

While Excelsior was in the repair station on Rigel II, Captain Sulu authorized shore leave for all off duty personnel. The Rigel System was one of the largest systems in the Federation. Ten of the fifteen planets supported sentient life. The Excelsior crew could find almost any form of entertainment they could imagine here. Most stayed in the entertainment centers on the system's second and third planets. Gonzoles piloted the Excelsior shuttle Tyco to Rigel IV, setting course for the small village that was the home of Matthew Brady.

Lt. Gonzoles landed the shuttle on the edge of the village. She stayed with the small ship, while Captain Sulu and Commander Chekov investigated the small modern town with wide well lit streets. Many different species were evident on the streets. Sulu and Chekov stopped at a public information terminal to locate the Maatee Cabaret. It was in the middle of an entertainment center that included restaurants, theaters, and bars. It was a short tram ride to the entertainment district.

They walked into the Maatee Cabaret. It had large central bar with five different rooms that connected through wide archways. The lights were low in the bar but brighter over each gaming table. Even though it was early evening, the bar was full of patrons of many different species.

"Dom jot." Chekov noted the irregular shaped tables in one room as they made their way to the bar. In another room were several other games of chance. Chekov ticked off the ones he recognized. "LaPrell. Some kind of craps dice game. We could try the roulette wheel."

"Rigelian rules?" Sulu said softly, "No thanks."

They found a place at the bar. An attractive young humanoid woman was tending bar. Her short hair was a bright pink with deep red tips. Her skin was pale pink and her eyes were lavender. "We don't get many Starfleet officers in here." She smiled. Her voice was deeper than either officer expected. "What can I get you boys?"

"What do you suggest?" Chekov leaned on the bar and asked with a smile.

"Now that depends." She said. "Are you looking for something hard and strong? Or maybe you want to keep a clear head for the games?"

"A clear head." Chekov said. "But not too clear."

"Then try the local ale." The bartender suggested. "It's called Diji and it's been brewed in this village for generations."

"We'll try it." Chekov nodded.

"I think you've made a new friend." Sulu smiled after she had brought the drinks and left with Chekov's thumb print on her padd.

"And you approve?" Chekov teased his best friend. "It has been a long time since you approved of my choice of friends."

"How is Cathy?" Sulu asked quietly and sipped the salty brew. "Still mad?"

"That would be putting it mildly." Chekov said.

"What did she expect?" The Captain kept looking around for Brady as they spoke. "That you would retire when Captain Kirk did?"

"She expected that I would be on Earth for awhile." Chekov shrugged and took a long drink of the Rigelian ale.

"Hi Del." The deep voice made Sulu look. A couple of feet down the bar a tall dark

haired human man leaned on the bar. He did not look any different than the last time Sulu had seen him nearly four years ago. He black hair was shaggy but not overly long, his full beard was neatly trimmed and he wore a small gold ear ring in his left ear.

"You are late again, Matt." The bartender said in her deep sultry voice. "You are asking for trouble."

"What else is new?" Brady said. "Give me the usual and I'll get to work."

Sulu put his drink down and slowly walked toward Brady. Chekov followed suit. From behind Brady's back, Sulu said. "Matthew Brady."

Brady took the small glass the bartender had set in front of him, downed the drink in one gulp, and placed the glass carefully back on the bar. Slowly he straightened and turned around. As soon as he saw the star fleet officers, he visibly relaxed. "Damn!" Brady grinned. "Sulu, what are you doing in this hell hole?"

"Looking for you actually." Sulu demeanor was all business. "Can we talk?"

"Sure." Brady shrugged. He nodded towards a table in the back then led the way. The bartender reminded him to get to work, but he ignored her. When they all sat down, Brady asked. "What happened to what's his name?"

"If you are referring to Commander Kyle, he has been reassigned." Sulu explained. "This is Commander Chekov. First officer of the Excelsior."

"Nice to meet you, Mr. Chekov." Brady smiled.

"Mr. Brady." Chekov nodded. He was not exactly sure what he had expected of Brady, but this friendly attitude was not it. "I do not believe this is a social call."

"I suppose not." Brady shrugged. "But I am clean. So what do you want, Sulu?"

"Information." Sulu said. "What do you know about Ricardo Dahl?"

"Ricky?" Brady asked wide eyed with surprise. He thought for a moment about what to say. If he played his cards right, this unexpected turn of events just might get him out of his present predicament. "Ricky is smart, calculating, and mean. Make that sadistic. I've managed not to do business with him."

"What about Michael Lenin?" Chekov asked.

"Mickey is a different kind of guy all together." Brady said when he turned to the new star fleet officer. "He's out for number one but not nearly as smart as Dahl. He seems to get by on luck. He is very good at getting the ladies to stand up for him. Very lucky with women."

"When was the last time you saw either of them?" Sulu asked.

"It was before the last time I saw you." Brady said to Sulu. "I've been stuck on this rock for years."

"Why don't you leave?" Chekov asked.

"And go where?" Brady turned back to Chekov. "I can't get a job as a pilot. Legit operations don't want to talk to me because of my criminal record. The others expect me to expand on that record."

"Which, of course, you are morally opposed to." Sulu said.

"I draw my own lines in the sand." Brady said. "Besides I owe the owner of this place some money. I am little more than an indentured servant these days."

"Is that legal?" Chekov asked.

"These things are flexible on Rigel." Brady sighed. He did not want to discuss his situation at this bar with Sulu and Chekov, so he asked. "So why do you want Dahl and Lenin?"

"Lenin was smuggling thorio-phosgene on a transport full of children." Chekov said. "Dahl was his backer. Lenin is in custody."

"And you want Dahl." Brady said.

"Damn right." Sulu looked Brady in the eye. "Can you give me anything on him that I can use to draw him off New Freedom?"

"Maybe." Brady said. He ran his fingers through his neatly trimmed beard as he thought about the possibilities. Sulu seemed willing to wait. After a minute or two, Brady asked, "What will you give me in return?"

Sulu sat back and studied Brady. "What do you want?"

"Out." Brady said quickly. "Off this backwater planet and back in the real galaxy."

"Rigel can hardly be called a backwater." Chekov said. "It is the Federation's most heavily populated system with residents from all over the galaxy."

"Rigel is a big system." Brady agreed. "But no one from out of the system comes here. We get students from the local university and business people cheating on their marriage partners from the surrounding area. Not one of them understands the intricacies of betting the LaPrell dice or has any interest in what is going on anywhere else."

"I can't pay off your debt." Sulu said.

"But you could take me to New Freedom." Brady said. "I've got friends there. I'll work out something with the owner here."

"I'd have to know what I was getting in return." Sulu said.

"The only thing that I can think of that would make Ricardo Dahl leave New Freedom is an emergency call from his sister." Brady said. "Of course getting her to help you will not be easy."

"But you know her." Chekov said.

"I know her." Brady nodded and smiled.

"And she will do what you ask her." Chekov said.

"I have a certain amount of influence."

Captain Sulu stood up. "We will be in the system for two days for some minor repairs. I'll be in touch."

Chekov and Sulu caught the tram back to the edge of the village where the shuttle was waiting. The tram had been crowded making conversation difficult. After they left the tram station pedestrian traffic started to thin.

"Brady was more cooperative than I expected." Chekov said as they walked along towards the shuttle harbor.

"Yes." Sulu agreed. They approached the Excelsior shuttle Tyco. "That worries me."

"His desire to leave this planet does seem real." Chekov said.

"That I don't doubt. As soon as we are back on Excelsior, check into Dahl's family." Sulu said. The door opened. Lt. Gonzoles sat in the pilot's seat going through the preflight checklist. "Everything quiet, Gonzoles?"

"Down right boring, Captain." She continued with her work. "No one even looked at us sideways."

"You missed an interesting bar, Rosita." Chekov caught her eye and smiled as he sat in one of the rear seats of the small shuttle pod. "The entertainment centered mostly on gambling. There were many different games some familiar, some not."

"Who wants to go to a bar when you can stand guard over a shuttle pod?" Gonzoles returned the smile. "But I will stow that information away for future reference, Mr. Chekov. Back to Rigel Two, Captain?"

"Yes." Sulu nodded. He took the seat next to Chekov. "Whenever you are ready, Lieutenant."

"I'm ready now, Sir." Gonzoles signaled the harbor computer of their departure and lifted the Tyco gracefully from the planets surface.

Back on Excelsior, while off duty personnel were granted liberty, repair crews worked to bring the ship back to top condition. Chekov went to his office to start checking on Ricardo Dahl's family. After checking in with Commander Williams in engineering, Sulu went to his ready room to finish the dreaded detail work.

It wasn't long before Dr. Patrick came to see him. He grinned and settled himself in the chair across the desk from the Captain. "I love Rigel."

"I'm glad to hear it." Sulu closed the file he had just finished working on. "Anything in particular?"

"Such a friendly people." Patrick winked.

"You've been to that little café that Dr. McCoy goes to every time he is in this system." Sulu smiled. "Haven't you?"

"You've been there?" Pat laughed.

"Sure. Ask Chekov about the first time we were there. He almost got into real trouble that night." Sulu smiled at the memory. "So if you were having a good time, why are you back so early?"

"It was either leave early or stay all night." Pat said. "And I am on duty this evening. How was your mission. Did you find Matthew Brady?"

"Yes." Sulu said. "And he is willing to help us for a price."

"That was expected." Pat shrugged. "What does he want?"

"He wants a ride to New Freedom." Sulu said. "Which is not a problem, but..."

"Can he deliver?" Patrick asked.

"That is one concern." Sulu nodded. "But the real question with Brady is how far can I trust him?"

"Well..." Dr. Patrick hesitated. "The last time we dealt with Brady, he actually went against his own interest to help us. But we never knew why."

"I think he was looking for a way out of that situation when we came along." Sulu said. "Although I doubt he wanted to land in jail, his options were limited."

"He does seem to make his own rules." Pat sighed.

"That is the problem."

Two days later the Maatee Cabaret was full of patrons. Young men and women of several different species danced through the crowd to the light lilting music providing entertainment. The customers at the bar enjoyed the show. Some joined the dance. The gaming tables were crowded with university students losing their small allowances. Matthew Brady took the bets and kept the game dice moving. But he kept a watchful eye on the door.

Commander Chekov walked into the bar followed by Lt. Johnson and two of his security guards. A loud roar of laughter rose from the table where Brady was running his dice game. Chekov decided to make a stop at the bar first. Johnson ordered the two guards to wait by the door then followed Commander Chekov. A place at the bar seemed to open up before them as a couple of young people eyed them curiously.

"Hello Del." Chekov smiled.

"Hello Captain." She smiled back. "Or is it Admiral?"

"It is Commander actually." Chekov said, leaning on the bar. "Give us a couple of those Dijis, Del."

"Coming up, Sugar."

"Sir." Lt. Johnson maintained his watch on the crowd around him. He was much taller and much less at ease than Chekov. "We are on duty."

"I know." Chekov said. Del returned with the drinks. "Thanks Beautiful."

"You going to become a regular, Sugar?" She asked, her smile openly flirtatious.

"I'd love to." Chekov returned the smile but sighed when he said. "But I'll be shipping out soon."

"Too bad." Del shrugged and went back to work.

"Try this, Mel." Chekov slid the glass towards Lt. Johnson. "It is rather salty, but not bad."

"Mr. Chekov." Lt. Johnson lowered his voice. "May I remind you that we are on a mission and that we are greatly outnumbered. Drinking is not advisable."

Chekov picked up his ale and took a drink. He leaned one elbow on the bar and using his finger called Johnson closer. The lieutenant had to lean down to hear his superior officer. "We are in a bar. The best way to appear inconspicuous is to have a drink. I know you know how to relax, Mel. Give it a shot."

"Yes Sir." Johnson straightened up then sampled the local ale. He did not look very relaxed to Chekov. Johnson was busy sizing up the different groups in the bar. Some were just drunk. He dismissed those. Some were obviously intent on romantic pursuits, others on the gambling. He dismissed those as well. A few openly watched the star fleet officers. Mel Johnson paid close attention to them.

Chekov just shook his head, smiling to himself. Turning to scan the crowd as well, Chekov kept watch on Brady's table. The group gathered around the table was growing. Someone must have been having an exceptional run of luck. Before he finished his drink, the laughter surrounding the table had turned to a loud groan. Much of the crowd turned away and

followed the player, a young Andorian man, to the bar.

Saying he needed a break, Brady turned the table over to another employee and casually walked over to the bar. He found a spot next to Chekov. When the bartender appeared, he handed over a computer padd and said. "The usual, Del."

Del took the padd and checked the tally before depositing it under the bar. She handed him his drink. "You're a lucky man, Matt. That Andorian almost broke the bank. And you know how Kree hates that."

"Lucky for me the kid didn't know when to walk away." Matt sipped the small amber drink. "Because I don't need to owe Kree any more money."

Another patron called for Del's attention. When she was gone, Chekov turned to Brady. "So is that how you started working here? To pay off gambling debts?"

"I don't think my arrangement here is really any of your concern." Brady said. "Where is your captain this evening?"

"He is on the bridge of Excelsior." Chekov said. "You are to come with us now."

"You didn't need to bring the security guards." Brady smiled and finished his drink.

"A precaution." Chekov glanced up at Johnson who was still watching the crowd as Chekov and Brady talked. The Commander couldn't help but add. "And we have trouble keeping Lt. Johnson out of bars like this."

Brady laughed and started walking casually towards the door. Lt. Johnson caught the eye of his guards. They both went out the door first to make sure Brady didn't disappear into the night. After a minute, Chekov finished his drink and called good night to Del. Lt. Johnson was the last to leave the bar.

After they had beamed onto Excelsior, Chekov turned to Johnson. "Show Mr. Brady to his quarters. Post a guard."

"A guard?" Brady asked. "Am I under arrest?"

"Another precaution." Chekov said. "While you are on board you will be accompanied by a security officer. This is not a pleasure trip. Is there anything that you left on the planet that you need?"

"Nothing I can't live without." Brady shrugged. "I make it a habit to keep the important things with me."

"Good." Chekov said. "You have your orders, Mr. Johnson."

"Yes Sir." Johnson nodded.

Chekov reported to the bridge. Captain Sulu was in the center seat. It was still first shift by Excelsior time. Chekov walked down the two steps to the lower bridge. "Mission accomplished."

"Good." Sulu nodded. "Mr. Sareth, take us out of orbit."

"Aye Sir."

"Set course for Space Station New Freedom." Sulu said. "Warp three as soon as we clear the system."

"Course set and laid in." Gonzoles said.

"Leaving Rigel Four." Sareth reported as he guided the Excelsior through the crowded shipping lanes.

Sulu turned back to Chekov. "I was beginning to wonder about you."

"I had to wait until Brady could leave without creating a scene." Chekov said. "One of the patrons at his table was having quite a bit of luck."

"I thought maybe you had stopped to have a beer and flirt with the bartender." Sulu said.

"While on duty?" Chekov scoffed on his way back to his own station.

"What was I thinking?" Sulu asked.

"Clearing main shipping lanes." Lt. Sareth reported.

Excelsior was well on her way to Space Station New Freedom by the end of the first shift. Captain Sulu turned over command to Lt. Lee and retired to his ready room. Chekov followed him. Coffee waited on the Captain's desk.

"Ready for Brady?" Chekov asked pouring himself a cup of coffee. Sulu nodded as he checked his messages. Chekov opened the comline. "Chekov to Lovsky. Bring Mr. Brady to the Captain's ready room."

"Aye Sir." Lovsky answered. Minutes later Lt. Lovsky delivered Brady. At the Captain's direction, Lovsky waited outside the ready room door.

"Sit down, Mr. Brady." Sulu directed. "Coffee?"

"Sure." Brady sat down.

Chekov poured the coffee and handed the mug to Brady. Chekov turned back to Sulu to report. "I've located Ricardo Dahl's only sister on Risa. Her name is Angelina Dahl and she is listed as a partner in an import-export business."

"Is that all you found on her?" Sulu asked.

"That's the basics." Chekov said.

"What can you add, Mr. Brady?" Sulu asked.

"For one thing, her brother is her partner." Brady said. "He put up the capital, she runs the business."

"How do you propose to get her to send the distress call to New Freedom?" Sulu asked.

"She owes me a favor." Brady smiled.

"She would lure her brother out of the safety of New Freedom for you?" Chekov asked skeptically.

"I will make it seem like a profitable opportunity." Brady said. He sipped the hot coffee before adding, "Just let me call her."

"What about the communication problem?" Sulu asked Chekov.

"I talked to Commander Rand." Chekov reported. "A transmission can be routed through the Persephone communications array. It would be practically impossible to trace the origin of the transmission without military equipment."

"Can I assume this woman does not have military grade communications equipment?" Sulu asked Brady.

"I don't know." Brady said. "But she knows me, trust me. Why would she try to trace my location?"

"Ok, it's worth a try." Sulu nodded and opened the comline to the communication station on the bridge. Lt. Commander Rand should have gone off duty with first shift, but had stayed to

handle the delicate nature of the transmission to Risa. "We are ready, Commander. Signal when you have the connection."

"Aye Sir." Rand answered. Sulu turned the desk top terminal to Brady. "Coming through now, Captain."

"Good day. This is Dahl & Dahl I.E. Can I help you?" A dark young woman answered automatically.

"Chi Chi!" Brady smiled broadly. Her long black hair was a mixture of tiny braids and tight curls. Her big eyes widened and brightened when she recognized him. "How are you, Beautiful?"

"Matty! Long time." She returned his smile and good humor. "Where have you been?"

"You mean after the stint in the Federation jail? I've been on Rigel. Keeping my eyes and ears open. If you know what I mean." Brady winked at her. "And now I need to talk to Angel. Privately, Chi Chi."

"Sure. Sure. Hold on." Chi Chi said. The screen changed to a ever moving kaleidoscope of colors and textures. Brady tried to ignore Sulu and Chekov who were both up and moving around the ready room as they listened in on Matthew's conversation.

When the screen changed again, an attractive woman about ten years older than Brady with short chestnut brown hair, a light brown complexion and strikingly beautiful deep brown eyes. She wore a red silk blouse with large black and silver earrings and matching necklace. "Matthew, what a pleasant surprise."

"Hello Angel." He leaned his elbows on the desk and stared intently at the screen. "It is good to see you."

"The last I heard you were working for some two bit gambling gangster on Rigel Four." Angel smiled. "How the mighty have fallen."

"Everyone gets their turn, Angel." Brady said. "And the one benefit of running a table for Kree is that you hear things. I thought you'd be interested, but..."

"You think what you've heard is worth something?" Angel asked.

"Could be." Brady nodded. "If you aren't interested, Ricky might be. I could always call him. I assume he's still on New Freedom."

"He is." Angel said. "What do you want Matthew?"

"I want Kree off my back. A new ship of my own to run by my rules." Brady said. "And twenty bars of gold pressed latinum."

Angel laughed at his list of demands and asked, "How about a little moon of your own?"

"No thanks." Brady laughed too. "I've got no use for property right now."

"What kind of information is worth all that?" Angel asked.

"Classified information." Brady said with just a hint of a grin. "Starfleet classified information."

"You have to give me more than that, Matthew." Angel said. "That could mean anything. And I need to know how you got it."

"I am not going to give you my contact." Brady said. "But I will tell you that a couple of days ago a couple of Starfleet officers came into Kree's place. We talked. That much I am sure you can check out. We discovered we shared a grudge against a certain captain."

"Let me guess." Angel smiled. "The one that got you thrown in jail."

"Yes." Brady sneered. "Captain of the Excelsior."

"Excelsior?" Angel said. "That's the same one that arrested Mickey."

"That does not surprise me. That captain is a real straight arrow." Brady said. "Anyway, the disgruntled officer shared information on shield modulations, command protocols, and prefix codes."

"Prefix codes?" Angel asked quickly. "How do you know they are real? How can you trust this officer? It's a trap, Matthew."

"That's what I thought at first too." Brady nodded then shrugged. "But he is willing to give a demonstration. He told me the Excelsior was going to be passing the Paulson Nebula in a couple of days."

"So?"

"Not even Starfleet can track you in a nebula." Brady confided. "We could wait in the nebula, try out one of these codes, and see what it is worth. No risk."

"Who is 'we'?"

"Me, cause I got the codes." Brady smiled. "You, Ricky, or whoever you trust. I don't care. As long as I get paid."

"I don't know, Matthew." Angel hesitated. "I better talk to Ricky about this. I'll call you back."

"I'm catching a freighter out of here in a few minutes." Brady said. "I'll call you back this time tomorrow."

"All right. I'll expect your call."

After the screen had gone blank, Brady looked up at Sulu who now leaned against the front of his desk. Brady smiled and said. "There you go."

"She did not agree to anything." Chekov sat down in the chair next to Brady.

"She will." Brady nodded. "Ricardo trusts no one. Not even his sister. For this kind of information, he will be there."

"Then we have to find a freighter to drop you off at New Freedom." Captain Sulu said. "No doubt Dahl would notice if Excelsior showed up."

"No doubt." Brady nodded.

Sulu leaned across his desk to open the comline to the bridge. "Sulu to Lt. Lee."

"Lee here."

"Lieutenant, scan for any freighters in the area on a heading in the general direction of New Freedom." Sulu said. "Identify and report before hailing."

"Aye Captain."

"Sulu out." The captain closed the comline. Strolling slowly around the ready room, he studied Brady. "One question, Mr. Brady. Why are you helping us?"

"To get off Rigel and back to New Freedom." Brady said.

"You lied easily to your friend Angel." Sulu sighed. "Why should I believe you now?"

"Is it necessary to believe my reasons?" Brady asked. "I am doing what you want. Isn't that enough?"

Sulu stepped into the sensor range of the door. When it slid open, Mr Lovsky came in

and stood at attention just inside the ready room. "Mr. Brady is not to wander the ship alone. A security officer is to stay with him at all times. But he is not restricted to quarters. Understood?"

"Aye Sir." Lovsky nodded. "Mr. Brady?"

"It's Matt." Brady smiled at his guard as they left the ready room. He was several years younger than Brady, a slight man with an olive complexion. His dark hair was worn in standard short military style. "You got a first name Lovsky?"

"Vince." Lovsky answered. The door closed behind them.

"He does lie easily." Chekov said.

"I know." Sulu nodded. "Unsettling, isn't it? Hungry?"

"Starving." Chekov said. They left the office and started down the hall together.

"Racquetball later?"

"Yeah."

Over the course of the next two shifts five freighters were identified and rejected as possible transportation for Brady. Without revealing what they wanted, Sulu or Chekov questioned each captain briefly. Either they had ties to New Freedom or evaded enough questions that they were not considered trustworthy.

Shortly before Brady was to call Angel back, Sulu had him brought to the ready room. Chekov was still on the bridge. Brady sat down. He skipped any greeting. "What do I say to Angel?"

"That's a good question." Sulu said. "We have not yet located a freighter."

"After my conversation with Angel yesterday, if I beam off a starfleet ship onto New Freedom," Brady looked Sulu in the eye. "I'll be dead by morning."

"I know." Sulu nodded. "We will find a freighter captain we can trust."

"Chekov to Captain Sulu."

"Sulu here."

"Another freighter on long range sensors." Chekov reported. "It is the Siberian Tiger. Owned by Vasco Enterprises. The captain is listed as Chu Tse."

"Hail him." Sulu said and closed the com line. He looked at Brady. "This may be the one."

"Vasco is a big operation." Brady said. "That captain has no leeway to make his own decisions. He'll have to get permission and that takes any secrecy out of the picture."

"Perhaps." Sulu said. He got up and started towards the door that led to the bridge. Before he got there, Chekov came in. "That was quick."

"He has to check with the home office." Chekov said. "I told him not to bother. I will do it. But this is not a call I want to make from the bridge."

"I understand." Sulu nodded.

The captain's desk terminal signaled. Commander Rand had already made the connection. Chekov went over and turned it towards him. When he switched it on Cathy's assistant, Sam, was waiting. Chekov smiled. "Hello Sam. Is she in?"

"C.J. is in a staff meeting right now, Commander." Sam said. "Can I give her a

message?"

"What about Katerina? Or Big Joe?" Chekov asked.

"Both off the planet right now." Sam said. "Sorry."

"Would it be possible to interrupt Cathy? It is important." Chekov said. Sam hesitated. "It is official business."

"Let me check." Sam said.

After a few minutes Cathy appeared on the screen. She was wearing a royal blue business suit. Her long blond hair was pulled back away from her face. She was not smiling and her voice sounded quite annoyed. "Official business? Really Pavel."

"Yes." Chekov said. "Regarding the Siberian Tiger."

She sat back in her chair, studying him. "Well?"

"We have asked Captain Tse to deliver a civilian passenger to New Freedom for us. It is important that he not arrive on a Starfleet vessel. And it is important that no one know we asked you to deliver him. Tse requires authorization from your office." Chekov said. "We need to know now."

"I haven't heard from you since you left Starbase Twelve and this is why you call me?" Cathy asked.

"I would like to get into that later." Chekov said. "When I am off duty. Will you authorize the change of course and passenger for the Siberian Tiger?"

"I'll send the authorization." Cathy sighed. "I might as well give Excelsior what she wants, she will take it anyway."

"Thank you." Chekov smiled. "I'll call you later."

"Fine."

"Friend of yours?" Brady asked Chekov after the connection had been terminated. He grinned as he tried not to laugh.

Chekov ignored Brady and turned to Sulu. "I will talk to Captain Tse."

"Good." Sulu nodded. Chekov turned and left. Sulu sat down at his desk. The captain could not help but grin when he said, "I'm glad I didn't have to call her."

"Why?" Brady asked.

"She doesn't like me." Sulu laughed.

"She must be pretty high up in the corporate structure." Brady commented as casually as possible. He stored the apparently unimportant information away. He never knew what detail would come in handy at a later date. "Evidently she didn't have to ask anyone about the authorization."

"She is." Sulu nodded. He turned his attention back to business and said, "Now, it is almost time to call your friend Angel. What exactly are you going to say?"

"I'll continue along the same lines as yesterday." Brady said. "I'm on my way to New Freedom. When I get there Ricky and I will go to the Paulson Nebula. You take it from there."

"And what is to keep you from just disappearing once you are on New Freedom?" Sulu asked.

Brady crossed his arms in front of his chest and grinned at the Captain when he said. "Sulu, you don't trust me."

"No." Sulu did not return the smile. "I don't."

"But you can't get Ricardo Dahl off New Freedom without me." Brady said, still grinning. "I guess you are going to have to trust me."

Sulu met Brady's eyes evenly. He opened the ship wide com line. "Lt. Johnson report to the Captain's ready room."

"This is Johnson." The answer came back. "On my way."

Chekov returned to the ready room carrying a small data padd. "Captain Tse is standing by. He has received a transmission from the home office authorizing his cooperation."

"Good." Sulu said to Chekov. "I've been thinking about our earlier conversation. I am sending Lt. Johnson with Mr. Brady to New Freedom."

"Not necessary." Brady said.

"A precaution." Chekov answered.

"You are a cautious man, Chekov." Brady said as Lt. Johnson came into the ready room. He stood straight as a rail and reported as ordered.

"Mr. Johnson." Sulu said. "I have a special assignment for you. Mr. Brady will transfer to a freighter which will take him to New Freedom. There he will make contact with Ricardo Dahl. They will take a ship to the Paulson Nebula. We will stop that ship and serve a warrant on Mr. Dahl. You will accompany Mr. Brady and make sure that he accomplishes his mission. Any questions?"

"I will not have any authority on New Freedom itself." Lt. Johnson noted. "What level of force will be authorized."

"What ever means necessary." Sulu said. "But you will be on your own. Use you best judgement."

"Yes Sir." Johnson nodded.

"Change into civilian clothes and meet Mr. Brady in transporter room three." Sulu ordered.

"Aye Sir." Lt. Johnson turned on his heel and left.

Sulu opened the comline to the bridge. "We are ready whenever you are, Commander Rand."

"Aye Sir." Rand answered. "Routing the transmission through the Persephone communications array. Connection coming through now."

Brady turned the screen towards him and made himself relax. Angel appeared. Brady smiled. "Since when do you answer your own calls?"

"Just when I know you are calling, Honey." Angel smiled sweetly. "Where is this freighter you are on taking you?"

"Back to New Freedom." Brady answered. "Didn't I say that yesterday?"

"No." Angel smiled. "You didn't tell me the name of the freighter either."

"Now Angel, you got to keep that quiet. It's the Siberian Tiger. But don't say anything. The captain could get in trouble for giving me a ride." Brady said. "The ship is owned by Vasco."

"I understand." Angel nodded. "No one will hear it from me. I talked to Ricky and he thinks you are crazy."

"Yeah, I'm crazy." Brady grinned. "Is he interested? Or should I look for another buyer?"

Several prospects jump to mind."

"Ricky said there is no way you got your hands on a prefix code." Angel shrugged.

"Once Starfleet knows it's out, they will change it. Excelsior is Starfleet's largest ship. They can't have just anyone send a remote command to lower shields, deactivate phasers, and anything else you can think of. The ship would be helpless."

"Yeah." Brady laughed. "Isn't that great!"

"Matthew!"

"All right." Brady said. "Listen, this guy I got the codes from is a computer expert. He not only gave me the code, he gave me the algorithm used to determine the code. So when Starfleet changes it, we'll be able to determine the new code."

"Damn!" Angel let her breath out slowly. "You are over my head now, Honey. I talk to my computer. It talks back. That's all I know and all I want to know about it."

"What about the payment?" Brady changed the subject abruptly.

"Ricky has a small ship he'd be willing to part with, no strings attached." Angel said.

"But you make your own peace with Kree and no latinum."

"To take care of Kree, I've got to have the latinum." Brady said.

"Then you are going to have to take that up with Ricky." Angel said.

"I will." Brady nodded. "Are you coming to New Freedom?"

"Can't." She shook her head. "I have some other business to take care of. Come see me after you are done with Ricky."

"Ok." Brady smiled. "I'll see you soon."

When the connection was terminated, Sulu asked. "What is the name of Dahl's ship?"

"I don't know." Brady said.

"Is it equipped with a cloaking device?" Chekov asked.

"Probably."

"At the appropriate time, you will have to make sure that cloak is off." Sulu said.

"Wait a minute." Brady protested. "If I do that, Dahl will know I've set him up."

"He'll know that anyway." Sulu said.

"But he won't be sure. I'll be able to argue that I was also set up. That you used me to get to him." Brady said.

"And we have." Chekov said. "Lt. Johnson can handle the cloaking device. He can also activate a transporter signal."

"That is assuming Dahl lets Johnson on the ship." Brady said. "Which is not very likely. Ricky doesn't trust strangers."

"You will just have to make sure he does." Sulu said. "Johnson will take control of the ship if necessary. How you maintain your status as victim is your problem."

"What about a code?" Brady asked. "I've got to have something convincing to show Ricky."

Chekov handed Brady the data padd he had brought with him. "I have programmed the main computer to recognize this code. He should find it convincing. This code will transmit any orders directly to my station. If your life is in danger, transmit a code red for emergency beam out."

Brady just nodded as he studied the padd. Chekov took him to the transporter room where they met Lt. Johnson. After Brady and Johnson left Excelsior, Chekov headed towards the officer's mess.