

Captain Sulu walked into the No Ranks Café in the early afternoon. It was July and the lunch rush ran later than other times of the year. It had been close to five months since he had been in the same room with his family. It was the first time he had been home since the landing party had been held captive by the Jushra. Jimmi smiled at him and walked into his arms. He held her tightly, closing his eyes.

“God, I have missed you.” He whispered.

“What’s wrong?” Jimmi asked as she held onto him.

“Nothing.” Hikaru said with a sigh and slowly loosened his grip on her.

Jimmi took his hand and led him to her office. She called to Randy to keep an eye on her tables. In her office, Jimmi led him to the love seat against the far wall. They sat down together. He pulled her close and kissed her long and hard. Jimmi pulled back a bit so she could look him in the eye.

“What happened?” Jimmi asked.

Hikaru took a deep breath and let out slowly. “It’s classified.”

“Well I assumed that, Captain.” Jimmi winked at him and smiled. She turned more serious when she asked, “What can you tell me?”

Hikaru sighed and started slowly, “There are many times when we are in harm’s way. It is the nature of the job. And we know that. But we don’t think about it. We can’t think about it, you know?” Jimmi just nodded as he talked. “But recently we walked into a situation. I can’t go into the details. But there was a point when I honestly thought I would never see you again. It was cold and dark and there was nothing I could do to change the situation. Nothing but just sit there and think. Think about you and the kids and how much time I am missing with you. The thought of not seeing you again....”

When he did not continue, Jimmi hugged him tightly. There was nothing she could say to ease his mind. But she was glad he was sharing his feelings with her. She whispered in his ear, “I’m here. I will always be here.” He returned her hug; letting himself enjoy her warmth. After a moment she whispered to him, “And I know exactly what you need right now.” She loosened her grip on him, smiled and called towards the steps that led to the family’s apartment. “Harry! Dee! Daddy’s home.”

The eight year old boy and four year old girl came running down the steps at top speed. They jumped onto their father, laughing and talking. He hugged them each, laughing and answering them. Jimmi went back to work, leaving the kids to entertain their father.

roughly 18 months later....

Jimmi and Mike were tending bar at the Fly by Night. Mike had returned from his vacation, but Jimmi did not leave immediately. She knew the Excelsior would be in port soon to pick up their first officer who was returning to duty from Earth. She kept her eye on the door for Pavel. Jimmi was busy with quite a few tables for the dinner rush when he finally walked in.

Jimmi finished delivering dinner to a couple of officers and put her tray on an empty table. She walked up to Pavel and hugged him tightly. “Congratulations!”

“Thank you, Princess.” He returned her hug. “She wants you to come for a visit when you can.”

"You know I will." Jimmi smiled as they walked over the bar together. She asked. "So tell me, are they beautiful?"

"Of course." Pavel laughed. "With Catrina as a mother, how can they not be?"

"Mike," Jimmi said. "Pavel's money is no good here tonight."

"Got it, Boss." Mike smiled. He reached across the bar to shake Pavel's hands. "Twins boys, eh? C.J. is going to have her hands full."

"She is just happy to have the pregnancy over with now." Pavel said. "I don't think the reality of taking care of two infants has set in yet."

"Boss, table 8." Mike nodded towards a table in the corner.

"Back to work." Jimmi smiled at Pavel and walked off to see what the mixture of aliens at table 8 wanted. Ambassador Asthta, of Rigel Four, smiled at Jimmi as she approached. Asthta was a short man with little hair and a friendly smile. The three alien women that sat with him looked like humanoid cats to her. Their bodies were covered with short fur except for their faces and hands. Their ears were slightly pointed. They wore long robes that reminded Jimmi of ancient monks of Earth. "Can I get you something else, Ambassador?"

"Yes." The Ambassador smiled at her. "We'd like some tea and something sweet for dessert. What do you suggest?"

"Let me bring you a selection of a couple of desserts." Jimmi said. "Today I have a chocolate cake, cheese cake, apple strudel and cherry pie."

"A wonderful selection of Earth desserts." Asthta nodded. "You really must try some Rigilian chocolate patem."

"Oh I love patem. I tried it a couple of years ago when on Rigel Three for a family vacation. So creamy, so rich." Jimmi smiled. "Anyway, I will bring the dessert and tea right out."

Jimmi returned to the table in a few minutes with the dessert order. One of the alien women looked at her and asked. "May I ask a question?"

"Sure." Jimmi smiled as she placed a pot of tea on the table.

"You are human?"

"Yes."

"Who is your family?" The fur covered woman asked.

"Who?" Jimmi cocked her head to the side. "When I said family vacation, I meant my immediate family. My husband and my three children. My more extended family was not with us."

"Extended family?" A different Jush.ra woman asked.

"Yes, my father, sister, her husband and children, aunts, uncles, cousins and of course all those on my husband's side of the family." Jimmi said.

"We've been discussing the nature of families." Asthta explained. "The Jushra definition of family is more tribal and the women and children live separately from the men."

"Interesting." Jimmi said with a smile. "Let me know if you need anything else."

When Jimmi returned to the bar, Mike said. "I think all Asthta does for the diplomatic corp is show dignitaries around. He's been in here many times, always with some aliens I've never seen before."

"They asked me about families." Jimmi shrugged and poured herself a cup of coffee.

“Evidently their definition is different than ours.”

Chekov looked over his shoulder at the group that Mike and Jimmi were talking about. His smile disappeared. He turned back to the bar and took a long drink of his beer. Quietly he said, “Jimmi.”

Jimmi walked over to him. He had not called her Princess and he sounded quite serious. She answered softly. “What Pav?”

“Did they give you their names?” Pavel asked.

“No.” Jimmi said. “The Ambassador called them the Jushra. What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Pavel shook his head. He smiled at her. “May I use your office to call Excelsior?”

“Of course.” Jimmi nodded. “Should I be worried, Pavel?”

“Of course not.” Pavel still smiled as he stood up.

As he walked towards her office, Jimmi said to no one, “Right.”

Chekov used his command code to access the Captain’s communication channel. It would ensure that Sulu answered the call in private. When he appeared on the Fly by Night’s view screen, Pavel could see that Sulu was in his office. He was smiling.

“How’d it go?” Sulu asked. “Cathy and the babies all right?”

“Fine.” Chekov dismissed the subject quickly. Sulu’s smile faded as Chekov spoke. “I am at Fly by Night. When will you be here?”

“About an hour.” Sulu answered in the same serious tone as Chekov used. “What’s going on?”

“There is an Ambassador here, having dinner with three Jushra women.” Chekov explained. “I have not talked to them, but one looks very much like the one we dealt with a couple of years ago. What was her name?”

“Suran A’Gar.” Sulu said. He found it hard to believe that Chekov forgot the name of their captor. “I will be there as soon as possible. Do you plan to talk to them?”

“I don’t know.” Chekov said. “It was just unsettling to see them here.”

“Yeah.” Sulu agreed. “I’ll see you soon. Excelsior out.”

Captain Sulu returned to the bridge. Dr. Patrick was there and Ensign Briscoe was manning the navigation station. She had transferred from security to the navigation department only a month after the incident on the Jushra planet.

Dr. Patrick took one look at Sulu and asked. “What was that all about?”

“Chekov reports there are Jushra women at the Fly by Night.” Sulu said after he sat down in the command chair. “Increase speed to warp nine, Mr. Kim.”

“Warp nine, aye.” Kim repeated. “New ETA 13 minutes.”

Briscoe turned her chair to look at Sulu but said nothing. He acknowledged her with a slight nod of his head but also said nothing. Pat sighed and said “We should let the rest of the landing party know. I wouldn’t want anyone else to be blind sided by an unexpected contact.”

“Agreed.”

“Ambassador Asthta?” Chekov asked as he approached the Rigilian man who was on his

way back towards his table after having visited the mens room. Chekov was several inches taller and several years younger than the Ambassador.

"Yes?"

"I am Commander Chekov of Excelsior."

"Yes." The Ambassador nodded as if he already knew even though they had never met. Asthta studied the Star Fleet officer. "What can I do for you Commander?"

Chekov wanted to demand what the hell he was doing with the Jush.ra women and how could he consider talking to them after the way they had treated him and his friends. Instead he said, "I thought you should know that the Excelsior is on her way here and should arrive in less than an hour. I do not think this is the best place for your.... guests."

"I understand." Asthta nodded. He slowly added, "Suran A'Gar said that she would like to speak to you when she saw you walk into the bar. Would you be willing to talk to her, Commander?"

"I do not want to speak to her." Chekov said with more distaste than he wanted to show. He turned and returned to the bar.

Captain Sulu walked into the Fly by Night. He quickly took in the room. He ignored most of the customers. Chekov was sitting at the bar, Mike behind it. His wife was on her way towards him. And the Jush.ra women were getting up from their table, evidently preparing to leave the bar. Hikaru smiled at Jimmi. He took her in his arms, hugged her tight and kissed her.

"Hi." She smiled. "You are early."

"How can I be early?" He asked. "I did not tell you when I would arrive."

"I have my spies." She teased.

"Dad!" Harry came running to his father. Sulu hugged the nine year old tightly, momentarily lifting him off his feet then setting him back down. He would be ten in just three months and looked like a clone of his father.

"Daddy!" Dee raised her hands to her father as she caught up with her big brother. The Captain picked up the five year old girl and hugged her as well. Jimmi kept Dee's shiny black hair cut short so that it curled around her little round face.

"What are you two doing in the bar so late?" He asked.

"It's not late." Harry insisted. "We had popcorn."

"Captain Sulu." The woman's voice interrupted the family reunion.

Sulu turned towards her, Demora still in his arms. The Rigilian Ambassador and other two Jush.ra women had stopped at the door of the bar waiting for her. His tone was cool and controlled when he said, "Suran A'Gar."

"You are not surprised to see us here?" A'Gar asked.

"Commander Chekov informed me you were here." Sulu said.

"Of course." Suran A'Gar nodded. "This is your family?"

"Excuse me." Sulu said curtly. He was not about to answer any more of her questions. Especially when they had to do with his family. He took Harry's hand and walked away. "Come on kids, let's go upstairs. I want to check on the baby."

Jimmi watched her family walk away then turned back to the alien woman. But Suran A'Gar turned and left with her companions. Excelsior officers started coming into the bar. Jimmi walked over to Pavel. "Who were they?"

Chekov took a long drink of his beer before answering. "We accidentally made first contact with them not quite two years ago. Their actions were hostile. I am surprised to see them here with a Federation ambassador."

"I guess they worked out whatever the problem was." Jimmi shrugged and went back to work. A few minutes had passed before Dr. Patrick walked up to the bar and sat down next to Chekov. "Hi Pat. What can I get you?"

"A draft sounds good." Pat smiled at her. "Where's the Captain?"

"Upstairs with the kids." Jimmi said as she put the draft beer in front of him. She did not bother with the payment padd. "He couldn't get out of here fast enough. What is it about these Jush.ras that no one is telling me?"

Dr. Patrick shrugged. "It wasn't a pleasant experience."

Realizing that she was not going to get any more of an answer, Jimmi went to fill other orders. Gonzoles walked up between Chekov and Patrick. She very quietly asked. "Was it her?"

"Yes." Chekov said. "But let's keep this to ourselves. No need to have it all over the base."

Gonzoles sat down on the other side of Chekov. "So tell us about the babies, Pavel. Ten fingers? Ten toes?"

"Blond hair and blue eyes, I'll bet." Dr. Patrick commented.

"They are angels." Chekov grinned. "Of course, all they did was sleep while I was there. I hope Cathy devises some way to tell them apart, because they are absolutely identical."

When Captain Sulu returned to the bar, many of his crew were there. The security officers that had been on the landing party all sat together at a table with their department head, Mr. Johnson. The Jush.ra women were gone. He walked up to Chekov and Patrick at the bar. Both had lit cigar. Sulu sat next to his first officer. "Sorry I did not stop before, Pavel. Congratulations on the twins."

"Thanks." Chekov pulled a cigar out of his jacket pocket and handed it to Sulu with a grin. "Have a cigar."

"Who started this tradition of babies and cigars?" Jimmi asked from behind the bar as her husband lit his.

"I don't know." Sulu smiled at her. "You are the historian. Why don't you know?"

"Damn, now I am going to have to find out." Jimmi laughed. "What's the status upstairs?"

"I sent the babysitter home. Demora and Brian are asleep. The baby monitor is on." Sulu reported. "Harry has had his bath and is in bed with a book."

"I could get used to you being around." Jimmi smiled.

"Right back." Sulu said and wandered off towards the security officers' table. He grabbed a chair from a near by table and pulled it up backward next to Mel Johnson. The captain

straddled the chair, smiled and said, "I believe Mr. Chekov has at least enough cigars for everyone in the bar tonight."

"How can you smoke that, Captain?" Mr. Johnson asked with a smile.

"It's a good thing they are not allowed on ship." Sulu studied his cigar. "I could really get addicted to these things."

"Captain, was it her?" Crewman Tony D'Amico finally asked the question they had all been thinking about since before they left the ship.

"It was." The Captain nodded.

"The bitch." Crewman David Silverman said to the table at large. They all nodded.

"I guess there is nothing we can do about it." Crewman Nguyen Huynh looked to Sulu.

"Nothing." Sulu looked each man in the eye. "It's just one of those situations where the diplomats have taken over and it is out of our hands."

"Yes Sir." The three young men said together.

Jimmi saw Lt. Commander Rosita Gonzoles head toward the ladies room. She followed. There were several women in the ladies room. Jimmi stopped at the mirror and checked her hair and makeup. She waited until Rosita joined her. "Rosey, what is all this nonsense with the Jush.ra?"

Ensign Maggie Briscoe had walked in just as Jimmi was asking the question. She stopped dead in her tracks and stared wide-eyed at the Captain's wife. Gonzoles said, "I don't know what the Captain has told you, Jimmi. But there was an incident with a landing party on their planet."

"You were both on that landing party, weren't you?" Jimmi asked.

"Yes." Briscoe said quietly.

"What happened?" Jimmi asked.

Briscoe looked to Gonzoles before continuing on to the facilities. Gonzoles said, "I don't think I can tell you, Jimmi. Frankly, I don't want to think about it. All I can say is that it effected all of us on that landing party. But that was almost two years ago. Having them here just brought back some old feelings."

"Hikaru was on the landing party too, and Pavel." Jimmi said and asked at the same time. Gonzoles nodded. "Who else?"

"Pat, D'Amico, Silverman and Huynh." Gonzoles said.

Jimmi nodded to herself and thought about what else she could ask. Gonzoles waited. But she could not think of anything else. "Thanks Rosey."

Captain Sulu put his arm around his wife. He lowered his voice and asked. "Was there a meeting in the ladies room?"

Jimmi smiled and matched his hushed tone. "You know me. I will take my information where I can get it."

“Jeanie, let it go.” Sulu said. “I will admit the incident effected us and seeing them here was unsettling. But we are fine.”

“You’re sure?”

“I am sure.”

“That is pretty much what Rosita said.” Jimmi smiled at him.

Captain Sulu woke with a start. Damn dream. He knew what it was about, but he could never hold onto the details. It always left him feeling cold. He turned over in bed and reached for his sleeping wife. She was so warm. He snuggled up to her back, getting as much skin to skin contact as he could. She stirred in her sleep and whispered. “Are you ok?”

“Sure.” He whispered back. “I am just laying here hating the fact that I have to leave you tomorrow.”

“Then stay with me.” She smiled to herself and leaned into him.

He kissed her neck and countered, “Give me something to remember you by.”

Captain Sulu took his children to the park in the morning. Excelsior would be leaving orbit by early afternoon and he was spending a much time as possible with them. Harry and Demora were playing on the playground equipment. Sulu sat on a bench with 11 month old Brian standing next to him. The toddler’s curly red hair was a sharp contrast to his brother and sister. Brian inched his way around the bench as he watched the other base children run and play. He would be walking any day. He babbled to his father constantly.

Ensign Briscoe stopped at the edge of the park. She walked over to him. “Good morning, Captain.”

“Morning Briscoe.” Sulu smiled at her. “You’re up early. Aren’t you on second shift today?”

“My day off.” She explained. She leaned down and held out her hand to Brian. He reached out to her and grabbed her hand to walk toward her. “I thought I would take advantage of the base shops before we were on our way. He’s getting big.”

“Careful, he is teething.” Sulu warned. “He bites.”

Briscoe laughed and slowly moved the hand the little boy held onto so that he walked further away from the bench. “My mother always said they only bite the ones they love. But I don’t believe her.”

“It’s been awhile since I heard you quote your mother.” Sulu observed.

“I hear her in my head all the time, Captain.” Briscoe smiled at the toddler while she spoke. “Can I ask a question, Sir?”

“About Suran A’Gar?” Sulu asked. Briscoe nodded. “Ask.”

“I understand you spoke to her briefly, Sir.” Briscoe said. “What did she have to say?”

“Nothing.” Sulu said. “I did not stay around long enough for her to say anything. Did you think you might see her if you came to the base this morning?”

“Yes Sir.” Briscoe said as she turned Brian back towards his father. He followed the hand he was holding onto without question. “Although I am not sure what that would accomplish or even why I would want to see her.”

Captain Sulu just nodded. Briscoe let go of Brian’s hand just a baby step away from the Captain. Brian looked at his father, wobbled on unsteady legs and sat down quickly. Sulu reached down, picked the boy up and put him on his feet. Smiling, he said “Not yet, eh Bri?”

“Soon.” Briscoe said with a smile. She straightened up and left the park.

Jimmi joined her husband on the park bench. She leaned over and kissed him. “Thank you. I haven’t slept that late in ages.”

“Your welcome.” He put his arm around her shoulders. “I can’t believe how close Brian is to walking.”

“Any day now.” Jimmi agreed. Brian reached out to her, babbling with a big smile on his face. “Hi Bri. Are you having fun?”

Captain Sulu walked into Dr. Patrick’s office and made himself comfortable on the couch. “Well?”

“I’ve checked in with everyone from the landing party.” Pat reported. “There is no one I am worried about.”

“Good.” Sulu nodded. “What about yourself?”

“Me? I’m fine.” Pat smiled. “You?”

“Also fine.” Sulu matched the doctor’s smile. He turned more serious when he said. “But I can’t imagine what the diplomats are thinking. They can not seriously be thinking of bringing the Jush.ra into the Federation.”

“That’s not the only possibility.” Pat shrugged. “Could be just a getting to know you contact.”

“Non aggression agreement.” Sulu nodded.

“Perhaps trading information.” Pat suggested. “They had superior technology in some respects, but they did not have much information about other species or societies.”

“True.” Sulu nodded. “Luckily it is nothing we have to worry about.”