

The twins ran into the cabin and immediately attacked their older brother. The three laughing boys rolled on their parent's bed in a tangle of arms and legs. Pavel stopped in the doorway to watch them. Cathy had to raise her voice to get their attention. "Boys! Enough! Get ready for bed. It's late."

"Have you spoken to the office yet?" Pavel asked Cathy as the three boys rolled off the bed and wrestled on the floor. They giggled loudly and ignored their mother's orders.

"I'm waiting for them to make the connection." Cathy said. "Have you eaten?"

"Yes." Pavel nodded. "I need to take care of a few things in my office. I'll be back in about an hour."

"All right." Cathy said. Pavel left. Cathy sighed and turned her attention to the three savages she called sons. She would have to deal with Pavel's cool attitude later.

Commander Chekov's record keeping had taken longer than he anticipated. When Pavel walked back into his expanded cabin, Cathy sat at his desk talking to her assistant, Sam. She waved to him as he passed her to check on the boys. They were asleep in the three stacking bunks in an alcove no bigger than a closet. He adjusted the blanket that Peter had kicked off.

"Sam will send the employment records right away." Cathy said when he came back to her. "You will have them by the time you go back to work in the morning."

"I am only getting a few hours sleep." Chekov said. "Then I am going back to the bridge."

"Are you that angry with me for coming here, Pavel?"

"I have work to do." Pavel said as he took his uniform jacket off. "I would still be on the bridge now if you were not here."

"I'm sorry I am interfering with your schedule." Cathy said, although she did not sound sorry. "But Rosita tells me that seventy five of my employees are dead and I have to tell their families. Excuse me for using what little influence I have in Starfleet to get the real answers."

"Ah." Pavel turned towards the bathroom. "Now I am influence."

"Give me a break. That's not what I said." Cathy said. "What was I suppose to do?"

"Wait." Pavel turned in the doorway to look at her. "I would have given you the real answers as soon as I had them. You could have trusted me that much."

Cathy would have said something else, but the door closed behind him. Instead she undressed and got in bed to wait for him. When he came out she was sitting in bed brushing her blond hair. She was wearing a sleeveless olive green t-shirt with matching boxer shorts.

"Catrina." Pavel tied the belt of his robe. She looked so natural sitting on the bed with her legs crossed. Her eyes were not quite closed as she took the brush slowly through her long hair. He couldn't help himself. He smiled at her. "I haven't seen you in close to six months and that is what you are wearing to bed."

"I thought you were mad at me." Cathy shrugged.

"Not mad. A little annoyed, maybe." He laid down next to her and gently stroked her leg. Cathy uncrossed them and stretched her legs out on the bed next to him. He kissed her knee. "How about that satin night gown? The cream colored one."

"Left it home." She smiled at him. "I wasn't planning to come here. Remember?"

"No red teddy?" He worked his way up her legs.

"No." She laughed. "You don't like the way I look in this?"

"You look beautiful in everything." Pavel pulled on her shorts. "But I think I like you best in nothing at all."

Cathy shifted her weight to allow him to pull the boxer shorts off. Pavel tossed the shorts on the floor and turned his attention to her t-shirt. She dropped the brush and reached for the belt of his robe. Cathy kissed him and smiled. "You are so easy."

"Look who's talking."

After five hours of sleep, Pavel got up and showered. He dressed in a fresh uniform and checked his messages. With Lt. Mirek's report downloaded to a padd, he left his sleeping family for a cup of coffee in the mess hall. After his first cup of coffee, Chekov decide to eat breakfast.

Mr. Chekov was rereading Mirek's report when Dr. Patrick walked up to his table with a tray in hand. It was late in the third shift and they were the only two in the mess hall. "Mind if I join you?"

"Sit." Chekov said. "Seats are hard to come by in this crowd. How are things in sick bay?"

"It's calmed down a bit." Pat said. "Everyone we have is stable. And Gonzoles tells me all crew members of the convoy have been accounted for. So once I'm done with this, I'm off to bed."

"Everyone has been identified?"

"Yes." Pat nodded and covered a long yawn with his hand. "Do we know what really happened yet?"

"No." Pavel sipped his second cup of coffee. "I have been reading Mirek's report but there is nothing there we did not know before I went to bed. Lt. Wong is on duty on the bridge. I will be checking in with him shortly."

"I heard Cathy had a little trouble landing." Pat smiled. He propped his head in his hand while he ate his sandwich. His golden blond bangs dropped over his forehead making him appear half asleep.

"She did not bother to tell Mr. Smith who she was." Chekov said. "She simply asked for permission to land."

"Did she think if she just smiled and batted her eyelashes, he would ignore regulations?" Pat laughed.

"She will deny that to her deathbed." Pavel laughed too. "But I do think she enjoyed confusing Mr. Smith. I have explained to her that it was his first day. She found it amusing to say the least."

"Your wife has a wicked sense of humor, Pavel." Pat yawned again.

"One of her most endearing qualities." Pavel smiled. "Why don't you go to bed?"

"I'm on my way." Pat finished his drink. "Good night."

Lt. Kim turned the command chair when he heard the turbo lift door open behind him. Commander Chekov walked onto the bridge of the Excelsior. Lt. Kim stood. The younger Asian man was almost exactly the same height as the first officer.

"Report."

"All the crew of the convoy have been accounted for, Mr. Chekov." Kim reported. "The medical transports scheduled ETA is approximately eighteen hours. Captain Sulu has called a staff meeting at the beginning of first shift."

"Thank you, Heesun." Chekov nodded and walked over to the science station. Lt. Kim manned the helm station, leaving the command chair empty. "Anything new, Lt. Wong?"

"I've downloaded the records of the bridge escape pod." Wong said. "But I am confused by these files."

"What?" Chekov leaned down to look over Wong's shoulder.

Aaron Wong switched his readouts to the escape pod log of passengers and time indexes just prior to launch. "Captain Shah was the last one into the pod."

"That is not unusual." Chekov shrugged.

"Yes Sir." Wong nodded and switched back to the directory of pod files. "The bridge was in total disarray. I suppose the captain did not have time to order the black box records transferred to the escape pod."

"The records are not there?"

"No Sir." Wong said. "Of course, on a Starfleet ship the transfer is automatic with the call to abandon ship. Freighters don't always have that feature."

"The Odessa is Vasco's top of the line long range heavy duty freighter." Chekov said. "And it just went through a systems upgrade."

"Well, we have no official record of the battle from Odessa, Mr. Chekov." Wong shrugged. He ran the full directory. "The records of the escape pod are intact. The pod's sensors and distress signal were activated automatically on ejection of the pod from the ship."

"Is there any new information from these records?" Chekov asked.

"I'm about half way through." Wong switched back to the sensor log he had been reviewing when Chekov came onto the bridge. "Nothing new so far."

"Keep me informed." Chekov said. He turned to the communication station manned by Ensign Skorny. He was a skinny kid with a pale complexion and very short almost white hair. "Mr. Skorny, Hail the Eagle."

"Aye Sir." The young man nodded and immediately complied with the order. The bridge of the U.S.S. Eagle appeared on Excelsior's main view screen. The command chair was held by a woman lieutenant that Chekov did not know.

Chekov walked down to stand next to Excelsior's empty command chair. "I am Commander Chekov. First officer of Excelsior."

"Lt. Batenelli." She introduced herself. "What can I do for you, Sir?"

"I have just become aware that the bridge escape pod of the Odessa did not contain the official ship's logs." Chekov said. "I understand you have the bridge escape pod of the Terhara on board. Do you have the ship's logs?"

Lt. Batenelli turned to her science officer. "Jack?"

"Lt. Harris." The tall, athletic science officer introduced himself as he came down to the command station. "We do have the command escape pod, Mr. Chekov. However there are no sensor logs, communication logs, or captain's duty log."

"I see." Chekov nodded. "Do you have the ship's captain?"

"Yes Sir." Batenelli said. "Captain Tawna Kove. A Rigelian. She's still in sick bay. We have not gotten a statement from her yet."

"I would be interested in the explanation as to why the logs were not transferred to the pods when the ship was abandoned." Chekov said.

"I will inform Captain Rosenblatt of your interest, Sir." Batenelli said.

"Thank you, Lt. Batenelli." Chekov said. "Excelsior out."

"Lt. Wong." Chekov said. "Who has the other two command escape pods?"

"The Tian Nan Men has the Ibadan's bridge pod." Wong said. "And the Potemkin has the command pod from the Wi-kar."

The senior staff gathered in the conference room at the beginning of first shift. Gonzoles and Smith were the first to arrive.

"Good morning, Mr. Smith." Gonzoles smiled as she sat in her normal spot at the table.

"Morning." Smith stifled a yawn and sat next to her.

"Not enough sleep last night?" Gonzoles asked.

"Between changing schedules and packing and unpacking, I'm a little behind." Smith shrugged it off. "I'll catch up."

"You haven't changed the bridge schedule for the helm station, have you?" Gonzoles asked.

"No." Smith said. "Is there a problem?"

"No." Gonzoles sighed. "I just told Lek a little white lie yesterday and I was hoping I'd be sitting next to someone else this shift."

"Well, well, well." Smith smiled. "Lt. Commander Gonzoles lying! I am surprised. And interested."

"I just didn't want to get into it." Gonzoles shrugged. "So I told him I had never met the CMO on the Potemkin. He's such a--"

"Gossip." Smith said. "Mirek told me. It's a little late to change Sareth's assignment for this shift, but I can arrange it so you don't work the same shift from now on if you want."

"Don't be silly." Gonzoles said. Commanders Rand and Williams came in together and sat down. "He just drives me crazy sometimes."

"Ok." Smith shrugged. "Good morning, Commanders."

"Morning." Rand smiled. "Who are we talking about?"

"Nobody." Gonzoles said. Captain Sulu followed Chekov in.

"I know who drives you crazy." Janice smiled at Rosita. Gonzoles made a face at Rand causing her to laugh.

"Where is Pat?" Sulu asked as he sat down.

"He was on his way to bed when I saw him about three hours ago." Chekov said. "We should proceed without him."

"All right." Captain Sulu said. "Willy, what do we know about the freighters themselves?"

"All four were of the same class." Commander Williams reported. "Roughly the same size, same engine capabilities. All four ships were top of the line, with state of the art shields,

weapons, and computer systems. The Verillian configuration is different. It is spherical with the ship's holds along the outer portions of the sphere and the mechanical and living spaces in the center. The ships from Earth and Rigel are more linear with the holds together in one area and the mechanical and living spaces next to them."

"Not easy targets." Sulu nodded. "Have we received the employment records from Vasco?"

"Yes." Chekov nodded. "I have Lt. Mirek looking them over now. I also have found that none of the convoy's sensor logs, communication logs, or duty logs have been recovered."

"None?" Sulu asked.

"None." Chekov said. "I understand it is not an automatic feature on all nonmilitary ships. But according to Cathy, both Vasco ships emergency systems were configured to transfer all logs to the command escape pod once the abandon ship order had been given."

"Interesting." Sulu said. He turned to Gonzoles. "Anything more on the shields?"

"Everyone that I have questioned said the shields were up." Gonzoles said. "The systems analyst noted they were not responding to engineering controls. But she had not had a chance to investigate that before the attack."

"It would take a high level computer expert with inside knowledge to sabotage the shield controls and reprogram all four emergency systems without being detected." Smith said. "Not your average freighter rat."

"But without the communications logs we can't find out who might of had contact with all four ships." Captain Sulu said. "Mr. Smith, check into the convoy. How did it come together? Who outside the crews had access to all four ships?"

"Yes Sir." Smith nodded.

"Gonzoles review the survivors statements from the other ships." Sulu said. "See if there is any other mention of problems with the shields."

"Yes Sir." Gonzoles said.

"Pavel, I believe we need to talk to the rest of these tug captains." Sulu said.

"Captain Kove of the Terhara and Captain Shah of Odessa are both in serious condition." Chekov said. "But Captain Byrd and Captain Orm have been released from sick bay."

"We'll start with Shah since he's here." Sulu said. "Rand, let me know as soon as we have contact with the medical transports."

"Aye."