

Captain Sulu opened his eyes to find himself lying on a hard bunk in a small room with stone walls. He sat up to see Ensign Briscoe sitting in the lotus position on a similar bunk on the other side of room. When he swung his feet to the floor, she opened her eyes.

"Captain." Briscoe stood up suddenly. "Are you all right?"

"Yeah." Sulu stood up and stretched. He raised his eyebrow. "Actually, I don't feel any ill effects of being unconscious. Curious. How long have I been out?"

"You've been here about fifteen minutes, Sir." Briscoe said. Sulu took a few steps. "Careful, Captain. There is a force field between us."

"How did you determine that without a tricorder?" Sulu asked. He saw no evidence of a force field. No emitters on the wall, floor, or ceiling. No reflection from the field itself. It was absolutely transparent.

"The hard way, Sir." Briscoe pushed an errant strand of her chestnut brown hair back into the regulation braid. "The energy discharge was similar to a mild electric shock. Unpleasant, but no permanent damage."

"Good." Sulu smiled reassuringly at the young woman. He looked around the room. The bunk was the only thing on Sulu's side of the force field. He saw a few pebbles along the edge of the floor by the base of the stone wall. Sulu picked up a pebble and tossed it at Briscoe. When it hit, the force field momentarily shimmered a brilliant blue then returned to its transparent state.

"Interesting. Report, Ensign. What has happened to the others?"

"I'm not sure, Captain." Briscoe said. "We were outside the fort when I suddenly lost consciousness. Mr. Chekov is also being held captive. He was on that side of the force field a while ago. He told me he had seen Lt. Gonzoles, in a situation similar to this. At that point, neither of us had spoken to our captors. I haven't even seen them."

"You did not see any guards when they moved Mr. Chekov?" Sulu asked. "Or when they brought me in?"

"You were beamed in, Sir." Briscoe said. "Mr. Chekov was beamed out. And when he was taken, there was no warning."

"Then we better make good use of our time." Sulu said. "Have you found any controls panel of any kind?"

"I've searched the walls where I could reach, Captain." Standing still, Briscoe watched as Captain Sulu investigated his side of the cell. "But found nothing."

"What's that on the table on your side?" Sulu asked.

Briscoe glanced at the small table next to the bunk. A thermos bottle and two glasses were the only items on the table top. "Water, Sir."

"Was there water on this side when Chekov was here?" Sulu asked.

"No Sir." Briscoe shrugged. "I don't understand why they gave me water but did not give it to you."

"There is a reason Ensign. We just have to find it." Sulu rubbed the back of his neck and unconsciously licked his lips. He tried to ignore his thirst and concentrate on the problem at hand. "The most obvious difference is gender."

"And rank." Briscoe said. "You and Mr. Chekov, both senior officers. Me, a junior officer."

"Maybe it is simpler than that." Sulu said. "If they are not questioning us, maybe they are watching us. Perhaps they want to know how we react."

"Sir?"

"How I react to not having water when it is so close." Sulu explained. "How you react to having the water when you know I don't have any."

"Sounds like a psych test." Briscoe shuddered.

"Yes." Captain Sulu picked up another pebble and tossed it at the force field. Again it shimmered blue. "Look. The field does not extend all the way to the walls or the floor. Just like at the spring."

"But it's not enough room to get through, Sir." Briscoe said. "And the walls and floor are solid stone. There is no way to enlarge the opening."

Sulu walked along the wall to the force field. If he kept his hand flat against the wall he could slide his hand into Briscoe's side of the cell. When he was pulling his hand back he accidentally contacted the field and received a mild shock. He yanked his hand back to his own side.

"Pour a cup of water and hand it to me when I put my hand through." Sulu ordered.

"Captain. Electricity and water is not a good combination." Briscoe warned. "You are going to jump when the field shocks you. If the water spills, it could be dangerous."

"I know." Sulu said. "Fill the cup only half way and make sure the outside is dry. I'll take my chances."

"Yes Sir."

Sulu slid his hand back past the force field. Briscoe poured the water and wiped off the cup against her uniform jacket before handing it to him. With the cup in his hand there was no way to avoid contact with the force field. Captain Sulu took a deep breath and braced himself. Using all his concentration to keep his hand steady, he slowly pulled it through. Once he was clear of the field, he grabbed the cup with his other hand and shook the hand that had been shocked.

"Damn!" Sulu shouted. He took a couple of deep breaths before drinking the water. As he drank, Ensign Briscoe was transported out of her side of the cell. A couple of minutes later an unconscious Lt. Gonzales appeared on the bunk across the force field from Captain Sulu. Sulu sat on his bunk and waited for Gonzales to wake up.

Ten minutes later, she sat up. Seeing him, she smiled. "Captain, it's good to see you."

"Report." Sulu idly shook a couple pebbles in his closed fist.

"I have been with Dr. Patrick. Or I should say I have been talking across a force field with Pat." Gonzales stood up and took a tentative step towards the force field. She held out her hand to make sure she did not walk into it. "Prior to that I was with Mr. Chekov, then Mr. Silverman. We have not seen our captors. My last accommodations did have food. This appears to have water. Now if they only transfer me to one with a head, I'd be ok. Sir."

"Did both you and Dr. Patrick have food? Or only one of you?" Sulu asked.

"I had a pot of soup." Gonzales said. "Dr. Patrick had the bowls and spoons. The bowls just barely fit under the force field."

"They appear to be testing problem solving skills." Sulu said.

"Yes Sir." Gonzales nodded. "Pat says he feels like a rat in a maze. It seems to me they have been testing us since we arrived. The spring. The troops."

"Have you seen Ensign Briscoe?" Sulu asked.

"No Sir." Gonzales said. "But Dr. Patrick has. And Mr. Chekov."

"So have I." Sulu said. "Did Dr. Patrick, Mr. Chekov, or Mr. Silverman mention having a man on the other side of the force field?"

"No Sir." Gonzoles frowned. She slowly paced around her side of the cell. "Why would they be testing problem solving skills between men and women?"

"I don't know." Sulu said. "It would help if we knew something of their society."

"Why don't they just talk to us?" Gonzoles asked.

"I don't know."

"So what's the test here?" Gonzoles asked. Sulu shrugged. "It's not the water. You have a cup there, so I am assuming you've had water. There is nothing else different in our cells."

"Just each other." Sulu leaned back against the wall behind his bunk.

"There is no way to get by the force field." Gonzoles said. Sulu picked up a pebble and tossed it at the force field. It shimmered blue. The bottom of the field was six inches higher than it had been the last time Sulu had tested it. "I could get under that, Captain."

Sulu shook his head. "Stay where you are, Gonzoles."

"Sir?"

"I'm tired of performing for my dinner." Sulu said. "Sit down and do nothing."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles shrugged and sat down. They sat in silence for a few minutes. Sulu bounced his pebbles off the force field one by one. Each time the field shimmered blue. Gonzoles watched, silently wishing he'd stop. It was getting annoying. After the fifth pebble, Gonzoles said. "Captain. Just before I was transported out of my last cell, I heard you."

"What?" Sulu sat up straight.

"It sounded like you." Gonzoles said. "You yelled 'Damn'. It sounded like you were in pain. I called back, but got no response."

"Chekov!" Sulu yelled. He got up and walked around the cell yelling as loud as he could. "Chekov!"

"Here Captain." Chekov's faint reply came back.

"Do nothing." Sulu yelled.

"Aye." Chekov yelled back.

"Patrick." Sulu yelled. He waited but got no reply. "Pat!"

"Huynh here, Captain."

"The order is do nothing."

"Aye." Huynh called.

"Silverman, aye." Dave called.

"D'Amico & Briscoe." D'Amico yelled. "Do nothing. Aye."

Captain Sulu was transported out of his cell. This time when he materialized he was awake. He found himself in a large domed room facing two of the Jush.ra species. Unlike the troops, their sand colored robes covered them from shoulder to floor. One of the Jushra had a pale orange fur with a tan skin on face, throat, and hands. The other had dark brown fur with light brown skin. Their pointed ears gave them a slightly feline look.

Sulu surveyed the room around him. The Jush.ra had no weapons and the room appeared to be empty of any furniture. He could see no door, window, or other opening. The Jush.ra watched and waited until Sulu had looked over the entire room and back to them.

The orange one took one step towards him. "You are the leader of your people?"

"Yes." Sulu nodded. "I am Captain Hikaru Sulu of the Federation Starship Excelsior."

Are you in charge here?"

"I am Suran A'Gar, mother of many." She said. "This is my sister, Genel. Our family prospers here. We are curious about you Captain Hikaru Sulu."

"As I am about you, Suran A'Gar." Sulu said.

"Your family is military?" Genel asked.

"My family?" Sulu raised his eyebrow at the question. "No. My crew is not related to me except that those on this planet come from the same home world as I do. Some of my crew on my ship are from other planets in our Federation. We are organized as a military unit. And while I have some military duties, my mission is one of scientific exploration."

"Where is your home world?" Suran A'Gar asked.

"It orbits the star we call Sol." Sulu said.

"Show us." Genel lifted her hand to the domed ceiling. Sulu looked up to see the white ceiling darken. Stars appeared to transform the dome into an accurate detailed map of the galaxy.

Captain Sulu walked over to stand directly below Sol. "I come from the third planet in orbit around this star."

"It is an inhabited system with technology to support what we've seen." Genel said to Suran. "He does not lie."

"Good." Suran nodded to her sister.

"I have no reason to lie to you." Sulu said. "I will answer your questions to the best of my ability. But I wish to know about your world too. Are you a member of your government? Why do you hide your population and technology?"

"Yes, I am a member of the council." Suran said. "We do not wish to have others on our planet. We are content."

"I am not content." Sulu walked back towards Suran. "I am concerned for my crew. You must release them."

"Must?" Genel wrinkled her nose as if the word tasted bad in her mouth. "What right have you to make demands?"

"My crew is my primary concern." Sulu addressed Suran. "I need to know if they are all right."

"You spoke to them." Genel said.

"Dr. Patrick did not answer." Sulu said. "I don't know his condition."

Genel and Suran looked at each other. They put their heads together and spoke quietly. After a moment, they closed their eyes. The rest of the landing party materialized under the star Sol. They were all awake. Their greetings to each other were surprised and chaotic. Chekov quieted them by calling out to Sulu.

"Captain." Chekov started towards Sulu but was detained by the appearance of a shimmering blue force field around the group. "What is going on?"

"Away team status?" Sulu asked.

Chekov took a quick count of the crew. "All present and accounted for. All alive and well, Sir."

"Thank you, Suran A'Gar." Sulu said. "Now, may I ask your intentions regarding myself and my crew?"

"You do not need to know our intentions." Genel's smile seemed little more than a sneer to Sulu. "Since you can do nothing to alter them. We will continue as we always have."

"Nice." Gonzoles said under her breath to Dr. Patrick.

Genel turned to the landing party. She raised her hand towards Gonzoles. "You. Come." Lt. Gonzoles hesitated. She felt herself pulled towards the force field. She braced herself for the shock, but passed through without any pain.

"Genel." Suran warned her with the stern tone of her voice. The force pulling Gonzoles suddenly released her. Gonzoles slowly walked over to Captain Sulu. "You are called Lt. Gonzoles."

"Yes." Her answer was unsure and wary. She looked to Sulu for a clue as to what she should do next. The captain met her gaze and with the slightest movement of his head nodded. Gonzoles turned to Suran. Her voice was stronger and more sure when she added. "I am Lt. Rosita Gonzoles."

Sulu turned back to the Jush.ra women. "Suran A'Gar, in your observations of us, you seem interested in the gender differences. We wondered why."

"Suran." Genel said. "This is proving tiresome."

"No need for you to stay sister." Suran walked a slow circle around Sulu and Gonzoles. But Genel made no movement to leave. "Captain Hikaru Sulu, I am most interested in the way your crew has operated while on our planet."

"The crew of a starship does not survive unless it acts as a team." Sulu said. "I believe that is how we have responded to your obstacles."

"Yes." Suran said. "You protected each other and cooperated to achieve a goal. Even after one of your number was gone and there was no way for you to follow, you continued to search. Is this normal for your species?"

"Yes." Sulu said.

"You could have asked us." Gonzoles added. "An exchange of information is standard procedure when we encounter a new society."

"Impudent." Genel said to Suran.

"Yes." Suran replied calmly. "Lt. Rosita Gonzoles, you are a female of your kind."

"Yes."

"You live and work with the males of your species." Suran observed.

"Yes." Gonzoles said. "I studied and trained for years to prepare myself for my life on a starship. What does gender have to do with that?"

"We find the male of the species to be very different than us." Suran said. "And most disturbing."

"I understand." Gonzoles couldn't help but smile. "There are differences."

"Yet you work with him." Suran said. She turned back to Sulu. "He is leader."

"In this case." Gonzoles nodded. "You don't work with your males?"

"The males and females live separately here." Suran explained.

"And the females are the leaders?" Sulu asked.

"We have our leaders." Suran explained. "The males have their own leaders. We are merely separate."

"Who makes planetary decisions?" Gonzoles asked. Suran squinted at Gonzoles as if confused by the question. Gonzoles tried again. "Who decided to fire a missile on our party?"

"Ah." Suran nodded. "I did."

"Why?" Sulu asked.

"The protection of the family." Suran said.

"We mean you no harm." Sulu said.

"You are not capable of harm." Genel dismissed him with a toss of her head. "But we must see to the safety of our children. Protect them from criminals."

"Criminals?" Gonzoles asked.

"You were exiled from your ship onto our planet without food or water." Suran said. "It is a punishment befitting the most heinous of crimes."

"The missile was clearly not indicative of your level of technology." Sulu said.

"It was sufficient." Suran said. "We found it most curious that the ship that cast you out, then protected you. It was then we decided to study you further."

"Before termination." Genel added.

Once again the Excelsior crew was transported to another location. It was an open room with a rows of bunks against either of the longer walls. There was an open doorway. A small hall led to another room with a table and chairs.

"It would appear the scientist are finished with the white mice for today." Dr. Patrick said. "I guess this is home."

They explored the two rooms and hall. Sulu opened a door in the hall way. It was a complete bathroom. He looked at Gonzoles who was leaning on the table. "Looks like you got your wish, Rosita."

Gonzoles walked over and looked in. "Complete with a tub." She noted. "I wonder how long they plan to keep us."

Sulu put his hand on her shoulder. "We will find a way out of here."

"Yes Sir." She nodded. Rosita waited a moment. When Sulu didn't leave, she finally said. "If you'll excuse me, Sir."

"Of course." Sulu quickly left the bathroom and joined Chekov and Patrick at the table. They each had a cup of what looked like coffee. "Where did that come from?"

"A replicator." Chekov nodded towards a panel in the wall just above the counter. "Of course we had to explain the concept of coffee. But it came up with a reasonable facsimile."

Sulu spoke to the replicator. "One coffee."

"A hot drink made from roasted bean containing caffeine." the replicaotr replied. Another mug materialized on the counter top.

Sulu sampled the coffee and brought it back to the table. "I wonder how their computer knew what caffeine was. The universal translator shouldn't have translated it."

"Pavel remembered the chemical formula." Patrick said. "That translated."

"Let's turn our thoughts to the problem at hand." Sulu said. "How are we going to get out of here?"

"Once again we were transported in." Chekov said. "There are no doors of any kind. So far the only equipment we've seen is the replicator."

"Anything we can use?" Sulu asked.

"I don't know." Chekov shrugged. "I assume we will be watched. Examining the replicator may be difficult."

"If they continue to study us." Dr. Patrick said. "Chances are they will be occupied whenever a couple of us are taken out for testing. That will be the time to try to access the replicator's controls."

"Agreed." Sulu nodded. Lt. Gonzoles and the security officers all filed into the eating area together. They were ill at ease and stood around the door unsure what to do.

"Lights in the other room suddenly went off." Gonzoles reported. Eight food trays appeared on the counter. "I guess it's feeding time at the zoo."

"I'm hungry." Sulu shrugged. He got up and took a dinner tray. The others followed suit. Their dinner consisted of a large salad of local vegetables with a dark bread shaped in small round loaves. They ate in relative silence for awhile. Everyone was all too aware that the Jush.ra might be listening.

They were pretty much finished eating when Mr. Silverman asked. "What happens next, Captain?"

Sulu sat at the head of the table. He looked around at his crew. They had all wanted to ask the question and they all expected him to have the answer. "I don't see that we have any choice. I don't believe they will let us go. We have to find our own way back to the ship."

"Do we cooperate with their observations?" Briscoe asked.

"Whether we cooperate or not is immaterial." Chekov said. "If they are looking at us scientifically, any behavior will be noted."

"If they take you for testing, you will be isolated." Patrick added. "You will have to make up your own mind about cooperating."

"Do not put yourself in danger." Sulu said. "But the doctor is correct. You will have to decide just how far you are willing to go. At some point in time we may need to take a united stand not to cooperate, but that decision will come later."

"Yes Sir." Briscoe nodded. Again they all fell silent.

"When I was a kid, fourth or fifth grade," Dr. Patrick said to no one in particular. "I did a school science fair project with white mice running a maze. Standard stuff."

"Did you win the prize?" Chekov asked.

"First place." Pat smiled. "But then I always got first place. It was a little backwater town in New Zealand without much local competition. Now, I am beginning to understand how the mice felt."

"You learn something new every day." Briscoe said quietly.

Dr. Patrick turned towards her. "What did you say, Ensign?"

"It is one of my mother's favorite sayings." Ensign Briscoe felt her cheeks redden as she explained. "You learn something new every day."

"A wise woman." Chekov said. The lights dimmed noticeably. The Excelsior crew became more alert, looking around for clues. "Are they trying to tell us something?"

"Lights out?" Mr. Huynh suggested as the lights dimmed again. They could barely see each other sitting across the table.

"They are trying to train us." D'Amico said. "Like a you train a dog."

"Perhaps." Captain Sulu stood up. "But sleep is not a bad idea. It seems the lights are back on in the other room."

He left the dim light of the eating area for the some what brighter sleeping area. One by one the crew got up and followed him. Sulu took the first bunk he came to. Chekov sat down on the bunk next to the Captain. Gonzoles and Briscoe decided on the last two bunks.

"Not much on privacy." Gonzoles sat on the edge of her bunk facing Briscoe.

Briscoe sat on her bunk and leaned forward so only Gonzoles could hear her. "Don't you

feel like we should be doing something more?"

"Yes, I do." Gonzoles whispered. "But I couldn't tell you what. We'll just have to bide our time and seize any opportunity that presents itself."

"Such as?"

"You and I may have an advantage here." Gonzoles said. "Perhaps we can get Suran to listen to us."

"They are treating us like lab rats." Briscoe reminded her.

"I know." Gonzoles nodded. "But Suran at least seemed to want to listen. The other one doesn't even want to keep us alive. So if you get a chance to talk, talk only to Suran A'Gar."

"Ok." Briscoe nodded. Both she and Gonzoles leaned back in their beds. The mattress was a thin cushion laying on a hard slab. There were no pillows or blankets. Briscoe took off her jacket and rolled it into a ball to serve as a pillow. She took off her boots and laid them on the floor. As she settled herself on her stomach, she looked over at Gonzoles and grinned. "It's a good thing I'm exhausted."

Chekov looked around at the away team as they settled in to sleep. "I do not like this, Hikaru." Chekov whispered. "How are we going to get into that replicator? They are obviously watching us."

"Pavel." Sulu whispered back. "Do you watch your pets when they sleep?"

"I never had any pets." Chekov said.

"Trust me. Once they think we are all asleep, you and I will have a little more freedom to inspect the replicator." Captain Sulu laid down on his back and closed his eyes.

Chekov laid down on his side facing Sulu. "What will we use for light and tools?"

"Your department." Sulu said.

After the away team had settled down on the bunks, the lights slowly dimmed to almost total darkness. Sulu waited. Someone started snoring. He waited a while longer. When he did sit up, he saw Chekov's silhouette immediately sit up also. Without a word, they both got up and quietly felt their way to the hall. Sulu opened the door to the bathroom, the light came on. He smiled at Chekov. Chekov walked past him to get a chair from the eating area. He brought it back and blocked the bathroom door open.

The light did not shine directly on the replicator, but it did let them move around the eating area without walking into anything. Chekov ran his fingers around the replicator looking for some kind of control panel. He climbed up on the counter. Finally he found a seam that appeared to be part of a small panel door. He tried pushing it and pulling it, but it would not open.

"I need something to pry it with." Chekov whispered. Sulu checked his pockets but there was nothing useful there. Sulu looked around the room. The table had been cleared. There was absolutely nothing in the room. Sulu heard someone by the bathroom door. He looked to see Dr. Patrick.

"Pat." Sulu whispered. "What are you doing?"

"Couldn't sleep." Patrick whispered back. "Captivity does that to me. Guess I'm funny that way."

"Pat." Chekov whispered. "Do you have your pocket knife?"

"You carry a pocket knife?" Sulu asked.

"Always have." Patrick handed the small knife to Chekov. "Ever since my Dad gave me

my first one when I was ten. Mom almost killed him for it. You'd be surprised how often it comes in handy."

"I'll remember that." Sulu said. Sitting on the counter, Chekov pried the door off the control panel. A small light illuminated the alien controls. Chekov studied the unfamiliar configuration.

"This culture is very odd." Pat said.

"It's not the first time we run into a culture that keeps segments of society strictly separated." Sulu reminded him. "The Porta separate themselves by age groups."

"True." Pat nodded. "I guess my problem is that I can't get a hold on Suran A'Gar. What kind of a title is mother of many?"

"My wife would find it a most honorable title." Chekov said without looking away from the panel. "As would yours, Hikaru."

"Oh yes." Sulu smiled. Before Sulu could ask if he had found anything useful, Chekov was transported out of the eating area. "Damn."

Chekov found himself sitting on the floor of the domed room. Suran A'Gar stood in front of him. He slipped the pocket knife into his pocket and slowly stood up.

"You are the one called Chekov?" Suran asked.

"Commander Pavel Chekov." He nodded.

"There was a word." She said. "It does not translate into our language."

"Which word?" Chekov asked.

Suran moved her mouth with great concentration to pronounce the alien word. "Wife."

"Ah." Chekov smiled. "Yes, I referred to my wife. She is my spouse." Suran still did not understand. Chekov tried again. "My marriage partner. My mate."

"Ah, mate." Suran nodded. That word translated into the Jush.ra language. "It is an action, not a person."

"Well, to us it is both." Chekov smiled. "Many on my planet choose to live our lives in mating pairs. We call it marriage."

"And your wife is on your ship?"

"No." Chekov said. "My wife is at home with my son."

"Ah, she is mother." Suran nodded.

"Yes." Chekov smiled. "She is the mother of my son."

"Captain Hikaru Sulu also has a wife?"

"Yes." Chekov nodded. Suran A'Gar closed her eyes. In a moment, Sulu was standing next to Chekov.

"There you are." Sulu winked at Chekov. "Hello Suran A'Gar."

"Captain Hikaru Sulu, you have a wife?" Suran asked.

"Yes."

"I have been trying to explain the concept of marriage." Chekov explained. "But I don't seem to be doing a good job."

"I see." Sulu nodded. "The Jush.ra do not mate with one partner?"

Suran opened her eyes wide, staring at him with surprise. "Only one? What would be the purpose of limiting mating in this manner?"

"Well," Sulu scratched the back of his neck. "The bond between husband and wife is more than just mating. When we marry, we form a new family. We raise our children together."

"Males of your species raise children?"

"Yes." Chekov said. "When we are not on our ship, we are with our families."

"And you do not mate with other females?"

"Not if we know what is good for us." Chekov quipped.

"This is not the time for levity, Pavel." Sulu said. He turned to Suran A'Gar. "When two people marry they pledge to mate only with each other."

"Are all the males of your crew married?" Suran asked.

"No." Sulu said. "Of those here, only Commander Chekov and I are married."

"Then you only mate when married?" Suran asked.

"No." Sulu said. "When a human is not married they can mate with who they wish. As long as the other person wants to mate also."

"Then why did not the other males of your crew mate with the females Briscoe and Gonzoles?" Suran asked.

"You expected us to mate for your amusement?" Chekov asked.

"Amusement? No." Suran said. "We are curious. We do not understand males and females living together. We come together with our males only for mating."

"Then you will have to remain curious." Sulu said. "We will not mate for you."

Suran A'Gar closed her eyes again. Sulu and Chekov found themselves laying in their bunks in the dark. "Hikaru." Chekov rolled onto his side. "Do we tell the others what they want?"

"Definitely." Sulu stared into the darkness. "Try to get some sleep, Pavel. I'm sure our jailers will let us know when it is time to perform again."

They woke to the slow brightening of the lights. One by one they got up, washed up, and made their way to the eating area. When the last member of the away team sat down at the table, breakfast materialized on the counter. As Chekov picked up his tray he nudged Sulu and nodded towards the control panel. The cover was still open. Sulu nodded slightly, then took his tray and sat down.

"Stew for breakfast?" Tony D'Amico shook his head and played with his spoon. "What are they thinking?"

"If you wish to instruct the Jush.ra on proper nutritional requirements Mr. D'Amico, go right ahead." Sulu said. "Right now we have more important things to talk about."

"Sorry Captain." DiAmico said.

"What happened last night?" Dr. Patrick asked. Chekov got up from his seat and walked over to the counter. He jumped up onto the counter so he could study the control panel again.

"Mr. Chekov and I had another conversation with Suran A'Gar." Sulu said. "We have confused our captors. They expected that when men and women went to bed together in the same room that something more than sleeping would happen. Had to happen."

"Excuse me, Captain." Briscoe spoke up. "But they thought we would have sex with each other?"

"Yes Ensign."

"In a room full of people?" The pitch of Briscoe's voice rose more than she wanted. "Knowing that they were watching? Are they crazy?"

"The males and female sectors of their society only mix for mating." Chekov explained

from his post on the counter. "So they don't understand how we can be together and not mate."

Briscoe started to object to the whole idea, but Gonzoles put her hand on Briscoe's arm. Ensign Briscoe looked Lt. Gonzoles in the eye then down at her stew. Gonzoles turned to Sulu. "Captain, did you explain why their experiment did not go as planned?"

"I tried." Sulu said. "I also told Suran A'Gar that we would not engage in such activity for their benefit."

"What did she say?" Mr. Huynh asked.

"She did not answer." Sulu said. "She sent us back here."

"I wonder what they will do now." Silverman pushed his bowl of stew away. He wasn't the only one who ate sparingly. Briscoe barely touched her breakfast.

"That's a good question, Mr. Silverman." Patrick said. "I'm curious Captain. All they talked about last night was sex? Didn't they bring up what you were doing after lights out?"

"No." Sulu said. "They did not bring it up at all. I believe they feel we are incapable of challenging the situation. Since they are sure we can't pick it, they don't care how much we play with the lock."

"Perhaps this is just another test." Chekov said. He used Pat's knife to probe the control panel.

"Then why continue, Mr. Chekov?" Huynh asked.

"Maybe I can surprise them." Chekov glanced at him and smiled. "Scientists like to be surprised."