

"There's Mommy." Pavel said to Joey. The six year old ran to his mother with arms outstretched. She scooped him up and he wrapped his legs around her waist.

"My goodness you're getting big." Cathy whispered to the boy. He buried his face in her shoulder. "I can hardly carry you anymore."

Jamie held his father's hand with both of his while Peter stood apart with his arms crossed in front of him. These good byes were always hard on the boys. Pavel kissed Joey. He picked up Jamie and carried him into the ship. Cathy and Joey followed them. They strapped the twins into their seats.

"Be good, boys." Pavel gave them each a last kiss. "I love you."

"I love you, Daddy."

"Peter's mad." Pavel said quietly to Cathy at the door to the small ship. "He won't talk to me."

"I hate this." Cathy whispered. She did not want to admit the goodbyes were also hard on her. "I thought it would get easier as they got older."

"It will." Pavel took her in his arms. His closeness was the only comfort he could offer her. "It really will."

"Come on. Let's talk to him." Cathy reluctantly pulled herself away. The nine-year-old boy stood at the bottom of the ramp into the ship when his parents came back out. "Peter, it's time to go."

"I know." Peter said softly. He had his hands in his pockets and was staring intently at the floor.

"I will see you soon, Peter." Pavel rested his hands on his oldest son's shoulders. Peter just nodded without looking up. Pavel kissed the top of his head. "I love you, Peter."

"Peter." Cathy said softly. "It's ok to be angry and sad. Dad and I are both sad when we can't be together. But..."

"I know." Peter said again. He had heard it all before and it never made any difference.

"I will call you tomorrow, Peter." Pavel said. "Now go get in your seat and adjust the safety restraint properly."

"We're just going over to the Eagle." Peter looked up at his father and complained. "We don't need the restraint. We're not going to crash."

"I am glad to hear it." Pavel smiled. At least Peter was looking at him and talking to him. "But you know that lift offs and landings are the most dangerous part of the trip. And I don't know what I would do if you were hurt. So wear your restraint."

"Yes Sir." Peter mumbled and started slowly up the ramp.

"Pavel, I stopped in the cargo bay that they are using to transport my people to the Eagle and I spoke to Marty Choi." Cathy said. "It seems he was involved with that woman on Rigel. Cros Ripti."

"Involved how?"

"I did not press him for details." Cathy said. "But it sounded like a love affair. I told Rosita."

"I have to go." Pavel said.

"Hey." Cathy stopped him and wrapped her arms around his waist. She managed to smile at him. "Not until I get my goodbye, Mister."

Pavel took her face in his hands. He smiled and gave her a long loving kiss. "Goodbye

Catrina. Try to behave yourself on the Eagle."

"I'll try." She smiled and let go of him. "I love you. Please be careful where ever you go."

"I will." He nodded. "I'll talk to you soon. I love you."

Cathy kissed him one last time then walked up the short ramp into her ship. At the top of the ramp Cathy turned to look back at him, but Pavel was already on his way. In the ship, her three sons were very quiet. She sat in the pilot's seat and asked shuttle control for permission to take off.

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Commander Chekov walked into cargo bay two. Fifteen to twenty civilians waited patiently for the Starfleet officers to call their names for transport. Smith and Gonzoles were concentrating on the transporter controls. Chekov walked up to the control console just after five civilians had dematerialized.

"You seem to be making short work of this assignment, Commanders." Chekov said. "I understand you have some new information."

"Mr. Choi is the last man in line, Sir." Smith said.

"We haven't questioned him." Gonzoles said. "But I reported to the Captain. He is expecting you in his ready room."

Chekov glanced at the man. He was of average height with thick black hair and Eurasian features. He sat next to a Kerelian woman. They were talking casually. Choi seemed unaware that he was last for a reason.

"Mr. Choi." Chekov walked over to him. "I am Commander Chekov, First Officer. I need a few minutes of your time."

"Commander." Choi stood up slowly. "What can I do for you?"

"Come with me, please." Chekov nodded towards the door. Choi looked around. All the civilians were watching them. He shrugged and started walking towards the door. Chekov took him to the closest turbo lift. "Deck one."

"You are Ms. Vasco's husband?" Choi asked. Chekov nodded. "I told her it wasn't necessary. I didn't see any point."

"What?" Chekov asked.

"About Cros." Choi said. "Ms. Vasco suggested you could find her. But if she doesn't want to see me anymore, what's the point of trying to locate her?"

The turbo lift stopped and door opened. Chekov led Choi down the short corridor to the Captain's ready room. He walked in without signaling. "Captain Sulu. This is Marty Choi."

Sulu was sitting behind his desk. "Please sit down, Mr. Choi."

Choi looked from Chekov to Sulu and back to Chekov. The First Officer put his hand on Choi's shoulder and guided him to the chair in front of Sulu's desk. The Odessa assistant engineer slowly sat down. "What's going on?"

"We are interested in locating Ms. Cros Ripti." Chekov said. "We need to know everything you know about her."

"Why?" Marty asked.

"It's possible she is involved on the attack on the convoy." Sulu said.

"Cros?" Marty nervously ran his fingers through his thick black hair. "I don't think so."

"Why not?" Sulu asked.

"She's a sweet girl." Choi said. "And she knew I was on the Odessa. She wouldn't put my life in danger."

"I see." Captain Sulu said. "Let's start from the beginning. Where and when did you meet her?"

"On Rigel Two." Marty said. "The Odessa had been in the yards for a day or two and a bunch of us went to one of the bars on the strip. You know? She was there. I bought her a drink."

"The group that went to the bar were all from the Odessa?" Chekov asked.

"Sure." Marty nodded. He turned his chair to look at Chekov who walked slowly around the ready room. "I didn't know anyone else there. During the upgrades most of the crew had nothing to do. Everyone goes to the bars on the strip while their ships are repaired."

"Did she ask you about the convoy?" Sulu asked.

"No." Choi turned back to the captain and said. "We were just having a good time."

"You saw her more than once?" Chekov asked from behind him.

"I saw her every night for almost three weeks." Marty Choi felt like his neck was going to snap if he kept looking from one to the other. So he chose to focus on the calm and stationary captain. "We were practically living together for the time I was there."

"And you never mentioned the convoy?" Sulu asked. "Or your destination."

"Sure, I mentioned it." Choi said. "But she never asked me. It just came up. You know how it is. You talk about your work."

"What else came up?" Sulu asked.

"What do you mean?" Choi asked.

"Ripti knew about the convoy." Chekov had circled around to Marty's other side. "She knew its destination. Did she know anything else about your work?"

"I don't know." Choi shrugged.

"Could she have had any access codes from you?" Sulu asked.

"Codes?" Choi shook his head. "I never gave her any codes."

Chekov leaned close to his ear and asked. "Did she have access to your employee ID card?"

"No." Choi insisted. Chekov leaned against Sulu's desk with his arms folded across his chest and waited. Marty Choi shrugged and added. "I mean, unless she took it while I was asleep."

"I see." Sulu nodded. "Where is Ms. Ripti now?"

"I don't know." Choi said. Sulu and Chekov didn't say anything. They just stared at him. "I mean it. I tried to contact her. My messages were returned. And she did not leave a forwarding address. I really don't know."

"You will give me her old address." Chekov said to Choi. To Sulu he added. "I will see what I can get from that."

"Yazdani to Captain Sulu."

Sulu accessed the comline. "Sulu here."

"Warp power has been restored, Captain." Yazdani said.

"Thanks Yaz. Sulu out." The captain closed the comline and turned his attention once again to Marty Choi. "You knew she worked for the ship yards."

"Sure." Choi nodded. "But Cros worked in the administrative offices. She had no contact with the ships themselves."

"But she had access to the databases." Sulu said. "Can I assume that included the placement of cargo in the holds?"

"I guess." Choi shrugged. "I mean if you want to know, it's not hard to find out. Cargo slots are hardly classified."

"You will be staying with us, Mr. Choi." Sulu turned his attention back to the computer screen he had been viewing when they came in. "Mr. Chekov will see that you are assigned a cabin."

"Don't I get a choice?" Choi asked.

"No." Sulu said.

"Come on, Mr. Choi." Chekov led him out of the ready room. "If you are lucky, you will see your Ms. Ripti again."

In the turbo lift, Choi asked Chekov. "What about my job?"

"That is not in my control." Chekov shrugged. "I suppose that depends on how the rest of the investigation goes. And what your part in it proves to be."

"I didn't do anything." Choi insisted. "I'll help you any way I can."

"Good." Chekov nodded. The turbo lift stopped. Choi followed Chekov down the hall into a standard single occupancy cabin. After getting the coded address for Cros Ripti's computer mail address on Rigel, returned to the bridge.

Sulu was in the command chair. Chekov did a quick check of the science station. The ship was now traveling at warp speed. All sensors were clear of any indication of warp powered vessels. Smith and Gonzoles were back at their stations. The senior staff had been on duty for close to fifteen hours.

"Rand." Sulu said. "Get some relief up here."

"Aye Sir." Rand nodded. "Beta shift report to the bridge."

"I suggest everyone get some sleep." Captain Sulu said. "Senior staff will remain on call. ETA to the rendezvous point?"

"Four hours eighteen minutes." Smith said.

"All right." Sulu nodded. Lt. Kim and Lt. Briscoe came off the turbo lift together. "If we do not come across the fighter before, there will be a senior staff meeting at 07:30 hours. Lt. Kim, you have the bridge."

"Aye Sir." Kim nodded. Lt. Wong relieved Lt. Mirek. Ensign Sadat took the helm station. Smith and Gonzoles left the bridge together.

"Any contact with the Tian Nan Men or the Potemkin, call me." Sulu said. "You come across an unidentified fighter class ship, call red alert."

"Aye Sir." Kim said. Ensign Skorny relieved Commander Rand.

"Captain." Chekov stood just outside the turbo lift. "It's been a long day."

Sulu nodded. They got on the lift together. The captain sighed. "I will have no trouble falling asleep tonight."

"I hope I can say the same." Chekov said.

"It's got to help to know they are safe." Sulu said.

"It does." Chekov shrugged. "But the bed still feels empty."

Sulu nodded. The lift door opened and the captain got off. As the door was closing, he said. "I know what you mean."