told." Chekov said as he returned to the science station to check his databases.

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"Ricardo." Lenin spoke quietly. He looked around sick bay several times to make sure he was alone. "I need your help."

"I bet you do." Ricardo nodded. He was a slight Human man with dark brown skin. He wore three small hoop earrings in his left ear. "I almost denied being here when I heard it was a Starfleet ship calling. What have you gotten yourself into now?"

"I prefer not to discuss it right now." Lenin said. "By tomorrow I'll be on Starbase Twelve. I'm going to need a ride back to New Freedom."

"Where's the Aces?"

"She's gone, Ric." Lenin sighed. "Ianis blew her right out of this dimension."

"Damn. And the cargo?"

"Gone."

Ricardo Dahl shook his head and asked. "How are you ever going to pay me back?"

"You keep me alive and I'll find a way." Lenin said. He stared intently at his partner's image and spoke slowly to get his point across. "I am asking you to help me, Ricardo."

"I hear you, Mickey." Ricardo nodded. "I'll do what I can."

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"Ricardo Dahl." Chekov brought the man's picture up on the small screen at the main science station. Sulu studied the picture while Chekov reported. "Is wanted on Rigel Two for smuggling and possession of controlled substances. And on Gaspar Seven, the authorities would like to ask him about two unsolved murders from three years ago."

"Sounds like a rough character. No wonder he stays on New Freedom." Captain Sulu said. The New Freedom Space Station was a privately owned and while it was in Federation space, it was not technically part of the Federation. The corporation that owned it maintained that they needed total independence to deal with species from all over the known galaxy. In order to come aboard the station, every ship had to agree to New Freedom's law of sanctuary. No government could compel anyone to leave New Freedom, no wars were recognized, no outside contracts, grudges or warrants were enforceable. "Nothing regarding the Breen?"

"Nothing." Chekov said. "In the last two years he has not been reported anywhere other than New Freedom."

"I wouldn't expect to see him then." Sulu said. "He'd be a fool to come to Starbase Twelve."

"Agreed." Chekov noted. "But his financial resources are sizable. He may not need to show up personally for whatever help Lenin is asking for."

"You monitored Lenin's transmission?" Sulu asked

"It was not necessary." Chekov shrugged.

"Excuse me?"

"In a partnership, if one partner can handle the problem, he does and tells his partner later." Chekov said. "If he needs help, he calls his partner in immediately."

"Interesting theory." Sulu said. "Perhaps Lenin just wanted to let Dahl know of the ship's destruction."

"Perhaps." Chekov said. "But I still do not trust Lenin."

"We will keep an eye on him." Sulu nodded and returned to the command station. It was a routine morning on the bridge. Ensign Jacoby handed Sulu the padd with the daily personnel and sick call reports for his authorization.

"Commander Chekov." Ensign Mirek said tentatively from the second science station. "Could you look at this, Sir?"

"What have you got, Mirek?" Chekov turned his chair towards her.

"I am reviewing the sensor logs of the battle with the Breen, Sir." Mirek said.

"Why?"

"Perhaps I am overstepping myself, Mr. Chekov." Mirek said softly. "But I wanted to study the Breen's weapons and battle tactics for future reference. Last night I viewed the visual images from the flight recorder. I woke up in the middle of the night wondering why there was a green after image when the transport exploded."

"A green after image?" Chekov asked. "You are sure?"

"It was faint." Mirek said. "I didn't pay attention to it at first. But it woke me up. So I thought I'd check the sensor logs."

"There were five ships other than the transport in that battle." Chekov reminded her. "To sort out the sensor logs will take considerable effort."

"Yes Sir." Mirek nodded. "I thought I'd better check before embarking on a project that could take most of the day."

"Good idea." Chekov nodded. He considered the possibilities for a minute. "Proceed with the analysis of the logs. I would like to know what caused that green after image."

"Yes Sir." Mirek turned back to her work.

Chekov surveyed the bridge. It was business as usual. Sareth and Gonzoles manned the forward stations. Sulu was reviewing a report. Ensign Jacoby waited next to the Captain's chair. Sulu pressed his thumb to the padd to indicate his approval and handed the padd back to the young man. When Jacoby returned to his station, Chekov joined the Captain.

"Ensign Mirek has noticed an inconsistency in the flight recorder record of the destruction of the Aces Over Trays." Chekov said.

"What kind of inconsistency?" Sulu asked.

"There was a green after image." Chekov said.

Sulu waited. When Chekov did not continue, he asked "And?"

"There are many possible explanations." Chekov said. "But there was nothing that was suppose to be aboard that ship that would explain the such an image."

"What would explain it?" Sulu asked.

"It could be the presence of thorio-phosgene or dyspro-flourine." Chekov said. "Or Thallium acted upon by Uranium 86. Or possibly something entirely different."

"I thought Uranium 86 could only exist in the laboratory." Sulu said.

"To my knowledge." Chekov nodded. "Mirek is trying to sort out the sensor logs."

"Have a heart, Pavel." Sulu said. "That will take forever."

"She asked for the assignment." Chekov said. He rolled his eyes and added quietly. "Ensigns."

Sulu laughed. The meaning was clear. "Perhaps there is a quicker way to get an answer to this mystery. Might as well ask Lenin."

"Let me question him." Chekov suggested.

"Any particular reason?" Sulu asked.

"Because I don't trust him and he knows it." Chekov said.

"He'll be on his guard."

"Yes. But the two of you were together on the Breen ship." Chekov said. "If we are going to accuse him of something without proof, better that I do it. We may wish to use whatever goodwill exist between the two of you later."

"Hmmm." Sulu considered Chekov's statement. "All right, Pavel. Let me know what you find out."

Commander Chekov strolled into the recovery room of sick bay. Mickey Lenin was laying on his bed, eyes closed. The other five beds stood empty. The panel above Lenin's head showed all vital signs in the normal range.

"Mr. Lenin." Chekov said when he stood at the foot of the bed. Lenin involuntarily flinched. He had not heard anyone come in. He opened his eyes and lifted his head to see Chekov.

"Mr. Chekov." Lenin blinked. He forced himself to smile and said, "Glad to be back in the second slot?"

"I am glad that the Captain has returned safely." Chekov walked around to the side of the bed. "I have a few questions for you."

"I already talked to Sulu about Ianis." Lenin closed his eyes.

"Not about the Breen." Chekov touched the bedside control panel and adjusted the head of the bed bringing Lenin into a semi upright position.

"Then what?"

"Your ship."

"In case you hadn't noticed, Mr. Chekov." Lenin said looking Chekov in the eye. "I haven't got a ship."

"Yes, I know. However I have an assistant who has watched the destruction of your ship several times." Chekov said. "She brought an after image to my attention."

"What's an after image?" Lenin asked.

"When a warp driven ship explodes it looks like one big fireball to the naked eye." Chekov explained. "But when you slow down the image with a computer the precise nature of the explosion is revealed. Where it started. How it spread. The contents of the ship."

"Contents?" Lenin asked. "Like Omar and Leko's tea pot?"

"I mean the elemental break down of everything on board and the ship itself." Chekov said. "And that final image was of an element that had no right to be on your ship."

"What was the element?" Lenin asked.

"That is what I want to ask you." Chekov leaned back on the bed next to Lenin's. "Ensign Mirek will have the answer for me soon. You could save her the trouble by telling me now."

"I can't imagine."

"I understand." Chekov shrugged. "You do not want to admit to smuggling. It is not necessary. I will have the answer soon enough."

"Then why ask me at all?" Lenin asked.

"The lawyers in the JAG office take these things into account. Cooperation is important to them." Chekov said. "Me, I am a scientist. Even if you did tell me, I would have to check for myself."

"You mean your assistant would check."

"She is a hard worker and a very good scientist." Chekov said. "Out of place details bother her. They wake her up at night. She will check every possibility."

"Every possibility?" Lenin tried to sound casual.

"Yes." Chekov nodded. "Of course thorio-phosgene comes to mind right away. Deadly in the gaseous state. It is a controlled substance, isn't it?"

"I'm not a scientist." Lenin smiled as he avoided answering Chekov's question. "But isn't that hard to detect?"

"After it dissipates in an atmosphere it does breakdown into common elements." Chekov said. "But in a matter-anti matter explosion detonated by disruptor fire, there is no chance for that."

"Oh." Lenin laid back and closed his eyes. Chekov watched Lenin's hands slowly bawl into fists. He took a couple of deep breaths. "You'll let me know what you find."

"Count on it."

"Commander Chekov." Both Lenin and Chekov looked up when Jimmi called him.

Neither man had heard her come into the room. "Can I speak to you for a minute?"

"Of course, Ms. Sulu." Chekov left Lenin's bedside to join Jimmi by the door. He lowered his voice and smiled. "What is it, Princess?"

"It's an apology." Jimmi also spoke quietly. "I'm sorry I yelled at you on the bridge."

"It is forgotten." Chekov assured her. "You were understandably upset."

"Yes, I was." Jimmi nodded. "Now I am understandably grateful. I don't know how I am ever going to thank you for bringing Hikaru home safely."

"There is no need." Chekov said.

"Yes there is." Jimmi hugged him. "Thank you."

"Come on, Jimmi." Pavel said. "I'll walk you back to Harry. He is in the gym, right?"

"Yes." Jimmi nodded. "But I came to see Pat. He'll be free in a minute. Is that the pilot of the transport?"

Chekov glanced over his shoulder. Lenin appeared to be sleeping. "Yes, that is Lenin. It would be a good idea to stay away from him."

"Why?"

"He is not trustworthy." Chekov said. "He has broken Breen laws and I suspect Federation laws as well. If not for Lenin, Hikaru would never have been in danger."

"You don't believe Hikaru's *it's all part of the job* speech?" Jimmi asked with a smile. She had assumed her husband's attitude was standard Star Fleet issue. "Don't worry Pavel, I came to see Pat. Go on back to work. And tell my husband I wouldn't mind meeting him for lunch."

"All right." Chekov smiled. "I will relay the message."

Chekov left sick bay. Jimmi was about to leave the recovery room, when Lenin said. "When is the baby due?"

Jimmi turned to see Lenin leaning on one elbow smiling at her. His long sandy hair was hanging loose and he was in need of a shave. Jimmi eyed him suspiciously and answered his question from across the room. "A couple of months."

"I understand you are a historian." Lenin said.

"Do you?" Jimmi slowly took a few steps closer to him.

"Your husband wasn't lying to me, was he Mrs. Sulu?"

"No." Jimmi smiled and inched closer. "I teach history at the University of San Francisco. I am just surprised the Captain mentioned it."

"He did." Lenin said. "I didn't know captain's wives were allowed on board Starfleet ships."

"Are you intimately acquainted with Starfleet and its many regulations, Mr. Lenin?"

"Evidently not all of them." Lenin smiled. He turned more serious. "I owe your husband a lot."

"I should think so." Jimmi agreed.

"He stood up for me on the Breen ship. It didn't make much difference," Lenin said. "But I appreciate the effort."

"I'll tell him you said so." Jimmi said. Dr. Patrick walked into the recovery room. He stopped momentarily when he saw Jimmi talking to Lenin.

"Jimmi." Pat walked over to her smiling his easy going smile and asked. "You need to see me? What seems to be the problem?"

"It's probably nothing, Pat." Jimmi said.

"Come into the exam room and tell me about it anyway." Pat led her away from Lenin's bed without a word to his patient.

"I'm just not sleeping well." Jimmi confessed as they walked into the exam room. She sat on the table.

"Is it from physical discomfort or is it your mind racing from the stress of the last couple of days?" The Doctor leaned on the table and watched her.

"A little of both." Jimmi said. "I have a hard time getting to sleep then when I do I get these knots in the back of my legs."

"Are you sleeping on your left side?" Dr. Patrick asked as he scanned her and checked the readings.

"I'm tossing and turning." Jimmi said.

"Would it help you relax if I told you Hikaru is fine? That there is no need to worry about him?" Pat asked.

"Can you tell me it won't happen again?" Jimmi asked.

"No, I can't." Pat said. "How did you deal with these feelings before? If I understand your history correctly, the last time you were pregnant the Enterprise was destroyed and the crews condition was not known."

"Maybe I shouldn't get pregnant any more." Jimmi joked. Pat folded his arms across his chest and waited. "I don't know what I did. I cried. I worked. I got through it."

"The passage of time always helps." Pat nodded. "The cramping in your legs is normal for the last trimester. Remember to sleep on your left side and continue with light exercise. As for your mind racing, try distracting yourself. Put on some soft music or a relaxation sound loop when trying to go to sleep."

"You are sure he's all right?"

"Yes, Jimmi. I'm sure." Pat nodded. He helped her off the table and started strolling towards the door. "Why don't you go home and try to get some sleep now."

"I have Harry to take care of." Jimmi shrugged.

"Harry is fine with the Verset children." Patrick countered. "And he can always spend time here with me if you need to sleep."

"You don't know what you are suggesting, Doctor." Jimmi laughed. "I'll try to get a nap after lunch."

"Good."

Chekov returned to the bridge. Captain Sulu was standing next to the navigation station talking to Lt. Gonzoles. They were reviewing the battle that both had missed on the main view screen. Gonzoles pointed out the missing Breen ship. "The Emor was in the best shape. She cloaked and has not been heard from since."

"That is a detailed report, Gonzoles, considering you weren't on duty during the battle." Sulu commented.

"I felt the review was worth the time, Captain." Gonzoles said. "Someone once told me to take every opportunity to know my enemy."

"I wonder who said that?" Chekov asked as he joined them.

"How did it go?" Sulu asked Chekov.

"About as expected." Chekov said as Sulu returned to the command chair. "He became nervous when I explained just how much information we could get from the sensor logs of that explosion."

"But he did not volunteer anything." Sulu said.

"No." Chekov shrugged. "But I was interrupted."

"Oh?"

"I ran into Jimmi." Chekov said. "She wants you to meet her for lunch."

"She's checking on me." Sulu smiled.

"Someone has to." Chekov said. Before the captain could reply, Chekov turned to the science station. He leaned over Mirek's shoulder. "Any progress?"

"The ships were so close together during the battle." Mirek shook her head. "There is interference all over the place. It's hard to tell what is coming from what ship."

"Take your break." Chekov said. "Come back with a fresh eye after lunch."

"Yes Sir."

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Jimmi left Harry with the rest of the children in the gym and joined her husband in the officer's mess for lunch. They managed to spend the time talking about anything other than the captain's recent experience. They talked about baby names, rhyming games and tidbits of gossip about their friends. Since Jimmi told him of her visit to sick bay, when Hikaru left her it was with strict orders to go back to the cabin for a nap before dinner. Jimmi was just about to leave the mess hall when she saw Lt. Yazdani come in and sit down by himself at a small table.

"Hi Yaz." Jimmi sat down without waiting for an invitation. "Eating alone?"

"Hard to believe, isn't it?" Yaz shrugged. "What's up, Jimmi?"

"That's what I was going to ask you." Jimmi said with a smile. She leaned closer to him and lowered her voice when she asked. "What has Pat told you?"

"About?"

"Give me a break, Yaz." Jimmi laughed. "About the party. About Christy. They seemed awfully interested in each other."

"They certainly did." Yaz nodded. "But Pat's not talking."

"Not talking?" Jimmi sat up straight with eyes wide open. "Must be serious."

Yaz laughed. "Don't know."

"I thought you knew everything."

"Yeah, so did I."

"Well, if you hear anything..." Jimmi said as she stood up.

"And visa versa." Yaz said.

"See ya later, Yaz." Jimmi said as she headed out of the mess hall.