

U.S.S. Excelsior assumed standard orbit around Starbase Twelve. The unloading of passengers was a bit chaotic. The Donnars and Versets had no possessions of any kind. A team of officers was assigned to find them quarters, clothing, and other essentials. The children were excited and afraid and quite difficult to control.

Captain Sulu walked his wife and son to the transporter room. When they arrived, two security guards were waiting with Mr. Lenin. The last of the children had just disembarked.

"Are you leaving right away?" Jimmi asked as they walked into the room.

"I have to report the details of my investigation to the JAG office." The Captain said. "Then Excelsior will be on her way."

"Good morning, Mrs. Sulu." Lenin smiled from between his guards. He winked at Harry.

"Mr. Lenin." She nodded.

"Transport Mr. Lenin to the base." Sulu ordered. "Take him to the security office and turn him over to the duty officer."

"Aye Sir." The guard answered and, taking Lenin's arm, escorted him onto the transporter pad.

"Who's that, Daddy?" Harry pulled on his father's hand.

"Energize." Sulu ordered. After the three men had dematerialized, Sulu turned to Harry.

"That was nobody important, Harry. Now it's time to take you home. Come on."

The Sulu family beamed onto Starbase Twelve. The Captain walked to the Café with Jimmi and Harry. It was early and no one was there. When they reached the family's apartment, Harry ran to his room to reacquaint himself with the toys he had left behind. Pirate pricked up his ears and rubbed against Jimmi's leg.

"I wish you could stay." Jimmi stood very close to her husband and spoke softly.

"You always say that." Hikaru smiled.

"I always mean it." She returned his smile. "Will I see you before you go?"

"I can't promise." Hikaru said. "But I'll try."

He kissed her and was gone a moment later.

"Captain Sulu." The dark woman stood and smiled when he came into her office. "So good to see you again."

"Captain Fahd." Sulu nodded and smiled at the officer he had known socially for several years. "How are things in the JAG office?"

"The same as always." Captain Donia Fahd shrugged. "Sit down, Hikaru. Relax. I understand your family is growing. Jimmi should be due soon."

"About two months." Sulu smiled "How are Doug and the boys?"

"Doug is still stationed on Starbase 68. The Della Mir merchants are constantly making exorbitant demands that have to be litigated." She smiled. "Right now, the boys are here with me. Al is almost eleven, which I can hardly believe. And Rashid is now five. He was so mad when Harry left for a visit on Excelsior."

"Harry missed Rashid also." Sulu nodded. "I heard all about his outstanding abilities on

the playground."

"He takes after his mother. What can I say?" She laughed. "I could talk about my kids all day, but I'm sure you don't have the time. So let's get down to business. I reviewed your report on this Lenin character. Is there anything more?"

"I spoke to him again this morning." Sulu said. "He claims his partner, Ricardo Dahl, is behind the smuggling. Mr. Lenin is, of course, an innocent pawn."

"Of course." Fahd nodded. "If you can't deny it all together, make it someone else's fault. Do you believe him?"

"I'm not sure." Sulu said. "It could go either way. And Dahl is living on Space Station New Freedom, making the situation difficult."

"When I heard his name in your report, I checked into him." Fahd said. "He is wanted on four different planets for various crimes. We would love to get our hands on him, but as you say..."

"Has anyone considered going to New Freedom?"

"What would be the point? We can't arrest him without violating the sanctuary agreement." Fahd said. "And without the ability to arrest him, would he bother to even talk to us?"

"Use your imagination, Donia." Sulu smiled. "Perhaps we could get someone else to ask him the questions. Someone he might trust."

"You have someone in mind?"

"Check your records." Sulu said. "See if Matthew Brady is still incarcerated."

"All right." She said slowly and accessed her desktop terminal. "Brady...Brady..Who is Matthew Brady? Oh, I see. You had him arrested four years ago. He served eighteen months for transporting narcotics. Light sentence."

"A few charges were dropped in exchange for testimony against his business partner." Sulu said. "She was convicted of felony murder. Any idea where Brady is now?"

"Last reported on Rigel Four." Fahd said reading the file. She turned to Sulu. "But that was last year."

"Oh well." Sulu shrugged. "It was a thought."

"Keep thinking." Captain Fahd said. "I want this Dahl character in custody. Forget the murder and other smuggling charges. Dahl and Lenin transported nerve gas on a ship full of innocent children. I want them both to go away for a long time."

"Agreed."

Captain Sulu walked onto the bridge of Excelsior. Before Chekov could even get out of the command chair, Sulu issued orders to leave orbit. "Set course for Rigel Four. Warp six."

"Course set and laid in, Captain." Lt. Gonzoles said.

"Warp six. Aye." Lt. Sareth added.

"What's on Rigel?" Chekov asked as the captain sat down.

"An acquaintance." Sulu said.

"Is she pretty?" Chekov raised his eyebrow.

Sulu just laughed. Since he wasn't going to get an answer, Chekov returned to his own station. The rest of the shift was business as usual. After second shift took over the bridge, Sulu and Chekov met in the ready room.

"Pavel, I want to find one Matthew Brady." Sulu sat at his desk. "Remember him?"

"Should I?" Chekov thought for a minute then shook his head no. "I take it he was last seen on Rigel Four."

"Yes." Sulu nodded. "But it was over a year ago."

"What else do we have to go on?"

"He's human. A pirate slash smuggler slash pilot." Sulu said. "I last saw him four years ago when I was investigating Captain Warren's death. But he was also involved with those partially cloaked mines we ran into near the Romulan Neutral Zone."

"Now I remember." Pavel nodded. "Brady was the one that got away."

"Right." Sulu said. "I was thinking he may be able to help us question Ricardo Dahl."

"Able, maybe." Chekov said slowly as he thought about it. "But willing?"

"I don't know." Sulu said. "Perhaps we could persuade him."

"I'll start checking." Chekov said. "I'll be in my office if you need me."

After Chekov left him, Captain Sulu turned on his computer terminal and started catching up on all the details of running a Federation starship. He worked uninterrupted until Dr. Patrick came to his ready room.

"What can I do for you, Doctor?" Sulu asked after Patrick had made himself as comfortable as possible in the austere upright chair across the desk from the captain.

"You need a couch in here, Captain." Patrick shifted in the chair.

"Is that what brought you to see me this evening?" Sulu turned back to his screen. "Furniture?"

"No." Pat smiled. He stretched his long lean legs out in front of him. "Just thought I'd check and see how you were doing."

"I'm doing just fine."

"Good." Patrick pushed his errant blond bangs back into place. "How about Jimmi?"

"She's coping."

"Good."

"All right, Pat." Sulu turned his chair to face the doctor. He folded his hands on the desk and looked Patrick in the eye. "Is there something you want to say?"

"This is the third year that your family has joined us in July." Pat said. "The last two years I've noticed that you tend to throw yourself into your work after they are gone."

"I spend less time in this office when they are on board in order to spend time with them."

Sulu said. "So after they are gone, I have a lot of work to catch up on. You have a problem with that?"

"Generally, no." Pat shrugged. "But things are a little different this year. You may feel fine, but you are still recovering."

"And how long should I consider myself recovering?" Sulu asked.

"Physically, another day or two just to be sure." Pat said. "Emotionally, I'm not sure. Each person is different. But just saying you are fine does not make it so."

"Granted." Sulu sighed. "What would you have me do, Pat?"

"Take it easy." Patrick said.

"As far as these things go, the interrogation was not that intense. The duration was short and the level of pain tolerable." Sulu said. "I don't believe that babying myself is necessary."

"All I'm saying is that you can't deny it happened." Patrick leaned forward in the chair. "Just be aware that when you are least expecting it, the feelings of anxiety and helplessness may overcome you. If that happens, remember that it is normal and short term. And that you are not alone."

Sulu sat back in his chair and stared at Dr. Patrick. "You are really expecting this to happen? Some kind of anxiety attack?"

"I don't know if it will happen, Hikaru." Pat said. "But it is not unusual in these situations. And I want you to be ready."

"All right." Sulu shrugged. "If I experience such feelings, I will report them to you immediately. Good enough?"

"Sure." Pat smiled and stood up. "I'm going to get some dinner. Want to join me?"

"No thanks, Pat." Sulu shook his head. "I'm in the middle of something here. I'll get dinner later."

"Good night Captain." Patrick said and left the ready room.

"Night." Sulu called and went back to work. Just as he found his place in the report he had been reading, his console signaled. "Sulu here."

"Captain." Commander Williams appeared on his screen. "The repairs to the shields are not holding. Forward shields will only be available at fifty percent until we can put into a full service repair station."

"Can you get what you need in the Rigel system, Willie?" Sulu asked.

"Rigel Two has good facilities." Willie nodded.

"All right, Willie." Sulu said. "Notify them we are coming."

"Aye Sir."

"Sulu out." The report reappeared on his screen. The captain had forgotten what it said and started reading it from the beginning. Before he was finished, the door signal chimed. Sulu sighed. "Come in."

Commander Rand walked in. "Captain, since we are going to be in the Rigel system would it be possible to take a couple of days leave. I have the time coming."

Sulu rubbed his eyes and tried to concentrate on Janice Rand's request. Finally he looked up at her. "Your sister lives on Rigel now, right?"

"Rigel Seven, yes." Rand nodded. "It's very hard for us to get together."

"I don't see any problem, Janice." Sulu said. "Log the request. I'll approve it."

"Thanks Hikaru." She smiled and left.

Captain Sulu sat in his chair and did absolutely nothing for a few minutes. He was waiting for the next interruption. When it did not come, he took a deep breath and turned back to his computer screen. He finally finished reading the report on new personnel in the life sciences department. Again his door signal chimed.

"What?" Sulu snapped, his voice full of irritation.

"Something wrong?" Chekov asked from the doorway.

"Sorry." Sulu waved his first officer in. Rolling his head to relieve the tension in his neck, he explained. "I've just read the same report five times. A lot of interruptions tonight."

"Well, I could leave you alone." Chekov smiled. "But I thought you'd want to know. I've found your Matthew Brady."

"Where is he?"

"Still on Rigel Four." Chekov sat down and leaned forward on the Captain's desk. "He is listed as an employee of the Maatee Cabaret. According to their payment records he has been working there for nineteen months."

"Never heard of the place." Sulu said. "In the capital city?"

"No." Chekov said. "Actually in a small village on the edge of a dry sea bed on the smaller continent in the northern hemisphere. Not exactly on the A tour."

"Any other information?"

"Miscellaneous." Chekov shrugged. "His address. His bank account, which is minimal. His pilot's license is intact. But no record of other licenses, business or personal. And he has not been arrested while on Rigel."

"Good." Sulu nodded. "Willie wants to stop at Rigel Two for some work on the shields. We will take a shuttle to Four and talk to Brady."

"You up for a game of racquet ball tonight?" Chekov asked.

"Nah." Sulu shook his head. "I'm going to grab a quick dinner and call it a night. You ready to eat?"

"I'm starving." Chekov stood up. "Let's go."

It was dark. Pitch black. Sulu sat up suddenly. He was breathing hard and his pajamas were wet with sweat. "Lights." The computer responded to his demand. He sat there for a moment catching his breath and trying to remember the dream. But it was gone. He got out of bed and went to the bathroom to wash his face. "Time?"

"Oh four, forty four hours." The computer said.

The Captain looked in the mirror, smoothing his black hair back with both hands. He took off the wet pajamas and stepped in the shower. When he had dressed, Sulu headed for the gym. A few crew members were working out but it was not a popular time. Too early for those who liked to work out before first shift and too late for those who liked to work out after second shift. The Captain chose the solitude of the jogging track. After a few laps he started to feel in control.

Sulu returned to his cabin, showered again and dressed in his duty uniform. There were still more than two hours before the beginning of first shift. Captain Sulu called Dr. Patrick and asked to see him in the doctor's office.

When Sulu walked into sick bay, Dr. Vannereli was treating Ensign Shapiro's foot. The young man seemed to be in considerable pain. As he worked the doctor said, "The next time you are mad at your girlfriend, go to the gym and kick something soft. Your big toe will never win a fight with a bulkhead."

"Yes. Sir." Shapiro nodded.

Sulu ignored them and walked into the chief medical officer's office. The room was in its normal state. Pat called it organized clutter. His art supplies were scattered about the room. An easel stood in the corner holding a painting of an Joranian ostrich. Dr. Patrick was sitting on the long couch sipping a cup of coffee. A coffee pot and mug were on a bare spot on his paper cluttered desk. Sulu poured himself some coffee. "Morning."

"I suppose it is." Patrick said. His eyes were only half open and he was holding the mug with both hands. "Sit down. What's up?"

The Captain sat on the other end of the couch. He sipped the strong steaming coffee. "I wouldn't be bothering you with this if it wasn't for our conversation yesterday."

"Ok." Patrick seemed to perk up a bit. Sulu didn't seem to know where to start. He sipped his coffee several times and examined the sketches of various birds on the small coffee table. "Did something happen?"

"A dream." Sulu said. More truthfully, he added, "A nightmare really."

"What was it about?"

"I don't remember." Sulu shrugged. "But I woke up in a cold sweat feeling like I had just run a marathon. Going back to sleep was not an option."

"So what did you do?"

"I went to the gym and ran." Sulu said.

"Did that help?"

"Yes."

"Good." Pat put his coffee down. "Can you remember how you felt when you first woke up?"

"Disoriented." Sulu said slowly. "The same way I felt when I woke up in the Breen detention cell after I had been knocked unconscious."

The Captain and Doctor talked for over an hour about Sulu's recent experience. They talked about it all. The fear, the helplessness, the expectations, the Star Fleet training and how much it helped or didn't help. They finished the pot of coffee and went to breakfast together.