A summation of the episode Journey to Babel, as told from Spock's perspective, based upon my interpretation and perception of events.

Dialogue was taken directly from a transcription of the episode.

Spock stared down at his most recent orders unblinkingly. The orders were fitting for Starfleet’s flagship. To transport members of a diplomatic delegation to the Babel conference. A prestigious and worthy assignment, and one that he’d usually anticipate with a certain eagerness. After all, this assignment wasn’t about war, nor famine, nor any other overly unpleasant thing. Rather it was about fostering peace and cooperation, upholding the very values of the Federation that had attracted him to begin with.

But what was different about this particular assignment, the thing that he wasn’t overly certain how to handle, was exactly who he’d be escorting. His parents.

As a Vulcan ambassador, Sarek was a logical choice for the conference, and Spock knew that his mother Amanda accompanied him to many of such functions, as was appropriate for her station in accordance with Vulcan custom. He’d grown up having to contend with his father’s profession, so he knew it should not surprise him that Sarek would be here, now. However, Spock himself had strived to separate his past world from his present, and his family from his colleagues. A certain
compartmentalization was, for him, both healthy and beneficial. And now it was possible that those carefully constructed walls would come tumbling down.

The Spock of the Enterprise was not the Spock of Vulcan, and he was as reluctant for his parents to observe him here as he was for the Enterprise crew to see him with them. How would they treat him? He well remembered his father’s thorough disapproval for the decision he’d made to join Starfleet to begin with. Spock had faced enough adversity and derision from his Vulcan peers, and he’d worked tirelessly to cultivate a somewhat improved attitude from his Starfleet crew members. That they should be reminded he was different, that there was something inherent about him to dislike, was concerning.

Still, if there was one thing that Spock could count on Sarek for, it was to be implacably Vulcan. If he showed Ambassador Sarek the respect due his station, he was fairly certain that his father would do the same in respecting his place as First Officer. The trip need not be anything more than a professional interaction -- handled dutifully, and then forgotten. His human mother, however, was the wild card. And Spock tried very hard not to concern himself about her.

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Spock did his best to ignore Doctor McCoy beside him, and hoped that the man didn’t embarrass himself by attempting the Vulcan salute a second time. Across the hangar deck, Sarek emerged from the craft and Spock listened as Kirk greeted him and made introductions. It was perhaps unnecessary for his captain to introduce him to his own father, but of course Spock had neglected to mention his personal connection, hoping that it would, in fact, prove irrelevant.

He stiffened as his father paused, giving him a bland look at the introduction, though he was certain Sarek had caught on to his intent. A professional meeting, and no more. They need not interact beyond what duty required of them. And indeed, Sarek attempted to spare him needless awkward interactions only moments later when he requested from his captain that Spock not be his guide as Kirk intended. That he’d prefer another.

Something akin to shame lanced through him at the request, alongside something very much like gratitude, though Spock did his best to ruthlessly suppress both. Shame, because even now, his father still disapproved of him, he was certain -- not even trusting him enough to conduct the duties his captain assigned to him. But gratitude, because now, of all times, was not the time for confrontation or reconciliation. He’d not spoken to his father in any capacity in years, and an important diplomatic mission was hardly the time to address familial rifts. Perhaps in some way, Sarek did understand him, and respected the distance that he would prefer.

Captain Kirk stood gobsmacked at the request, which was hardly routine. Spock caught a glimpse of his eyes, the set of his shoulders, and knew he’d misstepped by not informing his captain of more. He should have told him exactly who the delegate was to him, and of their history, or at least some of it. It hadn’t seemed relevant, but he knew this look in Kirk. It was the one that wouldn’t tolerate any mistreatment of his First Officer, and Kirk well knew of the prejudice so many of his Vulcan peers had toward him, just the same prejudice held by many humans. One thing that Kirk did not tolerate on his ship was bigotry, and Spock feared that Kirk was crucially misreading the situation. Then again, perhaps some of the disapproval Sarek felt for Spock was just that kind Kirk wouldn’t want to tolerate. After all, Spock had never satisfied the man that he was fully culturally Vulcan.

The moment passed, and Kirk seamlessly accepted Sarek’s unusual request for a different guide, perhaps in deference to smoothing over diplomatic tensions.

"Mister Spock,” Kirk turned to Spock then. “We’ll leave orbit in two hours. Would you care to beam down and visit your parents?”
The other shoe had dropped, along with Spock’s stomach, and whatever relief Spock had entertained evaporated, as his captain asked him publicly whether he’d prefer to beam down to visit his parents. Even after years of working with humans, he was unused to them at times, unable to predict what they would do or say. That Kirk should ask him something so personal and so publicly was jarring, and he was forced to admit what he now knew he should have explained from the start. The fact that before him Kirk saw said parents.

The urge to save face for his humiliated captain was strong, but there was little he could do now. Not for his own dignity, or Kirk’s, or even that of his family. Cold logic was all he could cling to. A straightforward explanation of the misunderstanding, and an attempt to move on. Though he was certain he’d hear more of this during one of their weekly chess match.

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Spock sat at a kiosk in Engineering, seeing to his duties in relative peace. His scientific duties were something he knew well, soothing the frayed edges of his nerves through routine and familiarity. Here, the ship was quiet, set apart from the chaos of the other visitors in the more public areas of the ship. It was clean and the air freshly recycled, the chair comfortable and the sound of the engines hummed away. In his fragile sanctuary, Spock heard the tell-tale whoosh of the doors, and the voice of his captain explaining the ins and outs of the ship. Apparently, barring his first officer, Kirk had decided that the captain himself was the most suitable guide for the ambassador and his wife.

His mother hung back and sidled up to him, taking any chance to corner him and begin with her oh-so-human histrionics. Spock quelled his discomfort and was grateful that although he was forced into this private conversation publicly, at least there were no crewmen within hearing distance.

“After all these years among humans,” she began, “you still haven’t learned to smile.”

A criticism then, the first she’d levied since embarking on the ship but surely not the last. He’d thought surely that a criticism from his father as to his Vulcan shortcomings would come first, but instead it was to be his mother on him not being human. He deflected.

“Humans smile with so little provocation.”

“And you haven’t come to see us in four years, either.” Another criticism. One which they’d hashed and rehashed ad nauseum through each of those four years. Spock maintained his mental discipline to quell the spike of anxiety and irritation at her needling.

“The situation between my father and myself has not changed.” And with that unchanged situation came Spock’s unchanged stance on family visits. They were tedious and painful and unpleasant all around. His mental controls, which had perhaps never been what they should for a full Vulcan, were always tested to their limits around his parents. Criticisms and critiques levied at him from every direction. And if he were to leave the family home to visit nearly anywhere else on Vulcan, the same derision came unspoken (and sometimes blatantly) from his peers. No, a family visit wasn’t something he’d entertain. Not for at least the next fifty years if he had anything to do with it. Even Earth, with its own prejudices and imperfections, was preferable to that.

“My wife, attend.” Sarek’s voice cut through the mounting tension and Spock found himself unaccountably grateful to his father once again. No doubt the man knew exactly what sort of conversation his wife was inflicting, and agreed with Spock’s judgement that such discussion was hardly appropriate for public ears and eyes.

“Mister Spock. A moment, if you please.” Kirk summoned him across the Engineering floor.
“Yes, Captain?”

“Explain the computer components.”

And there it was again, that stubborn set to Kirk’s jaw. Spock knew what this was about -- the fact that Sarek had rejected him as guide, and so publicly. Apparently his captain hadn’t let the issue slide so easily after all. What Spock had interpreted as a him dropping the issue was only truly time to dwell, and now Kirk demanded of this ambassador that Sarek acknowledge Spock’s expertise on this ship, whatever Sarek’s prejudices were against his own son. Spock was touched, in an abstract way, by Kirk’s loyalty to him, but he wished fervently that he would let the issue slide, as he knew so little of the disaster that was the S’chn T’gai family.

“I gave Spock his first instruction in computers, Captain.” Sarek interrupted. “He chose to devote his knowledge to Starfleet instead of the Vulcan Science Academy.”

Just like that, whatever gratitude Spock had been developing for his father evaporated. The rejection that might have spared him an awkward encounter was seen now for what it was -- a slight against Spock’s expertise after all. And though Sarek had saved him moments before from his mother’s criticisms, he’d found it appropriate to launch his own, and just as publicly as Amanda’s. Perhaps more so.

“If you will excuse me, Captain.” Spock found himself saying, as he made his retreat. He couldn’t deal with this here, now. He could not, and he would not. Kirk could conduct the tour of the ship as he’d agreed he would, and Spock would see to his own duties. For his own part, Spock intended to make himself as scarce as he could while maintaining his duties until this mission was over, and he could go back to his chosen life.

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Spock surveyed the conference room filled with delegates, listening to the small talk around him impassively. The sight was a familiar one, more or less, as they’d been on similar missions in the past, if perhaps smaller and lower profile. The fact that his family was so nearby still unnerved him, though he tried to quell his unease. Doctor McCoy expressed some intellectual curiosity about the ambassador and a Tellarite tried to argue as Tellarites do, but all in all the scene was something he was comfortable with, and Spock felt some of the tension leave his shoulders as the familiar political banter surrounded him.

“Spock, I’ve always suspected that you were a little more human than you let on.” McCoy started in on him, and just like that Spock’s peace of mind vanished. What was familiar banter between the two of them became a dangerous game, one that threatened to unravel his entire professional persona. To dismantle all he had worked for, strived for all of these years. “Mrs. Sarek,” McCoy continued relentlessly, hoping to use Spock’s human mother to his advantage, “I know about the rigorous training of the Vulcan youth, but tell me, did he ever run and play like the human children, even in secret?”

It was all well and good for those close to Spock to tease him on occasion and in a specific way about his heritage. He’d made his peace with the practice by now. But those tidbits that they chose to fixate on, Spock had some control over. He had the ability to dole out facts about himself, to reveal or hide his quirks over time. His mother had the power to undo him here and now, to dismantle his carefully crafted persona that allowed him to work with these people in relative peace.

“Well, he, he did have a pet sehlat he was very fond of.” Amanda offered, and Spock waited tensely to see where this would go. He hoped fervently that his mother could satisfy the constraints of the conversation and move the topic off of him. For once in her life, perhaps she’d adhere to the logic
and professional dictates of the situation.

“Sehlat?” McCoy asked.

Amanda smirked. “It’s sort of a fat teddy bear.”

McCoy’s grin was blinding and his eyes glinted with a sort of sadistic glee. Spock would never hear the end of this one, he was certain. “A teddy bear?”

Sarek showed up again, just in the nick of time, and Spock allowed himself to feel his gratitude toward the man rekindle after all as Sarek herded Amanda away. “Excuse me, Doctor. It has been a rather long day for my wife.” No doubt Sarek was just as embarrassed by his wife’s sentimentality as Spock was, and his reasons for shutting her up were purely selfish. Nonetheless, Spock found himself relieved that that train wreck of a conversation had been closed with minimal damage.

“A teddy bear.” McCoy teased him, as Spock knew that he would.

“Not precisely, Doctor.” Spock did his best to crush that sentimental notion as ruthlessly as he could. “On Vulcan, the teddy bears are alive, and they have six-inch fangs.”

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It wasn’t until the Tellarite ambassador lay dead before him that Spock thought there may be a serious threat to the Babel conference, though he still hadn’t the slightest idea what form that threat would take. Ruthlessly, he attempted to apply logic to the situation.

The ambassador had died of an injury to his neck. As there was very little indication of an intruder on board, one would assume it was one of the numerous other guests. It need not have anything to do with the strange vessel they’d detected following them. Though it was a strange coincidence, and those rarely panned out well. With coincidences accumulating, Spock was forced to reassess the otherwise innocuous random signal Lieutenant Uhura had picked up earlier as well. Was it essentially noise, as so many random signals turned out to be, or was that, too, related to the series of coincidences that now threatened both the lives of the delegates and the outcome of so important a conference?

Here now in front of him was a fact that was even more disturbing than all of those coincidences piled together. The damage to the ambassador’s neck was so refined that only a small number of individuals could possibly have done it -- and Vulcans, with their neck pinches and warrior traditions, made Sarek himself a clear suspect. The notion was ludicrous to Spock personally. Part of Sarek’s disapproval of Spock’s career choice hinged on his disapproval of Starfleet in general, with its blatant use of force in the face of Surak’s teachings of peace. The idea that Sarek would then display such violence was patently absurd. Yet from the perspective of a criminal investigation, the possibility of it having been Sarek could not be entirely overlooked.

“Who aboard would have that knowledge?” Kirk was asking as McCoy gave his medical report.

“Vulcans.” The answer was easy for Spock to give, as ludicrous as it was to suspect his own father. The facts were the facts. What was, was. “On Vulcan, the method is called tal-shaya. It was considered a merciful form of execution in ancient times.”

“Spock. A short time ago, I broke up an argument between Gav and your father.” Kirk informed him, and Spock filed that information away as well. If his father were not to blame, he certainly had an uphill battle in proving his innocence. Who knew how many others had witnessed such an argument?
“Indeed, Captain? Interesting.”

“Interesting?” McCoy asked incredulously. “Spock, do you realise that makes your father the most likely suspect?”

“Vulcans do not approve of violence.” Spock pointed out. As far as he was concerned, it was the single most obvious reason that his father could not have been to blame for the crime, though perhaps convincing violent humans of that fact would be another matter entirely.

“You're saying he couldn't have done it?” Kirk clarified.

“No, Captain. I'm merely saying it would be illogical to kill without reason.”

“But if he had a reason, could he have done it?”

“If there were a reason, my father is quite capable of killing. Logically and efficiently.” He knew that the others would take that as some tacit admission of guilt, but he couldn’t allow himself to be bothered by it now. There were systems of justice in place to ensure his father’s safety. What was important now was discovering the truth, before more harm could come. Were there two threats, or one? A problem within the ship as well as without? Or were both strange occurrences tied together? Perhaps some prearranged attempt at sabotage.

What had begun as a peaceful diplomatic assignment had turned violent, as so many of their missions seemed to. It was unfortunate, but what was, was. Kaiidth.

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They proceeded to his parents’ quarters, as was logical, and Spock listened as Kirk asked Amanda if he might speak to Sarek. Leave it to his mother to inject her emotions without fail.

“What's wrong?” she wanted to know, discontent to simply tell them where Sarek might be. “Spock?” she looked to her son, as if he might answer her, as if this were some personal matter. Spock kept himself focused firmly on the direction of his captain, relieved when Sarek himself entered, thus putting a stop to her questions.

“You want something of me, Captain?” Sarek got right to the heart of the matter.

“Ambassador, the Tellarite Gav has been murdered.” Kirk answered with the directness of a Vulcan. Spock had thought it before, and he thought it again. Not all humans were as emotional as his mother, or as Doctor McCoy often was. And even said doctor knew when to leave his sentimentality behind.

“His neck was broken, Mister Ambassador, by what Spock describes as tal-shaya.” McCoy told him bluntly. Cold facts and logic were called for in a situation of such gravity.

“Indeed? Interesting.”

“Yes.” Kirk pursued the truth relentlessly. “Ambassador, where were you during the past hour?”

“Captain, you're not accusing him?” Amanda’s emotionalism was overwhelming.

“Mother.” Spock had had enough of it. “If only on circumstantial evidence, he is a logical suspect.”

“I quite agree.” Sarek told them, as Spock knew he would. The logic of the situation was irrefutable.

“Then where were you during the hour?” Kirk asked.
In private meditation, Captain. Spock will tell you that such meditation is a personal experience, not to be discussed. Especially not with Earthmen.”

“That's a very convenient excuse, Ambassador.”

Spock had nothing to add. Meditation was private, but Sarek’s stubborn adherence to privacy in this matter was illogical. It was regrettable that the man didn’t have a sound alibi. All thoughts of the matter flew from Spock’s head, however, when Sarek chose that moment to collapse. It was alarming to watch, as for the first time in Spock’s life his father seemed vulnerable, even weak. That his mother didn’t know what was wrong meant that this must be a new condition, and Spock watched helplessly as McCoy tried to diagnose the malfunction. Something to do with his cardiovascular system, he said, and he didn’t know whether he could help. As if Spock didn’t have his hands full enough with the mission, the murder, and his own personal crisis, now his father’s life might very well be in jeopardy.

And due to what? Some unforeseen medical condition? Another bit of bad luck to heap upon the rest? Or was there foul play at work here, too? Another ambassador in mortal peril.

A comment that McCoy had made earlier came to mind -- that of Sarek retiring so early for a Vulcan. Spock had dismissed it entirely, as his father’s actions were his own and deserved no special scrutiny. Now, however, he wondered whether this mysterious condition were truly new, or if Sarek had known about it privately for some time. If he’d hidden some ill health from his mother, that did not bode well, for only the most incurable of Vulcan diseases were not spoken of, as to discuss inevitability was illogical.

At any rate, Spock’s own part in all of this was at an end as his father was chauffeured away to sickbay, and Spock’s duties blessedly called him elsewhere. They’d come no closer to discovering the murderer, and peoples lives could now still be in mortal danger. Whatever Spock’s interests were in his father’s own health, they would have to wait.

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“Spock?” Kirk approached Spock on the bridge, while Spock bent over his station poring over the sensor readings.

“Yes, Captain. I get sensor readings of tri-tritanium from the alien ship's hull.”

“I'm sorry about your father.” Kirk murmured quietly. Spock suppressed a cringe. For a moment, his mind drew a parallel between his captain and friend, and his mother. He relentlessly suppressed that notion as well, reminding himself that they were not one and the same. Only moments ago he’d been reminded how thoroughly logical and mindful of duty his captain could be. Not histrionic, not usually one to bring up such personal matters within view of the rest of the crew.

Perhaps he did so now because he was truly concerned, and felt a great need to offer support. That, Spock could appreciate in a distant way, though now was not the time for such thoughts. It was a triviality when the entire crew of the ship was in danger, not to mention the impact recent events could have on the conference. The events of that conference could impact the future of the Federation. The health of one Vulcan was hardly a prime concern, much less the mental discomfort of one first officer.

“Yes, it could adversely affect our mission.” Spock answered, trying subtly to steer the conversation back on track to what was of concern.

“Aren't you worried about him?” Kirk pressed, and Spock suppressed his own instinctive emotional
response. That of course he was concerned -- as strained as their relationship was, Sarek was his father. He suppressed the urge to tell Kirk that it was none of his concern, and certainly no concern of the crew members scattered around the bridge. And at any rate, his concern was immaterial, such a foolish thing to dwell on for even a single second of time. What was, was.

“Worry is a human emotion, Captain.” Spock informed him. “I accept what has happened.” Because there could be no greater truth for a Vulcan than the acceptance of c’thia, the truth in all things. Ruthlessly Spock pressed on with the task at hand, relaying information on the composition of the hull of the strange ship, the data his sensors were able to gather. And blessedly, Kirk relented, at least for now. Duty. Always duty before all else.

Soon they were swept into unravelling the mystery once again, as Lieutenant Uhura had picked up yet another transmission. This time, the transmission seemed to be in contact with someone on the Enterprise, and Spock had to acknowledge once again that there was rarely such a thing as true coincidence. The enemy ship, the mysterious transmissions, the murder of the ambassador, they were all connected. And it was their duty to figure out how, before it was too late.

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When duty allowed for it, or rather when duty called for it explicitly, Spock accompanied his captain to sickbay for further information on his father. Information at this critical time was of the essence, and the ill health of an ambassador was of grave concern. That Spock had personal interest in Sarek’s health as well was immaterial -- or so he told himself as he joined his captain for the visit.

“Bones, how is he?” Kirk asked upon entering, and Spock waited eagerly for the news as well.

“As far as I can tell from instrument readings, our prime suspect is a malfunction in one of the heart valves.” McCoy told them. “It's similar to a heart attack in a human. But with Vulcan physiology, it's impossible to tell without an operation. Mrs. Sarek,” he asked, turning his attention to Spock’s mother, “has he had any previous attacks?”

Spock almost rolled his eyes at the blatant disregard for his father, who was alert and present. Perhaps McCoy thought that like some stubborn Terran human, Sarek would keep such information to himself even when it had become relevant. That his wife would be more likely to know the truth of the matter.

“No.” Amanda answered immediately, as Sarek answered himself not a second after.

“Yes.” It was as Spock had suspected, had worried even. That Sarek would keep the matter to himself meant there was likely nothing that could be done, which was confirmed by his next words. “There were three others. My physician prescribed Benjisidrine for the condition.”

A stop gap measure. No Vulcan would prescribe drugs in lieu of surgery unless surgery was not a viable option.

“Why didn't you tell me?” Amanda wanted to know.

“There was nothing you could have done.”

“Ambassador,” Kirk asked him. “When did you have these attacks?”

Again, Spock found himself wanting to know as well, his brow furrowed with unease at these revelations. On the sickbay bed, his father looked frail and weak in a way he’d never seen him before, and Spock’s entire perception of the man was turned on end. There was a very real possibility, he acknowledged to himself, that his father would die before they’d ever managed to
reconcile. There was every possibility that that was the reality of the situation he would be forced to live.

“Two before we left Vulcan, the third a few hours ago. I was on the observation deck. When the Tellarite was murdered, I was quite incapacitated.” Sarek’s explanation filled in one hole for Spock -- the illogic in maintaining the privacy of meditation in the face of such serious accusations. It was instead perhaps some stubborn pride over his ill health rather than a desire to keep his meditations to himself.

“There were no witnesses?”

“None.”

“Doctor,” Spock interrupted, wanting to focus instead on what was more important. Now that they knew his father had had nothing to do with the Tellarite, the pertinent issue was whether Sarek’s health could be saved. “Do you propose surgery for the heart defect?”

“I’m not sure.” McCoy answered. “It’s tough enough on a human. On a Vulcan, an ordinary operation’s out of the question.”

“Why?” Kirk wanted to know.

“Because of the construction of the Vulcan heart.” Sarek answered.

Spock was already aware of the difficulties involving surgery on a Vulcan heart, and he had no patience for explaining it to his captain. Not now. “I suggest that a cryogenic open-heart procedure would be the logical approach.”

“Yes, unquestionably.” Sarek agreed.

Why then, Spock wondered, hadn’t Sarek had such a procedure done to him already?

“Bones, what about it?” Kirk asked, and the room turned to him for the answers.

“Well,” he groused, “I’m glad somebody’s asking me something around here. Well, the procedure they’re discussing would require tremendous amounts of blood for the patient.”

“Doctor?” Chapel interrupted.

“Yes?”

“I’ve checked the blood bank. There isn't enough Vulcan blood and plasma to even begin such an operation of this type.”

“There are other Vulcans aboard.” Kirk pointed out, though Spock felt a sinking feeling in his gut as the discussion proceeded.

“My blood type is T-negative.” Sarek revealed to the others, though Spock already knew. “Somewhat rare, even for a Vulcan.”

“Yes, I'd say that's rare.” McCoy conceded.

“My blood is T-negative, Doctor.” Spock offered, ruthlessly suppressing the panic that rose in his chest. That they should be so close to a solution to his father’s heart, so close and then possibly miss the chance to cure him, was unthinkable. It was logical that Spock should offer his service in this. Because Sarek was his father, because he was the Vulcan ambassador, because he was a man and
Spock could help him.

“We've run a number of blood tests on Mister Spock.” Chapel told them. “It isn't true Vulcan blood either. It has human blood elements in it.”

Again, his humanity made him too un-Vulcan. Quite literally now, at this critical time. “It should be possible to filter out the human factors.” More easily done on blood than on a personality.

“Even you couldn't give that much blood, Spock. It would kill you.” McCoy snapped.

“Bones.” Kirk warned, quelling an argument before it could erupt.

“Mrs. Sarek.” McCoy turned to Spock’s mother once again, perhaps seeking out a fellow overly emotive being for his corner in this discussion. Or perhaps feeling it was she who he’d most need to explain his failure as a doctor to. Certainly she would be more upset even than her husband, who met his fate with Vulcan equanimity. “You must understand,” he explained to her, “the chances are extremely small to find a way to produce sufficient T-negative blood.”

“Indeed. I would estimate the odds --” Spock began.

“Please don't.” Amanda said with a tone of finality. She'd clearly heard more than enough.

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Spock paced the length of McCoy’s office as the man worked. He helped himself to any data disk that McCoy had discarded, just as desperate as the doctor to find a solution if not more so. Even now, he was taking time away from his duty to the ship and the Federation to turn his attention toward so personal a matter. It was perhaps not logical. Indeed it flew directly in the face of Surak: the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one. And yet he could not stop himself. Especially not now, when a possible solution revealed itself before him.

“Doctor.”

“I see it, Spock, but that was a Rigelian.” McCoy countered. He didn’t even have to open the disk Spock presented him, having already read it.

“Rigelian physiology is very similar to Vulcan.”

“Similar is not good enough. It's still experimental.”

“But it does look promising.”

“Spock, we would need such great amounts of blood that even if the drug worked on the Vulcans as well as a Rigelian, which I'm doubtful, it would still drain Sarek to a critical level.”

“I consider the safety factor low, but acceptable.” Spock pressed. Why was the doctor so stubbornly fighting him on this, on the one chance Sarek had to survive? What was the logic in sitting by to do nothing, when there was something at least to attempt in aid of his life?

“Plus the fact I've never operated on a Vulcan before.” McCoy went on relentlessly, ignoring Spock’s futile attempts at reason. “Oh, I've studied the anatomical types. I know where all the organs are. But that's a lot different from actual surgical experience. So if I don't kill him with the operation, the drug probably will.”

“What drug, Doctor?” Amanda interrupted, having let herself into the room. McCoy hesitated in
answering her, but she pressed on as stubbornly as Spock. “My husband is asleep.” she dismissed, lest that were the reason for the doctor’s hesitance in answering “What drug?” she asked again.

Reluctantly, McCoy answered, loathe to withhold information from the patient’s spouse. “A chemical stimulant to speed up reproduction and replacement of blood in the body. It's only experimental.”

“It has been used successfully on test subjects on Rigel Five.” Spock countered, both to argue against McCoy and in hopes to solicit his mother to his side in this. She was after all an intelligent woman. Surely, even she could see the logic in this.

“It places a tremendous strain on the spleen and the liver. In Sarek's condition, the stimulant would kill him.” McCoy stubbornly held.

“Miss Chapel?” Spock called the nurse. “I underwent a physical examination last week. Would you pull those records, please?”

“Already pulled. You're perfectly healthy, Mister Spock.”

“What has that got --” McCoy began, only to be interrupted by Amanda. As Spock had believed, she was an intelligent woman. She understood his meaning without his having to explain.

“You're going to use it on yourself.” she said. “A transfusion from you to your father.”

“It would seem the only answer.”

“It could damage you internally. It could kill you. I'm sorry, Spock. I can't sanction it.” McCoy told him.

Spock listened to the doctor’s refusal as a certain numbness came over him. Spock could consent all he wanted, but if the doctor refused to perform the procedure, all of the logic and consent in the world could not force him to do so. Furthermore, he could see that McCoy’s emotional appeals had swayed his mother away from the cause. He saw it in her frown before she had to say a thing.

“And I refuse to permit it.” Amanda told him. I won't risk both of you.”

The nerve of her! Spock internally fumed. That his mother should deny him this, as if it were her say. He was a fully grown man, capable of making his own decisions and judgements in his life. And certainly he had the right as a man to do what he could for his father, his blood. Even now, Spock gone years from her roof, she treated him as a child. Not simply as her child, which he would always remain, but rather as if he’d never matured. A child that she tried to manipulate as well as she could. To be more human, to be more like her. To do as she saw was best for all involved.

“And you, Doctor,” he rounded on McCoy, “have no logical alternative either. If you do not operate, Sarek will die. You now have the means to perform the operation. I am volunteering myself as the blood donor.” He saw McCoy look between he and his mother, and knew that the doctor heard what he did not say. That he was a fully grown man, and whatever Amanda might say, she could not consent or deny consent in his stead. In the end, the operation was up to patient, and doctor, and it was for Spock to decide whether or not he would offer his own assistance. While Sarek was able to decide for himself, Amanda’s opinion in this case was entirely irrelevant. “I'll be at my station until
you require me.” Spock told him, and saw himself out. He had duties that required his attention, and he’d already wasted precious time on this personal matter, though little good it had done anyone. All he could hope for was that the doctor at least would see the logic of the situation before it was too late.

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Spock stared down at his injured captain in sickbay. It seemed he could not get out of this place of late, and that his luck in fact could become worse. He’d been on the bridge when his captain had commed him. There’d been no time, no logical way to have prevented the attack.

An Andorian, Kirk had said. There’d been an attack. A request for security, and then silence. Spock had felt these feelings before in the line of duty. Whenever Kirk had been injured or in danger, there was the familiar panic, and a sort of numbness to mask it so that Spock might take command.

“It's a bad wound.” McCoy was telling him. “Punctured left lung. A centimetre or so lower, it'd have gone through the heart.”

A bad wound was what Spock heard. But not fatal. The doctor hadn’t said fatal. And at any rate, he could not allow himself to care right now. He could not afford it. Control.

While an Andorian had performed the attack, they did not know why. They’d learned nothing about the nature of the mysterious transmissions, or of the alien craft in pursuit. They knew nothing of the Andorian’s motive, or whether he was working alone. One dead ambassador and nearly a dead starship captain. Now that Spock had command of the ship, the burden fell entirely to him to get answers, and fast. Their lives, all their lives, could depend on it.

“I'll be in the brig questioning the Andorian prisoner.” he told McCoy, because he couldn’t afford to deal with this now. He would leave his captain in the doctor’s capable hands.

From where she monitored Sarek, Chapel spoke up before he could leave. “Doctor, the K2 factor is dropping.” she informed him.

“Spock, your father is much worse.” McCoy told him, before he could make his retreat. As if he had time for this discussion. But apparently there was no longer time. “There's no longer a choice. I have to operate immediately. We can begin as soon as you're prepared.”

“No, Doctor.” Spock denied him. This couldn’t possibly be happening now. This was why he’d never sought command. Because he hated, he abhorred, these types of decisions. He never once had envied Kirk his difficult position. Kaiidth. Spock would mourn his father’s death later, when duty allowed.

“What?”

“My first responsibility is to the ship. Our passengers' safety is by Starfleet order of first importance. We are being followed by an alien, possibly hostile, vessel. I cannot relinquish command under these circumstances.”

“You can turn command over to Scotty.” McCoy argued him, though Spock knew it to be yet another emotional plea.

“On what grounds, Doctor?” he wanted to know. “Command requirements do not recognise personal privilege. I'll be in the brig interrogating the Andorian.”

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Interrogating the Andorian attacker had revealed nothing, and his discussion with the Andorian ambassador had revealed even less. Spock paced his quarters, attempting to find logic where there was none. As commander of the ship, what was the logical next move? Security was already stationed around the ship. What more could he do to ensure their safety? What steps could he pursue in order to unravel the mystery in all of this?

His door chimed, disrupting his thoughts. “Come in.” he directed, and tried not to cringe when he saw his distraught mother. This was the worst possible time for whatever discussion she’d come to have. He simply could not be there for her right now. Not when he was barely holding himself together, barely keeping control over the ship.

“Spock,” she said without preamble, “you must turn command over to somebody else.”

How dare she instruct him on how to do his job? He was first officer of the flag ship of Starfleet, and she was an ambassador's wife. She had zero authority to dictate how to perform his duties, first of all. Not to mention the hubris behind what she would suggest. That he set aside his obligations to care only for his personal affairs. How selfish could she possibly be?

“Mother, when I was commissioned, I took an oath to carry out responsibilities which were clearly and exactly specified.” Spock told her this dispassionately, concretely, that she might understand and cease her childish tantrum.

“Any competent officer can command this ship. Only you can give your father the blood transfusions that he needs to live.”

“Any competent officer can command this ship under normal circumstances.” he ceded, though a part of Spock was offended that his mother would compare him to any competent officer. That she would insinuate there was so very little to his job, to his position. He’d thought that of the two of his parents, his mother was the more proud of what he’d accomplished and his father the less approving. Perhaps his assessment needed reconsideration. Later, when there was time.

At any rate, she was correct in a way. Under normal circumstances, as he’d allowed, any competent officer could take command of the ship. “The circumstances are not normal.” he explained to her, as one might explain something obvious to a child. “We're carrying over one hundred valuable Federation passengers. We're being pursued by an alien ship. We're subject to possible attack. There has been murder and attempted murder on board. I cannot dismiss my duties.”

“Duty?” she asked scathingly. “Your duty is to your father.”

This was true, even by Vulcan standards. One had a certain duty to his family, this Spock knew. But Amanda had studied the tenants of Surak as well as Spock had, and she must know that the needs of the many took precedent. “I know,” he told her, hoping to show her some compassion and understanding of her feelings in this. “But this must take precedence. If I could give the transfusion without loss of time or efficiency, I would. Sarek understands my reason.” Of this he was certain. On this visit alone, Sarek had showed his understanding of Spock’s logic at every turn.

“Well, I don't.” his mother told him, offence marring every line of delicate face and slender body. Offence at what Spock should suggest, though all he would suggest was truth. “It's not human.” she told him coldly, and Spock felt himself flinch in spite of his controls. There was that word again, that incessant accusation. He might never be Vulcan enough for the people of his planet, but neither did he ever remotely satisfy his mother in her eternal quest to make him human rather than Vulcan. In a way, it was the more offensive of stances as well, between the two. For Spock had chosen the Vulcan culture over that of the human one, years ago. He’d studied the ways of his people tirelessly. He meditated like a Vulcan, thought like a Vulcan, and had even been subjected to the trials of the
Time. How dare his mother come into his quarters and demand again, at this trying time for him, that he become more human? Now, of all times? It seemed petty, and cruel.

“That's not a dirty word.” Amanda insisted, misinterpreting his flinch, no doubt. As if he had something against her own humanity. He simply wasn’t her. “You're human, too.” she insisted, though he knew he was not. “Let that part of you come through. Your father's dying.”

“Mother,” Spock asked of her, “How can you have lived on Vulcan so long, married a Vulcan, raised a son on Vulcan, without understanding what it means to be a Vulcan?” For she showed not the slightest bit of comprehension of what he must do, what his father surely knew he must do in these circumstances. The second it went against her wishes, she no longer even pretended to respect his way of life.

“If this is what it means, I don't want to know.” she bit out, and Spock suppressed the coldness that came over him at her words. It was difficult to hear them aloud, but they were the truth of the situation. C’thia. It was evident that she did not want to know. What it meant to be Vulcan. What it meant to be Spock.

“It means to adopt a philosophy, a way of life, which is logical and beneficial.” Spock told her anyway, regardless of whether or not she wanted to hear. He could not seem to stop himself, a need to defend the very fabric of who he was. What he believed. “We cannot disregard that philosophy merely for personal gain, no matter how important that gain might be.”

“Nothing is as important as your father's life.” she countered, and Spock was almost struck dumb by how selfish she could be. Humanity always reflected a certain selfishness that he'd come to accept, his mother no exception to that rule. But he was appalled at what he saw of her now. It was an ugly light that shone upon her to say such a thing. Nothing as important as Sarek? As any one life? As if the entirety of the universe revolved around her and her desires.

“Can you imagine what my father would say if I were to agree, if I were to give up command of this vessel, jeopardise hundreds of lives, risk interplanetary war, all for the life of one person?” Spock asked her. For he was certain that if Sarek could hear her now, he would feel a similar revulsion crawling under his skin, in spite of the bond that his parents shared.

Discontent with talk of logic and duty, Amanda went for yet another emotional appeal, one even less relevant to the situation at hand than her others had been thus far. “When you were five years old and came home stiff-lipped, anguished, because the other boys tormented you saying that you weren't really Vulcan. I watched you, knowing that inside that the human part of you was crying and I cried, too.”

Spock stared at her impassively. His childhood, his anguished and tormented childhood, was of no consequence here. It couldn’t possibly have less to do with his decision, and as far as he was concerned it was in poor taste that she should bring it up now. And for her to insinuate that it was merely his human half that was affected by his peers was blatantly offensive. And that she should turn it around then, and make it all about her? That his own struggle was somehow suffered equally by her? Did she think she owned every part of him then? That Spock, her son, was only put in this world to be an extension of herself?

“There must be some part of me in you,” she told him, though Spock knew that there was not a small Amanda and a small Sarek living within his katra. Only himself. “Some part that I still can reach.”

But he was not unreachable. It was his mother who refused to hear logic. Refused to see the reality of the situation they were living in now. Refused at every turn to actually acknowledge Spock.
“If being Vulcan is more important to you, then you'll stand there speaking rules and regulations from Starfleet and Vulcan philosophy, and let your father die.”

And Spock knew he would.

“And I'll hate you for the rest of my life.” Amanda told him, and Spock felt his arms grow numb.

Emotional blackmail then. He’d always wondered at the human expression of “unconditional love”. He knew now what he’d always suspected -- that such love, even between parent and child, was entirely conditional. His mother had laid the conditions before him, and sealed his fate. He would let Sarek die, because he must. And his mother had vowed to hate him. Sarek would die with their relationship still estranged, and his remaining ties to his mother would be irrevocably broken.

“Mother.” Spock said, though he could not seem to form more words.

“Oh, go to him.” Amanda pleaded. “Now. Please.”

“I cannot.” Spock told her numbly, and was only shocked out of his dissociation by her slap, sharp on his face, as she stormed out. Never before had his mother hit him. And never before had she denied him her love. As strained as their relationship had been at times, he’d never thought it to come to this. Even were Sarek by some miracle to survive, Spock very much doubted that their relationship could ever heal from this conversation.

But as he’d told his mother numerous times, there was hardly time to dwell on it now. Spock took a steadying breath, and shut his emotions and that conversation away. This ship was in danger. And the duty fell entirely to him.

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Spock sat on the bridge, doing little but monitor the situation, while in sickbay his father was probably dying, his mother grieving. And his captain? Bones had said that the wound was serious. Serious but not fatal. He could not allow himself to think about it now.

The doors to the turbolift whooshed open and Spock stared incredulously at the man he’d just been thinking of. Captain Kirk, in full uniform, acting as if he’d been fully cured of a knife wound that had punctured a lung, with Doctor McCoy in tow. Chasing him down? Or sanctioning his recovery?

“Captain?” Spock questioned, not believing for a second that Kirk was fully recovered. How could he be, given the severity and nature of his injuries? It wouldn’t be the first time Kirk had powered through an injury when he really shouldn’t have. And indeed, his suspicions were only confirmed at Kirk’s next words.

“I'll take over, Mister Spock. You report to Sickbay with Doctor McCoy.”

Just like that, Spock knew why Kirk, no Jim, had come. Because his friend knew the stakes, and wished to spare Spock the pain of the decision. And this, above all else, was why Kirk was suited for the captain’s chair, and Spock would always hold that he was not. Still, he could not in good conscience relinquish his duty until he knew for certain. Was Kirk fit for duty? Was it safe, was it responsible, to leave the ship in his control?

“Captain,” Spock asked, “are you quite all right?” He knew that all the meanings behind his question were understood.

“I've certified him physically fit, Mister Spock.” McCoy assured him, and on this, Spock was forced to accede to the medical expertise of the ship’s CMO. He would trust McCoy, at least in this. “Now
since I have an operation to perform and both of us are required --” McCoy continued, his statement clear.

“Get out, Spock.” Kirk encouraged with a last kind look before turning to Chekov for a status report. A clear dismissal. And who was Spock to disobey direct orders? Gratefully, he exited the bridge with Doctor McCoy, his mind already shifting to the next task at hand. He could not think of the painful conversation he’d had with his mother, or how she might react. He couldn’t think of how close to death his father was presently either, but rather directed his thoughts only to his role and the medical procedure before him. That much, he could manage.

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Spock laid in sickbay, a needle in his arm and drugged up to his gills with the experimental concoction that would aid him in producing sufficient blood for the transfusion. It was a good thing he was lying down, as his head swam with vertigo. He felt sluggish even as his heart seemed to race. The sensations were so odd, so foreign to him, that he might have under any other circumstances panicked a bit. As it was however, things were going perfectly according to plan, and neither Doctor McCoy or Nurse Chapel seemed overly concerned with his symptoms.

“Readings, Nurse.” McCoy’s voice floated over to him, seeming a further distance away than he truly was. Spock turned his head to watch the proceedings as the scenery seemed to slant and shift beneath his gaze. Chapel answered the doctor, of that he was sure, but he couldn’t seem to focus on anything too clearly. Luckily, he didn’t have to. He remembered that at least -- that he was doing his duty here, and that was all he had to focus on getting through.

It was here, in the drug-fuelled peace of the moment that several disparate elements began to connect, and suddenly Spock was certain that he’d unravelled the mystery at last. It was blindingly clear to him. He knew the identity of the intruders, and it was imperative that he report his information to the bridge.

Spock rolled himself to a sitting position, though his inner ear rebelled against it. Temporarily, he forgot his IVs, and struggled to find his footing. He needed to stand, to move, to report.

“Mister Spock!” Chapel said in alarm.

At the same time McCoy demanded of him, “Where do you think you're going?”

“I must see the captain.” Spock tried to explain. There was no time for explanations. Not when the floor was shifting and his heart was racing and he knew now the identity of the intruders.

“My patients don't walk out in the middle of an operation.” McCoy told him.

“The alien ship.” Spock tried desperately to explain. “I've just realised that if their power utilisation curve is not the norm, it should be possible to identify them this way. Very important.”

But it was too late to explain further, as Spock felt the familiar hiss of a hypo against his neck. And in his weakened state, even the diminutive Chapel was able to coax him back onto his bed. He fought against the sedative, but it was useless, as blackness came.

When Spock blinked awake, sickbay was moving. The vertigo again? No, that was ship’s fire. Spock took a steadying breath.

“One more like that,” the doctor complained, “and I'm going to lose both these men.”
You might anyway, Spock thought to himself as he struggled to shake off the effects of the sedative. Though he knew that it was likely too late to attempt contacting the bridge. Whatever tactical advantage foreknowledge would have gained them, that advantage would be gone now. Enterprise was engaged in battle, and the situation was firmly out of Spock’s hands.

So he waited and watched, as McCoy and Chapel did their work, the ship jolting around them.

“Doctor, his heart's stopped.”

“Cardio-stimulate.”

“The systems are off.”

“Then get me that old portable cardio-stimulator. Call engineering and have sickbay systems put on priority.”

Would his father live? Would anyone on the ship?

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“Bones?” Spock could hear his captain calling from the adjoining room.

“Are you quite through shaking the ship around?” McCoy groused.

“Spock, Sarek how are they?” Kirk wanted to know, and Spock felt a certain warmth suffuse him at Kirk’s concern. The ship had been in mortal peril, and at his earliest convenience Kirk had still come directly to sickbay to check on him. And to check on his father. As if Sarek, in being connected to Spock, was of nearly equal import.

“I don't mind telling you, you sure make it difficult for a surgeon trying --”

“Bones!” Kirk sounded ready to burst a blood vessel in his frustration.

Taking pity on the poor man, his mother ushered the captain in before Spock himself could call out.

“Captain, come in.”

“That pig-headed Vulcan stamina. I couldn't have pulled them through without it.” McCoy announced, deflecting any praise or credit that Spock knew was his due. It was McCoy’s expertise and raw ability that had pulled them through -- of that he was certain. From the start, when he’d asked McCoy to save his father, he’d had faith in the man’s abilities. That faith had clearly not been misplaced.

“Some doctors have all the luck.” Kirk indulged him, though his expression told Spock that he felt much the same way about the man that Spock did.

“Captain, I believe you'll find the alien --” Spock tried to tell him, now that he was finally alone with the man. Now that there was finally an appropriate opportunity to share his findings.

“We damaged their ship.” Kirk interrupted, clearly bursting with a need to fill Spock in. “They destroyed themselves to avoid capture. Bones, Thelev's body will be brought to your lab. I want an autopsy performed as soon as possible.”

“I think you'll find he's an Orion, Doctor.” Spock interjected, before he could be interrupted yet again.

“Orion?” McCoy asked in surprise.
“Intelligence reports that Orion smugglers have been raiding the Coridan system.” Spock told them.

“But what would they gain by an attack on Starfleet?” Kirk asked.

“Mutual suspicion and interplanetary war.” Sarek deduced.

“Yes, of course.” Kirk followed right along with them. “With Orion carefully neutral, they'd clean up supplying dilithium to both sides and continue to raid Coridan.”

“The thing that confused me was the power utilisation curve. It made them seem more powerful than a starship or anything known to us. That ship was constructed for a suicide mission. Since they never intended to return to their home base, they could use one hundred percent power on their attacks.” Spock explained. Then, perplexed, he added, “The thing I don't understand is why I didn't think of it earlier.”

“You might have had something else on your mind.” Kirk smiled.

And of course, indeed he had. His parents aboard the ship. The dismantling of his carefully constructed persona. The criticisms of his identity -- never Vulcan enough, nor human. His estranged relationship with his father, and his rapidly disintegrating relationship with his mother. Not to mention the impending threat of Sarek’s death. The serious injury to Kirk’s own lung. The pressure of commanding the ship during a crisis. Spock had most certainly had something else on his mind, though he still felt as if he should have realized the truth of the matter sooner.

The banter was familiar, and Spock easily slipped into his role. “That hardly seems likely.” he denied.

“No,” Kirk agreed, humouring him, “but thank you anyway.”

For what, Spock wondered, would Kirk thank him? For figuring out it was the Orions, after the fact? For trying, and failing, to hold himself together during a crisis? Certainly he wasn’t being thanked for withholding information on the fact that the ambassador was his father, at the start of all of this.

“And you, Sarek.” Amanda chimed in. “Would you also say thank you to your son?”

“I don't understand.” Sarek responded blankly, though Spock suspected his father did not want to understand.

“For saving your life.” Amanda clarified, though Spock knew that she would say that. It was an illogical, human sentiment, and no doubt she believed that Spock had done it based purely on emotional reasoning. That he’d been swayed somehow by his mother’s words. Rather than the truth of the matter -- that he had done his duty when he was able, and if Kirk had not come to the bridge, Sarek would be dead.

“Spock acted in the only logical manner open to him.” Sarek told her, and no doubt he had the same reasoning as Spock. “One does not thank logic, Amanda.”

“Logic, logic!” Amanda ranted. “I'm sick to death of logic. Do you want to know how I feel about your logic?”

“Emotional, isn't she?” Spock could not keep from asking his father. As if to tell him, Do you see what I put up with during your incapacity? And also, Spock wondered -- as much as he dearly loved his mother, he wondered at times how Sarek could stand her over-emotionalism. Amanda Grayson outdid at times even one Doctor Leonard McCoy.
“She has always been that way.” Sarek said by way of explanation.

“Indeed? Why did you marry her?” He asked it casually, lightly, as in the tone of their banter, but he did want to know. For never were two beings so opposite in temperament than his mother and his father.

“At the time, it seemed the logical thing to do.” Sarek told him.

And before Spock could inquire further, he became distracted by the slow collapse of his captain, while McCoy ushered him into a bed with his usual grousing. As Spock had suspected, the injury was far from healed, and now that the crisis was at an end, Kirk would be as much a prisoner of sickbay as were Sarek and Spock.

He tried for a moment to take advantage of the chaos to escape sickbay and return to his station, but McCoy was on him before he could even move. Perhaps it wasn’t healthy, but it was familiar here and filled him with a certain warmth. He and Kirk once again confined to these beds with McCoy carefully watching over them.

Spock took a moment to take stock of the situation. He’d told himself that when this was at an end, he would require extensive meditation. But as he lowered the shields he’d built around each dilemma in his mind, he saw that that was no longer the case. The ship was safe, the delegates (for the most part) in good health. His father would live and their relationship was strangely improved. Even his mother seemed to have forgotten their earlier discussion, though Spock knew that the wound she’d inflicted would take quite some time to heal.

He was content for now to let McCoy do his job. There would be time for all of them to heal.

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