Hi, You Were My Husband in Another Life, Professor

by littlebirdtold

Summary

Um, hi. I'm Jim. Jim Kirk. You don't know me, but I know you. Well, sort of. It's a long story. All of this started when I... Actually, no, it started when my mom got it into her head that... well, it's kind of complicated. Long story short, I accidentally ended up in another universe and... Look, I know it sounds crazy, but in that universe, we—the other me and you—are married and you're the crown prince of Vulcan Kingdom. It does sound crazy, I know. Fuck, I don't even know why I'm doing this. I don't really know you—hell, I'm not even sure I want to know you. It's not like I think you and me... I'm just curious, I guess. You'll probably ignore me anyway; I know I would if I were a Vulcan and got a call like that from some stranger. Fuck it, it was a stupid idea. Bye, Spock.

[18-year-old Jim ends up in Once Upon a Time's universe. When he gets back, Jim's curiosity gets the better of him. And then things become complicated. Academy AU.]

Notes

This story can be considered a sequel to Once Upon a Time, but it really isn't necessary to have read it to understand this fic. Most of this story is set in ST XI-universe.
Chapter 1

Stardate 2251.04

Iowa

"A parcel for Winona Kirk. Is she home?"

"Nope," Jim said distractedly, doing his damnedest not to drop the eggs in his hand. They were the only thing in the house he knew how to make something edible out of. If he dropped them, he would have to rely on Winona to cook for them.

All things considered, he'd rather not rely on that. Not today.

"Are you a relative?"

"Yup, her son," Jim said. "Gimme, I'll sign it."

The courier handed him the form. Cradling the eggs to his chest, Jim scribbled his name with the other hand and took the small parcel from the guy.

And nearly dropped it. "Holy— What's this? It weighs a ton!"

The guy shrugged. "Holy— What's this? It weighs a ton!"

"Alright, thanks," Jim said, shoving the door shut and running to the kitchen before he dropped the parcel or the eggs. Or both.

Putting everything on the table, Jim examined the parcel curiously.

His eyebrows flew up when he read the shipping information. The parcel had been sent from a sector at the far end of the Alpha Quadrant, from a planet he'd never heard of.

"Huh," he muttered, glancing at the name of the person who'd sent it.

Dr. David Clarkson.

Something tugged at his memory, but, no matter how hard he tried to remember why the name sounded familiar, his mind stayed blank.

Well, only one way to find out.

Jim tore the wrapper off. He could always claim Winona was the one who had opened it. It wasn't like she would remember a thing when she sobered up.

There were only two things inside: some stone and a note.
Glancing briefly at the stone and suppressing the urge to touch it—he wasn't that reckless—Jim picked up the note first.

It read,

Dear Winona,

As you see, I've changed my mind. I hope I won't come to regret it. I trust you to be discreet about having the Tear in your possession, at least until I get my article published.

I hope you understand that my initial reluctance to give it to you had nothing to do with greed or distrust, and everything to do with the danger the Tears pose. Even I, after many months of research, observation and experimentation, still don't understand how they work and why they work. They just do, and sometimes they don't. Or perhaps this Tear is just defective, and that's why it doesn't work properly. I suppose there's no way to know, as there have been no records of other Tears in the last four centuries.

You're probably wondering why I've changed my mind and decided to give you the only known Tear of Forever in the Federation. Ironically, it's also due to the dangerous nature of the artifact.

To put it bluntly, four years or five days ago (depending on the perspective), I woke up one hundred and ninety-seven years in the future. I don't know why. I just left the Tear on a nightstand when I fell asleep, and when I woke up, everyone I knew and loved—Jenna, the kids, my parents, friends and co-workers—were gone. Dead. To say I was terrified and freaked out is to say nothing.

You might be thinking that since I'm writing to you about this, I must have figured out how to set everything right. I didn't. I spent 1397 days in the future—almost four years, Winona—trying everything I could think of, but nothing worked. One day I simply woke up in our time again, only five days after I disappeared, and hell if I know why. And to be completely honest, I don't care. I'm just happy that I'm back with my family and I don't want this thing anywhere near us. So I'm giving the Tear to you.

Winona, I don't know what you want it for, but if those four years taught me anything, it's that Tears of Forever are far too complex for humans to understand, much less manage. I'm starting to think maybe it's for the best that there are next to no Tears left and the location of the planet with the Guardian of Forever is long lost. No matter how interesting the subject matter, it isn't worth our lives and families.

Be careful.

Putting the note down, Jim looked back at the stone—the Tear, if it really was a Tear.

It was hard to believe that this ordinary-looking onyx stone could be a powerful alien artifact. Although he had never heard of Tears of Forever, he had heard about the Guardian. According to legends of some old civilizations of the Milky Way, the Guardian of Forever was supposedly a construct of an ancient alien race, which functioned as a gateway to other times and dimensions. If that Tear thing worked in a similar way—and Dr. Clarkson's words implied that it did—then...

The sheer potential…it was staggering.

The question was, what did his mom want it for?

Suddenly, Jim got a really bad feeling.
With another wary glance at the stone, he headed upstairs.

The house was silent. The old steps creaked beneath his feet with each footfall. He paused at the top of the stairs, reluctant, considering turning around. He usually stayed away from his mom's room on the anniversary of the Kelvin's destruction, and for a damn good reason.

Sighing, Jim resumed walking before stopping in front of the closed door to his mom's room. He strained his hearing, but all was quiet. Figuring she had probably passed out, Jim pushed the door open.

A strong smell of body odor and booze greeted him.

Fighting his revulsion, Jim looked around the semi-dark room. Four empty bottles of vodka were lying on the floor. Another one was grasped in Winona's hand. She was lying on her back and gave no indication of noticing him, her eyes fixed on the photograph of George Kirk she was holding in her other hand.

Jim walked over and looked down at her. "Dr. Clarkson sent you something," he said, watching her bleary, bloodshot eyes slowly focus on him.

When they did, her face lit up, and a mad, lovesick smile stretched her lips. "George," she breathed out, reaching out for him.

Grimacing in disgust, Jim stepped back. "No, it's Jim. Remember me?"

"George," she said again, staring at him with such naked hunger and want that it made Jim sick. He knew Winona was mistaking him for his dad, but it was a pretty small comfort.

"It worked, then," she said with wonder in her voice. "It worked."

It was all the confirmation he needed.

Turning around, Jim walked away, ignoring her desperate cries for 'George' to come back.

It had been eighteen years, for fuck's sake. Why couldn't she move on and stop clinging to the past and the memory of a dead man? It wasn't love; it couldn't be. If that was love, well...he didn't want to ever experience it.

Returning to the kitchen, Jim dropped himself into the chair by the table and stared at the seemingly ordinary stone.

He must get rid of it.

He couldn't allow his mom to do anything stupid. If she got her hands on the thing, Winona would likely try to go back in time and save George. At least Jim hoped that was her intention and she wasn't planning just to go to another universe where George was alive, her son be damned.

But knowing her obsession with the dead guy, he wouldn't put it past her.

Jim tried to ignore the small voice in the back of his mind that whispered angrily that it wouldn't be necessarily a bad thing if she was gone.

Suppressing his anger and resentment, he focused back on the stone.

He couldn't let her have it. Sure, there was a good chance that the artifact wouldn't work, but he'd rather not take any chances. And frankly, he was pretty uncomfortable with the presence of this thing
in the house. He wasn't exactly eager to end up a few hundreds of years in the future—or to become a tasty snack for some T-rex.

Jim quickly wrapped the stone, careful not to touch it with his bare skin. The sooner he got rid of it, the better.

He stood and turned towards the trash can—

The stone warmed.

Jim froze.

Slowly, he looked down at it.

He inhaled sharply.

The stone was no longer onyx or ordinary. Its surface was shimmering with hundreds of shades of brown. The light was pulsing softly, and suddenly Jim had the crazy thought that the stone was alive.

It felt alive.

It felt like the thing knew that he was going to get rid of it.

"Okay," he said aloud. "Don't freak out, Kirk."

Carefully, not looking away from the stone in his hand, he made a cautious step toward the trash can.

The stone brightened and went hot.

Throwing caution to the wind, Jim made a beeline for the can.

He was too late.

He gasped, feeling a strange, dizzying sensation sweep over him. His eyelids grew heavy, his limbs weak, and he felt so exhausted all of a sudden. With an incredible force of will, he opened his eyes and tried to concentrate.

His mouth went slack.

The room around him looked off: too bright, too perfect. The longer he looked, the more unreal it seemed, as if he was looking at some pretty picture that had nothing to do with reality.

He glanced down at himself, and his eyes widened: it wasn't the world that was turning unreal; he was the one fading out of it.

Jim let go of the stone—tried to. It didn't work.

He could only watch as he faded out completely, leaving the room behind.
When Jim was six, Bobby Spenser pushed him down the stairs because he was "an annoying little shit" and he needed to "learn to respect his betters." Jim largely failed to do that despite his cracked skull, and up until this point, he'd been sure that his head couldn't possibly hurt worse. He'd been wrong. He'd been so fucking wrong.

He wanted to throw up. Scratch that, he wanted to die. His head was killing him.

What did—?

Right. The Tear. Shit.

When Jim managed to focus on something other than his throbbing head, he registered the noise. He seemed to be outside, and people around him were speaking in some foreign but vaguely familiar language.

The thing he registered next was the heat. It was nearly unbearable.

Blearily, Jim opened his eyes and almost yelped finding a stern-looking Vulcan leaning over him and studying intently Jim's face.

"Er," Jim said intelligently and looked around.

Okay.


It was probably reasonably safe to assume that he was on Vulcan.

The Vulcan who was all over Jim's personal space finally straightened and said something to him, looking a bit puzzled—well, by Vulcan standards.

"Er," Jim said again. His knowledge of Vulcan was limited to a few words he'd picked up from movies about pre-Surak wars, and Jim had the feeling they weren't appropriate for this situation.

The Vulcan frowned barely noticeably and said something into his communicator.

"Crap," Jim muttered, only now noticing the strange gun in the Vulcan's holster. Policeman? Did Vulcans even have a police force? It was kind of strange. Jim had always assumed Vulcans were too peaceful and logical to have things like crime.

He wondered if lying on the ground was considered a crime on Vulcan and quickly sat up, trying to ignore his dizziness. He looked around and sighed, realizing that the stone was nowhere to be found. Awesome. Fucking awesome.

The Vulcan said something again, and Jim shrugged distractedly, his mind reeling. How was he supposed to return home without the stone? And why had he ended up on Vulcan of all places?

He was so preoccupied with his thoughts that it took him by surprise when the Vulcan put a hand on his arm and gently but firmly dragged him to his feet. The Vulcan said something into his communicator again, clearly discussing Jim, if the glances he kept casting in his direction were any indication.

"Hey, can I go or not?"

The Vulcan gave him an odd look.
The really odd thing was, Jim got the impression that the guy didn't understand a word of what he was saying. But... but it should have been impossible. All Vulcans were supposed to know Federation Standard, at least its basics.

The Vulcan said something to him again. He seemed to be asking something. Jim just shrugged.

At this moment, a black hovercar landed a few meters away and the Vulcan pushed Jim towards it.

Having little choice and starting to feel dizzy from the planet's thin air, Jim didn't resist and got in the hovercar. The Vulcan climbed in after him and they took off.

Jim watched with interest the impressive city below.

"ShiKahr?" he asked, making a wild guess.

The Vulcan gave him a long look before nodding.

Jim found himself grinning. He'd always wanted to see Vulcan, but he hadn't really thought he would get a chance. Yep, he had no clue why he was on Vulcan of all places, and how he was supposed to get back, but it was more excitement than he'd ever had. Besides, if Doctor Clarkson, with all his superior knowledge, couldn't figure out how to use the artifact to get back to his time, Jim wasn't arrogant enough to think he'd have any luck even if he had the stone. He'd probably be back to his time at some point anyway.

Jim frowned as a thought occurred to him. His time. Was he in the future? Could he be in the past, pre-Federation, and that was why the Vulcan didn't seem to know Standard? If Vulcans had never seen a human before, it would actually explain why he'd been taken into the custody.

His brows furrowed, Jim looked at the Vulcan, but he was talking into his communicator.

Since there was no way of getting any information from him, Jim looked out of the window again.

They weren't in ShiKahr anymore. The hovercar was accelerating, the countryside passing in a blur of red and brown.

Jim's frown deepened. He'd thought the Vulcan would take him to a police station, or whatever the Vulcan equivalent was.

Where were they taking him?

~*~

About half an hour later, the hovercar finally landed and Jim looked out of the window again.

He whistled when he saw a majestic building—a huge palace—not far away.

The hovercar's door slid open and Jim found himself looking at five armed Vulcan guards.

Their guns were pointed at his face.
Slowly, Jim lifted his hands and stepped out of the hovercar.

"Hey, I didn't do anything!" he said quickly, in case some of them knew Standard.

The Vulcans' faces remained impassive. Well, mostly. Jim noticed one of them looking at him almost incredulously.

He said something to Jim and Jim shrugged, getting pretty annoyed about the language barrier. If he were in his own time, he could count on a universal translator, but it couldn't possibly exist if he was right and this was a pre-Federation Vulcan.

Trying to come up with a solution, Jim allowed himself to be escorted into a building next the palace; probably a security building, or something.

His guess turned out to be right. There were guards everywhere, and Jim was led into something resembling an interrogation room.

The severe-looking Vulcan who seemed to be in charge said something, gesturing to a chair.

Jim sat.

The Vulcan sat opposite him. Other Vulcans took guard at the door.

"Well?" Jim said when the silence stretched. "Are we going to sit here and look at each other forever?"

The Vulcan didn't even blink and gave no indication that he understood him. He seemed to be waiting for something.

Finally, the door opened and a female Vulcan came in, carrying a—

Jim frowned. That thing in her hand looked a lot like a universal translator. But Vulcans weren't supposed to have it yet. Unless... Unless he wasn't in the past, as he'd assumed.

The Vulcan put the device between them.

"I am Sereek," he said. "I am the Captain of Royal Guards. Do you understand the language now?"

"Yeah," Jim said, his thoughts racing. Royal Guards? Vulcan didn't have royalty, and if his memory served him right, they hadn't had it for thousands of years.

"Very well," Sereek said. "Introduce yourself and inform me of your origins."

Jim licked a corner of his lips, hesitating. He wasn't sure if he should be completely honest. Hell, they'd probably think he was crazy if he told them the truth.

"My name is Jim Kirk," he said finally, figuring his real name wouldn't matter anyway.

Sereek's face remained impassive, so Jim continued, "I sort of... Look, I don't even know what you want to know. It would really help if you tell me why I was arrested and what you want from me."

Sereek's blank expression didn't change. He said nothing.

Jim sighed. "Look, I have the right to know why I've been apprehended. I'm pretty sure you're breaking some law by keeping me here. I've done nothing wrong. So you better start talking or I'm walking out of here."
He made a move to get up and the guards by the door tensed and lifted their guns. Sereek raised his hand, stopping them.

"Very well," he said.

Jim leaned back in his chair and waited, crossing his arms over his chest.

Sereek was silent for a while. "Before I inform you why you have been taken into custody, it is of utmost importance to verify your identity. Would you allow a doctor to take a blood sample and perform an identification test?"

Jim nodded, though the request made him suspicious.

Sereek turned on his communicator. "Send for Healer Saavin." He frowned, ever so slightly, listening. "If he is unavailable, send for a nearest doctor." He paused again. "Indeed, if he is in the palace, he will suffice."

He shut off the communicator and looked back at Jim. "We will have to wait for approximately seven minutes before proceeding."

"Great," Jim muttered, wondering why it was so important to confirm his identity. He had a guess, but the thought made him uneasy.

The thing was, the existence of Vulcan royalty and universal translators at the same time made it pretty obvious that he couldn't be simply in another time. Which left only one possibility, really: Guardian of Forever was rumored to be able to manipulate not only time, but also dimensions. So it was probably pretty safe to assume that he was in some freaky alternate reality in which Vulcan royalty still existed and the Federation likely didn't.

He was torn away from his thoughts when the door opened and a man walked in.

Probably around thirty, he was tall and dark-haired. More importantly, he was human.

"You've got to be kidding me," the man said, staring at Jim.

"Doctor McCoy, if you could confirm the individual's identity," Sereek said.

McCoy scowled slightly. "Sure, but can't you just do your Vulcan voodoo? That's what you did to— to him when he got here."

"That was a different case," Sereek said stiffly, looking vaguely uncomfortable. "He was found on the Royal House's territory, thus breaking the law. As this individual, to our knowledge, has not committed any crime, we do not have any legal right to use t'verhat, nor can we perform a mind meld to see his memories—"

"Whatever," McCoy said, walking over to Jim and opening his medical kit. He put on gloves and pulled out some very menacing-looking device. It had a long needle.

Jim fidgeted, eyeing it warily.

McCoy snorted and opened his mouth to say something but seemed to think better of it. Quickly and efficiently, he took a blood sample from his arm and then connected the device to a handheld computer. "Hmm," he said.

"What are you doing?" Jim asked.
"Comparing your DNA," McCoy grumbled, eyes on the readings. "Yes, it's definitely Jim Kirk," he told Sereek. "But you knew that already, didn't you? Or you wouldn't drag the kid's ass over here."

Sereek didn't look particularly happy with the news.

Jim wasn't particularly happy to be the only one still in the dark. "You got your test, now you've got some explaining to do. Or I'm walking out." Never mind that he had no idea where to go and where he could stay until the Tear sent him back home. If it ever sent him back home.

Jim shoved the thought away and fixed his eyes on McCoy. He had a feeling he would get more answers from him than from Sereek. "Tell me what's going on."

McCoy looked at Sereek, snorted, and flopped into the free chair.

"How old are you, kid?"

"Eighteen," Jim said. "What does it have to do with anything?"

"Thought so," McCoy said, eyeing him speculatively. "You do look a bit younger than our Jimmy Kirk."

Jim's teachers used to say that he was a bit of a genius, "if only he applied himself." So it didn't take him long to put two and two together and get four.

"Your Jim Kirk is someone well-known, isn't he?" he said after a moment, forcing calmness into his voice and pretending that it didn't freak him out at all that there was another him living in this world, and that other Jim was apparently pretty well-known.

Could he even meet his counterpart? Would it cause a paradox, or something? Dimension-travel wasn't exactly well-researched.

McCoy gave a laugh. "You could say that. Jimmy is basically the Princess of the Vulcan Kingdom."

Jim blinked. "What?"

McCoy rolled his eyes. "Princess, prince-consort—same thing. He's married into the royal family." He clapped Jim's back, smirking. "You can be proud of yourself, Jimmy boy!"

"Doctor McCoy, while I appreciate your attempt to explain the state of affairs, I believe you are only bewildering Mister Kirk further," Sereek cut in.

"Fine," McCoy said with another eye roll before looking back at Jim. "Basically, about five years ago, your counterpart married into the royal family. Don't ask me how that happened; it's a long story. It was all very melodramatic and kind of unbelievable; shit like that only happens in fairytales. The point is, our Jim Kirk is a very well-known public figure, so we can't possibly have his doppelganger walking around and raising Vulcan eyebrows—at least I assume that's why they dragged you here for interrogation."

"Right," Jim said, blinking rapidly. His counterpart was a prince-consort. And he was married. That totally made sense. In some other universe. Right. "At least tell me she's hot."

"It's a he," McCoy said.

Jim stared at him.

Well, that was new. Yup, he wasn't exactly straight as an arrow, but he was pretty damn sure he
preferred women. Those few guys he had been attracted to in the past were an exception rather than a rule and his experience with them was limited to a few handjobs and a blowjob. He really had trouble imagining marrying a guy, much less a *Vulcan* guy. A Vulcan guy who was also the Crown Prince. The idea seemed too bizarre. How had they even met?

Sereek cleared his throat slightly and Jim looked back at him.

"Now that you have received a sufficient explanation as to why you have been brought here, explain your presence. It is obvious that you do not belong to our universe, since James Kirk does not exist here—"

"Wait, what? What about my counterpart?"

McCoy shrugged. "He wasn't originally from this universe, either. I told you—it's a long story."

"As I was saying," Sereek said, "since you do not exist in our universe, it is logical to conclude that you somehow travelled through dimensions. There are only 128 documented cases of travelling between parallel universes. If the act was intentional, you are possibly in violation of several laws. Explain yourself."

"It wasn't intentional," Jim said quickly. "The thing is, my mother—" He cut himself off, not knowing how to explain it. He looked at Sereek. "Look, can you just do this meld thing and see my memories? It's hard to explain."

Sereek studied him. "You will have to sign a form. Unauthorized mind meld is illegal."

"Whatever," Jim said, just wanting to get it done and over with.

Sereek handed him a form and Jim signed it.

The meld was quick and very efficient. Jim barely felt anything.

When the Vulcan pulled away, he wore a slight frown on his face. "You were transported into our universe through the use of *kv'assu*. There are documented cases of that artifact transporting individuals through time, however, as far as I know, there have been no documented cases of such dimension travel. Most curious."

"Yeah, whatever," McCoy said impatiently, getting to his feet. "So what are you going to do with him? He can't sit in this room until someone figures out how to send him back home."

Sereek hesitated. "I am uncertain how to proceed. Since their Majesties are travelling through Gamma Quadrant, and the Matriarch of the First House chose to be secluded this month in Kevinaar monastery—"

"The Crown Prince is the one you're supposed to consult with," McCoy finished before grimacing. "Good luck with that."

"Why?" Jim asked. "What's wrong?"

McCoy and Sereek exchanged looks.

"This is not a matter that should be discussed with outworlders," Sereek said, rather stiffly, avoiding Jim's eyes.

"He isn't exactly a stranger," McCoy said, pressing his lips together. "I'm taking him out of here."
"You do not have the authority to make the decision, Doctor McCoy," Sereek said. "You are a respected member of the Fourth House of Vulcan, but the Second and Third Houses have precedence—"

"Actually, I do have the authority," McCoy cut him off, scoffing and opening his kit again. He started rummaging in it, looking for something. "Since the Crown Prince and the prince-consort are temporarily unavailable, as Prince Savok's godfather, I'm in charge. Here it is." He pulled out a signet ring and shoved it under Sereek's nose.

Sereek studied it before nodding. "Very well. You may take him."

"Thank you," McCoy said, not without sarcasm, and grabbing Jim's arm, dragged him out of the room—not that Jim required much of dragging. Shoving the royal signet ring back into his kit, McCoy pulled out something like an earpiece and attached it to Jim's ear.

"Mini-universal translator," he explained. "It's not perfect, mind you, but it's better than nothing."

"Where are we going?" Jim asked as they got outside. He had trouble keeping up with McCoy and started to pant almost immediately. If the hell existed, it was probably not unlike Vulcan.

Glancing at him, McCoy swore under his breath and jabbed a hypo into his neck.

"Oi!"

"Tri-ox," McCoy said, putting the hypo back into his kit and heading to the palace. "Vulcans are idiots."

"You could have warned me," Jim grumbled, but he did feel a lot better. Then he remembered something. "You said you were Prince Savok's godfather. The Crown Prince has a little brother?"

He didn't bother to hide the hopeful note in his voice. Because no. Just no.

Yeah, okay, he could accept that the other Jim was married to a man, but he couldn't possibly have a kid. Well, he supposed he could—it was the 23rd century, after all—but Jim Kirk having a kid? Just no.

McCoy smirked and clapped his back. "Nope, Spock has no siblings. Congratulations, you're a daddy!"

Jim scowled at McCoy. "You're enjoying this too much, buddy."

McCoy grinned. "I know. But who would blame me?"

Jim snorted a laugh. "So, why is the prince unavailable?"

McCoy nodded to the guards and they opened the doors to the palace. Jim followed him in and let out a relieved sigh. It was much cooler inside, though still nowhere as cool as he would have liked.

"The thing is..." McCoy said, as Jim looked around and tried hard not to gawk. "When Spock was twenty, someone drugged him with an illegal substance that made him go into pon farr much earlier than he should have—"

"What is pon farr?" Jim cut him off, studying his surroundings as they walked deeper into the palace.
The luxury made him more than a little uncomfortable. Jim honestly couldn't imagine ever living in such a place.

McCoy made a face. "Basically, it's a neurochemical imbalance that takes on a form of madness. Every seven years, adult Vulcan males go into heat and must have sex or die—"

"For real?" Jim said with a chuckle.

McCoy cringed. "Yes. Normally, Vulcans don't have their first pon farr until their mid-thirties, but the drug totally messed up Spock's system. He had his first pon farr about fifteen years earlier than he should have, and it seems the drug also messed up his normal biological circle. He shouldn't have had another pon farr for two more years, so we hadn't expected it when it hit him a few days ago. The timing couldn't have been worse: T'Pau left for some monastery, and the King and the Queen are travelling. So that leaves only me and little Savok. Speaking of little Savok. Say hello to your son, Jim."

Jim stopped and stared at the little boy running towards them. "He isn't my son," he said just as the toddler ran into him and hugged his knees.

"Daddy!"

"Um," Jim said, eyeing the mini-Vulcan clinging to his legs. "Isn't he supposed to be unemotional and logical?"

"He's Jim Kirk's son," McCoy said with a snort, ruffling the kid's dark hair. "And he's only two. He doesn't have a stick up his ass yet."

The little boy looked up and stared at him with huge blue eyes—Jim's own eyes. Other than the eyes, he looked completely Vulcan: upswept eyebrows, little pointed ears, smooth dark hair, and greenish tint to his skin. He was cute as a button, actually.

"You are not Daddy," the boy said, looking at him with suspicion. He stepped away and clasped his small arms behind his back. "Why do you look like Daddy?"

Jim smiled sheepishly. "What gave me away?"

"Your scent is different," Savok said. "You do not smell like Father."

McCoy made a face. "Too much information, kid."

"You did not answer my query," Savok said.

Jim nearly laughed. It was hilarious as hell to hear a toddler talk like that.

"I look like your dad because... Because I'm him, but from another world."

Savok raised a pointed eyebrow. "Fascinating."

"Goddammit, stop imitating Spock, kiddo," McCoy grumbled. "It's weird."

"There is nothing wrong with imitating a highly intelligent individual, Uncle Bones," the boy said.

"Bones?" Jim mouthed at McCoy.

"Don't ask," McCoy said with an eye-roll before picking up the kid. "Where's Jo? She was supposed to be looking after you."
"I do not require 'looking after,'" the kid informed him seriously, grabbing McCoy's ear and tugging. "I am two point one years old."

"Yeah, real grown-up," McCoy said before fixing him with a stern look. "Where's my daughter, you devil's spawn?"

"You are highly illogical. I am not a son of a mythological supernatural entity—"

"Savok, son of Spock, son of Sarek, son of Skon, son of Solkar," a female voice said coldly, and the kid froze, looking like a deer caught in headlights.

Jim nearly laughed. The kid was hilarious.

Turning around, he saw a Vulcan female walking towards them. She was very beautiful and very pregnant. A cute human girl—she was probably around six or seven—was holding her hand and helping her walk.

"Dammit, T'Pring!" McCoy said, dumping the kid into Jim's hands before striding to the female. "You're not supposed to be out of bed!"

The beautiful female—T'Pring—gave him an icy look. "I am pregnant, not ill, Leonard."

"Yes, you're pregnant, but you're also ill!" McCoy scowled and pulled out a tricorder.

Jim looked down at the toddler in his arms.

The toddler looked back.

"Is he her doctor?" Jim asked, clearing his throat.

"Uncle Bones is Aunt T'Pring's bondmate," Savok informed him, studying him. "Do you have a son in your world?"

"Um," Jim said. "No. I'm a bit too young for that, kiddo."

"Daddy is not old," Savok said, a small frown crossing his little face. "He was twenty point seven years old when I was born."

Inwardly, Jim grimaced. He sure as hell wasn't going to have kids in two years' time.

"Savok," T'Pring said again.

The kid glanced at her over Jim's shoulder and then hid his face in Jim's neck.

Jim chuckled. "Is she that scary?"

"Affirmative," Savok whispered, wrapping his tiny arms around Jim's neck. They were surprisingly strong for a two-year-old.

Jim looked down at the small dark head. The boy was very warm and pretty heavy.

"Savok, you deceived Joanna," T'Pring said sternly, probably meaning the girl still holding her hand.

Savok lifted his head from Jim's neck and peeked at her. "If she is not intelligent enough not to be deceived, the fault is not mine."
Jim laughed. "Okay, now I can believe this is my kid."

"Jo is the smartest little girl on Vulcan!" McCoy said, scowling at the boy. "Apologize to your cousin, Savok."

"It would be most illogical to apologize for telling the truth," the kid muttered under his breath.

Snorting, Jim said quietly into his ear, "Sometimes it's better to apologize, even if you think it's stupid."

Savok looked at him, his face impassive but eyes glistening with mirth. "But Vulcans do not lie."

Jim winked at him. "Well, you're part human, aren't you?"

"Your reasoning is sound," Savok informed him before turning to Joanna and T'Pring and putting on a very innocent and very serious face. "I apologize, Joanna."

T'Pring nodded graciously, but the little girl studied him with narrowed eyes. "The midget is lying!"

"Joanna," T'Pring said. "Do not call the child a 'midget.'"

"I apologize, Mother," Joanna said reluctantly, glaring at Savok.

T'Pring nodded and finally looked at Jim. "Leonard has already informed me of your situation through our bond. T'Ver will show you the way to your room."

As if on cue, a maid appeared and told Jim, "Follow me."

Jim looked at the kid in his arms. "What about him?"

"I am coming with you," Savok announced before either T'Pring or McCoy could say anything.

"Kiddo, he's not your daddy—"

"I know that, Uncle Bones. However, since Daddy and Father are engaged in sexual intercourse at the moment—"

Jim spluttered and heard McCoy make a similar sound, turning red in the face. "Dammit, I knew the royal hobgoblin and Jim couldn't be trusted with raising a kid!"

Savok gave him an unimpressed look, pursing his little lips. "My parents are not at fault. My hearing is functional, Uncle Bones, and since I am not mentally afflicted, I am capable of drawing my own conclusions based on the information I am presented with. I am well aware of what my parents do in privacy of their quarters."

McCoy pinched the bridge of his nose. "Please, take him away," he told Jim before shaking his head and muttering, "Goddammit, I knew this would happen when Spock and Jim decided to procreate. They did it to spite me! To put me into an early grave!"

"Cease being overly dramatic, Leonard, and help me return to our room," T'Pring said, putting a hand on her huge belly as Jim walked away. "Your son responds to your emotional outbursts in a most unpleasant fashion."

What a madhouse.
Shaking his head, Jim followed the maid.

"Are you married to Father, too?" Savok asked him.

"Nope," Jim said, snorting. "I doubt he even exists in my world. Vulcans do not have royalty where I come from."

The toddler gave him a long, serious look. "It is illogical to assume that only because Vulcans do not have royalty, members of the First House of Vulcan do not exist in your world. Are you certain that you have not heard of our Matriarch, T'Pau?"

Jim frowned. Actually...He had heard of a Vulcan female called T'Pau. Wasn't she the only person to have refused a seat on the Federation Council?

"Maybe I have," he said before tapping his finger against Savok's little nose. "Not that it matters. I have no interest in marrying anyone, much less some Vulcan guy. No offence to your father."

"My father is not an ordinary Vulcan male," Savok said, rather defensively. It was kind of cute. "He is highly intelligent and hot as hell."

Jim stared at him. "What?"

"Daddy says so," Savok informed him. "He also says that Father gives the best head in the world." He frowned slightly, looking puzzled. "However, I am uncertain of its meaning. How would Father give his head to anyone?"

"No idea," Jim said, his face rather hot. "But I'm going to have a word with your dad about what is appropriate to say in the presence of overly-intelligent, nosy little boys."
"So," Jim said, putting his fork down and looking at McCoy. "The prince and the other me. When are they going to be done with...?" He glanced at Savok talking to Joanna at the other end of the table. The little girl was slowly reddening in the face as Savok talked. The toddler didn't seem to be paying them any attention, but Jim had a sneaking suspicion that those cute pointy ears of his missed nothing. "... pon farr?"

"Who knows," McCoy said with a small grimace. "It can last anything from a few hours to a few weeks."

Jim's eyes widened. "Are you sure it's safe? Didn't you say Vulcans become mad or something?"

McCoy shrugged, but he was frowning. "Feral. But Jim can look after himself. He has the necessary supplies with him." He made a face. "And Spock would never really hurt him. Don't tell him I said that." He glanced at the clock on the wall, his lips pressing together.

"I'm sure she'll be fine," Jim said.

"Yeah," McCoy agreed, but he looked anything but sure. Raking a hand through his hair, he stood up and started pacing the room. "She should have let me stay with her. I'm a doctor, dammit!"

"You're also her husband," Jim said. "You'd only distract her and make her nervous." He paused. He'd known T'Pring only for a few days, but she didn't seem to be the type to get nervous. "Well, maybe not nervous, but—"

"Of course she is. She was terrified, Jim." McCoy sighed. "Don't let her Vulcan poker face fool you. She's just a girl. And Vulcan-Human pregnancies are always very risky. Anything could go wrong."

He looked at the clock again. "Goddammit, why is it taking so long?"

"It's been only three hours," Jim said. "And don't you know what's happening? Aren't you mentally linked or something?"

McCoy scowled. "It isn't that simple. I can't feel her if she blocks the connection."

"Come on, sit down, Bones. I'm sure she and the baby will be fine."

McCoy opened his mouth, but at that moment Savok suddenly jumped off his chair. "What is it, kiddo?"

"Father is fully recovered," Savok said, nearly bouncing in excitement.

"How do you know that?" Jim asked.

"He has a familial bond with Spock," McCoy said. "The kid's telepathy isn't developed enough yet, so it's pretty one-sided."

"Father wished to ascertain that I was well and in good health," Savok said, his lips twitching. He looked happy, and Jim realized that he must have been missing his parents terribly. And then he felt stupid for not realizing it sooner. For all Savok's vocabulary and intelligence, he was a two-year-old baby. Of course he missed his parents.
"Good," McCoy grumbled. "I'm sick of being responsible for this place."

"Don't you live here?"

McCoy scoffed. "No. Thank god. We live in the manor of the Fourth House."

"Won't they—"

The door opened and a young man walked in.

Jim found himself staring. He'd thought he got used to the thought, but it was more than a little freaky to see himself.

Sure, the other Jim looked a few years older, but other than that they looked completely identical.

"Daddy!" Savok made a beeline for his counterpart.

Grinning, the other Jim picked him up and lifted him to his face. "Who's Daddy's little boy?"

He tickled the boy's belly and Savok let out a cute squeal. "Me!" Savok said, wrapping his arms around his dad's neck.

Jim's counterpart rubbed his nose against his son's, making Savok giggle in a most unVulcan-like fashion. "I missed you, pumpkin."

Savok leaned to his ear and said something that made his dad close his eyes and hug the little boy harder.

Watching them, Jim felt... odd. It was a good thing that his counterpart still hadn't noticed him, because he wasn't sure he could say anything at the moment.

His gaze shifted to the door as it opened again to admit a Vulcan male. The prince. His counterpart's husband. Jim knew the prince was twenty-six, but he seemed older, maybe because he looked rather tired. Well, five days of non-stop sex would do that to you.

Jim eyed him curiously, trying to see what could have attracted his counterpart to him. Sure, Spock was tall and pretty handsome, but he looked too cold and reserved—the exact opposite of the guys Jim had been attracted to in the past.

Noticing the prince, Savok immediately stopped giggling. "Father," he said in a more dignified manner. He seemed to hesitate before reaching his arms out to Spock.

"Little traitor," the other Jim said with a laugh, passing him to his husband.

Taking his son, Spock simply looked at the boy for a moment before his fingers touched Savok's meld points. His eyes closed.

When he opened his eyes, he looked around the huge dining room until his eyes fixed on Jim.

"Jim, we have a guest," he said.

His husband turned around.

"Well," he said as blue eyes met blue. "This is weird."

"Hi," Jim said.
"We are familiar with the artifact you call Tear of Forever," Spock said later that evening as they sat in the library. "We refer to it as kv'assu."

Jim looked at him and then at his counterpart seated next to Spock, with Savok in his lap. McCoy and Joanna were with T'Pring, who finally gave birth to a baby boy a few hours ago.

"Yeah?" he said.

"Affirmative," Spock said. "And we have a hypothesis as to why you ended up in our universe and on Vulcan in particular. We believe our dimension has a weakness in space–time continuum—"

"After I ended up here five years ago," his bondmate said.

"Indeed," Spock said, linking two of his fingers with his bondmate's before looking back at Jim. "We have learned that kv'assu are not stable enough to intentionally travel between dimensions. There is no coordinate system, as one might say. Therefore, you were simply drawn to the universe that already had an entrance point opened by an immortal omnipotent alien from the Q continuum for your counterpart."

"That... makes sense," Jim said. "Do you know how to send me back?"

His counterpart and Spock exchanged a look. Jim got the impression that they were communicating through their bond.

"Possibly," the other Jim said finally, turning his head to him. "We know the location of the Guardian of Forever."

"Really?" Jim said. "In my universe, the location is long lost."

"That was the case in our universe as well," Spock said. "We have found it only because we have been looking for it specifically after Jim's arrival here."

"Why?"

His counterpart sighed. "I was on very bad terms with my parents when I left my own universe. I was angry with them and didn't want to see them again, but... "He looked down at Savok who was sleeping against his chest. His expression softening, he put a hand on the boy's back. "I've changed my mind. I'm no longer that angry teenager. I didn't want them to think I was dead. They're my parents."

"So you went back to your universe after you located the Guardian?" Jim asked.

"No," his counterpart said.

"Why not?"

The other Jim looked at him with a grim smile.

"Because I was too late. We found the Guardian two years after my arrival here, but it told us that in
my own dimension it had been hundreds of years and my parents were long dead."

Jim's lips parted in surprise. "What?"

"Time passes differently in some dimensions," Spock said. "The more different the dimensions are, the more remote they are and the more different the flow of time is. Jim's original world was very different from this one."

"Humans don't even have space travel in my world," Jim's counterpart said. "The two dimensions are too distant from each other."

His brows furrowed, Jim thought about the differences between this world and his own. "We do have space travel, but other than that… There's sure as hell no United Planets of Vulcan Kingdom. We have the Federation. I don't know Vulcan history that well, but I think in my dimension Vulcans didn't have Royalty for thousands of years."

Spock regarded him with a small crease between his brows. "That is worrying. The differences between our dimensions appear to be very prominent. We cannot waste any time if you wish to use the Guardian of Forever to return home. You have been here for three days. It is impossible to calculate how much time has passed in your dimension."

"Is there any alternative?" Jim asked, feeling a bit uneasy about the possibility of returning home years after he left.

His counterpart was the one who replied. "Well, there's an alternative, I guess: the Q continuum, an extradimensional plane of existence inhabited by Qs. The Q that sent me to this world could manipulate times and dimensions. Qs aren't as limited as the Guardian. Unlike Q, the Guardian of Forever is pretty much just a gateway to the vortex that allows access to other dimensions; it can't manipulate time in very distant dimensions. Qs can. But it's impossible to find a Q if they don't want to be found."

"So basically, there's no other alternative," Jim said, sighing and getting to his feet. "Where can I find the Guardian?"

~*~

His counterpart and the crown prince decided to accompany him to the Guardian's planet.

When Savok found out that his parents were leaving again, he threw a huge temper tantrum, the force of which startled Jim. He hadn't expected it from the normally calm, well-behaved boy. Only when Spock stepped to the enraged child and said quietly Savok, the kid froze and paled, looking crushed. Jim wasn't sure what that was about. Savok seemed to be... almost afraid of Spock's reaction.

Eventually, Spock and the other Jim decided to take Savok with them too—as well as twenty heavily armed guards.
"Is this really necessary?" Jim asked, pulling his hood down to hide his face. The crowd at the spaceport didn't need to see their prince-consort's doppelganger walking beside him and the Crown Prince.

"You mean the guards?" his counterpart said, nodding to some people. "Not really. The Royal Family is pretty popular nowadays, but... There are always a few extremists. I'm not willing to put my son's life at risk."

"You didn't have to accompany me," Jim said.

"We do, actually. Very few people besides us know where the Guardian is located. It's highly classified information." He shrugged. "Besides, T'Pring and Bones left with their children, so the palace is empty now."

Jim looked at him curiously and then at Spock who was walking slightly ahead with Savok in his arms. "Aren't you tired after... you know?"

His counterpart grinned. "Pon farr? Yeah, a bit, but it was actually a small vacation. Normally we can't laze in bed and fuck all day. Sure, the first day was intense, even a bit scary, but... " He shrugged, his face a bit flushed. "I liked it."

Jim averted his gaze, trying hard not to think about what he could possibly mean.

He was still *not* thinking about it when they got into a shuttle. He was still not thinking about it as the shuttle docked with a large, heavily armed starship, *V.F.S Savok*, and they boarded it.

"This is my ship, Uncle Jim," Savok announced, peeking at him over his counterpart's shoulder. "Is it not most impressive?"

"Sure thing, kiddo," Jim said honestly. He didn't think the Federation had a starship this advanced. Even the Federation flagship that was under construction at the Riverside Shipyard —the Enterprise —was nowhere this impressive.

"Don't boast, baby," the other Jim said with a laugh, kissing his nose.

Savok pursed his lips. "I am not a 'baby.' I am a grown boy. I am two point one years old."

His dad licked his nose. "Tastes like a baby Vulcan to me. Are you sure you're a grown boy? You sure you don't want to play horsey with your daddy? Grown boys can't do it, of course."

Savok bit his lip, looking torn. He glanced around.

"Don't worry, your father won't see us," his dad whispered in a conspiratorial tone. "We'll be sneaky!"

"Very well," Savok said before eagerly climbing onto his dad's back.

And off they went.

Left alone, Jim turned to look out the observation window at the distant stars.

They seemed cold and lonely.

They called to him.
He didn't know how long he had stood there on the observation deck; long enough for the ship to jump to warp speed. Jim was watching stars streak by as they traversed space at hundreds of times the speed of light when he felt someone's presence next to him.

Turning his head, he found himself looking at the crown prince.

"Do you like space?" Spock said.

Jim put his hands into his pockets, feeling slightly uncomfortable. It was the first time he'd been alone with his counterpart's husband and it made him vaguely uneasy. It wasn't that he didn't like the guy. Spock didn't seem that bad, really; he just seemed... too unemotional and unapproachable most of the time.

"Yeah, I guess," he said. "You?"

"I find it quite fascinating. Jim and I enjoy participating in exploration voyages when we have time available. However, as we do not wish to risk our son's safety, it is a rare occurrence. Unexplored space can be dangerous."

"Yeah," Jim said, turning back to the window. "Space isn't a place for kids. He's... He's a great kid."

"He is," Spock said and there was warmth in his voice. Warmth and pride.

Jim gave him a sideway look before quickly averting his gaze.

"You appear uncomfortable in my presence," Spock commented mildly, clasping his hands behind his back.

"No—maybe," Jim admitted.

"Speak your mind."

Jim shrugged awkwardly. "I just... I just don't get it. I mean, your Jim isn't that different from me, but... Look, don't take it personally. I'm sure you're a great guy and all. I just have trouble imagining marrying someone so unemotional and uptight. Hell, your own son fears you."

"You are mistaken," Spock said. "Savok does not fear me."

"But you still expect him to control them," Jim said. "He's a kid! He deserves to have a normal childhood. He should be allowed to have emotions!"

"Controlling emotions does not equal purging them. Yes, he is a child, but he is a Vulcan child."

"He's part-human," Jim said.

"Indeed. However, Vulcan genes are dominant, strong even when diluted. Physiologically, he is"
Vulcan. He has a Vulcan mind and physiology, and everything it entails."

Jim frowned. "What do you mean?"

Spock turned to the window.

"Vulcans are not incapable of feeling," he said after a moment. "It is a common misconception. In fact, we feel more deeply than humans. Our emotions have to be controlled; else they will control our lives. Do not mistake our reserved and rational behavior for the inability to feel. It cannot be further from the truth." He went silent for a short while. "Vulcans are not pacifists by nature. We are not creatures of logic. It is an acquired trait rather than innate. The Vulcan race used to be a race of violent warriors. Before we adopted logic, we were a race more bloodthirsty than Klingons and far superior to them in intelligence. A deadly combination." He turned his head to meet Jim's eyes. "The United Planets of Vulcan Kingdom was built on the blood of billions, Jim. Why do you think there was not a Jim Kirk in this universe? Thirty-two percent of Earth's population was killed when my ancestors conquered the planet seven centuries ago."

Jim swallowed. He moistened his lips with his tongue. "You mean that Vulcans are naturally prone to violence?"

"Indeed," Spock said looking out the window again. "That is why we encourage our children to learn to control their emotions from very early age. The later we start doing it, the more difficult it is for a child. If I am at times stern with my son, it is done out of necessity. Jim knows it is necessary for Savok to learn to control himself. Savok is aware of it, as well." He paused. "When I was a child myself, I thought I was not 'Vulcan enough' for my father. I did not think he was proud of me. I was mistaken. I would never do the same mistake with my son. Savok knows he is cherished by both of his parents. Do not assume I do not love my son because I do not show my emotions as freely as Jim does."

Jim stared at his profile. "Sorry. I didn't know. I just— back in my world everyone considers Vulcans unemotional logical pacifists. I've never even heard of pon farr until I ended up here."

Spock's shoulders tensed barely noticeably. "Nowadays we are known as 'unemotional logical pacifists' in this world as well. People tend to forget and, as you know, history is written by the victors. It appears Vulcans in your world adopted logic much earlier than us, but it does not change their nature. Nor does it change ours. When our Time comes, we are stripped of all hard-learned self-control and discipline because they are not natural to us. Beneath the layers of logic and rationality, we are still the same violent race that conquered and enslaved billions." Spock's jaw clenched slightly. "No better than savages."

Eyeing him, Jim thought that he'd never be able to look at Vulcans the same way.

"Why are you telling me this?" he said quietly. "I mean, it's obvious it's not something you'd talk about freely."

Turning his head, Spock met his eyes again. "Because you are a Jim. If you ever have to deal with Vulcans, I do not wish you to operate under misconceptions and get hurt."

Jim wasn't quite sure what to say.

"Are you saying all Vulcans are dangerous?" he asked, clearing his throat.

"Most of the time, modern Vulcans are not dangerous. We do not let ourselves become emotionally compromised." Spock paused, regarding him calmly. "Do you know what a sehlat is?"
Jim gave him a startled look, confused by the sudden change of topic. "It's a Vulcan pet." He chuckled. "Looks like a giant teddy-bear."

"Indeed. Domesticated sehlats are very intelligent and loyal creatures, but that is not why we keep them. We give them to our children to teach them discipline and responsibility. Vulcan children are never late with their sehlat's dinner. A hungry sehlat is the most dangerous beast on Vulcan."

Something flickered in Spock's eyes. "Appearances can be deceiving, Jim. No matter how well-tamed a beast is, its nature remains the same."

And he exited the observation deck, leaving Jim frowning and wondering.

~*~

"The Guardian says the time does flow very differently in your dimension," Jim's counterpart confirmed, returning to where Jim stood with Savok in his arms. "It says you'll return more than four years after your disappearing. Your mom must be beside herself."

Jim just snorted.

Taking Savok from him, his counterpart gave him a long look, his blue eyes solemn. "Look, I know you said you didn't get along with your mom, but... "He bit his lip. "It's not too late for you. She's your mom. I'm sure she misses you. Try."

His jaw tightening, Jim nodded. Glancing at Spock who was still talking to the Guardian, he asked, "Do you regret it?"

His counterpart looked at his husband, then at his son cradled against his chest, and said with a smile, "Do I look like I regret it? Sure, I wish I've made peace with my parents, but everything I love is here."

"Father and me," Savok clarified helpfully, in case Jim didn't get it.

Jim grinned and, leaning down, kissed the toddler's forehead. "Goodbye, kiddo," he said, ruffling his shiny hair. "Be a good boy and stop eavesdropping on adults' conversations."

Savok nodded seriously, his eyes full of mischief. "Goodbye, Uncle Jim. Do not forget about T'Pau."

His dad looked down at him with confusion. "What?"

Rolling his eyes, Jim chuckled. "I think your son is trying to play a matchmaker. He's hoping his father exists in my dimension. He doesn't understand how illogical and improbable it is." And that I'm not interested.

The little boy pursed his lips.

Jim's counterpart frowned, his expression becoming thoughtful. "You know, years ago, Q told me something... He said that the universe had ways to right itself—that Spock and I managed to find each other in practically every universe against all odds. I know it sounds crazy, but he said that there
was a fixed natural order to the cosmos. That some things are fixed, and completely different actions and circumstances may still lead to a predetermined destiny."

Jim let out a disbelieving laugh.

His counterpart smiled crookedly. "That was my reaction precisely. And look at me now." He shrugged. "Who knows, maybe he was wrong. I think he was a bit mad, actually."

Spock walked over to them. "It is time," he said, looking at Jim. "The Guardian has opened a portal to your dimension."

"Good luck," Jim's counterpart said, stretching his hand out.

Jim shook it and then looked at Spock, who stepped closer to his husband and son.

The Vulcan's dark eyes were thoughtful. "Peace and long life," he said quietly, raising his hand in \textit{ta'al}.

"Thanks." Removing the mini-universal translator from his ear, Jim gave it to Savok. "Give it to Uncle Bones and thank him for everything, alright?"

Savok nodded. Glancing at his father, he raised his hand in the Vulcan salute, his tiny fingers managing to perform it flawlessly. Spock nodded at his son approvingly and Savok's face lit up. He smiled slightly at Jim and said in Vulcan,

"\textit{Dif tor heh smusma}."

"Thanks, pumpkin." Smiling at the kid, Jim turned away and walked to the Guardian.

As he was about to step through the portal, he turned his head back and looked at them for the last time.

Spock and Jim had their fingers linked, and Savok had his small arms wrapped around his dad's neck. Dozens of armed guards clothed in the colors of the Royal House stood behind them.

Life was a strange thing. If many circumstances were different, this could have been his life.

In fact, in this universe, for this Jim Kirk, this was his life.

Well, now it was time to find out what his life would be like.

Jim turned around and stepped through the portal.

Everything went white.
Riverside, Iowa

He appeared some distance away from the house.

The first thing that surprised him was that it was a hot summer day: it had been the middle of winter when he'd left. Despite the Guardian’s words, it was still hard to believe it really had been over four years here. He had been gone only for eleven days: four days on Vulcan and seven days travelling to the Guardian's planet. Four years. It was supposedly 2255 now. The thought made Jim more than a little uneasy.

He walked to the house and knocked.

While he waited, Jim eyed the house. It didn't look any different.

Finally, the door opened.

Jim found himself looking at an unfamiliar middle-aged man.

"What?" the man said, rather rudely.

Jim blinked. "Hi. Is Winona home?"

The guy scowled. "Who? There's no Winona here." He slammed the door in Jim's face.

Frowning, Jim knocked again.

The door swung open. "I told you, there's no—"

"Look, I'm really sorry to bother you, but are you sure you don't know Winona Kirk?"

The man's thick eyebrows furrowed before his expression cleared up. "Kirk? You mean the former owner of the house? She doesn't live here anymore. She sold the house about three years ago."

"Really?" Jim said, surprised. Winona had always refused to move out of the house—George's house. "Do you know where she is now?"

"No idea. But..." The man stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Hmm, I think I remember her saying that she was going back to Starfleet."

"Thanks," Jim said— when he picked his jaw up off the ground.

He turned around and walked away from the house, his mind reeling.

Jim stopped, realizing that he had no idea where to go now. He didn't have a home anymore. He had no money. Hell, he didn't have anything but the clothes on him. He had no idea where his mother was or how to contact her.

Also, it was probably pretty safe to assume that he was presumed dead.
Jim sighed.

Awesome. Fucking awesome.

~*~

Having nowhere to go, Jim went to his favorite bar, hoping to see a few familiar faces.

But the bar was full of Starfleet cadets, which initially confused him before he remembered about the Federation Flagship that was being built at the Riverside Shipyard. Right. There had been rumors that the shipyard would be an embarkation point from where Starfleet Academy cadets would travel to their training facilities. What the cadets were doing there in the summer was another matter entirely, but Jim couldn't bring himself to care.

Jim looked around the bar. His gaze lingered on a middle-aged Starfleet captain standing by the bar, observing the cadets. Jim hesitated before walking over.

The man turned his head to him. His eyes widened.

Inwardly, Jim grimaced. He knew that look.

"Jim Kirk," he said, stretching his hand out for a handshake. "Yep, George Kirk's son."

After a long moment, the man shook his hand. "Christopher Pike," he said, looking at him piercingly. "You do resemble your father, but I know your face because I attended your funeral, son."

Jim blinked a few times before chuckling. "Wow, now this is something I've never expected to hear." He studied Pike's face. "No offence, but I don't remember you being a family friend."

"You are right: I wasn't," Pike said. "I wouldn't normally attend your funeral if Starfleet wasn't involved in investigating the circumstances of your death."

"What?"

Pike met his eyes. "Ever heard of the Department of Temporal Investigations? Probably not. Our sensors detected a strange energy reading in Iowa on stardate 2251.04. The readings were similar to the ones that were recorded by the *Kelvin* when that giant ship appeared from the black hole. Since the readings were detected nearby the Riverside Shipyard, the Headquarters were concerned—and understandably so—and sent me and a few other DTI officers to Iowa to investigate."

"And?" Jim said, curious. "What did you find?"

Pike sighed.

"We found your mother in a hysterical state. Where have you been all this time, Jim?"

Jim frowned. "Don't you know about..." He hesitated.

Pike raised his eyebrows. "If you mean a highly dangerous alien artifact in Winona's possession, yes, we know of it," he said, eyes glistening with humor. "And we saw the letter from Doctor Clarkson and put two and two together. But the artifact was cracked in half and wasn't working anymore. The
DTI's scientists studied it extensively and came to the conclusion that whatever the Tear did to you, it was too much of a strain for it and it malfunctioned in the middle of transporting you. If it worked correctly, it would have transported with you, as it was supposed to. So we thought that it was most likely that you hadn't survived the trip."

Jim nodded, remembering the killer headache he'd had when he woke up on Vulcan. His counterpart had been surprised when Jim told him about it: apparently dimension-travel wasn't supposed to make him feel as though an elephant stomped all over his head and he wasn't supposed to black out like that.

Now it made sense. If his counterpart and his husband were right, the Guardian and the Tears weren't designed to transport people to distant dimensions and time, but that was what the Tear attempted to do when it tried to transport him to the point of his counterpart's arrival to the Vulcan Kingdom, which was five years ago. Considering that time passed so differently in the two worlds, it probably only complicated everything. No wonder the thing broke.

"I guess I'm lucky," Jim said, shrugging.

"Very," Pike said and took a sip from his drink.

Jim looked longingly at it. "You know what? Buy me a drink and I'll tell you what happened to me."

Pike did.

It didn't take Jim long to tell him everything—well, maybe not everything. He just told Pike where he had ended up and how Vulcans helped him return home. For some reason, it seemed weird and wrong to mention his counterpart and little Savok, so Jim didn't.

Pike wasn't that interested in Vulcan Kingdom but seemed quite interested in the Guardian. "Do you, by any chance, remember the location of the Guardian's planet?"

Jim shot him a look. "Nope, but I wouldn't tell you even if I did. Messing with time is a bad idea."

"Trust me, I know that better than anyone. That's why the DTI was created, after all." Pike looked thoughtful. "It's very interesting that time passes differently in some dimensions. Our scientists hypothesized that it was possible, but there was no proof so far." He looked darkly at Jim's drink. "If I knew you weren't of legal drinking age yet, I wouldn't buy you that."

Jim grinned cheekily. "But I'm twenty-two."

Pike shook his head. "Any biological scan would reveal that you are not twenty-two. The DTI will have to come up with an explanation that doesn't involve you hopping dimensions and times. Things like that tend to make people nervous." He smiled. "Sorry, Jim. And don't look at me like that. You're coming with me to the Headquarters."

"Who says I'm coming with you?"

Pike raised his eyebrows. "And what are you going to do? You have no money, no home, no family here. Legally you don't exist."

Jim pursed his lips. "Where's Winona?"

"The last I've heard, she was working on a very distant Federation station."

"Why?"
Pike regarded him calmly. "That's something you'll have to ask her. But if I have to make a guess, it probably wasn't easy for her to lose her son on the anniversary of the Kelvin's destruction. Your death seemed to have shaken her quite badly."

Jim looked down at his drink.

A while passed before he said,

"Are you telling me to join Starfleet?"

"Only if you want it."

*Do you like space?* Spock's voice echoed in his head.

Biting the inside of his cheek, Jim looked up to meet Pike's eyes. "Fine. But I'm not George Kirk."

Pike looked at him without a smile. "I know. Your father was a remarkable man, Jim. He was the captain of a starship for twelve minutes and saved eight hundred lives. But something tells me you can do even better."

~*~

*San Francisco*

The process of 'reviving' him from the dead had turned out to be more complicated than Jim expected, but a month later, he finally got a shiny new identity card that actually stated that he was eighteen, despite being born twenty-two years ago. The official explanation for his presumed death and his eighteen-year-old body involved a tragic accident, a cryogenic stasis chamber and a miraculous recovery. In Jim's opinion, the whole thing was totally unbelievable. Granted, it was less unbelievable than him travelling to an alternate reality and losing four years in eleven days.

The Starfleet Academy entrance exam had been unexpectedly—and excitingly—pretty challenging, but Jim passed it easily enough, and since he had nowhere to go, Admiral Barnett allowed him to move into his dorm early.

In hindsight, it had been a very bad idea.

There was still a week until the start of the term and Jim was bored out of his mind. Bored and curious: a very bad combination for him.

He wasn't bored enough to hail Winona and tell her he was alive. But he was bored enough to look up T'Pau in Starfleet database.

Finding her was easy; she was a well-known Vulcan political leader.

*T'Pau, daughter of Savok, born in 2122 on the planet Vulcan. During the mid-22nd century, she was one of the leaders of the Syrannite movement which helped to reform Vulcan society by bringing forth the true teachings of the ancient Vulcan philosopher Surak…*

Jim skimmed through the document in search of anyone familiar.
Jim knew it was a bad idea to hack into Starfleet's private database to get Spock's address and communicator frequency. If he had gotten caught, he would have been kicked out of Starfleet. But now the deed was done and he only had to decide what he was going to do with them.

And he wasn't sure what to do. Sure, he was curious. He was really curious to see what Spock was like in this dimension. It was totally natural to be curious about the guy he was married to and had a kid with in an alternate reality.

Everyone would be curious.

That was what Jim kept telling himself as he stood outside Spock's building. He was a bit surprised that Spock lived there: it was the most prestigious, high-security building on the Academy grounds. Normally only Starfleet Admirals lived in there. Commanders, even the youngest commanders in Starfleet's history, weren't supposed to live in that building.

Jim eyed the entrance to the building, hesitating.

Did he really want to meet Spock? Was he really going to go to a complete stranger and say, "Hi, you were my husband in another life"?

The mere thought made Jim cringe.

He shook his head. It had been a mistake to come. It was pointless to try to get in anyway: the security in the building was top notch.

Jim turned around and left.

When he returned to his dorm, he was in for a surprise.

A dark-haired man was unpacking his shit, grumbling something under his breath. He turned his head when Jim entered.

"Oh, great," he said with a scowl. "They gave me a kid to babysit."
And for the second time this day, Jim found himself staring, his mouth open.

_Q told me that there was a fixed natural order to the cosmos and that universe had ways to right itself._

Well, maybe Q hadn't been that mad, after all.

"Why are you looking at me like I have two heads?" the guy grumbled.

Slowly, Jim smiled. "Hi, Bones."

Leonard McCoy gave him a strange look. "My name is McCoy. Leonard McCoy."

Jim grinned wider and, walking over, slung an arm around his shoulders. "I know—Bones. Hey, you aren't married to a hot Vulcan girl, are you?"

"No," McCoy said slowly, like he was talking to a three-year-old. "I'm not married to any Vulcan girl."

"Thank fuck," Jim said, grinning. He was pretty damn relieved. It would have been just creepy if Bones was married to T'Pring in this dimension, too. "Hey, stop looking at me like that! I'm not crazy." Ignoring McCoy's scowl, Jim pushed him to the bed. "But I have a really crazy story to tell you. Take a seat. I'm Jim, by the way. Jim Kirk. Nice to meet you."

~*~

Meeting Bones—getting him as his roommate—more than a little weirded him out, if Jim was honest with himself. McCoy seemed to be exactly the same as the other McCoy. He even had a little girl called Joanna.

And it was pretty mind-boggling. The two dimensions split off from each other _thousands_ of years ago. The other dimension's history was completely different. For one thing, in the other dimension, the Time of Awakening—a period in Vulcan history when Vulcans switched to more peaceful ways didn't occur during the 4th century; it happened only a few centuries ago. How could it be possible for both worlds to have Leonard McCoys who had a daughter called Joanna? It made no sense. It was implausible.

Spock's existence in both worlds was even more inexplicable.

Having _both_ of them at Starfleet Academy at the same time as him was one hell of a coincidence. Jim usually wasn't one to freak out easily, but this freaked him the fuck out.

The thought that there was some kind of _force_ manipulating everything in the universe made him uneasy. It also made him determined not to go looking for Spock, his curiosity be damned.

But the universe had other ideas.

He literally ran into Spock a few days before the start of the term.

"Be careful, Cadet," Spock said evenly, stepping away from Jim.

Jim watched as Spock's uniform-clad back disappeared down the hallway.
Should he or shouldn't he?

He knew it was a perfect opportunity to talk to Spock—if he was going to talk to him at all.

He followed him.

He followed Spock all the way to his building, keeping a safe distance from him. But he still hadn't made up his mind by the time Spock disappeared into the building.

Dammit.

Sighing, Jim eventually headed back to his dorm, annoyed with his own indecisiveness.

"What's with that face?" McCoy asked when Jim strode into the room and flopped down onto his bed.

"I don't know what to do about Spock."

"Spock? As in the other Jim's husband?" Bones still sounded like he was humoring him.

"No," Jim said, ignoring his tone. "I told you there was another Spock in our dimension. I'm talking about Commander Spock."

"What about him?"

"I don't know." Jim sighed, getting to his feet and starting to pace the room. "I mean—I don't really want to know him. It freaks me out, to be honest. But I'm just really curious, you know?"

"No, I don't," McCoy said with an eye roll. "Goddammit, kid, if you want to talk to the hobgoblin so much, go talk to him! What's the problem?"

"It would be weird. And awkward."

"So what? It's not like you're going to see him every day. Didn't you say he served as a Science Officer on some ship? He'll probably leave soon anyway."

Jim stopped pacing. "You're right. He was wearing his standard Starfleet duty uniform when I saw him. He's probably leaving soon. I have nothing to lose."

"Exactly! Now go to him and stop bothering me with your teenage angst." Bones buried his nose in his book again.

Decision made, Jim headed back to Spock's apartment.

His determination lasted only until he reached Spock's building. Then he lost his nerve again.

He wasn't sure how long he stood there, considering the pros and cons and arguing with himself, when he noticed that the security guards were beginning to look at him suspiciously.

Okay; time for a strategic retreat.

Jim walked away quickly.

When he got back to his dorm, he was glad to find that Bones wasn't there anymore; he'd only make fun of him. And Jim wouldn't blame him: he was acting ridiculous. It wasn't a big deal. Spock was just a guy. Yep, it would be weird talking to him, but he could talk to Bones, so what was the
difference?

Fuck it.

Jim pulled out his communicator, and before he lost his nerve, hailed Spock's frequency.

*Here goes nothing.*

He wasn't sure if he was relieved or disappointed when the call went to voicemail.

"Um, hi," he said. "I'm Jim. Jim Kirk. You don't know me, but I know you. Well, sort of. It's a long story. All of this started when I… Actually, no, it started when my mom got it into her head that… well, it's kind of complicated. Long story short, I accidentally ended up in another universe and... Look, I know it sounds crazy, but in that universe, we—the other me and you—are married and you're the crown prince of Vulcan Kingdom. It does sound crazy, I know. Fuck, I don't even know why I'm doing this. I don't really know you—hell, I'm not even sure I want to know you. It's not like I think you and me… I'm just curious, I guess. You'll probably ignore me anyway; I know I would if I were a Vulcan and got a call like that from some stranger. Fuck it, it was a stupid idea. Bye, Spock."

Jim switched the comm off and groaned. It was a stupid idea.

Maybe if he pretended that this never happened, the message would miraculously disappear from Spock's inbox.

Right.

~*~

The next morning, Bones woke him up. "Get up, kid. You're summoned to the office of Admiral Barnett."

Yawning, Jim rubbed his eyes and sat in his bed, trying to wake himself up. "What? Why?"

Bones shrugged. "How would I know? He said it was urgent. He looked pretty grumpy."

Frowning, Jim rolled out of the bed, took a quick sonic shower, dressed in his cadet red and left.

It was a good thing he already knew where Barnett's office was located, so it didn't take him long to get there.

He knocked.

"Enter."

Straightening his shoulders, Jim walked in.

He froze.

Admiral Barnett wasn't alone.

Spock stood by the big window, his hands clasped behind his back and his face completely inscrutable. He was also wearing an instructor's black uniform.
Jim stared. Spock was going to be an instructor?

"Cadet," the Admiral said, forcing Jim to look at him.

Bones was right: Richard Barnett didn't seem to be in a good mood this morning.

"Admiral," Jim said and, after a moment, added hesitantly, "Commander."

For a while, there was only silence in the room.

"Commander," Barnett said at last, still looking at Jim unwaveringly. "If you would repeat what you told me?"

"Certainly, sir," Spock said.

Jim returned his gaze to him.

Spock met his eyes calmly. His face betrayed nothing. "Fourteen point three hours ago, I received a message from Cadet Kirk on my private communicator frequency, in which he claimed to know me. Since Cadet Kirk could not obtain my communicator's frequency by legal means, I have checked the Starfleet database for possible breaches. I have discovered that there was indeed unauthorized access to the database 124.7 hours ago. It proved to be more difficult than I expected, but I was able to trace it back to James Kirk's computer."

Shit.

"Furthermore," Spock continued. "Yesterday, I detected the same cadet following me to my apartment. Since it was a singular occurrence, at the time, I dismissed it as irrelevant and insignificant. However, after receiving the message from Cadet Kirk, in which he appeared to wish to pursue a romantic relationship with me, I have examined security footage of the building's front entrance. There were three separate occurrences of Cadet Kirk standing outside the building and watching the entrance."

Jim pressed his lips together, his face hot with embarrassment and humiliation. When put that way, he knew what it looked like: it looked like he was stalking Spock.

"Since James Kirk is a Starfleet cadet, I considered it my duty to inform Starfleet of his misconduct and breach of several regulations."

Jim took a breath through his nose and looked Spock in the eye. "And what regulations did I break, Commander?"

Spock looked at him calmly, his face completely unemotional. "Starfleet Regulation 374-A—unauthorized access to Starfleet's confidential information; Federation Law 16-6F—"

"I wasn't stalking you," Jim ground out. "I just wanted—"

"Kirk," Barnett said. "Whatever your reasons were, you were stalking the Commander. The evidence is undeniable. And there's another regulation that you nearly breached: Starfleet Academy regulation 781-F."

Jim pursed his lips. "And what regulation would that be, Admiral?"

Barnett leaned back in his chair and leveled him with a look. "Fraternization between Starfleet instructors and cadets is strictly forbidden, Kirk."
Jim laughed. "I didn't—"

"Look, son," Barnett cut him off, rubbing his temples tiredly. "I have a massive headache, so I'm not in the mood for this. Don't insult my intelligence. You're not the first cadet to become infatuated with a professor and you won't be the last. But being infatuated is one thing, and stalking the professor and hacking into the Starfleet database to get the professor's address is another. In all honesty, I should kick you out, but Captain Pike vouched for you. Besides, it wouldn't look good if we kick out George Kirk's son."

Jim opened his mouth and then closed it.

"Permission to speak freely, Admiral?" Spock cut in.

Jim stiffened.

"Granted, Commander."

"I must object, sir," Spock said. "This sets a bad precedent. Starfleet regulations are clear on the matter."

Jim gritted his teeth. He couldn't believe he'd actually wanted to talk to that stuck-up asshole.

Barnett sighed. "I know, Commander, but in all honesty, I don't believe the cadet meant any harm. Sometimes going strictly by the book isn't the best course to take, Spock. I know it's hard to understand for a Vulcan, but sometimes we need to take into account people's emotions and motivations."

Spock gave him a blank look. "I do not understand, sir."

Robot, Jim thought.

"He's just a teenage boy," Barnett said. "Teenagers have crushes all the time and do highly illogical, stupid things."

Jim's cheeks went hot again. He didn't think he'd ever been so humiliated in his life.

"I thought Cadet Kirk was twenty-two years old," Spock said, glancing at Jim briefly. "However, he indeed appears rather young for an adult human male."

"No, he's just eighteen," Barnett said, rubbing his temples again. "He had an unfortunate accident four years ago and had to be put into a cryochamber for medical reasons. It's a long story, Commander, and completely irrelevant right now. My point is, he's just a teenage boy with a crush —"

"I'm not," Jim bit out. He didn't have a crush on Spock, and he wasn't a 'teenage boy,' dammit. He was eighteen. An adult.

Barnett gave him a hard look. "Do be quiet, Kirk. The term hasn't even started yet, but I already have to clean up after your mess."

His jaw working, Jim pressed his lips together and nodded stiffly.

Barnett turned back to Spock. "Commander, I would appreciate it if you let it slide this time and don't file an official report."

Spock looked at Barnett, and then glanced at Jim—who glared at him—before looking back at the
"Very well, sir. I shall trust your judgment on the matter."

"Good," Barnett said, smiling for the first time since Jim entered the office. "You are dismissed, Commander."

With a slight inclination of his head, Spock left, not even sparing Jim a glance.

Jim glowered at his back.

"Kirk," Barnett said when the door slid shut behind Spock.

Jim looked at him.

Barnett was no longer smiling. His gaze was hard and unforgiving. "It's the first and last time I'm doing this. If you do something like that again, I'm kicking you out. Your father's name wouldn't save you next time."

Jim had to make an effort not to tell him to fuck off. If he did, he would be expelled and that Vulcan asshole would get what he wanted.

So instead, he said, "Sir, I really wasn't stalking Spock. I was just curious, because in that other dimension —"

"Do I need to remind you that you're discouraged to talk about your little adventure, Kirk?" Barnett said. "And he's Commander Spock for you. I wasn't joking when I said that fraternization between Starfleet instructors and cadets was strictly forbidden." He sighed. His voice softened a bit as he said, "Look, son. Just stay away from the Commander. You're lucky Spock came to report you to me and not to Admiral Marcus: he doesn't have a teenage son, so he wouldn't be as forgiving as me."

"Thank you, sir," Jim forced out. "May I ask a question, sir?" Barnett nodded. "What's the deal with Commander Spock? He lives in the same building as admirals, but he's just a commander."

Barnett folded his hands on the desk. "Commander Spock belongs to a very influential Vulcan clan with a long history of involvement with Earth. His grandfather Skon was the first to translate The Teachings of Surak into English, giving humanity access to Surak's teachings and helping us to understand Vulcans. His great-grandfather Solkar made the first official contact with Earth as captain of the T'Plana-Hath, and later served as the first ambassador of Vulcan to Earth." Barnett grimaced slightly. "And you've probably heard about T'Pau. Historically, Spock's clan has a reserved seat on the Federation Council, as well as an apartment on Starfleet grounds, though until Spock enlisted in Starfleet, it was unused."

Barnett looked at Jim with something like pity. "Forget about him, Kirk. Commander Spock has a brilliant mind, but he's the epitome of Vulcan logic. He can't understand us wacky humans and our illogical emotions. He does everything by the book. If you continue stalking him, he will report you and get you expelled. He would never breach Starfleet regulations for a pair of pretty eyes. He's a Vulcan." He smiled. "They have a computer instead of a heart."

"Right," Jim said, putting on a smile. "Thanks for sticking up for me, sir. I promise to leave Commander Spock alone."

Looking relieved, Barnett nodded. "I knew you were a sensible boy. Your father was."

Jim smiled wider. "Can I go, sir?"

"Yes, you're dismissed, Kirk."
Still smiling, Jim walked to the exit.

As soon as the door slid shut behind him, his smile disappeared.

~*~

"So what did Barnett want?" McCoy asked when Jim returned to the dorm.

Jim didn't answer.

He sat on the bed, pulled out his PADD and quickly found what he wanted. "You're taking *Introduction to Linguistics* this term, right?" he asked.

McCoy nodded, frowning. "Why are you asking?"

Jim looked at the name of the instructor. He smiled. "Good. I'm taking it, too. It's still not too late to apply for the course."

McCoy gave him a suspicious look. "I don't like that smile. It's making me nervous."

Jim grinned. "*You* have nothing to worry about, Bones."

"Then who does? Dammit, Jim! What happened?"

"Spock happened," Jim bit out, putting the PADD away and stretching out on his bed. He glared at the ceiling. "He went to Barnett complaining that I was stalking him. Can you believe that?! He nearly got me expelled. He *would* have gotten me expelled if he went to another admiral. Everyone knows Barnett is a big softie compared to the others."

"Well, you were sort of stalking him."

"I wasn't."

"I hope you aren't planning revenge. That would get you expelled for sure."

Jim smiled at the ceiling. "Don't worry, I won't get caught."

"Goddammit, kid!"

"It was Barnett who gave me the idea, actually. He said that fraternization between instructors and cadets was strictly forbidden."

McCoy stared at him in confusion before his eyes widened. Then he burst out laughing.

Jim glowered. "It's not funny, Bones!"

"It is! You're delusional if you think you can make a *Vulcan* break the fraternization regulation. There are actually rumors that Vulcans have no sex drive whatsoever and make baby-Vulcans in labs. Everyone knows Vulcans don't feel, Jim."

"Then everyone is wrong," Jim said firmly. "They do feel. They just control their emotions. Control is everything for Vulcans, Bones." He smiled. "I'm going to make him lose it. Before the end of the
"term, Spock will be stalking me." Jim grinned. "I'll so enjoy reporting him to the board."

McCoy snorted. "Never going to happen. A grown Vulcan male would never get infatuated with a human teenager, no matter how pretty you are, Jimbo. It's too illogical."

"Sure," Jim agreed. "But I've been told by a very reliable source that logic is an acquired ability for Vulcans rather than something they are born with. Beneath their logical bullshit, they're supposed to be impulsive and violent."

Bones looked like he'd swallowed something bad. "Sorry, kid, but I don't believe it. It goes against everything we know about Vulcans."

Jim frowned, remembering Commander Spock's blank, unemotional face. A sliver of doubt crept in.

But then he remembered the other Spock's words.

Appearances can be deceiving, Jim. No matter how well-tamed a beast is, its nature remains the same.

A shiver of excitement ran up his spine.

"Just wait and see, Bones," Jim said, a small smile curling his lips. "Before the end of the year, I'll have him wrapped around my little finger."
Truth be told, Jim wasn't sure how exactly he was going to make Spock lose control, much less wrap him around his finger, though he would never admit it to Bones.

So when he entered the lecture hall with Bones at his side, he had no plan whatsoever. Not that he let it bother him too much; he had always been better at flying by the seat of his pants than coming up with elaborate plans anyway.

"Too much people," McCoy grumbled, looking around with a grumpy look on his face.

Jim grinned. He hadn't known Bones for that long, but he liked the guy and his general grumpy attitude towards everything and everyone.

"Why are you even taking Introduction to Linguistics?" Jim asked as they walked toward the front of the room; the lecture hall was crowded.

"I needed a non-medical course, and everyone said it was a good class to take if you want a few easy credits." McCoy scowled. "Who would have known Professor Chang would resign from Starfleet and we'd get your hobgoblin."

"Yup, people say he's pretty stern," Jim said, finally spotting a couple of seats at the front and sitting down.

Snorting, McCoy took the seat next to him. "Pretty stern? It's like saying space is 'pretty big.' Apparently Spock's high standards are legendary."

A girl seated on Jim's other side cut in, "Yeah. That's why Commander Spock usually teaches only advanced courses." She grimaced. "Obviously cadets in advanced classes are hardly stupid, but half of them still can't pass his class. We weren't supposed to deal with Spock at all unless we chose to take either Advanced Xenolinguistics, Advanced Astrophysics or Computer Simulation next year." She sighed. "I don't know what the board was thinking when they chose him to replace Chang."

"Oh come on, Sarah," said the girl on her other side. "He's not that bad. I've heard that the commander is very fair." She grinned. "And he's very handsome, don't you think?"

Sarah gave her a look. "He's our instructor, Kira. We aren't supposed to notice that he's attractive. Besides, Commander Spock is taken."

Jim turned his head to her. "He is?" He smiled at her. "I'm Jim, by the way."

She blushed slightly. "I'm Sarah."

"So what about Spock? He's taken?"

She nodded. "Oh yeah. My older sister was in the same year as the commander and she told me that she had seen his fiancée when she came here to visit him. A very beautiful Vulcan girl."

Frowning, Jim mulled the information over, not sure what to think. He hadn't even considered that Spock could have a fiancée. It made things…more difficult—if it was even true that Spock had a fiancée. Gossip could be misleading.

Before he could say anything, the lecture hall fell silent.
Jim turned his head, and sure enough, Spock had just walked in.

"All right, he is handsome," Sarah murmured to Kira.

He was, Jim admitted reluctantly. He ran an inspecting glance over Spock's tall, broad-shouldered frame clad in a black uniform. He did look fine.

The Vulcan stopped behind his desk and eyed the cadets for a moment.

"I am Commander Spock, your instructor for this course." His voice was cold and controlled. "Before we proceed, I have to forewarn you that a final grade for the course is calculated from forty-three percent of your year's work and fifty-seven percent of your final examination. A score of at least eighty-three percent must be obtained on your final examination in order to pass the course. If you wish to apply for Advanced Xenolinguistics, your final grade for this course must be at least ninety-eight percent."

A shocked murmur ran through the room.

"Is he out of his mind?" Bones said.

Jim stared at Spock who was simply looking at the students with a slightly raised eyebrow, as if he didn't understand why the cadets were unhappy.

"Can he even do it?" Sarah murmured angrily.

"He can," Kira said quietly. "Commander Spock basically has a carte blanche from the board. He's the Academy's most distinguished graduate and they take pride that a Vulcan agreed to teach here. You heard about the Kobayashi Maru test? It's part of the curriculum for command-track cadets since last year. The commander invented and programmed it. It's absolutely brutal and impossible to pass, but the board is very pleased with it, despite numerous complaints from command-track cadets. So yeah, we'll just have to suck it up and deal with it."

Jim frowned deeply. "Impossible to pass? But that's just stupid. What is the point of the test you can't pass?"

"If you are done questioning the curriculum, Cadet Kirk, shall we proceed with the class?"

Flinching, Jim looked up.

Spock leveled him with a look.

Jim eyed him, part angry, part intrigued. He wasn't the only one "questioning the curriculum." Why had Spock singled him out?

"Sure," Jim said, leaning back in his seat and meeting Spock's eyes. After a pause, he added, "Professor."

Spock's expression stayed blank, but there was something in his eyes...

The Vulcan looked away and started the lecture. Not even once did he glance down at his PADD, rattling off numbers and statistics from memory. Not even once did he glance at Jim, even though he was sitting no more than fifteen feet away.

Jim frowned and decided that he didn't like it.

So he blatantly stared at Spock.
At first, Spock showed no sign of noticing his stare or being in any way affected by it.

But after a while, his eyes flickered to Jim for a split second.

Their eyes met.

Looking away, Spock continued his lecture in the same calm, even tone.

Jim kept on staring on him.

Thirteen minutes later, if the clock on the wall was to be believed, Spock glanced at him again.

Jim met his eyes firmly. Unashamedly.

Spock's mouth thinned a bit, but otherwise his face remained completely expressionless as he continued the lecture.

He didn't look at Jim again.

When the class was over, McCoy grabbed his arm and dragged him out of the hall. "What do you think you're doing? You spent the entire class ogling the hobgoblin and ignoring the lecture! How are you going to pass the class?"

Jim clapped him on the back. "Don't worry, Bones, it'll be fine."

McCoy sighed heavily. "I'll enjoy telling you that I told you so when you fail his exam. Did you see him, Jim? Does he look like the kind of professor who would get infatuated with a student?"

"Nope," Jim said, grinning. "But I love a good challenge, Bones!"

McCoy just shook his head.

~*~

"Alright, kid. Explain something to me."

"Mmm?" Jim said, engrossed in *The Teachings of Surak*.

"Even if what you say is true and Vulcans in the other dimension do have emotions behind the unemotional mask for a face, how do you know that our Vulcans aren't different? Didn't you say the two dimensions split off thousands of years ago? Vulcans could have evolved differently. Maybe our Vulcans really purged their emotions while the other Vulcans just learned to suppress them."

Jim looked at him. "You don't really believe that, do you? I don't have to tell you, of all people, that when it comes to evolution, two thousand years is nothing. Biologically, they should be the same. And biology doesn't change only because our Vulcans learned logic two thousand years earlier. Their society is probably more repressed, but biologically, they shouldn't be any different."

"Well, yeah, but..." McCoy was frowning. "I don't know, Jim. You said that Surak guy—the one who taught Vulcans how to purge emotions—didn't exist in the other world. Maybe that's the key."

Jim shook his head. "It doesn't matter, Bones. Logic is still something learned for Vulcans, not something they are born with. If I learn how to knit, my kids won't be born with the ability to knit; it doesn't work that way. And it doesn't look like Surak taught Vulcans how to purge emotions." Jims
scowled at the book he had been reading. "Skon, Spock's grandfather, translated this for the Academy, but it's too vague—and I bet on purpose—so it's not really clear what exactly Surak had taught Vulcans. Skon sort of implied that Vulcans as a species purged emotions, but I don't believe it. When Vulcans imply something, something isn't right."

McCoy sighed. "Alright, let's say our hobgoblin is biologically the same as the other one. Why is it important?"

A small smirk appeared on Jim's lips. "I spent seven days on a Vulcan ship while we travelled to the Guardian's planet, Bones. Had seven days to talk to my counterpart. And he told me something pretty interesting."

"What?"

Jim put the book away and, stretching out on the bed, looked at McCoy. "He told me that when Vulcans go into pon farr—"

"Crazy Vulcan mating season?"

"Yup. When Vulcans go into pon farr, apparently they basically become what they biologically are: they have bad self-control and become illogical, emotional and violent."

"Wait. I thought you said they become mindless beasts when they go into pon farr."

"Nope," Jim said. "You're confusing pon farr with plak tow, the final stage of pon farr. Yeah, a Vulcan in plak tow is unable to speak or think clearly and all he wants is to mate. But the early stage of pon farr isn't that insane. A Vulcan just becomes very aggressive and has emotional outbursts—and it is, according to the other Jim, very similar to Vulcans who don't follow the path of logic. I think that's why Vulcans don't talk about pon farr: it reveals their true nature. And I think they're ashamed of it, Bones."

McCoy reached out for his PADD and started typing.

Jim laughed. "Hey, are you taking notes?"

McCoy scoffed. "Yes, I'm taking notes. There's nothing on hobgoblins' biology in my Xenobiology textbooks. Tight-lipped bastards." He stopped typing. "Though…" He put the PADD away and started rummaging through his things.

"What are you looking for?"

"Bought a book from a Deltan med cadet yesterday about rare diseases of Federation species. I think there was something about Vulcans." McCoy finally pulled out a thin book and began reading. "Hmm...Here it is. Bendii Syndrome. It's a degenerative neurological illness affecting a minority of elderly Vulcans. Initially it's characterized by fatigue, fever, and a gradual but accelerating loss of emotional control, with victims exhibiting sudden bursts of emotion. Diagnosis is made by culturing tissue samples taken from the patient's metathalamus. There's no known treatment. A dangerous side effect of Bendii Syndrome is that the loss of emotional control can be telepathically projected to others. Vulcans are able to resist the emotional projections, but if the afflicted person is in the presence of non-Vulcans, the emotions can cause outbreaks of violence." McCoy looked up from the book at Jim. "I'll be damned. You were right."

Jim grinned. "I told you!"

"Drop that smug smile," McCoy grumbled. "So, why is that pon farr thing important? What does it
have to do with your revenge plan?"

Jim chewed on his lip. "The other Jim told me that Spock was in plak tow—sort of—when they met. It's a long story, but basically Spock was stuck in a feral state and injured anyone who came close to him. But he didn't attack Jim. He fucked him."

McCoy turned green in the face.

"What? And your counterpart married him after that?"

Jim grimaced. "Yeah, I know, but it's not that simple and Spock didn't know what he was doing. The whole story is complicated. And to be fair, Jim didn't seem that traumatized by the experience."

"I don't get it. How could he not be traumatized by the experience?"

Jim just shrugged uncomfortably.

McCoy's eyes narrowed. "Tell me you aren't into that kind of thing, kid."


Jim cleared his throat. "Anyway, that's beside the point."

McCoy scowled. "There was a point?"

"Yup," Jim said. "My point is, the other Spock was drawn to the other Jim when he was in plak tow. We know that plak tow is just an extreme, final stage of pon farr, and we also know that pon farr just strips away Vulcan logic and all inhibitions."

"And since biologically Commander Spock is no different from the other Spock, and you're no different from the other Jim, he should be attracted to you?" McCoy gave him an unimpressed look. "Don't you think it's a bit of a stretch? Our hobgoblin isn't in pon farr. He can control himself."

"Sure he can," Jim agreed. "But on some level, beneath all the layers of logic and rationalization, he is attracted to me. Just think about it, Bones. I'm sure there are dozens of cadets who make advances towards Spock—to be honest, he's one of the best-looking professors here—so why me? Why does he single me out? Because on some level, I get under his skin."

McCoy nodded solemnly. "I agree. He criticized you in front of the entire class and looked at you twice. Yep, he must be besotted."

Jim threw a pillow at his head.

~*~

Bones had bluntly refused to sit at the front again, so Jim was alone as he took a seat opposite Spock's desk, no more than nine feet away.

The lecture hall was less crowded this time—it looked like the rumors that some cadets had dropped the course were true—so Jim was the only student seated in the front row.
One of the two, Jim corrected himself, noticing a very beautiful girl taking a seat some distance away from him.

Jim flashed her a smile.

She gave him an unimpressed look and turned away.

Shrugging it off, Jim turned back to the front as Commander Spock entered the lecture hall. His dark eyes swept over the cadets, lingering on the two students seated in the front row.

Their gazes locked. Something tightened and twisted in Jim's gut.

After what felt like an eternity but was probably only a few seconds, Spock looked away and, taking his seat, started the lecture.

Jim didn't listen. Unlike him, the hot girl—Cadet Uhura—did, dutifully taking notes and nodding at everything Spock said. Sometimes she asked intelligent, thoughtful questions, and as the class progressed, it was obvious she was rapidly earning Spock's approval. Jim didn't bother asking intelligent questions; he wasn't interested in Spock's approval. He didn't want Spock to approve of him; it would be actually better if he didn't. He wanted Spock to despise him and despise himself for wanting an illogical, stupid, lazy student rather than an intelligent, hard-working one.

So he just leaned back, made himself comfortable and watched Spock blatantly.

Spock successfully ignored him for the first twenty-seven minutes of the class.

Then his eyes flicked to him. He gave Jim a look of disapproval, his lips pursing a bit briefly. Jim just met his eyes without a smile.

Spock averted his gaze.

Jim kept watching.

Eight minutes later, Spock looked back at him.

~*~

During the next class, Spock finally snapped.

Well, perhaps 'snapped' was a bit of exaggeration. Spock paused in the middle of his lecture and turned to him, "Cadet Kirk, you are not paying attention. If this course is of no interest to you, perhaps you should cease attending it."

Jim met his eyes. "On the contrary, I'm very interested, Professor."

One corner of Spock's mouth tightened; but his face stayed mostly blank.

"If that is the case, how many consonants are in the word—"He said something unpronounceable. Jim's eyebrows flew up. "I have no idea. But I'm sure Cadet Uhura can tell us. Why don't you ask her, Professor?"
Some emotion flashed in Spock's eyes, but it was gone so quickly Jim's wasn't sure what it was.

"Stay after the class, Cadet," he said, very evenly, before addressing the same question to Uhura, who promptly answered it.

Jim spent the rest of the class staring rudely at Spock, as usual, while Spock pointedly ignored him—or rather, tried to.

When the class was over, Jim waved Bones off, and waited until the lecture hall emptied.

Then he walked to Spock's desk.

"You wanted me?" Jim said.

Spock looked up from the PADD in his hand.

Putting the PADD aside, he gave Jim a flat look, his lips slightly pursed. "Admiral Barnett assured me that you would cease this improper behavior. If you do not desist this instant, I shall be forced to report you, Cadet. Your behavior is illogical and inappropriate for a Starfleet officer. As it is clear in Starfleet Academy regulation 7—"

"But I'm not breaking any regulations, Commander," Jim said nicely, meeting his eyes. "I just like looking at you. It's not a crime, is it?"

Spock stared at him blankly.

After a moment, he said, "Whatever you are attempting to accomplish is futile, Cadet. Even if you were not my student, I would not be interested."

Jim put his hands on the desk and leaned forward, looming over Spock. "Really? I call bullshit, Professor. If I didn't get under your skin, you would just ignore me. But you don't. Because you can't."

From such a small distance, Jim could see that Spock's eyes were dark brown, not black, as he'd thought. As always, they were oddly expressive on his emotionless face. "Your logic is flawed," Spock said. "Your conclusion is based on assumptions rather than facts, Cadet Kirk."

Jim smiled at him slowly. "You sure about that, Professor? Let me tell you some facts. Cadet Uhura, who you like so much, has an inappropriate... crush on you. She stares at you all the time." _And her crush is real, unlike mine._ "Why aren't you reporting her, Commander? Why am I the one you asked to stay after the class? Why not her?"

Spock eyes bored into his. "Cadet Uhura is merely a highly attentive student and she has no such inappropriate—"

"Come on," Jim said. "Use that Vulcan brain of yours, Professor. Now tell me how much time Uhura spends looking at you in class."

Spock's lips pressed together briefly. "Ninety-six point seven percent of the time," he said after a few seconds.

"Awesome. And how much time do I spend looking at you?"

For a moment, it looked like Spock wasn't going to reply at all.

"Ninety-four point six eight one two percent," he said at last.
Jim smiled and, leaning in, said softly, "So tell me: why am I here?"

"Step away from me, Mister Kirk."

"I'll tell you why, Professor," Jim said, ignoring his words. "Because you're aware of me. Because deep down, you want me. That's why you pay attention when I stare at you and don't when Uhura does."

Spock's blank expression didn't change. "Your logic is faulty and your conclusion is not supported by the facts, Cadet. You are implying that I have... inappropriate fascination with a student. It is impossible: I do not know you." And what I know of you I do not like. Spock didn't have to say that; it hung in the air between them.

Jim smiled, amused and pleased. "Yup, I'm a lazy, illogical, emotional brat," he said. "But you don't have to like me or know me to want me, Professor."

Spock gave him a cold look. "You are mistaking me for a human, Cadet. Vulcans are logical beings and our actions are not affected by such illogical—"

"Bullshit," Jim said. "You do feel. It's in your biological makeup, and you can't change it."

Spock's shoulders tensed up. "If you are implying that my human mother—"

"Not at all. I'm talking about your Vulcan side."

Spock went very still. "I do not understand your meaning, Cadet."

"I think you do," Jim said, eyeing him. "You Vulcans fool everyone that you feel nothing, but it's a lie. In truth, I think you're ashamed and scared of what you are. That's why you cling to your logic. You're afraid."

Spock stared at him. "Your statements are erroneous, Cadet Kirk. I suggest that you conduct research on Vulcan culture before speaking about matters you do not know."

"I've done my research already. I've read the translation of The Teachings of Surak that your grandfather Skon kindly made for us illogical humans." Jim cocked his head. "And guess what? Your grandpa's translation was just vague and misleading enough that humans assumed that during the Time of Awakening, Vulcans completely purged emotions and became a logical, peaceful race. But it's not true at all, is it? The truth is, you Vulcans just learned to suppress the hell out of your emotions. The truth is, when uncontrolled, Vulcan emotions are no less violent and destructive than they were two thousand years ago. Vulcans despise humans for our illogical emotions, but I think you just envy us, because we don't have to control them. Because our emotions aren't as dangerous and violent as yours." Jim met Spock's eyes. "You feel too much. You want too much. I think I know why you wanted to get me expelled, Spock. I think you're scared. You're scared that I make that illogical, primitive thing in you surface—"

"Preposterous," Spock said and stood up. "Dismissed, Cadet."

His face was completely void of expression, but Jim could feel the tension coming off him in waves. Tension and danger.

A shiver ran through his body, an adrenaline-fueled rush of fear and excitement.

Straightening, he tore his gaze away and walked out, trying to shake off the feeling.
"I don't get what you're trying to do," McCoy said two weeks later as they walked back to their dorm. "You aren't doing anything!"

"What do you mean?" Jim said.

McCoy was frowning deeply, looking confused. "I thought you'd try to seduce him or something, be all flirty and shit, like you're with other people. Speaking of which…" He gave Jim a piece of paper with a comm frequency on it. "Just remember that I'm a doctor, not a courier."

Jim glanced at it and stuffed it into his pocket. "I have no intention to seduce Spock, Bones." His jaw clenched. "I'm not going to stalk him, like some lovesick puppy."

"Then what are you doing?"

Jim smiled to himself. "Haven't you noticed anything lately?"

"What am I supposed to notice?"

Jim moistened his lips. "He looks at me, Bones."

"What do you mean 'he looks at you'?"

"He looks at me. He's always aware of me when we're in the same room. I can feel it. It won't be long before his control snaps."

McCoy pursed his lips. He didn't look happy. "Jim, it's not meant as a criticism, but don't you think you're getting a bit obsessed with the hobgoblin? I get that you want to get back at him, but—"

"Don't be silly, Bones," Jim said, with more certainty than he felt.

"…Graalen is a consonontal-root language where consonant pairs provide a word's core subject matter, while the vowels specify the word's type. For example, the consonant pair nd-r connotes worlds, planets, or 'everything'…"

Most of the cadets in the lecture hall had their eyes glazed over. Only Uhura was taking notes. She seemed to be the only one following what Spock was saying.

Jim sat relaxed in his seat, eyeing his fingernails. They needed trimming.

That was when he felt it: someone's gaze on him.

Slowly, Jim looked up.

Spock's face was inscrutable, but his eyes were fixed on him as he kept talking in an even voice.
Their gazes locked and held.

And held.

His skin was suddenly too warm. The air reaching his lungs felt dense.

He licked his dry lips.

Spock's dark eyes flickered down to them. A familiar ache and heat spread to Jim's crotch, his heart thudding against his ribs.

His lips tingling, Jim wet them again with a swipe of his tongue.

Spock's voice faltered.

His jaw tight, he looked down at his PADD, and after a moment, continued his lecture, not looking Jim's way,

"The vowel set a-o indicates a simple singular noun. Therefore, Andor means, simply, 'world' while Ondara means 'music.' The suffix -ya or -ia modifies a noun to prominence, thus when Andorians became aware of other worlds, their world became more popularly known as Andoria, meaning the world…"

Sitting very still, Jim took a deep breath in.

~*~

"I'm giving up on my plan," Jim told Bones when they returned to the dorm. "I mean Spock."

"What?" McCoy said. "Why?"

Jim shrugged and, stretching out on his stomach on the bed, closed his eyes. "It's silly and childish. I have better things to do. The asshole doesn't deserve the attention."

There was silence for a moment.

Then the unmistakable beep of a tricorder.

Jim laughed. "I'm fine, Bones. Put that thing away."

"Right," McCoy said. "So you're telling me that you spent three weeks obsessing over revenge and then suddenly decided that it wasn't worth it? Bullshit, Jim."

Jim sighed, not opening his eyes. "Alright, fine. I still want to get back at him for nearly getting me expelled, but I'm not going to use the fraternization regulation for that."

"And why not? Not that I'm not glad you came back to your senses."

Jim didn't reply immediately.

When he did, his voice was quiet and full of resentment.

"I want him, Bones."
A pin drop could be heard in the moments following his words.

"Oh, great," McCoy said at last.

"Yup," Jim said flatly. "I'm an idiot. It was a good plan, but obviously now I shouldn't go anywhere near him." Because actually sleeping with a professor was never in the plan. "The most annoying part is I almost had him, Bones! It almost worked. He practically eye-fucked me."

McCoy snorted. "Yeah, right."

"No, really! I could feel it. I can tell when someone wants me. He stares at me, Bones. Like, I can tell that he doesn't want to, that he dislikes me, but his eyes keep going back to me. And his eyes were so—seriously." Jim licked his lips, his pulse speeding up, and then he felt even more annoyed with himself. It was ridiculous. He wasn't even that much into guys. "I have no idea why it's so hot. Maybe because he's so expressionless and proper, except for those eyes. His eyes are just—so intense. It was the first time I got a boner just from looking someone in the eyes."

"Ugh, too much information, kid."

Jim laughed. "Sorry." He turned onto his back and sighed. "I'm so annoyed with me right now, you have no idea. It's not like I suddenly like him or anything. Damn, I would have so enjoyed reporting him for making sexual advances toward a student." Jim made a face. "But now I'm not sure I won't jump on his dick if gets anywhere near me." He sighed. "He turns me on, Bones."

McCoy had a pinched look on his face. "Thank god you've got enough common sense not to sleep with your instructor."

"I'm just not an idiot. Fucking Spock would be the stupidest thing I could possibly do." Jim smiled crookedly. "Barnett's keeping an eye on me. If he gets a whiff of this, I'm out of Starfleet. Even if there is no proof and just plain hearsay, I don't want to be known as that cadet who gets the preferential treatment because he sucks an instructor's dick. It's bad enough already that I get the preferential treatment because I'm a Federation hero's son."

McCoy sighed. "Ignore it, kid. We know it's just a bullshit rumor."

Jim's lips twisted. "Is it? Barnett didn't kick me out only because I was George Kirk's son."

Bones gave him a long, grim look and said nothing.

~*~

For the first time in three weeks, Jim took a seat next to Bones at the back of the room.

When Spock entered the lecture hall, Jim tensed, eyes trailing after his tall form as the Vulcan walked to his desk. Spock's gaze swept over the room dispassionately, never settling on anyone for long. Then he paused slightly, looking at the front of the room where Uhura sat alone before his eyes swept around the lecture hall again.

Jim dropped his gaze, but he could sense it when Spock's eyes fell on him. His skin prickled.

He looked up only when he felt Spock look away.
"Is this seat taken?" a female voice asked.

Jim turned his head and gave the girl the once-over. Nice.

"Now it is," he said, smiling at her. "I'm Jim."

The girl took the seat next to him and smiled back. "I'm Vanessa. And my eyes are a bit higher up, Jim."

Jim grinned sheepishly, meeting her green eyes. "You can slap me in the face. It would be totally deserved."

She dimpled at him, her eyes full of amusement. "Maybe not in a public place."

Grinning wider, Jim said, "Well, now this is pretty intriguing—"

"Cadet Kirk, you are forcing me to remind you that if this course is of no interest to you, you should cease attending it."

Stiffening, Jim turned around.

Spock stood a few feet away, his hands clasped behind his back, his shoulders straight and his face completely expressionless.

But his eyes…

Dark brown eyes bored into Jim's with intensity that made the hair on the back of Jim's neck stand up. Jim wet his lips, suddenly hyper-aware of Spock's body and the short distance between them. The tension stretched taut and thick between them.

"My apologies, Commander," he said, clearing his throat. "It won't happen again."

"It will not, Cadet," Spock said, his lips pursing. His eyes flickered to Vanessa. "Cadet Devero, take your belongings and relocate to another seat. In the future, do not allow Cadet Kirk to distract you from your studies."

"Yes, Commander," Vanessa said, looking chastised, and quickly moved to another seat.

Spock looked back at Jim.

Their gazes clashed again and a rush of carnal need slammed Jim hard, knocking the breath out of him.

Spock's nostrils flared. He turned away and headed to his desk, his back very straight.

Jim dropped his face into his trembling hands and sighed.

"Well, I'll be damned," Bones said.
Spock went to his desk and opened a channel to Vulcan. It would be early morning there. It was unlikely that his mother was occupied.

When her face appeared on the screen, Spock leaned back in his chair. "Mother."

Amanda smiled. "Spock." She took a longer look at his face and a small crease formed between her eyebrows. "Is everything alright?"

Spock sat straighter. "Indeed, everything is satisfactory, Mother. I simply wished to inquire about my request."

She hesitated before nodding. "I have talked to Master Sevok. He says that at the moment there aren't many Vulcans attempting to master Kolinahr, so you would be welcome at Gol at any time." She pursed her lips.

"You do not approve," Spock said.

She smiled at him faintly. "Sweetheart, as I once told you, you'll always have a proud mother, no matter what you choose to do."

"And yet you do not approve of my decision," Spock said.

There was an emotion on her face he could not quite identify. "I just don't understand. I thought you decided against purging all emotion. Why now?"

Spock looked down. It was illogical that some words were more difficult to utter than others, and yet...

"I find that my control has been unsatisfactory as of late."

He felt a surge of shame and it only hardened his resolve; if his control were better, he should not have felt it at all. Shame was illogical. *Kaiidth. What is, is.*

"Unsatisfactory? Why?" There was an intrigued glint in his mother's eyes, but otherwise her face remained neutral.

Before enrolling in Starfleet Academy, Spock had thought his mother was a very emotional human being, but now that he had spent ninety-eight point three percent of the last seven years surrounded by humans, he knew that his mother was extraordinarily reserved by human standards.

Perhaps that was why Sarek had chosen her. As he once told Spock, marrying his mother was logical.

"Spock?"

"I apologize, Mother," Spock said, making an effort to keep his voice even. "But I prefer not to discuss it."

"All right," Amanda said carefully. "I understand that there are certain things sons would prefer not to discuss with their mothers. Why don't you talk to your father?"
"I do not wish to speak to father."

Amanda frowned, a look of worry crossing her face. "Have you had another fight with Sarek?"

Spock raised an eyebrow. "Vulcans do not have 'fights,' Mother."

She gave him a look, a hint of amusement glinting in her eyes. "Of course. They only have very logical disagreements. You know what I mean, Spock."

"Father and I have not had any disagreements as of late," Spock said. "I simply do not wish to speak to him on the matter."

She studied him for three point six seconds before saying, "Don't you think he should be at least informed of your wish to attempt Kolinahr?"

"Negative. I am certain he would approve."

She pressed her lips together and looked as though she did not agree with him. However, she said nothing, going quiet again.

"What about Starfleet?" she said at last.

"I have no desire to lead a life of complete isolation from civilization, as most Masters of Gol do. My Starfleet career will not be affected. As soon as the semester is over, I shall request a leave. I have approximately four point seven months of accumulated leave due. I am aware that it is unlikely to be enough to master Kolinahr, but I can request a sabbatical leave from Starfleet." The process of purging emotions and embracing total logic was known to vary from two to six years.

She looked him in the eye. "And what about T'Pring?"

The question gave him a moment's pause.

"What about her?"

"If you become a Master of Gol, that will leave her without a bondmate."

"T'Pring is a female of worth. She will not have any difficulty finding another bondmate."

His mother smiled. "You have an answer for everything, don't you? So you really are doing it?"

"Affirmative," Spock said. "In three point two months, I shall return to Vulcan to undergo Kolinahr."

Amanda dropped her gaze before nodding.

~*~

Vulcans fool everyone that they feel nothing, but it's a lie. In truth, I think you're ashamed and scared of what you are. That's why you cling to your logic. You're afraid.

Spock closed his eyes and took a deep breath in, inhaling the scent of incense in the room. His attempt to meditate was not successful. He could not clear his mind. Memories flooded into him.
When he was seven years old, T'Pau decided that he was to be bonded. Spock's opinion on the matter was not asked, nor was it considered relevant.

Besides, T'Pau had chosen well. Her name was T'Pring. She was a daughter of a very prominent Vulcan clan; the alliance between their families was only logical.

T'Pring was a quiet, calm girl who kept mostly to herself. She was the only child of her clan after her only cousin, Stonn, was killed in a terrorist attack by anti-Vulcanoid extremists shortly after the attack on the USS Kelvin. She appeared quite lonely and, unlike their peers, did not seem to despise him. However, she did not like the 'chaos in his mind,' as she referred to it.

"Your control is weak," she told him as they explored their link tentatively.

Being seven years old, Spock bristled. "It is not."

He felt a hint of amusement through the bond and it gave him pause. Amusement was an emotion. T'Pring was fully Vulcan. Why did she feel?

"Of course I do feel," T'Pring told him when he had asked, though she seemed quite disturbed that he could feel her emotions. "All of us do. But I control my emotions. Your control over your emotions is curiously weak. Even I can sense them and my telepathic ability is not strong."

That bewildered him at the time. He had believed his emotions were the result of his human heritage: Sarek had indirectly implied it and T'Pau had done the same when she started teaching him how to control his emotions. Not having associated with other children, Spock had not known that all Vulcan children were similarly instructed. He had assumed it was because of his human heritage that he required special training.

Spock could feel that T'Pring was appalled when he told it to her. "Your knowledge is lacking and your assumptions are erroneous. My father has melded with me and I do not sense any difference between him and you physiologically, except for the differences related to age and ability. However, your mind is not as disciplined as it should be. It is most curious."

"Am I correct in understanding that you are saying that my... emotions are not different from other Vulcans, and it is my control that is inadequate?"

"Yes. At your age, Vulcan children have a significantly better control. Perhaps your human heritage is hindering you."

"I did not mean it as an insult," T'Pring told him when Spock failed to suppress his anger. "I am merely stating a fact. You have a human mother. While Vulcan genes are dominant in you, your human heritage seems to disadvantage you when it comes to controlling your emotions. You are not a full-blooded Vulcan. That is a fact."

Later, as years passed by, Spock came to the conclusion that Sarek and T'Pau had not intended to mislead him; they were simply deeply uncomfortable admitting that Vulcans felt. Several years later, after he attacked a classmate for insulting his mother, Sarek finally admitted to him that emotions ran deep within their race—in many ways more deeply than in humans. However, as far as Vulcans were concerned, the ability to feel was a biological flaw that must not be spoken about. Emotions were shameful to place on display; control and logic were something to strive for.

*Vulcans despise humans for our illogical emotions, but I think you just envy us, because we don't have to control them. Because our emotions aren't as dangerous and violent as yours. You feel too much. You want too much.*
Spock pursed his lips.

Cadet Kirk's words were most curious. He was too well-informed.

Spock knew what other races thought of Vulcans. They described them as rational, logical, emotionless, and asexual.

While the first two were correct, and the third one was something Vulcans strove for, 'asexual' was not only illogical but also improbable: Vulcans had two sexes and a population of ten billion; therefore, the common belief that Vulcans did not engage in sexual relations was most puzzling. As a matter of fact, due to excessive testosterone levels, Vulcan males had a very high libido. Spock found it... inconvenient at times, but sexual urge, unlike emotion, was not something shameful: it was merely a biological function and was treated as such. As long as sexual desires did not rule one's actions, it was only logical to satisfy them on a regular basis; it was required for optimal functioning of one's body.

That was what T'Pring told him nine point one years ago as she suggested that they started sexual relations.

"I do not wish to be inadequately prepared when your Time comes," she had informed him calmly, unfastening her dress. When Spock did not move, she looked up and raised an eyebrow. "Is there an issue that needs to be addressed? Do you not find me attractive?"

He did. T'Pring was very aesthetically pleasing. T'Pring was also his bondmate. It was only logical to desire one's bondmate and future wife.

What was not logical was to desire one's own student.

Spock inhaled deeply, forcing the muscles that had tensed at the thought to relax.

He had not had sexual intercourse in two point three months. The reason for that had nothing to do with T'Pring: she had insisted that since they currently lived on different planets, it was not rational to ignore their physical needs, and Spock had agreed with her. He had not engaged in sexual relations in two point three months because he had served on the USS Victoria as a science officer and did not wish to fraternize with the crew. Yet his current... fascination with Cadet Kirk could not be explained by that fact alone.

Fascination. What a misleading, ambiguous word. His inappropriate fixation on the cadet had little in common with the fascination he experienced when he encountered remarkable, interesting phenomena.

There was nothing interesting or remarkable about Cadet Kirk besides his very pleasing appearance. Even the attention he received from the cadet was not remarkable in itself. Kirk had not been the first cadet to display interest in him; in fact, he was thirty-sixth. For a reason Spock could not comprehend, some cadets mistakenly believed that if they offered him sexual favors, they would receive a passing mark. Usually Spock simply ignored such offers, pretending that he did not understand what they meant. He did not report the students. Contrary to what he had told Admiral Barnett, he was well aware that human adolescents could act in a most illogical manner. It was a matter of their physiology. The areas of the human brain that developed first were those involving primary functions, such as motor and sensory areas. The areas of the brain involved in more complex processes, such as the lateral and prefrontal cortices, developed later. Specifically, developments in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex were important for controlling impulses and planning ahead, while development in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex was important for decision making. Changes in the orbitofrontal cortex were important for evaluating rewards and risks. Therefore, the human brain
did not fully mature until the age of twenty-five.

Spock was aware of all those facts; that was why he usually simply ignored such students. Yet he could not ignore Cadet Kirk.

He did not understand why.

Being attracted to a cadet would not have been as disturbing if the object of his attraction was someone admirable, like Cadet Uhura. Besides possessing attractive physical features, she was a highly intelligent, serious young woman. As opposed to that, Kirk was an obstinate, idle, emotional human boy who did not care about his studies. Kirk had breached several regulations to leave him that puzzling, illogical message, the purpose of which was still unclear to Spock. Indeed, human teenagers could behave in a most illogical fashion, yet the message seemed odd even for Kirk.

Spock did not understand the cadet. Kirk had spent three point two weeks looking at him provocatively during class, and then he…just ceased. Instead, he had started smiling excessively and behaving in a flirtatious manner with other cadets, paying no attention to class. Not only did he not pay attention, he distracted others.

And he distracted him.

The incident with Cadet Devero was still a source of unease for him. His conduct had been irrational. After meditating on the matter for several days, Spock had had to admit the truth: his behavior was that of a…jealous individual.

Jealousy. The word seemed odd and inadequate. He had never felt the emotion before; he was not certain that it was indeed jealousy. There was no word for jealousy in modern Vulcan. Humans described jealousy as "an emotion that typically referred to the negative thoughts and feelings of insecurity, fear, and anxiety over an anticipated loss of something of great personal value, particularly in reference to a romantic connection." Cadet Kirk was not of great personal value to him. Spock barely knew him, yet every time he saw the boy smiling at others, he…did not like it. It was most illogical. His attraction to the cadet was illogical.

It reminded him of those old disturbing tales from ancient times. Modern Vulcans did not speak of this, as it was a reminder of their shameful, violent history, but there were hushed whispers among Vulcan youths. It was said that before the Time of Awakening, Vulcans had not chosen mates for logical reasons—they had them. They desired and took.

You're scared that I make that illogical, primitive thing in you surface.

Spock took a deep breath in. Cadet Kirk's words were not entirely untruthful. He was already an aberration among his people: a part-human with extremely high telepathic abilities. He did not confide in T'Pau and Sarek regarding the extent of his telepathy. He knew T'Pring suspected, but she did not ask. She was smart enough and fond enough of him not to ask.

The truth was, most modern Vulcans had a very limited form of touch-telepathy; it was easily controlled and could not influence others. Even a mental link between bondmates was rarely strong enough to influence minds. As Vulcans took pride in suppressing emotions and displaying emotions was offensive, in the view of most Vulcans, mind melds were an unnatural behavior, never condoned, since emotional transference was a side-effect of the melding process. Only a small minority of Vulcans were born with the ability to initiate a mind meld\(^1\) and sense others' thoughts and emotions without touching, and only a few respected Elders, such as T'Pau, were permitted to learn and use a mind meld for healing purposes. T'Pau was a highly skilled mind adept, but she was not a natural melder; she had learned it. Spock... Spock accidentally melded with his mother when he
was six point three years old.

Melders were considered to be genetic aberrations, throwbacks to ancient times.

*You're scared that I make that illogical, primitive thing in you surface.*

Pressing his lips together, Spock opened his eyes, disturbed by his inability to cease thinking about Kirk and his low, mocking voice. He would not have continued thinking about Kirk if his control was adequate.

*If you were a true Vulcan.*

Spock stood up briskly and walked to the wardrobe. Removing his meditation robe, he donned his Starfleet issued training uniform—a black short-sleeved shirt and a pair of black loose-fitting trousers with elastic cuffs—and leaving his apartment, headed to the training facility nearby.

As it was a Saturday evening, the grounds were full of cadets heading out into the city. Spock nodded curtly to those who greeted him, carefully avoiding physical contact. Being exposed to human emotions could be difficult at times, and due to insufficient meditation, his mental shields were not in the optimal state at the moment. When his mental shields were weakened, Spock could sense strong emotions and thoughts of other individuals. It was not ideal when one was surrounded by hundreds of emotional human teenagers every day.

It was fortunate that the training facility was likely to be unoccupied this evening.

~*~

He was mistaken.

The gymnasium was not unoccupied.

Two cadets were wrestling with each other on the mat.

Spock paused for a moment as he recognized them, before proceeding to the area with boxing bags. Donning protective gloves, he chose the heaviest bag and, fixing his gaze on it, started punching it. His respiration accelerated, his testosterone levels increasing by thirty-two percent, but he was not certain it was due to the physical exercise only. His hearing sharpened to an alarming degree, picking up the elevated heartbeat of the two other individuals in the room, focusing on the grunts the boy emitted as he struggled to pin the other cadet down.

Six point three minutes later, the cadets stopped wrestling.

"Dammit, Jim, I told you to go easier on me! My body feels like one big bruise. And get off me!"

Spock hit the heavy bag so hard that the seam split on the bottom.

A quiet laugh. "Aren't you supposed to be a doctor—"

"Well, well. Look who's here: the hobgoblin."

Eyes fixed on the bag, Spock kept hitting it, pretending to be unaware of the cadets. They were approximately thirteen meters away and could not know he could hear every word.
"Do you want to leave?" Cadet McCoy said when Kirk remained silent.

"No. Why should I? It's a big gym. He's just an instructor."

"If you say so."

"Yes, I say so, Bones. Let's lift some weights. Come on."

Spock heard them go to the weight lifting area.

The cadets did not speak again for the next twelve point six minutes.

It was McCoy who broke the silence.

"Damn, doesn't he get tired? He's been punching that bag for God knows how long! My arms hurt just from looking at him."

Kirk made a non-committal sound.

"I wouldn't want to be on the receiving end of that," McCoy said. "Remind me never to piss him off."

Kirk remained quiet.

"What, have nothing to say?" McCoy grumbled.

"I have a lot to say, Bones. But you wouldn't like it. Hell, I don't like it."

"Don't tell me this turns you on."

Silence.

"Dammit, Jim. That's sick! You actually want to be on the receiving end of that?"

"Imagine that intensity, Bones..." Kirk said softly. "Focused on you."

Spock set his jaw and kept hitting the bag. He would ignore the conversation.

He would ignore the conversation.

"Ugh—"

"You know, I've never done anything serous with guys, but if he weren't an instructor--and an asshole--I'd..." A small laugh. "This so weird, but...I actually.. I'd totally let him do me."

A surge of vasopressin and testosterone rushed into his bloodstream and Spock punched the bag hard, attempting to will the arousal away.

He was an instructor. Kirk was his student. He was also barely eighteen. A boy.

Control.

He was in control.

He was a Vulcan.

He was not the slave of his body.
"Oh, crap," McCoy muttered suddenly. "I strained a muscle in my back. I'll go find some ice." He paused. "You okay to stay here on your own?"

A laugh. "I'm not a baby, Bones."

"That's what I'm worried about. All right, I'll be back soon."

"Don't hurry on my behalf. I'll be a good boy."

Footsteps.

Silence.

Two point three minutes later, Spock ceased the exercise. Taking the protective gloves off, he glanced at Kirk.

He frowned upon seeing that the cadet was lying on his back, doing bench press with a barbell.

Putting the gloves on the shelf, Spock walked to the cadet.

"You are in violation of safety protocols," he said, stopping next to him.

Kirk looked up and met his eyes.

"What, are you going to report me again, Commander?" He was breathing hard as he struggled to lift the barbell.

A bead of sweat ran down his face.

Spock tore his gaze away to look Kirk back in the eye. "Perhaps I should. You are not supposed to do this exercise on your own, Cadet. You could injure yourself."

Kirk raised his eyebrows. "Are you worried about me? How sweet."

Spock gave him a look. "I am your instructor. I have a certain responsibility for you."

"Responsibility?" Kirk said, the muscles in his arms trembling with the effort. "Come on, then. Spot me, Commander."

Spock moved to stand by his head, ready to catch the barbell if it slipped.

Kirk looked up at him and their gazes locked. Kirk huffed through his nostrils and panted as he lifted the heavy barbell over his head and brought it down to his chest, only to lift it once more—all the while looking him in the eye.

Blue eyes were exceedingly rare among Vulcans but relatively common on Earth. Yet this cadet's eyes were unlike anything Spock had ever seen. They were startlingly blue. They pulled him in. He wished to...

"Stop looking at me," Kirk bit out, his face flushed.

"As your 'spotter,' I am required to look at you."

Kirk let out a laugh. "I'm pretty sure you aren't required to look at me like you want to eat me."

"Vulcans are not cannibalistic. We are vegetarian."
"Yeah," Kirk said softly, eyes boring into his. "Let's pretend that's what I meant." His gaze travelled down Spock's body, lingering on his crotch before returning to his face.

When their eyes met again, Kirk's pupils were dilated. He did not look away. Neither did Spock.

The air between them grew thick, heavy and restless. Kirk's lips parted.

His arms buckled.

Spock caught the barbell before it crushed Kirk's chest.

Eyes fixed on the cadet, he set it on the stand.

They looked at each other. Kirk was panting, his face flushed and sweaty. It should not be attractive.

It should not be attractive.

"I must leave," Spock heard himself say.

He did not move.

"Yeah," Kirk said, licking his lips. "Get out."

Spock did not move.

The blue eyes pulled him in.

Spock did not know how, but he found himself on top of Kirk, hands braced on either side of the cadet's head.

They stared at each other, breathing hard.

"Down," Kirk whispered, wetting his lips. "Lie down on me."

Spock let his weight drop onto him, their bodies pressing tightly against one another. It was...highly satisfying, and yet...

"Fuck," Kirk said and, grabbing Spock's head, yanked him to his. "Kiss me. Kiss me."

Spock pressed his lips against Kirk's trembling lips.

One of them gasped.

Then their lips crushed together in a bruising kiss that erased all rational thought from Spock's mind. He had never before understood the appeal of a human kiss, but now he wished to devour the boy's mouth, devour him, and never wished to stop. He bit the plump bottom lip, tasting blood, and Kirk moaned softly. Fingers clutching Spock's hair in a tight hold, he yanked him closer, sucking on Spock's tongue and squirming under him.

"Want you," he whispered against his mouth, a cool hand roaming over the expanse of Spock's back. "Fuck, I want you."

Yes, Spock thought, giving him another bruising, hungry kiss before trailing his lips down Kirk's neck, his hands wandering up Kirk's shirt and stroking the soft skin of his stomach possessively. He nuzzled into Kirk's neck, and then bit hard, wishing to leave a mark. Kirk let out a whimper, grinding their hips together. Spock had to kiss him again, deeply, deeper. Yet it was not sufficient, he wanted
more—he wanted—

His fingers moved to Kirk's meld points.

"What the fuck."

They froze.

Then they sprang apart to face Cadet McCoy.

McCoy glared at them. "Are you out of your minds? It's a public gym! Anyone could have seen you!"

Taking a deep breath in, Spock rolled off Kirk and stood up stiffly.

McCoy jabbed a finger in his friend's direction. "I leave you for ten minutes and you're already under him? You want to be kicked out of Starfleet?"

"Bones—" Kirk said hoarsely.

"No, don't you 'Bones' me! Are you a fucking idiot, Jim?" McCoy turned to Spock, scowling darkly. "And you! Want a black mark on your record, Commander? Jim is a teenager, but you're a grown man, dammit! I thought Vulcans were supposed to control themselves?"

His jaw clenching, Spock departed without saying a single word.

He did not look at Cadet Kirk.

~*~

Returning to his apartment, Spock took his keethara set and sat down on the hard floor.

He began building the structure one block at a time.

"Structure, logic, function, control," he recited quietly, trying to keep his hands steady. Keethara meditation technique required precise balance and spatial acuity. A structure of harmony. "A structure cannot stand without a foundation. Logic is the foundation of function. Function is the essence of control. I am in control."

The blocks collapsed.

"I am in control," Spock said.

Taking a breath in, he started building the structure again.

"Structure. Logic. Function. Control. A structure cannot stand without a foundation. Logic is the foundation of function. Function is the essence of control. I am in control."

I am in control.

1 - ENT: "Stigma."
He returned from the bathroom and sat down heavily on his bed.

Bones continued his rant, as if he hadn't left at all. Jim listened only with half an ear; he'd heard it all already.

".. you said yourself that fucking your instructor would be the stupidest thing you could possibly do! If the board gets a whiff of this—if someone else saw you before I returned, you're fucked, and not by the hobgoblin!"

Jim stared at his hands.

"Bones."

"I told you not to 'Bones' me! This was the most idiotic thing—"

"Bones—"

"He's your goddamn instructor, kid—"

"Leonard."

McCoy stopped ranting, his mouth opening and closing wordlessly.

"What?" he said at last.

Jim showed him his hands. Small tremors shook them. "I think something's wrong with me."

McCoy looked at his hands, frowned deeply, and then looked back at his face. He swore under his breath and, grabbing a tricorder from his desk drawer, started scanning him.

"Describe how you feel, Jim," he said, his voice serious and professional. The transformation was weird as hell.

Jim sighed, burying his hands in his hair. "Hot. Frustrated. Turned on. Still turned on."

"It's been almost two hours," McCoy said grimly. "You're a teen, but you shouldn't have been still aroused. Your heart rate and respiration rate are very elevated, too."

Jim laughed weakly. "Really? Thanks for telling me, Doctor."

McCoy glared at him. "It's not a joking matter, Jim. Your testosterone levels are much higher than normal, your heart is beating like you just ran a marathon —and it's not dropping! Did you try…?"

Jim looked down, wincing. "Yeah, I tried to jerk off, but it doesn't go away. It's like I'm stuck."

"You feel any testicular pain?"

The look McCoy gave him made him flinch. "Oh yeah, I can hypo you, sure. But I won't. Because it will remove the symptoms. But not the cause."

"What do you mean?"

McCoy scowled at him. "You aren't the dumb pretty boy you pretend to be; you know what I mean. What the tricorder can't show is what's happening in that brain of yours. It doesn't take a genius to put two and two together. Arousal originates in the brain. The hobgoblin did something to you. He's a fucking telepath."

Jim sighed, trying to even out his breathing and calm his pounding heart. "But he's a Vulcan, Bones. Vulcans are categorized as Class A on the Standard Telepath Classification Scale. They only have basic telepathy: the ability to form mental links and some limited touch telepathy. They're basically harmless."

McCoy's lips turned down. "I know they're listed as Class A, but I don't trust the hobgoblins. If they can lie about not feeling a thing, they can lie about their telepathy too. Try to remember if he did something to you."

Jim laughed hoarsely. "Are you joking? I barely remember anything after he got on top of me."

McCoy looked like he'd swallowed something bitter. "Try."

Clenching his trembling hands into fists, Jim frowned. "I don't know, Bones. It was so fast and intense—" His forehead creased. "But... I think I remember him touching my meld points. I think I felt something, but you interrupted us, so I'm not sure."

"Meld points?" McCoy asked with a pinched look.

"Yeah." Jim touched the side of his face to show him. "The captain of Royal Guards used something called 'mind meld' to see my memories, and I've seen Prince Spock mind-meld with his son to see what happened in his absence."

"That's it," Bones said. "Get up and let's go."

"Where to?" Jim said, standing up and wincing. He was close to having a really painful case of blue balls.

"We're going to report Spock for telepathic assault."

Jim stopped. "I'm not reporting anything, Bones."

McCoy crossed his arms over his chest. "And why not, Jim? It looks like he really messed with your brain! Guess what? There's no such thing as 'mind meld' in Vulcans' official telepathic profile. Those tight-lipped bastards! Class A my ass."

"C'mon, it's just some harmless form of telepathy to see memories! I barely felt a thing when the guard did it to me."

"Oh really?" Bones said. "Then why isn't it listed among their telepathic abilities?"

"I don't know!" Jim snapped. "But I'm not going to report him. How do you suggest me to explain this to the board? 'Admirals, Commander Spock might or might not have messed with my brain while we made out. Please punish him? Really, Bones?'"
Looking very unhappy, McCoy grumbled, "Fine. But if we can't report him, we'll go to him and make him fix you."

Jim flushed. "No, we won't. And you can't make me. Do you know what it would look like? 'Hi, Commander, I'm still turned on after you kissed me, can you do something?' Do you want me to die from mortification, Bones?"

The look on McCoy's face was decidedly unimpressed. "It's better than to die from your brain melting out of your ears. Telepathy is dangerous, Jim. Most forms of telepathy are illegal for a reason, dammit. Medicine can do nothing to reverse it if a telepath screws with your mind. Do you want me to show you the records of 'innocent' telepathic contacts that resulted in deaths and people becoming permanently disabled? Don't make me threaten you, Jim. If we don't go to him, I'm reporting this to the board."


McCoy rolled his eyes. "Sometimes I forget you're still a kid." He pulled out his communicator. "Tell me Spock's comm frequency. And before you say you don't remember, I know you do, so spill."

Scowling, Jim told him.

Wrapping his arms around himself, he could only watch as Bones commed Spock. He almost hoped Spock wouldn't answer.

But he did.

"Cadet McCoy." Spock's voice was calm and collected. *He* clearly wasn't a mess.

"Commander," Bones gritted out.

"I was not aware you had access to—"

"Let's cut to the chase," Bones said. "After your little *lesson* with Cadet Kirk, he's not feeling well."

"I am afraid I do not understand your meaning, Cadet."

"He's showing signs of telepathic assault," Bones said bluntly, glaring at the screen. "If you don't fix him, I'm reporting your ass. Commander."

There was a pause. Jim almost wished he could see Spock's face. Almost.

"Very well," Spock said, his voice sounding a bit odd. "You may come to my apartment. I will inform security personnel to let you in."

He hung up.

Smiling grimly, McCoy looked at Jim. "Let's go, kid."

Feeling weird, Jim followed him out of the dorm. "Huh, so that's what having an embarrassing parent is like."

It was meant as a joke; Bones was only ten years older than him. Of course it was a joke.

Pressing his lips together, McCoy gave him a look. "You still haven't talked to your mom?"

Jim shrugged and quickened his pace. "You can go back to the dorm, Bones. I'm not a little kid and
don't need you to hand-hold me."

McCoy lengthened his strides to catch up with him. "Like hell I'm letting you be alone with him! And in his apartment no less."

"I feel sorry for your daughter," Jim said with a laugh. "Come on, do you really have to go with me? It's embarrassing, Bones."

"Why do you care what he thinks about you?" McCoy looked vaguely sick. "Don't tell me you like him."

"No!" Jim cringed. "It's just... I'm going to look like a stupid kid if you go with me."

"Good," Bones said. "Because you're a kid, and he should see you as a kid."

"I'm eighteen. An adult. He's not that much older."

"Yeah, sure. Only seven or eight years older. You're a teen, and he's in a position of power over you. He's your instructor."

"Bones, I'm not saying I disagree. It was a mistake. It won't happen again." Spock was his professor. He was also his superior officer. He was totally off-limits. Jim wasn't exactly a stickler for rules, but he wasn't an idiot. Breaking that rule would end his Starfleet career before it even started.

Jim ran a hand over his face. "I'm just saying that it would be awkward and humiliating as fuck." He looked down at his crotch and grimaced. "Can you at least fix this?"

"No, Jim. I'm not going to mess with your system without knowing what he did to you."

Sighing, Jim gave up. "Fine. But I'll do the talking. You won't."

Bones nodded and looked at the building with a frown. "He lives here?"

"Yep." Shoving his trembling hands into his pockets, Jim nodded to the security guards. "Leonard McCoy and James Kirk to see Commander Spock. We're expected."

After scanning them, they let them in without a word.

Spock's apartment was on the third floor.

Bones knocked. Jim wiped the sweat from his brow and tried to will his erection away. It didn't work. His heart was still beating rapidly, his breathing was uneven, his skin tight and hot.

Bones knocked again.

There was no answer.

Frowning, Jim pushed the door.

It was open.

He entered the apartment, and Bones followed him in.

Jim looked around curiously. It was a big apartment, but it wasn't Spartan, as he'd expected. It was very warm and cozy, decorated with strange Vulcan artifacts. A faint scent of incense was coming from one of the rooms and Jim went in there.
The room was lit only by a couple of candles and it took Jim's eyes a few seconds to adjust.

Spock was sitting in a lotus position on the floor, his eyes closed. He was wearing a traditional Vulcan robe.

Jim stared at him, a bit weirded out.

Spock looked strikingly like Prince Spock. Well, obviously he always looked like Prince Spock, since biologically they were the same person, but up until this moment, Jim had never really looked at Spock and seen his counterpart. It'd been more than two months since his return from the other dimension, and sometimes it all seemed a bit like a dream, too strange to be real.

But now, looking at Commander Spock wearing a long Vulcan robe not unlike the ones Prince Spock wore, it really hit home: this man—this alien—was his husband in another life. He was the father of his kid. He was the closest living being to a Jim Kirk.

An uneasy feeling settled in his stomach. Suddenly, he wanted to leave.

Jim told himself not to be ridiculous. This wasn't Prince Spock, the husband of his counterpart. This was Commander Spock, his Xenolinguistics instructor.

The instructor who had his tongue in his mouth just a few hours ago.

Jim licked his lips. He could practically feel his blood coursing through his veins and making his neck heat up.

"Cadets," Spock said, opening his eyes and looking at Bones.

He was very carefully not looking at Jim.

Bones put a hand on Jim's shoulder and squeezed. Spock's eyes flickered to Bones's hand for a moment before settling on the doctor's face. "You requested a meeting."

His lips pressing into a thin line, Bones pulled his tricorder out and, walking over to Spock, gave it to him. "These are Jim's readings. I presume you know normal readings for a young human male."

Spock studied the readings for a moment before looking back at Bones. His face was inscrutable. "As I understand it, such readings are quite normal in certain circumstances."


"Oh yeah," Bones said, his voice practically dripping with sarcasm. "It's totally normal to have readings like that for hours. You think you're so hot that Jim would be still so aroused two hours after you left?"

Spock's face remained impassive. "Am I correct in understanding that you blame me, Doctor?"

"Damn right I blame you! You did something to him! If you don't tell me what the hell you did, I'm reporting you. It's my duty as a Federation doctor, actually. Unsanctioned telepathy is illegal. And before you deny it, bullshit. Jim felt you do some telepathic voodoo when you touched his face."

Spock went very still and quiet.

"What is Cadet Kirk's psi-rating?" he said at last.

Alright, enough was enough.
"Cadet Kirk is here," Jim said. "And he really doesn't like being talked about like he isn't in the room."

"Sorry, Jim," Bones grumbled, probably remembering that he had promised to let Jim do the talking.

Spock didn't apologize. It probably didn't even occur to him. Ass.

"What is your psi-rating, Cadet?" Spock said, shifting his gaze to the weird structure made of blocks not far away from him.

He was still not looking at Jim.

Jim bit his tongue to keep himself from saying something he would regret. So Spock was going to pretend nothing had happened? Fine.

"Pretty high for a human: P7. What does it have to do with anything? I'm not a telepath, just pretty sensitive to telepathy."

Spock remained quiet for a little while. "I did not perform telepathy on you intentionally. However, due to your high psi-rating, it is possible that when I placed my hand on your…" He trailed off.

"Meld points," Jim finished for him.

Spock's shoulders tensed up.

Still looking at the weird structure, he said, "Pardon?"

Bones scoffed. "Yes, we know about this! Class A my ass. Harmless my ass! Is there something Vulcans don't lie about? I'm going to have to report this, because lying about telepathic abilities is dangerous and irresponsible!"

"The information provided to the Federation is not incorrect," Spock said stiffly.

"Stop with this bullshit, you green-blooded—"

Spock's eyes narrowed. "Cadet McCoy, we are not in class, but I am your superior officer. You are forgetting yourself."

McCoy raised his eyebrows. "You conveniently forgot that you were Jim's superior officer when you decided that it was okay to grope your student."

His face stony, Spock stood up, eyes boring into McCoy's. "I do not understand your interest in the matter, Cadet. You are neither Cadet Kirk's relative, nor his guardian. The matter does not concern you."

"I'm his friend, but then again, you wouldn't understand it—"

"Enough," Jim snapped, stepping between them. "Bones, sit down and be quiet." Scowling, McCoy did as told. Jim turned to Spock. "And you—you have some explaining to do. I want answers. I'm frustrated as hell and seriously feel like punching someone right now if I don't get them."

Spock turned away and walked to the window.

All Jim could see was his back when the Vulcan finally started talking. His voice was quiet and void of any emotion. "The information provided to the Federation is not incorrect; it is incomplete. It is correct that most Vulcans are Class A telepaths. Their telepathy is quite limited and cannot be used in
an offensive manner against other sentient beings. However, a very small minority of Vulcans are born with active telepathic abilities such as the abilities to merge minds, to take and inflict pain, to erase and implant memories, to control another individual's mind, telekinesis, and several others." Spock said all of this in a flat tone, as if he wasn't saying that some Vulcans were Class H telepaths. *Class H.*

"Holy shit," Bones whispered.

Jim stared warily at Spock's back, a chill running through his body. Class H telepaths normally didn't just walk around without any kind of neural inhibitors—not on a planet where the population was mostly psi-null and defenseless.

He moistened his lips. "And you're one of the minority." It was a statement, not a question.

"Correct," Spock said.

"What did you do to me?"

Spock didn't answer immediately.

"During…our previous encounter, my mental shields failed momentarily. I can only hypothesize, but considering your high psi-rating and the fact that my control was... compromised at the time, it is possible that I inadvertently overstimulated your medial preoptic area, causing—"

"Fix it," Jim said.

Spock said after a moment,

"It is not a simple matter."

Jim stared at his back. "What is that supposed to mean? If you could do it accidentally, you should be able to undo it intentionally."

"Your conclusion is erroneous," Spock replied, his voice a bit clipped. "My telepathy is not trained."

Jim frowned. "I've been told that Vulcans start teaching their kids control when they're toddlers."

Spock's head turned slightly, but he didn't turn around, still looking out the window. "That is correct. We are taught how to control and regulate our bodies from a very young age. However, you are mistaking mental control with telepathy. They are not the same. In fact, it has been observed that the stronger one's telepathy is, the more detrimental it is to one's mental control."

Jim crossed his arms over his chest. "Are you saying you can't fix me?"

"Negative," Spock said. "However, I will have to perform a mind meld. Mind melds are considered...intrusive and distasteful among Vulcans."

Jim eyed his straight back. Mind melds didn't seem to be such a big deal in the other dimension. "Why?" he asked. "Is it illegal?"

"It is a very…intimate form of telepathy," Spock said. His voice sounded reluctant. He clearly didn't want to talk about it. "Skilled Class A mind adepts can learn how to perform a shallow mind meld, but it is not a true merging of minds and is not as intrusive. Only members of the minority—melders—can initiate a deep mind meld, but it is considered highly offensive and…emotional. A century ago, melders were outcasts on Vulcan and the names of known melders were kept track of. Healers
refused to treat them when they were ill. If one was in the military, and the Vulcan High Command found out they were one, or approved of melders, they could be recalled as being unfit for duty. After the Vulcan Reformation of 2154 and the disbandment of High Command, the situation regarding melders has not been as grave and a consensual mind meld is no longer illegal, yet the majority of Vulcans still distrust and...

"Fear you," Jim said softly.

"You are not incorrect."

"Isn't fear illogical?"

"On the contrary, sometimes fear is logical. A sentient being’s optimal chance at maximizing their utility is a long life, and in the presence of a threatening stimulus, the amygdala generates the secretion of hormones that humans call 'fear.' Fear is an instinct of self-preservation. It is ingrained into the nature of every living being." Spock paused and added quietly, "It is only logical to fear something that can strip one of one's control."

Jim narrowed his eyes at Spock’s back.

"So let me get it straight," he said after a while, breaking the tense silence. "Thanks to Vulcans' prejudice against strong telepaths, you haven't been taught how to control this and that's why you accidentally messed with my brain and have no idea how to fix it."

A pause. "Essentially, yes."

Jim shook his head. The more he learned about Vulcans, the harder it was to believe that they fooled everyone into thinking that they were unemotional, superior, logical race.

"Great." He sighed, raking a hand through his hair. "Well, it's not like we have much of a choice. Go ahead, try to fix it anyway."

Spock finally turned around, clasping his hands behind his back. "It may not be safe for you. I have not been trained and I have a very limited experience, as I have melded only with one individual and that individual was psi-null. Every time, she developed a mild headache. I do not know if the experience would be as unsettling for you."

Jim considered telling him that another Vulcan had already used a mind meld on him and it was completely painless, but he decided against it. He would have to do a lot of explaining, and at the moment, he wasn't exactly in the mood for that. Glancing at his crotch, Jim grimaced. "I don't care. Just do it."

"Very well," Spock said. "Move closer."

Jim took a step and then another until there was only a foot between them. He swallowed when Spock’s dark eyes locked with his. This was the first time Spock looked him in the eye since he'd entered the room.

Spock's face was impassive, but there was a tightly coiled tension in his stance that sent a shiver of fear and excitement through Jim. His skin prickled with an instantaneous, self-conscious awareness, his nipples oversensitive against the fabric of his shirt.

Slowly, looking him in the eye, Spock lifted his hand and laid his fingers on the left side of his face.
Jim shivered, his lips parting.

Spock stared at him.

"Ahem."

Jim flinched. He'd completely forgotten about Bones.

"Yes, Jim is very pretty to look at, but we don't have all night, Commander."

Spock's lips thinned to a line, but he made no comment.

Looking Jim in the eye, he said quietly, "My mind to your mind. Your thoughts to my thoughts. Our minds are merging. Our minds are becoming one." His fingers pressed harder into his skin—

Jim's eyelids dropped shut and he gasped as wave after wave of pleasure flooded into his mind. It felt like he was floating, and there was warmth everywhere, a glowing, expanding well of liquid, golden, pulsing brightness, and he was wrapped in it tightly, like in a thick blanket on a cold night. The sense of rightness was overwhelming. He wanted more. He needed more. He wanted him deeper—

But suddenly it ended.

Gasping, Jim opened his eyes. He felt disoriented, tremors racking his body.

There were voices, but his ears were ringing and the voices seemed distant and far away, yet somehow much too loud at the same time.

Right. Bones. Spock. They were saying something.

"… readings are going crazy! What did you do to him now? And stop touching him, dammit!"

Jim blinked dazedly, realizing that Spock's hand was stroking his back. The hand went still and then was snatched away, as if Spock only now realized what he'd been doing.

Spock moved away.

Feeling cold and wrong, Jim wrapped his arms around himself and blinked rapidly, trying to make sense of what was happening. Bones was hovering over him like a protective Mama Bear. Spock stood some distance away, his posture very straight. There was an odd expression on his face, but Jim's mind was still spinning and he couldn't quite gather his thoughts to read it.

"—Jim! How do you feel?" Bones was examining his pupils, a mixture of concern and anger on his face.

"Odd," Jim muttered, stroking his arms. They were freezing. He was freezing. Small tremors shook his body as his eyes shifted from focused to unfocused to focused again. "I'm cold."

Bones swore under his breath before turning to Spock. "I swear to god if you don't tell me what the fuck you did to him—"

Spock clasped his hands behind his back, his face impassive once again. "I performed a mind meld with Cadet Kirk's permission. I was able to find the overstimulated area in his hypothalamus and corrected the problem. The issue will not arise again."

"Oh really? Then why is he shaking like a leaf?"
Spock pursed his lips slightly. "I believe you are the one to blame, Cadet McCoy. It is not recommended to forcefully interrupt a mind meld. It can cause serious neurological damage."

Bones went red in the face, his hands clenching into fists. "His vitals were going crazy! What was I supposed to do?! Let you screw with his mind like you tried to screw his body, Professor?"

A muscle jumped in Spock's jaw. "Leave."

"Yes, we'll leave!" Bones said, grabbing Jim's arm and pulling him to the door. "I was right not to trust your Vulcan voodoo! You're lucky that I can't report you for assault without destroying Jim's career, but if you come anywhere near him again, I'll personally go to AdmiralMarcus and file a report against a Class H telepath being allowed to teach teenagers! We'll see how fast they'll kick you out, Commander!"

"Are you threatening me, Doctor McCoy?" Spock said, his voice low.

Bones scowled, glaring at him. "Yes, I'm threatening you! And I imagine normal Vulcans won't be happy to have you either when they find out you're one of the freaks. Touch Jim again and you'll be unwanted on both planets."

Spock went very still.

"You are making a mistake, Cadet," he said quietly. "And your threats are unnecessary. Cadet Kirk is my student. Even if he were not, I am a bonded male."

"Good. Don't you forget that," Bones said, pulling Jim to the door. "Let's go, Jim. I'll fix you with real medicine when we get to our dorm."

His mind still fuzzy and legs unsteady, Jim let his friend drag him out of the apartment.

Before the door closed behind him, Jim looked back.

Spock was staring at him intently, eyes dark and fathomless.

~*~

Spock ordered the computer to lock the door and open a channel to Vulcan.

Walking to his study, he sat down behind his desk, punched in a series of codes, and waited for T'Pring to answer.

His hands were not trembling. He was perfectly composed. Perfectly in control.

"Spock."

He lifted his gaze to meet his betrothed's eyes. "T'Pring."

She raised an eyebrow. "You are fortunate that I have not left for work yet. Is something the matter?"
"Indeed," Spock said. "I wished to ask you to come to Earth."

The other eyebrow joined the first. Spock could not feel anything through their link due to the distance, but he knew her well. She was very surprised.

"Is this request personal or professional?" she asked. "You have mentioned that you would appreciate it if I gave a few lectures at Starfleet Academy."

"The request is of a personal nature."

She studied him carefully. Spock was not the only one who knew his bondmate well. They had been bonded for the majority of their lives. She knew he would not request it if it was not important.

"Very well," she said at last. T'Pring was not one to ask questions prematurely. He knew she would demand answers when she arrived to Earth. "I shall speak to Elder Saaken and see when it can be arranged."

"I appreciate it," Spock said.

She inclined her head, looking him in the eye. "I shall see you soon." She raised her hand in salute. "Live long and prosper, Spock."

"Live long and prosper, T'Pring," he intoned, returning the gesture.

Spock broke the connection and sat back, staring at the blank screen.

T'Pring was fond of him. She almost certainly knew of him belonging to the minority and she had not revealed it to anyone. She would understand. She would understand that he had certain needs besides physical ones.

He had neglected his telepathic needs and it had been a mistake. Had he not neglected them, it was unlikely that the experience with Cadet Kirk would have been as...overwhelming. He was grateful for McCoy's harsh but timely interference. Kirk's mind was...

Spock closed his eyes and inhaled deeply.

He longed for the calmness of T'Pring's analytic mind. That was what he needed. That was what he wanted.

Calmness. Logic. Control.

There was an eighty-seven point three percent probability that T'Pring would allow him to meld with her.

There was also a ninety-six point two percent probability that she would find the experience distasteful and appallingly intimate.

And she would be correct.

Spock opened his eyes and stared at the picture of the Vulcan's Forge on the wall.

The meld with Kirk was too intimate.

Kirk's mind was vivid and disturbingly chaotic. It should have been repelling, but it was not and it appealed to the part of him that he had struggled to control all his life. The longer their minds had stayed merged, the more difficult it had become to withdraw: the meld was...addictive, drawing him
deeper into the illogically beautiful chaos.

Spock shook the odd thought off. Chaos was not beautiful. He did not want chaos, and he did not want the primitive desire his student incited within him. He did not wish to desire his own student, regardless of how pleasing to the eye he was.

*Yes, Jim is very pretty to look at.*

Spock's lips pursed. Doctor Leonard McCoy had claimed that he was a 'friend' of Kirk, yet the way he touched the boy—in a very possessive manner—was at odds with his words.

*I imagine normal Vulcans won't be happy to have you either when they find out you're one of the freaks. Touch Jim again and you'll be unwanted on both planets.*

Spock found himself clenching his fists and had to consciously unclench them.

Meditation was in order.
Chapter 7

T'Pring arrived six days later.

Spock had a class to teach this afternoon and therefore was unable to meet her upon her arrival. Since they had agreed that she would wait for him in his apartment, Spock was surprised to see her waiting for him when he exited the classroom.

"T'Pring," he greeted her, aware of the looks they were attracting. Some cadets appeared curious, others blatantly stared at her. It was logical. T'Pring was striking: tall, beautiful, and statuesque.

She ignored the looks, her head held high and proud.

Her face was impassive when their eyes met, but he could feel through their bond that she was pleased to see him. He was pleased to see her, as well. It had been seven point three eight months since they last saw each other.

"Spock."

"I did not expect to see you here," Spock commented, brushing two fingers against hers briefly.

"It was an unexpected development," T'Pring said. "Elder Saaken has asked me to participate in the science conference that will be held at Starfleet Academy. I came here to meet Admiral Barnett. As our meeting concluded eleven minutes ago, it was only logical to wait for you."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "The science conference will last three weeks."

He felt a hint of amusement through the bond. "As ever, you have a penchant for stating the obvious, Spock."

He was going to reply when his eyes fell on Cadet Kirk, who was exiting the classroom accompanied by Cadet McCoy.

Their eyes locked.

Kirk's gaze shifted to T'Pring for a moment before returning to him. Kirk turned away. McCoy scowled at Spock and followed Kirk.

Spock eyed the back of Kirk's head before averting his gaze. He was pleased that Kirk seemed to have recovered from the neurological damage caused by McCoy's interference, but it was disconcerting how quiet the cadet had become. He was very quiet in class. From his limited knowledge of Cadet Kirk, he was anything but quiet.

"Who is he?"

Spock had to make an effort to keep his face impassive. "Pardon?" he said, turning to look at T'Pring.

She gave him a flat look. "The young man you stared at for seven point three seconds. Is he not your student?"

"He is," Spock said before starting to walk towards the exit. "It will be more prudent if we continue the conversation in privacy."
He could feel her curiosity through their bond, but she did not ask. She simply followed him in silence.

They did not speak again until they entered his apartment.

"Your room," Spock said, showing her the guest room. Her previous visit was brief and she had not stayed in his apartment. "Inform me if you do not find it satisfactory."

T'Pring glanced around before nodding. She turned to Spock, looking at him appraisingly. "I have to admit that while I still do not approve of your choice of career, your uniform is not displeasing to the eye." She began unfastening her dress. "Assist me."

Spock moved closer to her and started helping her disrobe. Vulcan dresses were rather complicated to remove, but he had had sufficient practice.

"I wished to speak to you first," he commented when she laid her hands over his and brought them to rest on her bare chest.

"I shall be here for three weeks," she said. "We will speak later. I think sexual intercourse is in order."

"Very well," Spock said, not at all surprised. Like most Vulcans, T'Pring saw little point in exchanging meaningless pleasantries and preferred the straightforward approach, ever so logical and time-efficient.

Removing his hands from T'Pring's chest, he began undressing.

~*~

"Why did you ask me to come?"

Spock opened his eyes and looked at his betrothed.

T'Pring lay on her side, watching him.

He studied her blank face, considering his words. In the end, he decided to be straightforward; T'Pring appreciated it.

"I belong to the minority," he said, sitting up and reaching for his clothes. He was not avoiding looking her in the eye; it was simply pointless to do so, as T'Pring’s face rarely betrayed her thoughts.

She did not say a word, but he sensed it through the bond.

"You are surprised," Spock stated, standing up to dress.

"I am surprised you are speaking of this," T'Pring said, getting out of the bed and beginning to dress as well. "I have known it for twelve point six three years, Spock."

Her tone was even and unemotional, yet he could feel that she did not like the topic.

Fully dressed, Spock looked at her and clasped his hands behind his back. "And what is your opinion on the matter?"
T'Pring dropped her gaze, fastening her dress. She did not ask for assistance this time and he did not offer.

"My opinion is not relevant as it is not something you can change," she said finally. "Kaidith."

"Indeed," Spock said, attempting to ignore the pang of disappointment. Feeling disappointment was illogical. T'Pring's reaction was very mild compared to how the majority of Vulcans would have reacted.

A strained silence descended upon the room.

"Why did you wish me to come?" she said. "I do not think you requested my presence simply to tell me about this."

"It is of little relevance now. It is unlikely you would be amenable to my request."

She walked to him and fixed him with a look. "I travelled to Earth for this, Spock. I deserve an explanation."

T'Pring was correct, of course.

Spock hesitated before meeting her eyes. "It has come to my attention that I have been neglecting my telepathic needs. I wished to inquire whether you would agree to a mind meld." He did not need the bond to know that she was appalled by the request. He turned away. "It is clear that it was a mistake. My apologies for wasting your time and taking you away from your research." He headed to the door.

"Spock."

He stopped.

"Do not be illogical," T'Pring said. "Your human impulsiveness is clouding your reasoning. Let us discuss this in a rational manner."

"What is there to discuss, T'Pring?" he said, turning back to her.

She looked at him calmly. He could no longer feel any emotions through the bond. She was fully in control of them again.

"I do not despise you for what you are," she said. "However, what you are requesting is not something I am willing to do. I am... sorry, but I cannot do it. You are asking too much."

T'Pring never apologized.

Spock nodded curtly. "Understandable."

"However, I understand that you have telepathic needs that I do not have. I think it will be logical if you satisfy them elsewhere."

Spock stared at her. "Mind meld is a very intimate practice, T'Pring." In ancient times, it was usually practiced only between bondmates.

She looked rather uncomfortable. "I am aware. However, since you said that it had come to your attention that you were neglecting your telepathic needs, I presume you have successfully practiced it with another individual. Why do you not ask that individual again?"
Spock averted his eyes. "That is impossible."

He felt her probing gaze on him.

"Is it the boy? The one you stared at?"

Spock tensed for a moment before looking back at her.

Denying it would be illogical.

"Affirmative."

She raised an eyebrow. "I do not see why it is impossible. He is within your reach."

"James Kirk is my student," Spock said. "Besides, a... friend of his, Cadet McCoy, is threatening to reveal to the board that I am a Class H telepath if I approach Cadet Kirk again."

There was silence for two seconds.

"Do not tell me you are afraid of a human."

Spock stiffened. "I am not 'afraid' of Cadet McCoy. It is merely illogical to risk my career for this."

The look T'Pring gave him was unimpressed. "I believe you are capable of being discreet. If the boy can satisfactorily fulfil your telepathic needs, it is worth the risk. If you want his mind, have it."

"It is not so simple."

She studied him, her gaze scrutinizing.

"Do you want him?"

Most of the time, Spock found T'Pring's blunt approach refreshing. This was not one of those times.

Contrary to popular belief, Vulcans were capable of lying. Yet doing so would be distasteful.

"Yes," Spock said, holding his betrothed's gaze.

Admitting it was…rather uncomfortable. By mutual agreement, due to their living on different planets, they were not exclusive, but they did not normally discuss it, as it was largely irrelevant. They both knew that when his Time came, they were to be bonded completely and married.

"He looks rather young," T'Pring commented. "Is he of age?"

"He is." Spock stared at her. "I do not understand the reason for your continuous questions about Cadet Kirk."

"What I do not understand is why you are denying yourself this." A small frown crossed her features briefly. "If you want him, take him."

Spock knew his mother was of the opinion that T'Pring was 'spoiled,' and she was not incorrect. Being the only child in her clan, T'Pring was accustomed to getting everything she wished and was puzzled when she was told that something was impossible. It would be rather amusing…if Spock allowed himself to feel amusement.

"You do not understand," Spock said.
"Correct: I do not understand," T'Pring said. "It is clear to me that you are allowing your emotions to rule your actions. If you approached the matter logically, the solution to the problem would be as obvious to you as it is to me."

"He is my student, T'Pring."

She gave him a flat look. "Indeed, he is. That is why you cannot allow your job to be compromised by a fleeting physical desire. Take him, satisfy your needs, and you will cease being affected by his presence. It is only logical."

*Take him. Logical.*

Spock shook his head, but the thought refused to leave his mind.

Perhaps T'Pring was correct. Based on his previous sexual encounters, physical desire tended to diminish once it was sated. The mere fact that he had spent the last six days thinking about Kirk twenty-four percent of the time was disconcerting. He had been allowing his inappropriate fixation on his student to compromise his efficiency. That was unacceptable.

"Your logic is sound," Spock admitted.

T'Pring inclined her head. "Thank you." She walked to the desk and sat down. "Is this communication device functional?"

"Affirmative."

"Connect me to Admiral Barnett's secretary."

His eyebrow raised, Spock ordered the computer to do so.

He stepped out of sight as the admiral's secretary appeared on the screen.

"Doctor," she greeted T'Pring.

"Please inform the admiral that I changed my mind and would like to accept his offer and get an assistant for myself."

"Of course, Doctor. I can give you a list of the best cadets, all coming highly recommended—"

"I have already chosen an acceptable student," T'Pring interrupted her. "His name is James Kirk."

The secretary frowned. "But he's only a first year—"

"Do not force me to repeat myself," T'Pring said, her voice steely. "Connect me with Mr. Kirk."

The secretary nodded quickly and the screen went black.

"What are you trying to accomplish?" Spock said.

"Doing the logical thing without putting your career in jeopardy," T'Pring replied.

Two seconds later, Cadet Kirk's face appeared on the screen. Since Kirk could not see him, Spock allowed himself to look.

"Cadet Kirk, I believe?" T'Pring said.
The look Kirk gave her was…odd.

"Yes," he replied a moment later. "Admiral Barnett's secretary said you wanted me to be your assistant at the science conference."

"That is correct," T'Pring said.

Kirk's eyes were wary. "Don't get me wrong—it's not that I'm not flattered—but why me?"

"Why not? I do not have to explain my actions. Are you accepting the offer or not? If you do not want to earn extra credits, I shall find another—"

"Fine," Kirk said, but his expression was still wary.

"I am pleased," T'Pring said evenly. "I need your assistance today. I am currently residing in Commander Spock's apartment."

Spock could see some emotion flicker in Kirk's eyes.

"Commander Spock's apartment?" he repeated.

"Indeed. It is to be expected, since I am his betrothed."

Kirk's face went blank.

"Is something the matter?" T'Pring said.

"No," Kirk said one point six seconds later. "When do you want me to come over?"

"Seven o'clock."

"All right," Kirk said. "See you in two hours, Doctor."

"You may call me T'Pring."

"See you later, Doctor."

The screen went black.

T'Pring turned in her chair to look at Spock. "He is remarkably pleasing to the eye."

Spock said nothing.

"Where is your gratitude, Spock? You must admit that this is an ingenious solution."

Spock clasped his arms behind his back. "T'Pring, are you indeed suggesting that I engage in sexual and telepathic relations with my cadet while you are in the next room?"

T'Pring raised her eyebrows. "Do you wish me to watch?"

Sometimes Spock was not certain whether T'Pring was serious or not. Vulcans did not 'joke,' and yet...

Perhaps he had lived among humans for too long.

"Negative," he said, in case that was a legitimate question.
"Then it is settled," she said. "Cadet Kirk will come at seven o'clock. I believe an hour will be sufficient for you. Afterward, I expect you to take me to the restaurant we had a meal at during my last visit. The menu was very agreeable. I shall be ready to leave at eight-thirty."

As always, Spock thought, his mother was correct.

~*~

Jim hesitated in front of the door, asking himself again what he was doing there.

He'd promised Bones he'd avoid Spock and he wanted to keep the promise. If he was honest with himself, that thing with Spock made him uneasy as hell. The intensity of his attraction to Spock was...freaky. And that mind meld... He had told Bones he didn't feel weird anymore, but it was a bit of a lie to mollify his overprotective friend. Sure, after Bones's numerous hypos, he felt fine. Physically. But it was like he'd been put together wrongly and something was off; it was hard to explain. Even now, almost a week later, every time he thought about that mind meld, it made him restless, warm and—the weirdest part—turned on. Apparently his body fucking loved it when Spock screwed with his mind.

Grimacing, Jim knocked.

A few moments later, the door opened to reveal Spock.

He was wearing a Vulcan outfit again: some odd grey tunic that clung to his broad shoulders and black trousers.

He looked good enough to eat.

Jim licked a corner of his lips. *Off-limits, dammit.* Spock was his instructor and superior officer. He was also apparently engaged. To T'Pring, of all people.

"Cadet."

He dropped his gaze before looking back at Spock, trying to keep his face blank. "I'm here to see your fiancée."

"I am aware." Spock stepped aside, letting him enter.

Jim entered, but then he stopped and said quietly, not looking at him, "Don't you feel guilty? You really have a fiancée and you..."

Spock clasped his hands behind his back. "You do not understand."

"That's right," Jim said, his lips twisting. "I mean—I've heard the rumors, but I thought it was bullshit. That's a pretty dick thing to do if you have a fiancée, Spock."

"As a matter of fact, she is not my fiancée. The term is not accurate. She is my bondmate."
Jim snorted. "Even better. And now I'm supposed to talk to her like I didn't have her bondmate all over me? I'm not saying I'm a saint or something, but that's awkward, to put it lightly."

Spock averted his gaze and headed to the living room, as though Jim hadn't said anything. Ass.

"T'Pring is waiting for us."

She was.

She was seated on the couch, a PADD in her hand.

She really was as beautiful as he remembered. The only difference was that she definitely wasn't heavily pregnant with Bones's child.

"Mr. Kirk," she said, looking up from her PADD.

Jim nodded, wetting his lips.

"Spock, try not to look at him in such a manner at least while I am present," T'Pring said, raising an eyebrow.

Jim's breath caught in his throat. His gaze snapped from T'Pring to Spock, who wasn't looking at him.

"I am doing no such thing, T'Pring," Spock said, rather stiffly.

Jim tore his gaze away and looked back to T'Pring. "What's..." He narrowed his eyes. "You didn't invite me here to talk about the conference."

"I did not," T'Pring confirmed. "I am a Vulcan; I do not need an assistant. I am perfectly capable of handling the conference myself. However, it is correct that I require your assistance in another matter."

Crossing his arms over his chest, Jim leveled her with a look. "Another matter? Does it happen to have anything to do with your bondmate?"

T'Pring folded her hands in her lap, looking at him like he was a very curious creature. "You are not unintelligent. As Spock and I have to leave at eight-thirty, I will make my point. I am aware that Spock wants you."

Jim's stomach made a little flip-flop. He didn't look at Spock.

In the meantime, T'Pring continued, "As this can jeopardize his career, the matter needs to be addressed. Spock also has certain telepathic needs and I cannot help him. Therefore, I have come to the conclusion that the most logical course of action would be to have you assist him. As I have officially requested you as my assistant, your visit will not jeopardize your careers."

Jim stared at her. "I'm not sure I heard that right. You're asking me to sleep with your bondmate?"

"Essentially, yes."

Jim stared at her some more before turning his face to Spock. "And you're on board with this?"

Spock frowned slightly, clearly unfamiliar with the expression. "If you are inquiring if I am in accord with T'Pring, I am. While it is not an ideal solution, it appears to be most logical."
Jim blinked, looked at T'Pring before looking back at Spock. "You're both crazy. Vulcans are fucking crazy."

T'Pring cocked her head. "What are your exact objections?"

Jim laughed, running a hand through his hair. "Objections? For starters, why would I even agree to this?"

"Why would you not?" T'Pring said, studying him. "Do you not desire him? Spock is very proficient in bed."

This rendered Jim speechless.

Okay. All right. He understood that other species had their own customs; discovering new civilizations and their cultures was a part of Starfleet's appeal to him. But this was downright weird.

His face very warm, Jim looked at Spock.

At least Spock seemed rather discomfited by his bondmate's bluntness.

Their eyes met.

"Spock is very proficient in bed."

Jim felt hot all over—hot and oddly angry, though he couldn't even explain why.

He looked back at T'Pring.

"Proficient. Right. And you wouldn't be jealous at all?"

"Jealous?" T'Pring repeated, a look of puzzlement appearing in her eyes. "Spock is my bondmate. He is parted from me and never parted. He is mine, and I am his. Whom he occasionally chooses to satisfy his physical needs with does not affect me or our bond."

Jim's stomach churned. "How logical of you," he said flatly. "But I'm not very logical, so I think I'll pass. Sorry, but such a rational approach to sex isn't a turn-on at all." He turned and headed to the exit, angry with himself that T'Pring's words bothered him on some level and angry that he was tempted. Really, really tempted.

Spock followed him out of the room.

"Cadet Kirk," he said once they were alone in the hallway.

"Seriously?" Jim said with a short laugh, coming to a halt. He didn't turn around. "Your girlfriend offers me to have sex with you and you call me 'Cadet Kirk'? This is a whole new level of weird. Are Vulcans emotionally retarded? Oh wait, don't answer that."

He felt Spock step closer to him.

Jim stiffened, his skin prickling with awareness. He hated how his heart started beating like crazy. He hated how his neck became oversensitive where Spock's breath brushed it. Hated that he could acutely feel the heat of Spock's body. Jim took a shaky breath in.

"I understand that such a rational approach might seem odd to humans," Spock said quietly. "However, I believe it would not affect the level of satisfaction derived from the act."
"The level of satisfaction derived..." Jim groaned, running a hand over his face. "For fuck's sake, shut up. Enough. This thing is seriously fucking with my head. Everything's been so weird ever since I left you that stupid message. It—this thing doesn't make any sense. I don't want this. And I promised Bones that I'd stay away from you."

"This is none of Cadet McCoy's concern," Spock said.

His voice was a bit clipped.

Jim blinked and then turned around to study him. "Are you jealous?"

Spock's face turned into a stony mask. "Vulcans do not feel jealousy. I am merely observing that Cadet McCoy is interfering into matters that do not concern him. Moreover, his attitude towards you is most unbecoming and suspicious for a 'friend.' He treats you like you are his property and touches you in an inappropriate manner. He admitted himself that he found you highly pleasing to the eye."

Jim stared at him. "For someone who isn't jealous, you're doing a damn good impression."

Spock leveled him with a look. "I am not 'jealous,'" he repeated.

Jim grinned.

Spock stared at his smiling face, his eyes dark, before suddenly jerking him close and kissing him hard. Jim gasped, his arms going up around Spock's back to yank him tighter to him. Spock pressed short, hard kisses against his lips before slipping his tongue in. Jim moaned and sucked on it, his head spinning, shivers of want shaking his body. He squirmed against Spock. "Want you," he muttered before he could stop himself.

"And I, you," Spock said, placing kisses all over his face and neck. "We have one hour and thirteen minutes before T'Pring and I have to depart. I believe it is sufficient for a gratifying sexual congress."

Jim couldn't fucking think when Spock was touching him that way. "Yeah. All right. Just once."

Spock gave him a short kiss before taking his hand and leading him to the furthest door in the corridor.

It was a bedroom.

Once they were inside, Spock said, "Computer, engage privacy locks. Lights to thirty percent."

Then he pushed Jim against the door and kissed him again.

When they finally parted, Spock's cheekbones were slightly green, eyes dark and glazed over. "Undress and relocate yourself to the bed," Spock said before pulling away and starting to undress himself, his movements sharp and tense.

Jim pulled his shirt off and threw it to the floor. The rest of his clothes followed suit a few seconds later.

Naked, he walked to the bed and, sitting down, looked at Spock.

He was still wearing his trousers, but he was barefoot and bare-chested. He was gorgeous: all smooth, lean muscle and tightly controlled strength. There was a trail of dark hair that disappeared into his trousers. Jim stared at it, licking his lips absent-mindedly. "Why aren't you naked yet?"

He looked up to Spock's face to find him staring at him. His eyes roam...
lingering on his lips, his neck, his nipples, and his thighs. Jim's skin ached wherever he looked. Spock's heavy gaze was like a physical touch.

Jim swallowed, a part of him a bit unnerved by the darkness lurking in Spock's eyes, the other part excited as hell.

Still staring at him, Spock unzipped his trousers and pulled them down with his underwear. Folding them and putting them on the chair, he moved to the bed, his arousal very obvious. Jim tried not to stare at it.

Wetting his lips, Jim lay back on the bed, enjoying Spock's gaze on him. He didn't feel self-conscious; he might not be as muscular as the other Jim was—yet—but he knew he looked good. And it was obvious Spock very much liked what he saw.

"Come on," he said, locking his eyes with Spock's. "Get on me."

Vulcans were fucking fast.

Before Jim could blink, Spock was on top him, his heavy body pinning him down to the mattress, hands on the either side of Jim's face.

Jim panted under his weight. So much skin. "You're heavy." He smiled dazedly, draping a leg over Spock's thigh and gasping as their erections rubbed together. "But I'm not complaining."

Spock touched his cheek with his thumb, eyes fixed on his face with something akin to fascination. "You are very stimulating to one's senses," he said before leaning down and giving him a long, deep kiss.

By the time Spock pulled away to allow him to breathe, Jim's mind was completely, blissfully blank.

"I wish to have you," Spock said. "Would you be amenable to that?"

Jim blinked. "You mean, like, real sex?"

Spock nodded, sliding a hand between their bodies to squeeze Jim's hard cock. "Indeed, I wish to have penetrative sexual intercourse."

Jim bit his lip. "Okay. But I should probably warn you that I've never done it before."

Spock merely nodded, but Jim could have sworn that he saw a pleased gleam in his eyes.

Jim gave him a narrow-eyed look, but Spock's expression was blank once again, his face not betraying a thing. If Jim couldn't feel his leaking hard dick against his thigh, he would have never guessed that Spock was so aroused.

"Very well," Spock said, settling between his legs. Sliding his hands under Jim to grip his buttocks, he lined up.

Jim's eyes widened and he grabbed Spock's shoulders. "What the fuck? You need to prep me first! You can't just stick it in! If you don't know how to do it, let me fuck you."

Spock's nostrils flared. "I assure you that I am well-informed on the matter. What you are not taking into consideration is that I am not a human. My physiology vastly differs from yours."

Jim snorted softly. "Unless you have a cock that can magically stretch my muscles and make it painless, your different physiology wouldn't change a thing."
Spock raised an eyebrow.

Jim stared up at him. "You've got to be kidding me."

"It is a logical evolutionary trait. Most Vulcan mammals have... a very violent mating season and, as a result, have developed a trait that prevents them from damaging their mates."

A violent mating season. Pon farr.

It made sense, but Jim still found it hard to believe.

"Okay," he said skeptically. "But if it hurts, you'll stop."

Spock leaned down and kissed him once again, biting on his lower lip. "I shall make it a satisfying experience for you," he said, sucking on Jim's swollen lip.

Jim sighed against his hot mouth, his mind clouding with need again. "All right. Go ahead," he said, trying to relax as Spock's slick cock nudged against his hole.

"It won't fit," Jim said, squirming.

"Be still. It will," Spock said, stroking the tense muscles of his stomach soothingly. He started pushing in, and Jim stiffened. No way in hell it could fit without tearing him apart.

But then his inner muscles just gave in, relaxing, and the cock slid all the way in until he felt Spock's balls against him. Spock made a small sound, his body going rigid on top of him.

Jim stared at him with wide eyes. He could barely feel a thing. Just fullness.

Looking down at him, Spock raised an eyebrow that clearly meant to convey I told you so.

Smug ass.

Jim scowled. "Fine, it fits, so what? I'm starting to fall asleep here. I don't feel a thing." He was a bit disappointed, to be totally honest.

Spock gave him a look. "You are experiencing some numbness because of the mild anesthetic that my lubricating fluid contains. It should wear off any moment now." He started thrusting in and out carefully.

Jim smiled slightly, looking Spock in the eye. "Nope, still nothing. Maybe you're just a boring lay, Commander."

He got a kick out of watching Spock's eyes narrow at him. "We shall see," he said and pulling Jim's right leg up to his chest, leaned forward and changed the angle of his thrusts. "If the memory of human anatomy serves me correctly—"

Jim moaned, going cross-eyed.

Spock did it again, his dick rubbing against that spot—his prostate, right—again. Jim bit his lip, trying to swallow back moans.

"Are you still bored?" Spock said, looking down at him, his dark eyes roaming all over him.

"Stop looking so smug," Jim said, panting.
"Vulcans are never 'smug,'" Spock said, his eyes closing for a moment as he rocked into him.

So full. So good. Jim threw an arm over his mouth, trying to muffle the noises he made, but he couldn't, not fully; quiet needy moans kept escaping from his throat as Spock fucked him steadily, stroking Jim's thighs with his strong hands.

Spock paused.

Jim didn't whine. It wasn't a whine.

"Look at me," Spock said tightly.

Jim lifted his heavy eyelids and focused his eyes on him.

Spock's normally perfect, pale skin was flushed green, his eyes just as unfocused as Jim's. "I wish to meld with you. Would you allow me?"

Jim moaned, his aching cock throbbing against his stomach.

"Yes, please."

"Go ahead," he managed. "But no reading my thoughts, got it?"

Spock actually flinched. "I would never violate your privacy in such a way."

"I'm not saying you will." Jim shifted his hips, trying to get Spock moving again. "Come on, do it." When Spock didn't move, Jim made a frustrated noise and, grabbing Spock's hand, brought it to his face. "Come on," he said, looking Spock in the eye. "Get in me. Want you."

Something primitive flashed through Spock's eyes before his fingers shifted into the melding position. A push, and then he was in.

Jim moaned when a rampaging torrent of want, need, and desire slammed into him hard. He felt Spock fall onto his elbows and start moving again, setting a hard rhythm. Jim wrapped his arms around him and held him tightly as Spock's thrusts quickened, his cock brushing his prostate every time. It was too much, too good, too intense, and a bit painful, but the pain only sharpened the overwhelming pleasure; he loved it, his body jerking and pitiful whimpers spilling out of his mouth as he dug his fingers hard into Spock's back, urging him on. Deeper, harder, come on, Spock. He wasn't even sure he was saying that aloud, but Spock's rhythm went wild. Jim moaned and arched, spine curling as Spock pounded into him, the bed creaking from the force of his thrusts.

Spock slammed hard into him once again and Jim cried out when Spock's pleasure flooded into him like a storm, so intense that it pushed him over the edge. He came, too, clinging to Spock as he shuddered and panted. It felt like his orgasm—their orgasm—lasted forever. Finally, Spock fell heavily on top of him, his breathing harsh and fast.

Jim didn't know how long they had lain like that.

When the euphoria finally started fading, he found that their minds were still joined.

"So good," Jim muttered before he could stop himself.

He felt Spock's agreement before Spock said it aloud. "Indeed."

Still panting, Jim opened his eyes and, turning his head, looked at him.

They were sharing the pillow. Spock's face was only a few inches away. He could see every eyelash.
It felt odd. Intimate.

Scarily intimate.

"You're still an asshole for reporting me," Jim said. "And I'll get back at you for that."

"Noted," Spock said, looking him in the eye.

Jim tore his gaze away and frowned when a thought suddenly occurred to him. "You didn't mess up my brain again, right?"

Spock shook his head slightly. "My shields are in place." But he withdrew his hand and the meld slowly broke.

Jim shivered, feeling a bit cold again.

"Are you well?" Spock said, a small crease forming between his eyebrows.

Jim stared at him, a bit surprised. But then, it probably wasn't that weird that Spock's attitude towards him softened after screwing him silly and sharing his mind.

"Yeah," Jim said, touching his lips. They felt sore and swollen from Spock's kisses. Spock's eyes shifted to them.

He started leaning in again.

Laughing, Jim turned his head and Spock's lips landed on his jaw. "You love kissing, huh? My lips are sore as hell."

That made Spock pause for some reason. He gave Jim an odd look.

Before Jim could ask, there was a knock on the door.

"Spock, I request entrance," T'Pring's voice said.

Jim went still, his stomach twisting. He'd completely forgotten about T'Pring.

His face unreadable, Spock sat up and then got out of the bed. Shrugging on a black robe, he turned to the door before stopping and looking back at Jim. His lips pressed together briefly and then he leaned down and pulled the bedcover from under Jim to cover his naked body.

"Seriously?" Jim said, raising his eyebrows.

"Yes," Spock said, avoiding his eyes. "That is inappropriate."

Jim kind of thought that it was a major logic fail, considering that T'Pring was perfectly aware of what they had been doing, but he decided to keep his mouth shut.

"Computer, open the door," Spock said.

The door slid open and T'Pring walked into the room. "I am ready," she announced, barely glancing at Jim. She looked gorgeous, elegant, and classy. A perfect woman.

"I shall be ready in three point two minutes," Spock said.

T'Pring looked displeased. "You know I detest tardiness," she commented before turning to Jim.
Under her scrutinizing gaze, he suddenly felt very grateful that Spock had pulled the cover nearly to his chin.

"Thank you for your assistance, Mr. Kirk."

Jim shrugged awkwardly.

"Please dress and leave in a prompt manner, Mr. Kirk," T'Pring said. "Spock and I are leaving soon."

Spock's face was completely blank once again, but Jim still could feel a faint echo of the mind meld and just knew that he was disturbed by something. Maybe he was annoyed that he'd lost track of the time. It was probably a big deal for Vulcans.

T'Pring turned to Spock. "You may use my bathroom and Mr. Kirk may use yours."

Spock nodded, and with a last glance at Jim, left the room, leaving T'Pring and him alone.

"Um," Jim said, feeling awkward as hell. He looked down at the bed and suddenly wondered if Spock would fuck T'Pring in this very bed later that night. Stupid. Of course Spock would: T'Pring was his bondmate.

"Thank you again, Mr. Kirk," T'Pring said, her voice softer. "I appreciate your sacrifice of your privacy."

Jim stared at her for a moment before realizing that she was talking about the mind meld.

He shrugged, deciding not to mention that he totally loved it. Maybe loved it a bit too much. He knew she wouldn't understand. It was kind of hilarious that engaging in a mind meld was far more disturbing for Vulcans than sharing their bondmate with another person. Vulcans were fucking weird. Okay, Jim could understand where their mistrust was coming from: Class H telepaths could totally screw you over if they wanted to, and for Vulcans who valued control more than anything, it was probably unthinkable to engage in something so intense and emotional.

"It wasn't a big deal," Jim said.

And it wasn't. How had T'Pring put it? Spock had merely satisfied his physical needs in a very logical, practical manner.

It was a one-off.

Or was it?

"Is it a one-off, right?" Jim said when she turned to leave.

T'Pring stopped and seemed to hesitate. "I am not certain," she replied. "I shall speak to Spock. I do not know the extent of his telepathic needs. If he requires it on a regular basis, I shall have to find a discreet companion for him before I leave. Obviously, your association with Spock cannot continue beyond my visit. Spock is correct that it is too dangerous: you are his student. I shall find another individual." And with that, she left.

"Right," Jim said to the empty room.

Right.
Chapter 8

Spock appeared distracted.

In fact, he had been distracted all evening and had barely spoken ever since they left his apartment.

As a scientist, T'Pring was prone to curiosity, but she was patient and decided to wait for the right opportunity to speak. Spock could be frustratingly stubborn and uncommunicative if he did not wish to talk.

She breached the subject only when they were served the second course.

"Was he satisfactory?"

Spock paused for a moment before resuming his meal. "I do not wish to discuss this."

T'Pring leaned back in her seat. "I am not interested in sordid details, Spock. I am asking if he satisfactorily fulfilled your needs. Do you want to have him again?"

Spock put his fork down. "As a matter of fact, I do wish to speak to you about this, T'Pring." His brown eyes fixed on her. "What is considered rational and logical on Vulcan is often considered rude and tactless on Earth. The blunt attitude in which you spoke to Cadet Kirk was very ill-mannered by human standards and I would not be surprised if he took offense."

T'Pring raised her eyebrows. "How odd."

"I do not dispute this," Spock said. "It has taken me more than two point six years to learn that humans are more...sensitive than we are in certain matters. I believe it is an issue of cultural misunderstanding. Humans do not appreciate a rational, logical approach when it concerns personal relationships. I do not think Cadet Kirk appreciated being told to leave immediately after engaging in sexual intercourse. My understanding is that humans tend to take offense in such a situation."

T'Pring could not quite suppress her bewilderment. "But we were indeed departing and he had to leave immediately unless he wished to stay in your apartment alone."

Spock took a sip of his tea. "That is correct, but perhaps you should have phrased it differently."

Cocking her head, she studied him. "Why do you care about the boy's feelings?"

Spock met her eyes steadily. "Cadet Kirk is very...strong-willed. It would be counterproductive to offend him."

T'Pring raised an eyebrow. "So you do wish to repeat the experience."

Spock dropped his gaze to his plate. "Yes."

In the silence that followed, she observed him, quite surprised. She had not thought that his desire for the human was strong enough for Spock to want him again. She knew Spock had never had recurring sexual partners besides her.

"Very well," she said. "I shall be more considerate when I speak to him again. What day do you wish me to schedule the meeting? Perhaps Monday?"

Spock lifted his fork to his mouth, chewed, and only after eight point six seconds replied, not looking
at her, "I am not occupied tomorrow."

T'Pring found herself staring.

How curious. Spock was eager.

"I am not," Spock said. "I am otherwise occupied on Sunday and Monday."

T'Pring forced herself to relax. Spock's propensity for occasionally reading her thoughts was disturbing, but she knew he did not do it intentionally. Their bond linked them together. She could not mentally shield her every thought from a melder.

She suppressed an involuntary shiver.

"Indeed?" she said, returning her attention to the conversation. "Very well, I shall tell him to come tomorrow. However, I need to speak to you on a related matter."

Spock raised an eyebrow.

T'Pring folded her hands on the table. "After my departure in three weeks, you obviously cannot continue any association with your student. Even strictly telepathic relations might jeopardize your career, considering that Starfleet cannot learn about your being a Class H telepath. Do you wish me to find you a discreet companion for serving your telepathic needs?"

Spock was discomfited and she did not need to be a Class H telepath to know that. Spock's face was never quite as expressionless as that of most Vulcans. She was not certain whether it was due to his being a part-human or a melder; perhaps it was both.

"I appreciate your concern, but the answer is negative," Spock said evenly. "I am capable of finding a discreet companion on my own should the need arise."

"Very well." Truth be told, she was rather relieved. She did not know where to start looking for an individual who would agree to merge minds with a Class H telepath and be discreet enough not to ruin Spock's career.

"Nevertheless, I thank you, T'Pring," Spock said, making her look back at him.

She inclined her head. "You should. You are very fortunate to have me."

~*~

T'Pring dialed Cadet Kirk's frequency at six o'clock next morning.

However, Cadet Kirk was not the one who appeared on the screen. A dark-haired man wearing a scowl on his face did. He was intriguingly bare-chested.

"Who the hell are you and why are you calling at ass o'clock?"
T'Pring blinked. "Pardon? It is six o'clock."

The man said, "Precisely!" and shut the connection.

T'Pring stared at the blank screen for a moment before redialing it again.

"Summon Mr. Kirk for me at once," she said the moment the rude human appeared on the screen once more.

"Look, girl—" The man squinted at her before scowling again. "You're Vulcan."

"How observant of you," T'Pring said. "I wish to speak to Mr. Kirk. I am Doctor T'Pring of the Vulcan Science Academy. Inform him that I wish to speak to him."

The man snorted. "Doctor? You? You can't be a day older than twenty!"

T'Pring gave him a cold look. "I am twenty-five point six years old. Not that it is any concern of you, Mister...?"

The man smiled. "It's Doctor, actually," he said. Was it mockery in his voice? "Doctor Leonard McCoy. I'm twenty-eight."

T'Pring narrowed her eyes. No one ridiculed her.

"Is your hearing impaired, Doctor McCoy? I have told you to inform Cadet Kirk that I wish to speak to him."

McCoy crossed his arms over his bare chest. "What about?"

"That does not concern you. But if you must know, he is to be my assistant at the interplanetary science conference that takes place at Starfleet Academy over the next three weeks."

McCoy pursed his lips. "Yes, Jim mentioned it. But he forgot to mention that you were Vulcan."

"How is that of any relevance?"

"The only Vulcan female recently seen at the Academy is Spock's fiancée," McCoy said, his eyes narrowing. "What a coincidence that you chose Jim out of hundreds of qualified cadets."

T'Pring eyed him warily. That irritating human was the one Spock mentioned yesterday as Kirk's friend who threatened to reveal his telepathy to the board if Spock approached Kirk again. She could not allow this to happen.

"He was simply fortunate," she said, meeting McCoy's eyes.

"Oh really," McCoy said. "And did he, by any chance, go to Spock's place to see you yesterday?"

T'Pring hesitated but, since it was easy enough to check, replied truthfully, "Indeed."

"And was Spock, by any chance, in the apartment too?"

"Affirmative," she was forced to admit.

McCoy did not look pleased. "And was he present when you and Jim talked about the conference?"

"No," T'Pring said, looking him in the eye. It was not a lie. As they did not speak about
conference, Spock was not present during such a conversation.

"And where was Spock while Jim was there?"

"Mostly in his own room," T'Pring said coldly. "If you are finished asking pointless questions, I demand that you inform Mr. Kirk of my request immediately."

McCoy scowled and, muttering something about 'spoiled little girl,' disappeared from the view.

She could not see him, but she could hear him.

"Jim, get your ass out of the bed!"

"Go away, Bones. It's Saturday."

"Precisely! Why am I answering your comm?"

"Who's that?"

"Doctor T'Pring. Ring any bells?"

There was a pause before Kirk replied. "What does she want?"

"How would I know?"

There was the sound of a bed creaking, and then Cadet Kirk appeared on the screen. His hair was in disorder and he was bare-chested as well.

T'Pring looked at him appraisingly. The boy was indeed very pleasing to the eye. Spock had excellent taste.

"Is she supposed to look at you that way?" McCoy said, appearing behind Kirk.

Kirk started laughing. "Never mind it, Bones. Vulcans are fucking weird. I don't take it personally."

T'Pring frowned, uncertain if they were ridiculing her.

Before she could say anything, Cadet Kirk became serious and turned to her. "You wanted something?"

"Indeed," she said, ignoring the suspicious look McCoy was giving her. "I wished to inquire if you were available this evening. Your assistance is required."

Kirk's face became inscrutable. "Is it?"

"Affirmative," she said. Remembering her promise to Spock, she added, "I also would like to apologize if you took offense when Spock and I had to depart so suddenly. It will not happen again. If my words offended you in any manner, you must know that it was not my intention."

Kirk's gaze dropped. He seemed to be considering her words.

"Fine," he said at last, returning his gaze to her. "I'll come at eight."

"Wait a minute!" McCoy said, grabbing Kirk and dragging him away from the communicator. He clearly did not know that she could still hear every word. "You won't be going to Spock's place again, kid!"
"His fiancée will be there, Bones."

"I don't trust her."

Kirk chuckled. "Bones, remember what I told you about your wife in that other…? Remember her name?"

"What does it have— No way, Jim. You're pulling my leg."

"Nope. Basically my husband and your wife... Hilarious, isn't it?"

T'Pring frowned. Their conversation did not make any sense. As far as she knew, Cadet Kirk was not married.

She cleared her throat, reminding them of her presence. Her time was valuable. She had more important matters to attend to than arranging Spock's trysts.

"Sorry," Kirk said, appearing on the screen again.

"Very well," she said. "Eight o'clock it is."

The last thing that she saw before she broke the connection was an odd stare McCoy gave her.

Humans were such strange creatures.

~*~

Cadet Kirk arrived at eight o'clock sharp.

T'Pring looked up from her PADD when Spock went to open the door.

However, when no one entered the living room within a full minute, she became curious enough to stand up and leave the room.

She stopped upon noticing them.

Spock had Kirk against the wall of the corridor and they were... Their lips were locked, and the two of them were sucking, biting, and licking each other's lips.

Her eyebrows crept up. Spock had never given any indication that he found the human way of kissing stimulating and never attempted it with her.

And yet the evidence was undeniable.

She watched Spock push his tongue into the boy's mouth and wondered if it was hygienic. Spock certainly did not seem to find it disgusting. He touched Kirk's lips as though he was starving and the boy's mouth was much-needed sustenance. And Kirk certainly seemed to enjoy it, judging by the soft noises of pleasure he was making, his fingers fisted in Spock's hair.

How odd.

Shaking her head, T'Pring returned to the living room and took a seat on the couch.
She frowned slightly when she heard the door to Spock's bedroom close. She had expected that Cadet Kirk would greet her upon his arrival. That would have been only polite, considering that he was taking her bondmate's valuable time—the time Spock could have spent with her.

T'Pring was not 'jealous,' per se. The human concept of jealousy was quite baffling to her. However, it was somewhat inconvenient that she would have to find someone else to satisfy her physical needs. Until Spock got tired of his boy, he would not be the best choice.

She was pulled away from her thoughts when there was a sharp rap on the door. T'Pring stood up and went to open it.

Leonard McCoy pushed past her into the apartment.

She stiffened. "What are you doing here? How did you get past the security guards?"

"Where's Jim?" McCoy said, ignoring her questions and striding to the living room.

T'Pring followed him, forcing her heart to beat at a moderate rate. She could not panic like a useless adolescent girl. "I have sent him out on an errand," she said and pointed towards the door. "Leave at once or I shall call the guards."

McCoy turned around and, walking closer, looked down at her.

T'Pring was not a short female by any means. She was not easily intimidated. Yet this human made her somewhat uneasy.

"Sure, missy, call the guards," McCoy said, his tone at odds with the dark look he gave her. "And I'll tell them that Spock is a Class H telepath who mentally assaults his students."

She did not move.

McCoy nodded grimly. "So where's Jim?"

"I have already told you—"

"Where's Spock?"

"He is not here."

"Then you wouldn't mind if I check," McCoy said, striding back to the corridor.

T'Pring followed him and grabbed his arm. "You are not going anywhere, Doctor McCoy." She could not be certain that Spock had had the presence of mind to lock the door.

He narrowed his eyes at her and scowled. "Why not? What's going on, dammit?"

T'Pring raised an eyebrow. "What do you think is going on?"

"I don't know," McCoy grumbled. "But I don't like it. You think I'm an idiot, woman? Why would a VSA scientist choose a first year cadet as her assistant at a very important science conference? I know how coveted those positions are. There isn't a single logical reason for your choice! It smells fishy."

"I do not smell fish," T'Pring said, lifting her chin up.

McCoy gave her such a withering look that it made her blood rush to her lower abdomen.
How inconvenient.

There was a logical reason for her arousal, of course—biologically Vulcan females were very responsive to male aggression and strength—yet it did not make it any less inconvenient.

The thought gave T'Pring pause. Perhaps, it was convenient, after all.

"Follow me," she said and walked towards her room, glad that the rooms in Spock's apartment were soundproof from the inside and McCoy could not hear what was going on in Spock's bedroom.

When the human entered her bedroom after her, she said, "Computer, engage privacy locks."

The door closed and locked.

"What the hell?"

T'Pring ignored the question and, turning away, started unbuttoning her blouse. It was fortunate that she had chosen to wear a human outfit this morning.

Taking her blouse off, which left her nude from the waist up, she turned to face McCoy.

He stared at her wide-eyed, his mouth slightly agape.

"Are you mad, woman?" Flushing, he turned his face away. "Cover yourself!"

T'Pring looked down at her breasts and frowned. "Is my chest not to your liking?"

McCoy made a choked sound. "Aren't you engaged, dammit? Don't you have any shame?"

"How illogical," T'Pring said, lifting her hands to take her hair down. Her heavy hair fell to her shoulders. "If that is your only objection, it is of no relevance. Vulcans do not experience jealousy."

McCoy scoffed, still not looking at her. "Tell it to Spock, woman. I've seen him jealous and it wasn't pretty. Now open the goddamn door! And cover yourself, dammit!"

"Why? Are you scared to look at me?"

She watched him stiffen. Males were so predictable.

Scowling, he turned to face her.

"You are aroused," she noted, glancing at his crotch.

His jaw worked. "Of course I'm aroused: I'm not dead. But I'm not a goddamn teenager. I'm not going to lose my head because of a pair of perfect breasts."

"Indeed?" She walked to him and stopped only when the tips of her breasts nearly touched his chest. His jaw set tightly, he glowered at her. Her nipples hardened and started aching.

"I would not want you if you were a teenager, Doctor," she said, looking him in the eye. "I want a man. Are you a man?"

"You little—" He yanked her to him.
There was something wrong with him.

Something was very wrong with him; Jim was sure of it.

He'd had three mind-blowing orgasms in the past few hours, and yet here he was, still a mess of want and need, shivering in Spock's arms as they rocked together. His thighs were trembling already and he'd stopped moving, just panting against Spock's cheek and letting Spock lift him up and push him down onto his cock. Spock made it look effortless, but Jim knew from experience how hard it was to do, and fuck, maybe he was messed up in the head, but Spock's strength was such a huge turn-on.

His eyes closing, Jim tightened his arms around Spock, enjoyed the way his aching nipples rubbed against Spock's chest. After hours of hard, intense sex, this was almost gentle and relaxing. Spock's mind pulsed in him, and it was warm and good, almost as good as Spock's thick cock slowly moving in him.

They both were quiet, just enjoying the sensations. So good.

"Don't stop," he murmured, squirming and arching against Spock.

Spock didn't say anything, but Jim could feel that his words pleased him. It was weird; Spock wasn't even touching his meld points anymore, but the meld hadn't broken. Jim didn't know why and didn't care. He just loved it.

Spock slowly lifted him up until only the head of his cock stayed inside before thrusting back in. Jim made a very embarrassing, needy noise. Spock pulled out and thrust in again, faster. Jim's mouth opened in a silent moan as the pleasure continued to mount.

Spock leaned forward and pressed his face against Jim’s neck, nuzzling into it and rocking gently into him. "You like having me in you."

"How did you guess?" Jim laughed, but his laugh turned into a long moan when Spock started thrusting harder. "It's so weird, you know."

"What is?" Spock said, sucking and nipping at his jawline, his thrusts escalating.

Jim grinned dazedly, squirming and starting to ride his cock again. "I have a cock in me, and I'm loving it. It's weird, but good weird, you know? It's—intense. Like—like it's massaging me from the inside. I've been seriously missing out. Maybe I should have fucked guys ages ago—"

Spock shoved him onto his back and slammed hard into him. Jim groaned at the weight of him—so good—and, gripping the headboard, let Spock fuck him hard. Spock's rhythm went wild, his hips jerking forward and teeth closing on Jim's shoulder hard. *This is mine and no one else's*: that single, furious thought slammed into his mind as Spock pounded into him, pleasure and fierce possessiveness shaking his body. The violence of Spock's thrusts escalated until the world shrank to the feel of him inside Jim, the feeling of the skin on Spock's back giving way to his nails. Jim clung to him and moaned and begged until he came with a half-sob.
He must have blacked out because when he opened his eyes, Spock wasn't moving anymore and his cock wasn't in him.

Jim blinked a few times. What the hell was that?

"I apologize," Spock said, his face buried in Jim's pillow. He was heavy as hell, but Jim didn't complain.

He frowned, noticing that Spock was clenching the sheets in his hands. And he was trembling faintly, his breathing ragged.

"You're shaking," Jim said. Hesitantly, he put a hand on Spock's back.

Spock breathed in and out.

"Hey, what's wrong with you?" Jim said, his voice soft, stroking Spock’s back with his hands. Maybe he was deluding himself, but it seemed to be helping and Spock's tremors were slowly receding.

"I do not know," Spock said.

Jim thought for a moment. "You went crazy when I talked about fucking other guys."

For a long moment, Spock was quiet.

"It appears so," Spock admitted.

Jim considered it. It didn't even feel like jealousy. It was something else. 'Jealousy' was a huge understatement for what had just happened.

*This is mine and no one else's.*

Jim licked his lips. The sheer possessiveness should have been disturbing, but on some level, it made him feel warm and *good.*

Jim grimaced. God, he was fucked up.

"It doesn't look like it's a Vulcan thing," he said. "T'Pring doesn't seem to get jealous at all."

"T'Pring is not part-human." Spock's voice was more or less even. "She is also not a melder. Melders are considered to be…throwbacks to ancient times."

"To pre-Surak times?"

"The term 'Pre-Surak times' is too broad a period. Vulcan civilization is very old. It is said that once upon a time, when Vulcans were a race of warriors, all Vulcans were capable of melding." Spock paused. "In fact, telepathy was freely used for offensive purposes during endless Vulcan wars."

"Okay," Jim said, drawing circles on Spock's back. "What does it have to do with you going crazy jealous on me?"

Spock didn't reply immediately.

"There is no documented evidence, but it is said that ancient Vulcans were extremely possessive of their bondmates. They killed anyone who as much as touched them."
Jim stopped stroking Spock's back.

"I'm not your bondmate," he said, his voice careful.

"You are not," Spock agreed quickly, finally turning his head to look at him. "I am simply saying that such possessive behavior was not unusual for ancient Vulcans. It is a…primitive reaction I failed to control, nothing more." His jaw clenched.

Jim grinned. "So basically, I bring out the caveman in you and he thinks I'm too pretty to share."

Spock lifted himself on an elbow and gave him a flat look. "This is not amusing, Cadet Kirk. I could have hurt you." Jim could feel that he was truly bothered by what had happened.

His smile fading, Jim met his eyes seriously. "But you didn't. I like it a bit rough anyway. And call me Jim. I had your dick in me; I think we're well past formalities."

Spock nodded.

He eyed Jim in silence for a while. Jim could feel him hesitate, but he decided not to push him. He waited patiently.

"I have a request for you," Spock said at last. "In the interests of safety, I request that you do not engage in sexual acts with any individual other than myself while we are sexually involved."

Jim raised his eyebrows. "In the interests of safety?"

"Indeed," Spock said.

"You probably have sex with T'Pring every day. If you want to be my only sex partner, it's only fair if it goes both ways, don't you think?"

"T'Pring is my bondmate," Spock said. "Some would say she is my wife."

"Yes," Jim said, his tone hard. "But I'm not willing to give you any promises if I don't receive the same in return. Either you don't fuck T'Pring or I can fuck someone else—"

"You will not." Spock stiffened and seemed to realize what he just said. Spock closed his eyes momentarily before looking at Jim. "I apologize. I meant to say that I will speak to T'Pring and inform her that for the time being, I cannot engage in sexual relations with her."

Jim smiled, feeling more pleased than he should have. "Good. Then it's settled." He yawned and then frowned. "What time is it?"

A crease formed between Spock's eyebrows.

"Perhaps a quarter past eleven," he said after a moment.

"Crap," Jim said, pushing him off and rolling off the bed. He walked to his clothes on the floor and started dressing quickly. "I have to go. I told Bones I'd return no later than ten. I don't want him to suspect something. He's probably beside himself already."

Spock sat up and got out of the bed, too. "Cadet McCoy is not your parent."

Jim grinned, putting on his shirt. "Are you jealous of Bones again?"
"Negative," Spock said, slipping into his meditation robe and walking to him.

"Right," Jim said, zipping up his jeans, still grinning.

*Stop being ridiculous,* he told himself, but the smile refused to leave his lips.

Jim looked up just as Spock leaned in and gave him a long, deep kiss. *Mmm.* He looped his arms around Spock, sucking on his tongue and trying to press closer. Their bodies fit together perfectly as the kiss went on, and on.

Jim wasn't sure how much time had passed when Spock finally released him and stepped back.

"Um, all right," he said, his face warm, running a hand through his hair. "I'll go."

"Yes," Spock said, his eyes fixed on him.

Jim wet his swollen lips. "See you. Maybe Tuesday evening?"

Tuesday evening was three days away. That was perfectly acceptable, right? Jim didn't want to seem too clingy and needy—because he *wasn't.*

"I will be otherwise occupied on Tuesday," Spock replied.


"Monday evening would be more convenient for me," Spock said, clasping his hands behind his back.

Jim paused and flashed him a quick smile. "All right. See you then."

"You will see me in class on Monday morning," Spock said.

Jim blinked. Right. That was going to be...interesting. Spock was still his instructor.

He looked at Spock.

Spock's expression was unreadable, but he looked rather tense.

"Right," Jim said. "Bye."

Spock's dark eyes bored into his. "Goodbye, Jim."

Realizing that he kind of wanted another kiss, Jim left quickly before he could make a fool of himself.
Chapter 9

His Linguistics class on Monday was... awkward.

It was very hard to reconcile his very proper Vulcan instructor with the man who screwed him silly two days ago.

"What's wrong with you?" Bones hissed, leaning closer to him.

"Nothing," Jim said quickly, looking at his PADD with great interest.

"Then why are you blushing every time you look at the hobgoblin?"

"I'm not blushing," Jim said and, just to prove that he wasn't, he looked at Spock again.

He found Spock looking at him already.

Their eyes met.

Jim's skin tingled. He was blushing, dammit.

His shoulders tensing up, Spock averted his gaze and said in a very even tone, "All students must have their assignments transferred to my PADD within five minutes. Failing to do so will reduce your chances of receiving a passing mark by seventeen point six percent."

Bones grabbed his PADD and sent his essay before looking at Jim. "You did yours, right?"

"Yeah," Jim said, sending his. "Spent two hours working on it yesterday."

It wasn't that he wanted to impress Spock or anything; he just didn't want Spock to think that he expected special treatment. It was bad enough that he was getting extra credits for being T'Pring's assistant, but there was no way around it, no matter how much it bothered him.

Sure, now Spock would find out that he was nowhere as dumb as he pretended to be, but Jim figured it didn't matter anymore. He couldn't allow his grades to suffer if he wanted to graduate in three years.

All of those were perfectly legitimate reasons.

He didn't do it to impress Spock.

Jim sighed, running a hand over his face.

~*~

Spock didn't seem particularly impressed when he summoned him to his office three hours later.

"Close the door, Cadet," he said, looking up from his PADD.

Jim did, feeling awkward and having no idea how to behave.
Unlike him, Spock seemed perfectly composed. "Did you do your assignment yourself?"

Jim stared at him. He hadn't been sure what to expect, but he definitely didn't expect to be accused of cheating. "What, you want proof?"

Spock's expression was unreadable. "Considering your abysmal performance in my class until today, it is only logical to suspect fraud upon receiving commendable work."

Jim gave a short laugh. "You really want proof? Do you want me to recite it or something?" His stomach tightened when a thought occurred to him. He met Spock's eyes. "Or do you want me to show you? I can show you." Jim hoped he didn't sound too eager.

Spock stiffened. "What you are suggesting is improper, Cadet."

Jim smiled wryly. "Isn't it a bit late for us to be worrying about propriety, Commander? I'm willing. It'll save us time. I have a class in ten minutes."

Spock dropped his gaze, a muscle in his cheek twitching. "Your logic is sound." He stood up. "Computer, engage privacy locks."

Jim rounded the desk and, stopping in front of Spock, leaned back against it.

Meeting Spock's eyes, he wet his dry lips, his pulse speeding up and skin warming. Maybe it wasn't such a good idea, after all.

Spock's eyes were searing in their intensity as he put his fingers on Jim's face. Jim took a shaky breath in. "You aren't going to read my thoughts, right?"

"I have already told you that I would never do it without your explicit permission," Spock said. "Concentrate on the relevant memory."

Jim's eyes closed. He might have moaned when Spock's mind entered his. So warm. So good. Jim pulled him in deeper.

No—focus on the relevant memory.

Jim didn't want to. He wanted him deeper.

Memory, Spock repeated, but his mental voice wavered.

Reluctantly, Jim focused on the memory of himself doing the assignment.

That is sufficient, Spock said and started withdrawing.

No. Jim yanked him back, deeper into him.

Spock fell against him, mouthing his cheek. Jim...We cannot do this. Not here.

Contrary to his words, Jim could feel how much Spock wanted to do it here. Christ. The force of Spock's want was insane and Jim closed his eyes, drinking it all in.

There was a sharp rap on the door. "Commander?"

Spock withdrew abruptly.

Opening his eyes, Jim looked at Spock, feeling a bit disoriented and a lot unsatisfied.
Spock didn’t look any better: his eyes were glazed over and his cheeks were flushed green.

The knocking stopped.

They stared at each other, breathing heavily. Jim glanced at Spock's desk.

Spock’s nostrils flared. He closed his eyes for a brief moment and then pulled away. "No. Not here. I shall see you in the evening."

Sighing, Jim stepped away. Spock looked at him for a moment before suddenly leaning in and sucking on Jim's bottom lip. "Go, Jim," he said, a little hoarsely. Jim tried to chase his lips, but Spock turned away, his back stiff and straight. "Dismissed, Cadet."

Jim forced himself to leave.

~*~

The thing about having a secret affair with one's professor was that it was very hard to keep a secret affair secret. It was particularly hard when one had an overprotective roommate who kept asking uncomfortable questions. By the end of the week Jim wasn't sure whether he wanted to hug Bones for caring or snap at him for being so damn nosy.

He felt like an ass for lying to Bones, but there was nothing he could do about it. Bones would flip if he found out that Spock and he were… having a thing.

And it was really becoming a thing; Jim could no longer deny it. He spent every other evening at Spock's place and had gotten uncomfortably comfortable hanging out there. What surprised him most was how rarely he saw T'Pring.

She was absent this evening, too.

"Hey, where's T'Pring?" Jim asked, returning from the kitchen to Spock's bedroom. He wouldn't have bothered putting on Spock's robe if he'd known that she wasn't in the apartment.

He froze, realizing that Spock was seated at his communication terminal and was talking to someone.

A woman. He was talking to a middle-aged human woman.

She was dark-haired and very beautiful for her age. Something about her brown eyes was very familiar. Right; she was probably Spock's mother.

And she was looking at him curiously.

Jim wrapped Spock's robe around himself tightly, re-securing the ties with a sharp tug. Thank god he'd put it on.

"Um, hi," he said, smiling crookedly and brushing a hand through his hair.

The woman blinked, looked at Spock—who sat very still—before looking back at Jim with a faint smile. "Hello. I'm Amanda, Spock's mother."
"I'm Jim," he said, walking closer. It was only polite, after all. "I'm Spock's...friend."

Amanda's eyes gleamed with amusement. "It's nice to make your acquaintance, Jim. Spock didn't tell me that he had a guest. I'm sorry if I interrupted anything."

Jim was pretty sure his face was as red as a tomato. "Nope, you haven't interrupted anything." I already finished sucking your son off. "It's nice to meet you, ma'am."

"I..." Spock glanced at Jim before turning back to her. "I am considering my options." His voice sounded odd. Jim looked at him curiously.

A small, hesitant smile appeared on Amanda's lips. "So you haven't made a final decision yet?"

"Negative," Spock said.

Her smile widened.

For some reason, she looked at Jim. "I'm glad. I will speak to you later, Spock. Goodbye, Jim. It was truly a pleasure to make your acquaintance."

"Likewise," Jim said with a smile, a bit confused. He had a strange feeling he was missing something.

The transmission ended.

Jim turned to Spock, grimacing. "Well, that was awkward. Do you think she guessed what we were doing?"

"Of course she did. You are wearing my robe. It was a gift from her." Spock was looking at him oddly.

Glancing at the black robe he was wearing, Jim wondered if he broke some Vulcan taboo.

Before he could ask, Spock took his hand and stroked his fingers slowly.

Jim looked down at their fingers, his stomach tightening. He'd seen the gesture before: Prince Spock touched the other Jim's hand that way. This was a Vulcan kiss.

He lifted his gaze to Spock.

Their eyes met and Jim got very warm—and very annoyed with himself.

Trying to shake the fuzzy feeling off, he straddled Spock's lap.

"So. What is 'Kolinahr'?'" he said, smiling.

Spock looked vaguely uncomfortable. "It is a ritual of purging emotions and embracing total logic."

Jim's smile slipped off his face. He tilted his head to the side. "Purging? As in completely getting rid of them?"

"Affirmative."
Jim studied him. "Why?"

Spock looked down at their linked fingers. "I have found my control inadequate of late."

Pressing his lips together, Jim thought for a moment. "Okay, I get that self-control is a big deal for Vulcans, but completely purging emotions because of that? Really, Spock? That's stupid, and you're not stupid."

Spock's jaw tightened. "You do not understand."

"Maybe I don't. But…" Jim shook his head, averting his gaze. "Your mom seems to love you a lot—even I can see it. Do you really want to look at her and feel nothing for the woman who gave birth to you? Believe me, it sucks."

Spock took his chin in his hand and forced Jim to look at him. His brown eyes were piercing and made Jim feel weirdly naked and vulnerable.

"What?" he said.

Spock's thumb brushed his cheek. "You are very different from my initial impression of you."

Jim shrugged uncomfortably. "Not my fault you suck at forming first impressions." He grinned. "Well, I guess I did contribute to that, too."

Spock fixed him with a stare. "As a matter of fact, I wished to speak to you about this. For what purpose did you pretend to be an idle, unintelligent student?"

Jim chuckled. "I wanted you to want a dumb, lazy cadet. That would be so very illogical and you would have hated yourself. It was all part of my grand plan to get back at you for reporting me to Barnett. Which was, by the way, an asshole thing to do, Spock."

The corners of Spock's lips tightened ever so slightly. "You wished to get me in trouble."

"Yep," Jim admitted shamelessly. "And it almost worked." He made a face. "Well, until I started day-dreaming about sucking your dick. So basically, your dick saved your career. You should be really, really grateful to it."

Spock stared at him with a mix of fascination and something like exasperation.

"You are most illogical."

Jim grinned, looping his arms around Spock's neck. "But you want me," he said, his lips almost brushing Spock's. "Me, your very illogical student. You're crazy about me. You want to put pointy-eared babies in me."

"That is impossib—"

Jim kissed him. Spock kissed back, his hand gripping Jim's neck hard. Moaning, Jim squirmed and Spock pulled him tighter and the rest of the world faded away to nothing.

~*~
"Why are you so damn cheerful lately?" Bones asked a week later.

Jim rolled his eyes. "I didn't know being in a good mood was a crime. Sorry for not being appropriately grumpy."

"Hmm." Bones crossed his arms over his chest, his lips pinching together. "You aren't in love with someone, right?"

Jim paused before forcing a laugh.

"No," he said, looking away. "Don't be silly, Bones."

~*~

He sighed, nuzzling into Spock's neck. This was ridiculous. After hours of sex, he was thoroughly fucked out, but instead of feeling satisfied, he felt like he was touch-starved and, considering that Spock's hands were roaming all over his naked body, Spock was faring no better.

They were cuddling, for fuck's sake. This was ludicrous.

"You are troubled," Spock commented.

"Of course I'm troubled. We're cuddling, Spock."

A few seconds passed. "Are you averse to me holding you?"

"No." And that was the problem. Their bodies and minds were so entangled Jim wasn't sure where he ended and Spock began—and he didn't care. "It's late. I need to go."

Spock's arm tightened around him to the point of becoming painful.

Jim chuckled. "Easy there. I'm not unbreakable." But in truth, he didn't mind. It hurt, but he loved how tightly Spock was holding him. It felt good. Safe. Right.

His train of thought made Jim cringe. This thing between them was becoming more ridiculous with every day that passed, and it was hard not to give it a name.

Jim sighed as Spock began kissing and sucking the skin behind his ear. "Don't leave hickeys."

"Have you not told Cadet McCoy that you are sexually involved with someone?"

"Yeah, but Bones is getting suspicious. He constantly asks me about what T'Pring and I do when we're alone."

"It is none of his concern."

"Yeah, but he worries." Jim smiled. "I think he misses his daughter and needs to baby someone in her absence."

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"It is none of his concern."

"Yeah, but he worries." Jim smiled. "I think he misses his daughter and needs to baby someone in her absence."
You are not his.

Jim laughed. "Keep the caveman in check. By the way... " He looked up at Spock. "You aren't touching my meld points anymore, but I can still feel your thoughts. Is that normal?"

Spock frowned slightly. "I do not know. As I have already told you, my experience concerning mind melds is very limited. However, I am a touch telepath and we are touching extensively at the moment. Perhaps that is the explanation."

"Yeah, maybe." Jim glanced at the darkness outside the window. "I need to get going." He didn't move.

"That would be most logical," Spock said, but his arms tightened around him again.

Jim sighed. "Spock... I think we have a problem."

Spock didn't say anything, but Jim could sense that Spock was equally disturbed by their inability to pull away from each other.

And it was actually getting worse instead of better. Since the first time, he had stayed longer and longer with each visit, sometimes even showing up early. By now, Jim was past the point of denial: he was becoming downright clingy.

"T'Pring's leaving soon," he said quietly, looking Spock in the eye.

"Indeed," Spock said. His face showed no emotion.

Jim lowered his eyes.

With T'Pring leaving, he could no longer come here without arousing suspicion. Sure, they could probably meet elsewhere, but how long would it take before someone spotted them together? Secrets like this never remained secrets for long. Spock wasn't exactly unrecognizable.

Dammit, the mere fact that he was trying to come up with a solution that would make it possible for him to keep seeing Spock was idiotic and made it obvious that he was in too deep. Any long-term relationship between Spock and him wasn't possible. Fraternization between Starfleet instructors and cadets was strictly forbidden.

Jim pressed his nose against Spock's bare shoulder and inhaled deeply. "I'll stay for another hour and then go."

"That would be unwise."

"Yeah. You're right, of course." Inwardly grimacing, Jim moved to roll off him, but Spock didn't let him, his arms like ironbands around Jim’s body.

"If someone notices you leaving at such a late hour, it would be very risky. Perhaps it would be more logical for you to stay and leave in the morning."

Jim ran a hand over his face. "Spock, we..." Shouldn't. This is crazy. "All right. But I need to comm Bones."

Spock's arms loosened enough to let him pull free and get out of the bed. The meld broke slowly and Jim shivered, feeling cold and empty. Trying to ignore the ridiculous urge to get back into the bed and cling to Spock like a baby koala, Jim pulled his communicator out and dialed Bones's frequency.
For some reason, Bones didn't answer for a long time. Maybe he was asleep.

Finally, he answered. "Where the hell are you, kid?"

"Bones, don't wait up for me, all right? I won't be coming home tonight."

"Oh for fuck's— Don't forget to use protection." Bones hung up.

Putting the communicator back into the pocket of his uniform pants, Jim turned back to Spock.

He found Spock wearing a small frown.

"What?" Jim said, climbing into the bed. He kind of wanted to crawl back into Spock's arms, but what felt natural a minute ago seemed cringe-worthy now, so he chose to sprawl out on his stomach, his face turned to Spock's.

"It has just occurred to me that you have classes tomorrow. Have you done your assignments?"

Jim gave him an incredulous look. "Seriously?"

Spock raised an eyebrow. "You cannot neglect your studies."

Jim let out a soft laugh. "If I managed to produce a 'commendable' assignment after a month of completely ignoring your lectures, I think I'll manage to do all right in classes I wasn't slacking off. Don't baby me, Spock. I have Bones for that."

"If I understand it correctly, 'to baby' means 'to treat someone like an infant; pamper or overprotect.' I do no such thing. I assure you I do not see you as an infant, Jim." He laid a hand on Jim's shoulder blades and slid it down his spine until it rested on his waist.

The heat from Spock's hand seemed to brand its imprint on his lower back. Jim made a small noise, his lips parting. "Spock.

Spock's eyes were bright and glossy. "This is troubling," he said before leaning in and fitting their mouths together. His lips were hot, his mouth was even hotter, but it was nothing compared to the heat and toe-curling warmth spreading through his entire body. He moaned when Spock's fingers shifted to his meld points and Spock's mind slid into him with alarming ease.

When they finally parted for air, Jim found himself back in Spock's arms, tangled in him so tightly there wasn't a hair's breadth between them.

"This is ridiculous," Jim muttered, burying his face in Spock's neck again.

"Indeed."

Jim could feel how much Spock enjoyed holding him and how much it bothered him at the same time.

"You require rest," Spock said, his voice a bit clipped. "Computer, lights off."

The room went dark.

"Sleep," Spock said. It sounded more like an order than anything else, but Jim didn't protest. Snuggled against Spock, with their minds still wrapped in each other, he couldn't bring himself to give a damn about Spock bossing him around.
And a part of him…a part of him liked it.

It felt good. Scarily good. And it freaked him out.

They had to stop. They shouldn't be doing this. It was supposed to be about sex. It wasn't supposed to be like this.

In the back of his mind, the clock was ticking. Jim tried to ignore it.

Breathing Spock's scent in, he drifted off to sleep.

~*~

"Cadet Kirk is not returning for the night?"

Leonard put his communicator away and turned around.

The naked woman lying in his bed had her eyebrows raised, a thoughtful look on her usually expressionless face.

"Apparently, he hooked up with someone after he left the meeting with you." Leonard eyed her unhappily. He still wasn't sure why the hell he let her in. Again. She was Spock's wife—or something. No matter what T'Pring said, he couldn't believe the hobgoblin really didn't give a fuck that his wife was sleeping with one of his cadets. But then again, Spock had no problem groping one of his cadets despite being practically married. Goddamn aliens and their customs.

He watched as T'Pring ran a slender hand over one of her full breasts, lifting it a little. "Satisfy me, Leonard."

"I already satisfied you twice, woman." He scowled at his dick that seemed to like this spoiled Vulcan girl far too much for his comfort.

T'Pring raised an eyebrow, her dark eyes roaming all over his naked body and lingering on his cock. "I believe copulation is in order."

Sighing, Leonard walked to the bed and, rolling on top of her, caught one taut nipple in his mouth. He sucked hard, rolling the other nipple in his hand.

"This is a most agreeable sensation," T'Pring said, her tone slightly breathless. "You are the first male to suck on my breasts. Vulcans always use hands."

Leonard lifted his head to glare at her. "I don't know about Vulcan, but on Earth talking about previous lovers during sex is considered very rude, missy." He wasn't jealous. This absurd girl was simply completely infuriating.

T'Pring didn't look fazed. "How illogical."

"Well, we're very illogical," he said, sliding a hand between them to stroke her opening. She was very wet for him already.

"I wish to be taken," she informed him, spreading her legs.
"What, the hobgoblin doesn't satisfy you?" Scowling, he propped himself on his elbows and pushed into her. She was tight and incredibly hot.

"Spock and I temporarily do not engage in sexual relations."

He narrowed his eyes at her. "Why? No man—"

"Spock has another lover for the time being."

Leonard went still.

Jim was seeing someone. Spock was seeing someone. Goddammit.

"It's Jim, isn't it? I knew it! That sneaky son-of-a-bitch—" He moved to roll off her, but her legs wrapped around him. Damn that Vulcan strength.

"You are not going anywhere, Leonard," she said, her inner muscles squeezing him tightly and her full breasts rubbing against his chest.

Groaning, he fell on top of her and started thrusting hard. She moaned, her fingers digging into his shoulders. "Harder."

"Insatiable little slut," he grunted, mouthing her pointed ear.

She was. But he'd never wanted any woman so much.

Damn her.

~*~

In the morning, Jim was woken up by Spock's hands wandering all over his chest, stroking his nipples, his stomach, and his erection.

"Jim, I wish to be inside you," Spock said, nuzzling against his ear from behind. There was an odd urgency in his voice.

Jim sleepily mumbled his assent. Holding him tightly against his chest, Spock pushed into him.

Maybe it was because he was half-asleep and his brain wasn't fully awake yet, but he could feel Spock's pleasure more acutely than his own. He could feel what Spock felt: the tightness around his cock and the feeling of his own body in Spock's arms. It was weird and confusing but incredibly good—and kind of kinky. It felt like he was fucking himself and being fucked at the same time.

When he came, there was a strange pull, and for a brief moment, he felt Spock deeper in him than he ever had and it triggered another toe-curling orgasm that left Jim panting and a bit freaked out.

"Are you well?" Spock asked as they dressed.
"Yeah," Jim said, fastening his uniform. He considered telling Spock about the weird mind meld, but figured he could tell later—when he didn't have to go to class.

"Gotta run," Jim said when he finished dressing. He looked at Spock, licking his lips. He had come to hate this part. He never knew what to expect when they said goodbye. Sometimes Spock shut him off completely and became very professional and proper; other times Spock wouldn't let him go for minutes, kissing him and touching him like he couldn't get enough.

It was the latter this time: Spock pulled him close and kissed him, long, hard, and utterly possessive. Jim kissed him back eagerly, maybe a bit too eagerly, and tried hard not to cling too much. He wasn't sure how successful he was.

"See you tomorrow," he said when they broke apart. Tomorrow seemed too far away, but they couldn't meet every day; it was dangerous. They were lucky as hell that the building's guards didn't keep records of people leaving—only entering—or they would be in big trouble for spending the night together.

"Indeed," Spock said, righting his instructor's uniform, his shoulders stiff.

Jim pulled him in for another quick kiss. God, he didn't want to go. "Tomorrow," he promised when he managed to tear his lips away.

Spock squeezed him tightly in his arms before letting him go and turning away. "Go, Jim," he said, clasping his hands behind his back.

~*~

The classes passed painfully slowly. He didn't share any classes with Bones that day and Jim was glad for that, because he had one hell of a headache. It had started as an itch and then grew into an ache in the back of his mind that kept worsening with every hour.

Jim had a sneaking suspicion that Spock accidentally screwed with his brain again. In hindsight, maybe it hadn't been such a good idea to fall asleep with a Class H telepath's mind in him, no matter how good it felt. And maybe he should have told Spock about the weird mind meld this morning.

By the time he returned to his dorm after his classes, Jim felt shitty as hell.

He wondered if his headache was a good enough reason to comm Spock.

Christ, this was pathetic: he was looking for an excuse to see him again. For all he knew, it was just a headache that had nothing to do with Spock.

Shaking his head, Jim walked to Bones's kit and pulled out his spare tricorder. He fiddled with it for a few moments before setting it to do a full-body scan.

He sighed, waiting for the results. A part of him couldn't believe they had really spent the night together and cuddled all night long. It was crazy. They had been having sex for less than three weeks, but he was already stupidly infatuated—if not worse.
Way to go, Kirk.

Spock was a bonded man. He was also his professor and superior officer. This thing between them couldn't last for long. Hell, when he had agreed to sleep with him, he'd thought he would be sick of Spock after a couple of orgasms. But instead, he was getting downright needy.

The door opened and Bones walked in. "Oh, you're back," he said, glaring at Jim.

Putting the tricorder down, Jim pinched the bridge of his nose. "Bones, I'm sure you're pissed at me for a good reason, but can we put the fight off until later? My head is killing me."

Bones folded his arms over his chest. "No, we can't. Dammit, Jim, you promised! You promised to stay away from him!"

Jim rubbed his forehead. "How did you find out?"

"Does it matter? For fuck's sake, kid! Are you stupid? He's practically a married man! And your instructor! And a Class H telepath on top of that! Don't come crying to me when he fucks with your brain, your career, and your heart!"

Jim grimaced. "I won't." He headed to the door.

"Where do you think you're going?"

"I have a giant headache, Bones. I'll come back when you calm down and can talk without yelling at me."

Bones was still saying something, but Jim walked out. His head was throbbing and he had to stop and take a deep breath to fight the nausea. Fuck. He had to get to Spock. It definitely wasn't normal.

He started walking towards Spock's building.

It never seemed so far away.

When he finally reached it, he muttered something about T'Pring to the guards and they let him in.

T'Pring was the one to open the door.

She was frowning. "Cadet Kirk? I was not aware you were supposed to come today."

"I wasn't," Jim said, blinking rapidly. "Is Spock...?"

"He has not returned from the Academy yet."

"I'll wait for him," Jim said, walking past her into Spock's bedroom.

Closing the door behind himself, he relaxed as the familiar scent filled his nostrils. Maybe it was his imagination, but his headache receded slightly.

Jim crawled into the bed and buried his face in Spock's pillow.

~*~
As soon as Spock entered his apartment, T'Pring told him,
"Your boy is here."

Spock paused and looked at her. "Jim? Has he given any reason for his visit?"

"Negative. He is in your room."

Spock strode past her to his bedroom when her voice stopped him.

"Spock."

He turned to look at her. "Yes?"

"It is likely that his frequent visits are starting to attract attention. When I offered this solution, I did not expect that your liaison would last for so long. I trust that you remember that your trysts with James Kirk have to end. I am leaving in three point four days."

Spock kept his face blank. "I am capable of recollecting facts without being reminded."

"Are you?" she said, her gaze scrutinizing. "You allowed him to share your bed last night."

It took considerable effort to keep his face expressionless and meet T'Pring's eyes calmly.

They both knew that it was improper. Taking lovers was acceptable, but sharing one's bed with a lover was very frowned upon when one had a bondmate.

"I am in control of the situation and my emotions," Spock said.

Vulcans could lie. Being half-human, it made the task easier.

T'Pring inclined her head, her dark eyes thoughtful. "Very well. I shall trust your judgment."

Perhaps you should not.

Turning away, Spock went to his room.

He came to a halt upon seeing Jim sleeping in his bed.

Walking closer, he looked at him.

The sight of Jim sleeping in his bed was illogically satisfying.

Spock seated himself beside Jim, his eyes tracing his strong jaw line and the curve of his full lips. He took note of the graceful slope of Jim's neck, moving to the strong curve of his broad shoulders. Jim was incredibly pleasing to all of his senses.

Leaning down, Spock pressed his nose against Jim's neck and inhaled.

Three days. T'Pring was leaving in three days. The logical thing to do would be to end his liaison with Jim immediately. In fact, he should have done it as soon as he had noticed that their involvement was... emotionally compromising his work. He could no longer trust himself to judge Jim's performance objectively. However, instead of immediately ending their association, he had chosen to give Jim's assignments to his TA for grading.

He had been behaving in a most illogical fashion when it concerned this human.
Spock inhaled deeply, nuzzling into Jim's neck. *Jim.*

"Spock?" Jim muttered sleepily.

"Indeed, it is I," Spock said, lifting his head to kiss Jim's soft lips. Three days. No, *Jim was his—*

Spock shook his head, disturbed by the direction of his thoughts but not surprised. As of late, he had been having such thoughts with ever-increasing frequency.

"My head hurts," Jim whispered, tugging him closer. "Make it better."

Spock frowned and pulled away slightly to study Jim. He appeared tired and disoriented.

"You have a headache?"

"Yeah—sort of. I don't know." Jim looked confused. "It hurts. It's like something is wrong in my mind."

Spock had to utilize all of his control to remain calm. "Will you allow me to check your mind?"

Jim nodded, wrapping his arms around Spock's back and trying to pull him closer. Spock allowed him and laid his fingers on Jim's face.

He closed his eyes as their minds became one. However, instead of the usual chaotic beauty of Jim's mind, there was only murkiness.

His concern increasing, Spock slid deeper. What surprised him further was that he met no resistance at all. It had always been very easy to meld with Jim—too easy—but there used to be natural barriers against intrusion that were absent now.

*I feel a lot better already.*

Spock nearly broke the meld, so startled he was to hear Jim's mental voice so clearly. It had never happened before: usually he could sense Jim's vague thoughts, but nothing like this. It was supposed to be impossible. Humans were psi-null.

*Jim?*

*You can actually hear me? Wow, that's cool! Maybe I'm a telepath, too!*

*I highly doubt it,* Spock told him, perplexed and concerned. This should not have happened. This was impossible. Unless...

A thought occurred to him and, however unlikely it appeared, it was worth investigating.

He delved deeper, towards the core of Jim's mind.

He reached the core and stopped.

Although he hypothesized that it was possible, he had not expected to be proven right.

*What is it? You found something, right?* Jim appeared anxious.

He should be.

It took Spock several seconds to recover and pull out of Jim's mind. He did not break the meld
completely, maintaining a shallow mental link for Jim's sake. Jim needed it.

Opening his eyes, he met Jim's confused blue eyes.

"I..." Spock said. "I must apologize. You are fully within your rights to report me for telepathic assault."

Jim's eyebrows shot up. "It's that bad? Am I dying or something?"

Spock looked away before returning his gaze to him. "There is a rudimentary bond in your mind."

Jim blinked. "Bond, as in a marriage bond?"

Spock inhaled before replying. "Yes. It appears it has been formed naturally during our mind melds." He did not tell Jim the other, even more disturbing possibility: it was feasible that he was entirely at fault for forming the bond. Of late he had caught himself six times wishing to have Jim with him when they were apart and unwilling to be parted from him. For most individuals, 'wishing' was largely irrelevant and foolish, but he was a Class H telepath. It was possible that he had done this, and the possibility was greatly perturbing.

"Oh," Jim said. He wet his lips before meeting Spock's eyes. "But you don't seem affected."

"The bond is one-sided since I am already bonded to T'Pring. You are not feeling well because of its incomplete state."

"But I feel better now."

"I am imitating the bond through a shallow mind meld." Spock stroked Jim's temple. "I am afraid the discomfort and pain will return when I cease touching you."

Jim's eyebrows furrowed. "How do we fix it? It doesn't exactly sound fun."

Spock hesitated.

"There are only two possible options and both require seeking assistance of a professional mind adept."

Jim smiled faintly. "Why do I get the feeling that both are pretty bad?"

Spock chose to ignore his attempt at humor. The situation was not humorous in the least. The longer the incomplete bond remained in Jim's mind, the more detrimental it was to Jim's health. "The first option is to have a mind adept dissolve the incomplete bond. I have been told it is quite painful, but the procedure is not uncommon. Such a procedure is usually done upon the death of one's bondmate."

Jim dropped his gaze. "And the other option?"

Spock took a moment to reply.

"I can break my bond with T'Pring and complete the bond with you."

Jim's eyes snapped to him. "Are you serious?"

"I am merely stating all available options," Spock said evenly. "It is only logical."

"Right. Logical. But hypothetically speaking, would you really want me as a bondmate?"
Spock looked down.

He should not have been even considering it. His father would disapprove. T'Pau would be displeased with him. T'Pring's clan would be greatly offended. T'Pring would be publicly humiliated. And yet... His mind kept remaining fixed on the concept of having Jim as his bondmate. His. Jim would be his. The primitive part of him—the one he always struggled to control in Jim's presence—kept whispering, Yes, take him; he is yours.

Spock attempted to rein it in. He was not slave to his primitive instincts. "It is not as illogical as it may appear. We are highly compatible physically and mentally."

Jim studied him, his blue eyes probing. "Yeah, we're compatible, okay. But...we met only two months ago, and this—" he motioned between them, "—has been going on for less than three weeks. It's too much, too fast."

Jim was entirely correct.

"Indeed," Spock said.

"And if we get together, it's likely I'd be kicked out of Starfleet and you'd be demoted and forbidden to teach."

"That sounds likely."

Jim bit his lip. "But...I'd have you in me all the time, right?"

They stared at each other. There was a look of barely-concealed hunger on Jim's face that was probably mirrored in his own eyes.

"Yes," Spock said hoarsely. "You would be parted from me but never parted. Always merged."

Jim's eyes became unfocused. His cheeks flushed. He was beautiful. "I want it." Cradling Spock's face, he pulled him down and kissed him, lips trembling. "It's stupid and crazy, but I want it. Want to have you in me all the time."

Spock kissed him hard. Jim's lips were soft, plush, and his. "And I."

"This is crazy." Jim buried his fingers in Spock's hair. "Spock, do you really want to sacrifice your career for me—for this? Even if I get kicked out, I'll lose only a few months that I spent at the Academy. You'll lose much more."

Tipping Jim's head to the side, Spock regarded him. Jim was so confident and brash most of the time that it was still startling when he demonstrated his vulnerability. Sometimes Spock forgot that Jim was still a boy—an eighteen-year-old who did not seem to have any parental figure besides Doctor McCoy and who was always expected to live up to his father's legacy. Jim was a study of contradictions: at times he seemed both over-confident and insecure.

"I will not 'sacrifice' my career, Jim," he said quietly. "It is most likely that I will receive a black mark on my record and will be demoted to the rank of lieutenant. I estimate that I will be able to regain the rank of commander in two point one years. There is a seventy-two percent chance that I will never teach at the Starfleet Academy again, but since that has never been my aspiration, I will not regret it. I believe most of my cadets would be relieved."

That made Jim smile, but Spock continued, looking him in the eye. "I will not lie to you that I do not have any regrets. It is simply a matter of choosing what I desire more."
Jim blushed. "Okay," he said softly. "Let's do it, then."

Spock stood up and pulled Jim to his feet as well. "We need to speak to T'Pring."

Jim grimaced but nodded, letting him pull him towards the door. Holding Jim's hand was necessary to maintain the meld and ease Jim's pain, yet Spock could not deny that he derived pleasure from the contact.

However, as soon as they left the privacy of his bedroom, his ears were assaulted by the sound of an argument coming from the living room.

"Dammit, T'Pring, I need to see Jim now. Look at his readings! He's sick!"

"Oh great," Jim murmured, wincing. "I forgot about the tricorder."

"Perhaps it is beneficial that he is here," Spock said, walking to the living room.

McCoy turned around when they entered. Based on his previous encounters with the doctor, Spock expected him to break into an angry tirade, but McCoy merely walked closer to Jim, an expression of concern on his face. "Jim, how do you feel?"

He obviously cared for Jim. Spock told himself it was admirable and had to push back the illogical urge to put himself between the man and Jim.

Jim shot him an amused look, squeezing his hand. "I'm okay, Bones. For now."

"For now? What's going on?"

Spock looked at T'Pring. She was looking at their joined hands.

She lifted her gaze and their eyes locked.

"During our mind melds, I have accidentally formed a rudimentary bond in Jim's mind," Spock said. "That is what causing him pain. The bond needs to be either dissolved or completed before it may cause damage to his mind."

T'Pring's expression did not change. "You wish to dissolve our bond."

Looking at her, Spock felt regretful. "You are a female of worth. Any Vulcan would be fortunate to have you as a bondmate."

"But not you," she said. "You want your human."

"Yes," Spock hesitated. He knew better than anyone how cruel Vulcan society could be. "I do not wish you to be ostracized. Perhaps you should tell everyone that you discovered that I am a melder and that is why you want to break the bond."

She gave him a withering stare. "Do not insult me further, Spock. You think very little of me if you think that anyone will dare to ostracize me."

"I apologize," he said.

She inclined her head. "Apology accepted. I presume Cadet Kirk and you will accompany me to Vulcan?"

"Wait a minute," McCoy said. It was odd, but he appeared both pleased and angry. "You want to
break your bond with T'Pring and get bonded with Jim? Are you serious?"

Spock tensed. "Indeed, I am quite serious, Cadet."

McCoy did not look impressed. "So let me get it straight: You screwed with your student's mind—again—and now want to bond him to you for life? You know what the board will say when they find out? Where's the guarantee that you haven't coerced him? Everything points to the opposite, actually. Why would an eighteen-year-old teenager want to marry a Class H telepath he met a few months ago? It smells fishy! Just get him fixed! You won't be bonding him to you!"

Spock stepped closer to McCoy. "Jim is not yours," he said, very quietly, trying to ignore the influx of testosterone. "You have no right to interfere. Jim is an adult. He wants to be mine and he will be."

McCoy scowled and opened his mouth, but Jim quickly stepped between them. "Bones, remember you asked me to remind you never to piss him off? Well, don't piss him off." Jim turned to Spock and brushed their lips softly together. "Calm down," he said quietly, squeezing his fingers. "My head is killing me as it is. Your anger is making it worse."

Spock took a deep breath. "I apologize."

"Jim—" McCoy said, hesitantly.

Jim looked back at his friend.

"Please, Bones. I want this. Let me have this."

Spock could not see Jim's face, but whatever McCoy saw on it made his expression soften. He sighed, looked at T'Pring, who nodded, before turning back to Jim. "All right, kid. If you're sure."

"I'm sure," Jim said firmly.

~*~

Telling T'Pau that he wished to have his bond with T'Pring broken was not as difficult as admitting the reason for wanting to do so.

"I have inadvertently formed a bond in Jim's mind during a mind meld," he said bluntly, looking at the screen. "I am a melder."

T'Pau regarded him in silence, her face completely blank.

Taking measured breaths, Spock waited.

At last, T'Pau spoke, "I am aware that most Vulcans think I am one of the few mind adepts who have been able to learn mind melding, but the belief is erroneous. I did not learn it. I was born with the ability."

Spock could only stare at her in a most rude fashion.

She studied him, her sharp dark eyes penetrating. "Most of our people see it as a curse and a
deviation from Vulcan nature, but they could not be more incorrect. It is gratifying that I am not the last of our clan to have the gift of our ancestors. Vulcan blood has always been strong in thee."

Spock had to make an effort to keep his face expressionless. "Jim, T'Pring, and I will arrive to Vulcan in two point seven days."

"I shall wait for thee."

"I thank you, T'Pau," he said, looking her in the eye. "Live long and prosper." He lifted his hand in Vulcan salute.

She did the same. "Peace and long life, Spock."

~*~

Admiral Alexander Marcus, the head of Starfleet, was an unforgiving man even when he was in a good mood.

When he was angry, it wasn't pretty. Admiral Barnett didn't look happy, either, though he looked more shocked than anything.

Jim stood at parade rest beside Spock while Marcus ranted. Since he couldn't touch Spock with their superior officers present, his head was beginning to hurt again, and Marcus's rant wasn't exactly helping.

"Forgive me for interrupting you, Admiral," Spock said, glancing at Jim and cutting Marcus off in the middle of his rant. "But our ship to Vulcan is departing shortly. I would appreciate if you merely state what disciplinary sanctions will be imposed upon us."

Marcus glowered at them. "I should kick both of you out! But with you being who you are, the scandal would be enormous." He gritted his teeth and breathed out. "As Kirk is technically the victim and can be considered taken advantage of—"

"I wasn't," Jim said.

Marcus ignored him. "—there won't be any sanctions against him. But you, Commander—you won't be teaching him anymore. And you're demoted to ensi—"

There was a knock on the door and Marcus's secretary entered. "Admiral, there's a live transmission for you."

Marcus pursed his lips in displeasure. "I told you that I am unavailable for everyone."

She hesitated. "But it's T'Pau of Vulcan High Council, sir. She requested to speak to you immediately."

Jim looked at Spock, but he seemed as surprised as he was.
Marcus paused. "Forward it to me."

"Yes, sir," she said and performed a few manipulations on her PADD.

A screen on the wall turned on. An elderly woman appeared on it.

T'Pau.

Jim suddenly remembered little Savok's words. *Do not forget about T'Pau.*

A wistful smile touched his lips. He hadn't forgotten.

Jim stared at the famous Vulcan woman with interest. She was very old, but her dark eyes were sharp and piercing. She glanced at him and Spock before her hard gaze settled on Admiral Marcus.

"Alexander Marcus," she said in greeting.

Admiral Marcus leaned back in his seat. "Councilor T'Pau. To what do I owe the pleasure?" He didn't look pleased at all.

T'Pau's face was inscrutable. "Ninety-two point seven standard days ago, thou requested from the Vulcan High Council to share with Starfleet the technology of the advanced warship that had been invented by the Vulcan Science Academy. Thy request was denied."

Marcus sat straighter, his eyes narrowing. "Are you saying you changed your mind?"

T'Pau inclined her head. "Knowledge for the sake of knowledge is the ultimate goal for our scientists, but we came to the conclusion that in this case, it would not be practical. Spock has brought to our attention that Vulcan does not have a defensive fleet, which is not desirable if thou are correct about the upcoming war with the Klingon Empire. We will utilize the discovered technology to build four dreadnought warships within the next two point four standard years."

The grin that split Marcus's face was kind of scary. "Excellent, excellent! I'm glad you changed your opinion."

T'Pau's expression remained unimpressed. She glanced at Spock and Jim before returning her piercing gaze to Marcus. "Is there a reason as to why thou are keeping Spock and his intended from boarding the ship to Vulcan? I am waiting for them to arrive to officiate their bonding."

Marcus went still. He looked between Spock and T'Pau.

Spock met his eyes steadily. T'Pau raised an eyebrow, her gaze cold and assessing.

"No," Marcus said at last, smiling. "No reason at all. You're dismissed, Commander. You too, Cadet."

"Admirals."

Jim followed Spock out of Marcus's office.

As soon as the door closed behind them, Jim made a mock-shocked face. "The world as I know it has been shattered! I'm not sure I want to work for such a corrupt organization." He burst out laughing. "Holy shit! Did your grandma just bribe Marcus?"

Spock raised an eyebrow. "T'Pau is not my grandmother and she did no such thing, although her interference was unnecessary. T'Pau indeed had been considering revising her decision for some time
—Vulcan does need a defensive fleet. I have seen the schematics of the warship and the technology is most fascinating; it is based on the data recorded by the USS Kelvin. I believe the circumstances simply pushed the project to come to fruition several years earlier. As an experienced politician, T'Pau merely used it as leverage. Vulcans do not engage in bribery, Jim."

Jim grinned. "Of course they don't. Just like they don't feel, don't get jealous, and don't have sex for the sake of it, right?"

A corner of Spock's mouth twitched up.

Bones had insisted on accompanying them to Vulcan. Secretly, Jim was relieved. He didn't want to be the only illogical human among Vulcans. Granted, Spock's mom seemed pretty cool, but he didn't know her well and Bones's grumpiness was oddly comforting—although Jim was beginning to suspect that he wasn't the only reason for Bones's desire to accompany them. He could be wrong, but there seemed to be something going on between Bones and T'Pring.

The universe worked in mysterious ways.

Shaking his head, Jim pressed his forehead against the cool material of the observation window. Ditching school for a week to run off to another planet to get eloped with one's professor sounded a lot more fun than it actually was, considering that the planet in question was Vulcan and Jim felt like curling into a small ball of misery whenever Spock stopped touching him. The worst part was, Jim wasn't at all sure that this craving for Spock's touch and mind would go away even when they completed the bond—he'd started feeling this long before Spock accidentally placed a bond in him, though it had been nowhere as bad.

Jim sighed, watching stars streak by in a blur. The ship had gone into warp already.

There was the sound of footsteps.

"You should not have left my proximity."

"I wanted to see how long I could last without crawling back to you." Jim smiled wryly. "Not long."

"Experimenting with your health is dangerous, Jim."

Spock walked over and, pulling him back against his chest, touched Jim's meld points with his fingers. Jim melted into the embrace, his body relaxing as their minds touched and his pounding headache receded.

_Better?_

_Yeah. Much better._

"Did you inform your mother?"

Jim winced. "Yeah. I sent her a transmission. But she serves on a station at the far end of the Alpha Quadrant, so it will take a while before she gets it."

"I must admit I find it odd that you are only now informing your mother of your being alive."
Jim shrugged. "It's not that I hate her or something. I just don't care."

Spock remained quiet.

Jim sighed. "All right, I care. I just don't like her much. I mean, I always—I always resented her for…"

Spock took his hand and stroked his fingers. "For neglecting you?"

"No. For loving him more."

"Your father?"

"Yeah." Jim chuckled. "My daddy issues actually stem from my mommy issues. Pretty pathetic, huh?"

Spock said nothing, but his mind wrapped tightly around Jim’s. It shouldn't have made him feel so much better, but it did.

"I've always resented her for loving him so much, but…"Jim looked down at their entangled fingers. "I guess I understand her a bit better now."

Spock's breath hitched. "Jim, I…"

"You don't have to say anything." Smiling, Jim tapped on his temple with his finger. "I have a pretty good idea about what you feel for me." Thanks to the rudimentary bond, he could feel Spock's emotions clearly whenever they touched: his want, affection, and fascination mixed with insane possessiveness and protectiveness. Spock wanted him more than anything. Yeah, maybe he was fucked up, but it meant more to him than any sappy confessions. Words were way too overrated, anyway.

They fell into companionable silence.

Jim stared at the stars flashing by. Billions. There were billions of stars, billions of galaxies, and billions of sentient life forms. Feeling small all of a sudden, he unconsciously moved deeper into Spock's embrace. Spock's arm tightened around him. Safe.

"I want to show you something." Jim said, taking Spock's hand and bringing it back to his meld points.

He felt Spock's curiosity, but Spock didn't ask and simply slid back inside his mind.

Jim showed him his memories of the other dimension.

Spock watched in silence and was still silent when he broke the meld.

"Fascinating," he said at last. "When I received the message from you, I thought it was a jest, an attempt to get my attention."

Jim smiled. "Nope. It's freaky, isn't it? The last time I stood on a ship's observation deck, there was a Spock with me, too—my counterpart's husband—and now look at us. It's weird and…a bit scary. I mean, our dimensions couldn't be more different, but here we are."

"Indeed, the likelihood of such a coincidence is statistically infinitesimal, but the data is corrupted by the fact that your journey to the other dimension has greatly changed the events in our dimension."
"Yeah," Jim said softly. "And that's another thing that bothers me. I can't help but wonder what would have happened if I didn't end up in the other dimension. Would I have enlisted in Starfleet? I have no idea. And even if I did, would I have met you? I know I wouldn't have signed up for Linguistics. Maybe we wouldn't have met each other at all—the Academy is huge—or we would have passed each other in the hall every day and didn't care. If we didn't get together, T'Pau wouldn't have ordered to build warships years earlier than she intended. And if little Savok didn't make me promise to remember T'Pau, it wouldn't have even occurred to me to look you up. It's freaky that one little thing can change everything, isn't it? It's…fascinating." Jim smiled, turning to look at Spock. "Damn, you're rubbing off on me."

"It appears so." Spock looked quite pleased. Smug bastard.

"While the subject is indeed fascinating, I find that I do not particularly care about what would have happened in alternate lives," Spock said, looking at him. "I am quite content with this one."

Grinning, Jim leaned in and kissed him softly, trying to keep it chaste and not to cling too much. But Spock ruined it, pulling him flush against his chest and kissing him deeply. God, he'd never get enough of this. Of wanting and needing, and being wanted and needed back. Body, mind, and heart.

Thank you, Savok, was his last coherent thought before the rest of the world faded away.

~*~

Somewhere in a distant universe, a small Vulcan boy opened his eyes.

"Is something amiss, Savok?"

He looked at his father, who was seated opposite him, and frowned, shifting his gaze to the candle on the floor between them. "I think I heard something."

Spock raised an eyebrow. "It is very unlikely. Your gift is extremely rare and requires extensive training for years before you can use it successfully. Close your eyes and attempt opening your mind again. Jim expects us to be ready to leave in thirty-seven minutes."

Frowning, Savok did as told.

He had been so sure he heard something.

The End

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