

Captain Sulu walked into the transport room followed by Terrel Lebner and security guard Konick. If Lebner had been a Starfleet officer, Sulu would have said the tall Herlan man was on alert. With small jerky eye movements, Lebner had visually measured every opening and piece of equipment in the room. He had sized up the security guard several times prompting Mr. Konick to keep a hand on his sidearm.

Lt. Commander Johnson was behind the control station with Chief Yancy. "We have the coordinates." Johnson reported. "And local shields on the base are down."

"Level two precautions, Captain?" Yancy asked.

"Yes." Sulu nodded. "Energize when ready."

"Aye Sir." Yancy nodded and put the transporter through its normal pattern. The energy beam took the form of Kem Lebner. He was of the same height as his son, with the same grey green eyes. His complexion and hair were darker and he carried considerably more weight around his middle. Yancy reported. "No weapons or unauthorized substances, Captain."

"Lower the force field, Yancy." Sulu ordered.

As soon as the field was down, Terrel Lebner was up the two steps to the transporter pad. Father and son embraced and whispered greetings to each other. Sulu watched and waited. "Mr. Lebner." He finally said. "Is there some other title you prefer?"

"No." Kem Lebner let go of his son and faced the Human captain. "Mister translates well enough."

"Good." Sulu nodded. "If you will come with me, we can talk in my ready room."

"I will speak to my son, privately." Kem Lebner said.

"In time." Sulu left no room for discussion. "This way."

Captain Sulu walked out of the transporter room. Mr. Konick stepped up to the Herlans. With his hand still on the phaser on his belt, he nodded towards the door. The two Herlans followed Sulu. While they rode in silence to deck one, the father rested his hand on the son's shoulder as if to prove to himself he was really there. Once they were in his ready room, Captain Sulu stopped and turned towards Kem Lebner. Mr. Konick stood silently just inside the ready room door.

"Mr. Lebner, let's speak plainly." Sulu looked Kem Lebner in the eye. "I have no love for the Cardassians. But my government is trying to make peace with them."

"There is no peace with the Cardassians." Terrel Lebner said.

"Perhaps." Sulu said as he glanced briefly at Terrel, but he kept his attention mostly on Kem. "But I have my orders. And those orders require that I keep the peace in this sector. And you are a threat to that peace."

"Our cause is just." Kem Lebner insisted.

"I don't care." Sulu stepped closer to the older Lebner. "I have on this ship the crew that stole Starfleet's fighter. On other Starships under my command are Herlans that have attacked Federation ships. And it is entirely in my power to prosecute or release these prisoners."

"Tricks!" Terrel said. "I told you."

"You have two choices, Sir." Sulu ignored Terrel and spoke only to Kem Lebner. "You can move your people and give up your fight. And I will release all prisoners. Or you can stay where you are and continue to raid commercial Federation ships. But all the prisoners I now hold will go on trial in Federation courts. With over two hundred dead from that convoy the chances

of any one of them seeing a free day in their lives is minuscule."

"And the rest of us?" Kem Lebner's steady gaze dared Sulu to destroy the base.

"Well," Sulu shrugged with practiced nonchalance. "The Cardassians know where you are. And if I am tied up with taking all these prisoners to a Starbase, there won't be anyone here to stop the Cardassians from coming across the border."

"The ruling council will need to discuss..."

"No." Sulu ordered. "Make it a military order. The families will go along."

"That is hardly fair. We are not a military society." Kem Lebner said. "Herlans have a right to make up their own minds. Our entire lives are based on this concept."

"I've studied the Herlan attacks on the Cardassian border posts." Sulu said. "The theft of the fighter and the attack on the convoy. You've operated with military precision. These people follow orders whether they have ranks or not. Make it an order."

"No!" Terrel said.

"This is not your decision." Captain Sulu dismissed Terrel Lebner and focused on his father. "Mr. Lebner, these people are depending on you. Save their lives. Give the order."

Kem Lebner took a deep breath and turned away from Captain Sulu. He took a couple of steps towards the strange narrow metallic club and small ball that hung on the wall. There was an artist's rendering of a group of people placed in apparently random geometric patterns. "It is a game?"

"Yes." Sulu let his attention wander to the familiar sight. He briefly wondered how it appeared without the years of warm comforting memories. "A very old game."

"Ga!" Terrel walked over to his father. He ignored the picture of the strangely dressed Humans engaged in their ancient ritual. He didn't understand why his father was suddenly listening to the Federation captain. Glancing over his shoulder at Sulu, he lowered his voice. "What are you doing?"

"Captain Sulu." Kem Lebner did not look at the Captain, but Sulu heard the resignation in his voice. "May I speak to my son alone for a few minutes?"

"Of course. Wait in the hall, Mr. Konick." The security guard nodded and stepped out of the room. Sulu headed for the other door. "I'll expect your answer when I come back, Mr. Lebner."

Terrel put himself between his father and that damn picture he was staring at. "You can't be serious, Ga."

"We don't have much time. So listen." Kem said to his son. "This is not a surrender. It is a strategic retreat. We have had to put our plans on hold before. I will not leave Herlans to languish in a Federation prison."

"What do we do?" Terrel asked.

"We will simply take our base elsewhere." Kem said. "As soon as we are on the base, you will be in charge of securing all weapons and supporting technology. The more we take that Starfleet does not know about, the better. I will issue the order to move and leave the discussion until later."

"Once we've moved, it is possible the council will decide to honor the agreement with Sulu." Terrel said. "Then what?"

"Don't worry about what the council decides." Kem said. "The fight will continue. If

you can, tell Adat what we are planning. He will be in command here."

"With his child on the way, Adat is more concerned with safety than he used to be." Terrel said. "He has listened to the Federation captain with an open ear."

"And Sulu will trust him for that." Kem said. "Adat is on our side. Elea should not have stayed on the fighter when she learned she carried a child."

"No one else knows the Starfleet fighter like she does. And she was going to quit after the raid on the Cards sensor array." Terrel said. Captain Sulu and Commander Chekov came back into the room, so Terrel quickly changed the subject. "Grun is here too. I spoke to him just before they brought me to the bridge to see you."

"And he is well?" Kem asked. Terrel nodded. Commander Chekov ignored the Herlans to cross the room and call Mr. Konick back to his post inside the ready room door. Kem Lebner watched Chekov carefully as he spoke to his son. "Cros will be happy."

"Well?" Sulu sat down at his desk and called the Herlans attention. "Is it to be prison and war or freedom and peace?"

"Sanity chooses freedom." Kem faced Sulu from across the room. He met Sulu's eyes steadily and with an abrupt jerky movement of his head nodded once. "I will give the order."

"Good." Sulu said. "When will you be ready to move?"

"There is a lot to take care of." Terrel said. "We've been here for more than fifteen years. Families will need time to gather their belongings into the transport."

"How long?" Chekov asked.

"Five days." Kem Lebner said.

"Be ready to move in two." Sulu said. He did not wait for any objections. "Commander Chekov has located several possible planets."

"Before we discuss sites." Kem walked over and stood in front of Sulu's desk. "When will the prisoners be released?"

"In transit to the new planet." Sulu said.

"Someone will need to make sure that their belongings are not left behind." Terrel said to his father.

"You can do that." Sulu answered to leave no doubt in anyone's mind who was in command. "You know who is here and on the other ships. Contact their families when you return to the base with your father."

"I will need to speak to them before I go." Terrel Lebner addressed Captain Sulu this time. "To make sure I don't miss anything."

"Mr. Konick." Sulu said. "Escort Terrel Lebner to see the other prisoners. Give him some time to explain the situation."

"Aye Sir." Konick said. "This way, Mr. Lebner."

"Now." Sulu said. "I would prefer to take you as far from the border as possible. Mr. Chekov has located a planet that appears to be a match for the third planet in the Herlan system. Pavel."

Chekov brought up the data on the planet on Sulu's desk view screen. "This planet has been surveyed by Starfleet as a possible agricultural colony. There is a large temperate zone with plenty of water and a reasonably long growing season."

"Farming." Kem Lebner sighed.

"Self sufficiency is the beginning of any colony." Captain Sulu said.

"Of course." Lebner nodded. "There are former farmers among our refugees. My own grandmother was a farmer. We will survive."

"I'm sure you will." Sulu nodded.

"Do you like being in Starfleet, Mr. Konick?" Terrel Lebner asked as they rode the turbo lift to the security deck.

"Sure." Konick kept a watchful eye on Lebner. He was not about to be taken off guard by Lebner's sudden friendliness. "I would have died of boredom if I had to spend my entire life on the family farm on Mars."

"Mars? Never heard of it." Lebner said.

"No reason you should have." Konick said when the lift door opened. Konick checked with the guards just outside the lift door. The main group of Herlans were still all together in the larger briefing room. Konick escorted Lebner to the briefing room.

"Well?" Elea asked as soon as the door had closed behind Terrel.

"We're moving." Terrel said simply. "Captain Sulu will continue to hold you while we get everything together and start moving. He will release you in transit to the new planet."

"You won't be staying with us?" Grun asked.

"No." Terrel laid a gentle hand on the young man's shoulder. "I'll return to the base with my father to get ready for the evacuation. But you will be back with your family soon. Everyone here has family that will take care of moving your belongings."

"Except us." Elea slipped her arm around her husband's waist and leaned into him. Adat responded by wrapping his arm around her shoulders.

"Right." Terrel said. "I will be sure your things are packed. Or if you want someone else to do it, tell me who."

"Shar." Elea said. "Ask her to take care of it."

"All right." Terrel nodded. "My father has designated Adat to be in command while you remain on Excelsior. We will be leaving the base in two days. And everyone will be back with his families shortly after that. Adat can I talk to you alone for a minute?"

"Sure." Adat stepped away from his wife. Terrel and Adat huddled together near the wall. The rest of the Herlans started discussing the meaning of the new turn of events. "What is it?"

"Keep this to yourself." Terrel whispered. "We will be taking as many weapons as possible. The fight is not over. But Starfleet must believe we have given in. It will be your job for the next few days to keep this group together. The Captain is to hear nothing from us except what he wants to hear. That is, that we are happy to be moving on to a new way of life."

"I'll take care of it." Adat nodded.

"I'll see you soon." Terrel said.