Invisible

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Summary

Spock is held captive in a Cardassian facility and tortured for information. The only way he bears it is with the knowledge that at least Jim is safe. Unknown to him, they are forcing Jim to watch everything they do to his first officer.

This is going to be a multi-chapter fic. And it will be dealing with very dark themes. Darker than Finding Spock. Please heed the warnings if you are easily triggered.
Chapter 1

Damp. That was the word for it. The dark room smelt damp. The odor of weeks old garbage, sewage water, and rotting meat made his gorge rise. But there was very little he could do about it. At this point, even opening his eyes was too difficult. Breathing was done with difficulty. Four cracked ribs, one shattered.

The cold, stone floor was dusty and rough against his sore back.

Normally, he had excellent night vision. But right now, there were black spots at the corner of his eyes. The ceiling was pitch dark. It could have been the night sky on a starless, no-moon night. But maybe, it was just a ceiling in a room with no light source and no windows.

Spock groaned. But even that little sound left him gasping and breathless. His legs were folded uncomfortably beneath him but he had no way of moving.

They really had done a number on him.

His pelvis was broken.

And it was sending shooting, agonizing pains through his legs and his spine. He needed to move, to get up, to somehow find a way to cover his naked body but he felt frozen.

He had felt frozen through the entire three hours of his ordeal.

“Dirty Vulcan, fucking speak,” the man with the hooked nose had screamed at him. “What is the mission of the Enterprise in Cardassian space? Where is the ship now?”

Well, they were wasting their time. Spock had not told them anything. And he was not going to in the future as well.

He had volunteered to beam down in order to collect a packet containing important documents from a member of the Gillissomati, the main rebel group in Cardassia. The government was building a stockpile of advanced weaponry for use against federation planets. Mercifully, the minute Spock had realized that he was surrounded, he had used a portable transwarp beaming device in order to beam the package to the ship.

Had he beamed up as well, they would have tried to follow him to the ship. Now, however, they were convinced that they had foiled his plans and could torture him for information.

If only they knew. The mission had been accomplished. And they could not do anything about him.

Spock felt a mad urge to laugh at that realization. Unbidden, he let out a gleeful snort which turned into an uncontrollable fit of chuckles.

However, within moments, the pressure of his injuries increased and he felt his chest tighten.

Spock had always prided himself on his immense ability to control pain. In his opinion, he was managing well for now. But he wasn’t sure for how long. His ribs sent stabs of misery through his chest each time he tried to breathe deeply.

And the inability to shift his lower body was starting to give him pins-and needles. Besides, the cell had gotten colder in the last few minutes.
Also, he needed to relieve himself. He had been holding his bladder for hours. But it was almost unbearable now.

With an effort that he knew he didn’t have the strength to make, he tried to lift himself up on his elbows. He gasped at the sudden discomfort but he refused to fall back. Beads of sweat broke out on his brow and trickled into his left eye.

It was the most difficult thing he had ever done. But he had no option. He tilted his hip joint just a little….

“AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHH"

A tormented scream escaped from his lips and he collapsed back on the hard, dirty floor. Through a haze of pain, he blinked. A fog seemed to have descended upon his mind. He couldn’t think clearly anymore.

And what was that terrible smell?

At first, he wrinkled his nose at the nasty odor. But then, shamefully, he realized that there was a pool of something warm and wet under his legs.

He had wet himself.

This was unacceptable. He couldn’t allow himself to be reduced to an animal. He needed to move. But the minute he tried to raise his head again, his vision swam.

Maybe tomorrow then, he thought fuzzily.

A moment later, he put his head on the ground again and before he knew it, he was asleep.

The blackness surrounded him as he slept uneasily.

But unknown to him, he was constantly being watched.

Silent tears rolled down Jim’s eyes.

Separated by a forcefield, he had no way of letting Spock know that he was here with him, that he would find a way to get them out. He had beamed down when he had seen the package materializing on the transporter pad without Spock.

A few hours later, he and his security detail had been caught. He had no idea where they had taken Lt. Giotto and his men. But Spock was in that cell. Tortured. Hurt. Injured.

Alone.

Because clearly, he could not see or hear anything outside the cell.

“Will you tell us what we want to know? Or will we have a little more fun with your Vulcan pet?” the Cardassian guard sneered at him.

They had not harmed him so far. But they had handcuffed him and forced him to watch the barbarity they had inflicted upon Spock. By the end of it, his face had been twisted into a mask of utter misery. The image would haunt Kirk for years. But right now, he could do nothing.

Spock looked so uncomfortable sleeping in such an unnatural, twisted position. He looked so small and weak, injured as he was.
“You have no compassion?” Kirk whispered at the Cardassian.

But the guard only laughed.

Kirk turned away from the mocking, leering Cardassian and turned back to Spock. Silently, he promised to himself that he would get them out. He wondered if Scotty was looking for them. He desperately hoped he was. But even if that wasn’t the case, he knew he would do everything in his power to protect Spock from these monsters.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Hey everyone, I decided to continue with this story after all. Be warned that it is going to be VERY DARK, darker than even Finding Spock. Please heed the warnings and don’t hesitate to ask if you have any concerns or questions. As always, I would love to know what you think.

It had been nearly 16 hours since they had left him here. Kirk knew this only because the guards had changed twice already and on Cardassia, the norm was to end shifts every 8 hours.

Kirk knew such useless, mundane facts about this planet from his briefing notes. At this point, those notes were of no help to him. If anything, they only kept him on the edge. He had no idea when they would return for Spock. He knew they would come back and he was scared. Because the Cardassians’ reputation for utter brutality was not exaggerated.

He was still lost in his thoughts, when his cell door was opened.

“Our grand vizier wants to talk to you,” the guard sneered. “Captain,” he added with a mocking smile.

“Well, you can ask him to fuck off,” Kirk snarled.

“Sure,” the guard laughed. “We can screw the Vulcan all you like. Maybe we’ll let you have him too after we’re done with him.”

“Don’t you dare touch Spock.” Jim said dangerously. “Or I will fucking kill you.”

“Watch your language,” the Cardassian said. “We have orders to spare you for now. But that doesn’t mean we can’t have some fun with you. Besides, you do care about your pet’s safety, don’t you?”

Kirk glared at him, unwilling to give in but worried all the same that his stubbornness would result in more torment for Spock.

“Come with me quietly and no one gets hurt,” the guard said.

Kirk stood up to follow him. He did not like the situation they were in but he knew he would swallow his pride and cooperate as long as they left Spock alone. Besides, he needed to keep all his wits about himself if he wanted to resist the interrogation that would no doubt happen again.

The Cardassian attached a thick chain to the prisoner’s handcuff’s and led him out. It was difficult to walk because just like his hands, Kirk’s feet had also been shackled. And therefore, he could only take short, jerky steps in order to keep up with the other man’s pace.

The hallways through which he was led out were long and dingy. The walls smelt of seepage and mold was growing at the corners of the walls.

And yet, the technology employed by the facility was state-of-the-art.
A few minutes later, they arrived outside the grand vizier’s quarters. Moments later, he opened the door.

“Ah, here is the fleet’s youngest captain,” he said with an insincere smile. “Welcome Kirk, I am Grand Vizier Garok and I am honored to have you as my guest.”

The man’s face was smooth and dark except for the ridges around his eyes and forehead that were the mark of his species. His jet black hair and eyes gave him a rather menacing look. And by his richly embroidered clothing, Kirk could tell he was an important man.

“What do you want from me?” he asked without preamble.

“Not so soon, Kirk, not so soon,” Garok said. “First, you must dine with me.”

“I am not hungry,” the Captain said.


Kirk swallowed roughly.

He had seen what they had done to Spock yesterday. And they had not even allowed him water after his ordeal. He did not want to dine with this monster.

But if he refused, they would withhold food and water from Spock also.

“I will eat,” he answered impassively, unsure if this would further give them ideas about how to use his relationship with Spock against them.

But then again, who was he kidding. They already knew how close he and Spock were. That is why they had taken such savage pleasure in torturing Spock earlier while making him watch.

“After you, Captain,” Garok said courteously, as if this was a normal dinner meeting. Kirk was not fooled. He knew their ultimate aim was to gain information from them. And this façade of dining with him was just another tactic of theirs to get him to talk.

“Sit,” the Grand Vizier told him, pulling a chair for him. Kirk sat down without comment. Garok took the seat on the opposite end of the small table.

“I apologize for the delay but our meal will be here in a few moments,” he said. “I want to offer you the best of Cardassian hospitality.”

“I cannot eat with my hands bound like this,” Kirk answered stonily.

The Grand Vizier laughed.

“Oh, I apologize,” he said in his clean, polished accent. “I do hope you will forgive me for forgetting.”

With that, he loosened Kirk’s handcuffs and joined them with a longer chain in order to give him more freedom of movement.

“There,” Garok said. “And oh, don’t even think of using your hands for anything other than eating. This little remote here,” he said, pointing to a small, blue device. “It will deliver a fatal shock to the Vulcan the moment I press this button.”
Kirk did not respond. He had not even contemplated such a thing. He was not stupid. Instead, he held Garok’s gaze steadily for several minutes when a servant brought two covered dishes for them.

“I would like some water,” Kirk said as the man placed one dish in front of him. The servant brought him a glass of water and a cup of wine.

“I hope the food will be to your taste,” Garok said smoothly. He made no move to uncover his own dish.

Tentatively, Kirk uncovered his plate.

Bile rose in his throat when he saw what was on the plate.

“What is this?” he growled.

“Roast meat,” Garok answered nonchalantly. “Do you not like it? I believe they call it steak on your planet.”

“I am not a cannibal,” Kirk ground out, nauseous at the sight of the remnants of green blood on the meat.

“Cannibalism would be to eat the flesh of another human being,” the Grand Vizier answered conversationally. “The Vulcan is not human. Just like the other animals they consume on your planet. Besides, the Vulcan’s flesh is soft and sweet…” he trailed off, lifting the lid off his own plate and taking a bite from it.

“When did you do this?” Kirk asked, fighting to control his anger and terror. He had witnessed Spock’s torture in its entirety. He did not remember him being cut at any point.

“Well, meat is best when it is fresh,” Garok said, cutting another small piece of meat on his plate. “These steaks were taken from the Vulcan’s thighs less than 20 minutes ago. I believe you will be able to taste the freshness.”

“YOU FUCKING BASTARD,” Kirk spat and stood up.

“Sit down, Captain Kirk,” the Cardassian responded calmly. But there was a chill in his voice that sent shivers down the human’s spine. “You will eat. Otherwise not only will the Vulcan not eat, I will allow my men to sample his flesh as well.”

Tears welled up in Kirk’s eyes when he heard this.

He did not want to show weakness to this man. But he felt so out of control.

And he could not…

He could not eat the flesh of his first officer, his best friend, his… his beloved.

He swallowed roughly, forcing himself to swallow the bile that had risen up in his throat again. He could not bear to watch the vizier eating so peacefully.

“Please, don’t make me do this,” he begged quietly.

“As you wish, Garok said coolly. “The choice is yours. I will inform Dapak that the Vulcan is theirs to use as they wish to.”

“NO...NO... Please,” Jim said, almost weeping. “Don’t hurt him.”
“Then take your meal, Kirk,” the Cardassian answered. “It is a very simple request. I only want you to appreciate and accept my hospitality.”

Wordlessly, Jim picked up his cutlery and cut into the meat, forcing his mind to not think about what he was being made to do.

The first bite felt like fire on his tongue.

He could literally taste Spock.

He choked. He couldn’t do this. His eyes watered uncontrollably.

Garok watched the younger man struggle. He told himself he didn’t like doing this. But interrogation was often unpleasant business. And as a man in his position, he had no option but to do these things to get the answers they needed.

“Swallow, don’t spit it out, it is delicious,” he said conversationally.

Kirk sputtered as he struggled to push the meat down his throat with a large gulp of water.

After what felt like an eternity, he managed.

“See, that wasn’t so tough now, was it?” Garok said gently, as if talking to a small child.

“I will make you pay for this,” Kirk said, his voice low and tortured, his eyes rimmed red. “We shall see about that,” the Cardassian replied, unfazed. “But first finish your meal.”

The next half an hour was absolute torture for Kirk. It was with great difficulty that he managed to eat. And with every single bite, tears leaked out from his eyes and his stomach threatened to betray him.

When he was finally led back to his cell, the first thing he did was to get violently sick in the corner. For ten long minutes, he retched and he retched, forcing himself to rid his body of the vileness of what he had been forced to do.

He gasped for breath and tried to rein in his racing heartbeat.

And only then did he dare to peer inside the force field that was Spock’s prison.

As expected, the Vulcan’s thighs looked mangled and mutilated. His legs were still bent unnaturally.

And he was moaning piteously.

“Jim,” he whispered. A tired, helpless sound.

Kirk’s heart broke.

But unlike yesterday, he didn’t feel any bravado. He was unable to make any promises to himself or to his hurting friend.

He had hoped for rescue or for respite.

Clearly, he had underestimated the Cardassians.

And now that he was realizing it, that had been his big mistake.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

The Cardassians are unable to get answers from their captives. And they wonder if desperate times do indeed call for desperate measures. Scroll down to the end for additional warnings if you are easily triggered by certain types of content.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Kirk was tired. But he forced himself to stay awake and keep vigil over Spock’s sleeping form. Logically, he knew he would be able to do nothing if they came for Spock again. But then again, logic was the Vulcan’s forte, not his.

Guilt ate away at him like acid.

And anger. He still did not know why Spock had chosen to beam the packet of documents to the ship but not himself. Besides, whatever his reasons may have been, if they did not get out of here soon, nothing would matter anymore.

As a starship captain and a Starfleet officer, he knew they could not tell the Cardassians anything other than their name, rank, and service number. In reality, it was easier said than done. Multiple times it had crossed his mind to simply give them what they wanted so that they’d leave Spock alone.

But he could not. Spock was making this sacrifice for a reason.

And Kirk had never dishonored his friend.

He reached into his pocket to find the tiny amber globe he had purchased for Spock on their last shore leave. It was like any other semiprecious stone. But in Kirk’s eyes, the swirling patterns on the globe’s brown and golden surface were reminiscent of Vulcan. He had hoped to give it to Spock after the completion of the Cardassian mission. After all, now that they were friends, Kirk knew how much the Vulcan man valued symbolism and these small tokens of affection.

It was illogical. But Spock was half-human.

Kirk swallowed roughly.

“Spock…” he whispered.

“Spock,” he repeated, slightly louder this time.

As expected, there was no response.

For the next few hours, he watched Spock.

But as daylight crept upon them, the noise around the cell increased.

In the second hour of the morning shift, he saw the grand vizier approaching.
“I hope the arrangements are comfortable, Captain Kirk,” he said, coming close to the cell. “I take it you had a pleasant night.”

Kirk stayed quiet. He did not want to provoke the man. He had seen his savagery last night and he had no desire to witness it again.

“It is impolite to not return greetings,” Garok said softly. “Insolent even. But I can cure you of your insolence….”

“What do you want me to say?” Jim asked in a wretched voice. “Don’t play games with us. You want information. We have nothing to tell you. Let us not pretend this is anything else.”

“Oh but it is,” Garok replied with an exaggerated casualness. “It is so much more. Look at that Vulcan. So high and mighty. Brought so low that his cell smells more like a cesspit than a room. I am not a cruel man, Kirk. I am the grand vizier of Cardassia. And I am a scientist. You two have given me remarkable insights into how weak, disgraceful humans are. You have shown me that even a Vulcan can be broken.”

“You have not broken Spock,” Kirk ground out. “You have hurt him. But you will never break him.”

“Is that so?” the Cardassian asked rhetorically. “Well, now is a good time to test your assertions.”

And with that, he nodded to his guards.

Obviously, they understood his orders clearly. A moment later, they entered Spock’s force field and roughly yanked the sleeping Vulcan to his feet.

“Aaaargh,” Spock bit back a scream as his broken pelvis was jarred. The deep wounds on both his thighs throbbed anew.

“Please…” he moaned, still not fully awake.

“Please what, Vulcan?” one of the guards sneered. “Are you begging for mercy? So soon? What happened to that control of yours?”

Amidst Spock’s gasps and whimpers, they laid him on a rough, uneven table. Without any care for his injuries, they spread his legs apart.

“No…” Spock managed to say. He attempted to close his legs, humiliated at how exposed, how vulnerable he was. But the guards held his legs tightly. The Vulcan did not have enough strength to struggle. And even his meager attempt brought him to tears.

Kirk looked on, horrified by what he was seeing.

“WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?” he yelled. “You will KILL HIM.”

“Then tell us what we want to know?” the grand vizier said, unfazed by the muffled screams of the trembling Vulcan.

Kirk’s tightly sealed lips wobbled with the effort to stay clenched. He desperately wanted to give the man what he wanted. He could not watch Spock suffer anymore.

“Yes, Kirk,” Garok said gently as if coaxing a small animal. “Go on, tell me what I want to know and this will stop now.”
It was such a tempting thought.

But ultimately, this is what came out of Jim’s mouth.

“James T. Kirk, Captain, 2753903.”

For several moments, nothing happened.

But then, the Cardassian nobleman sighed. He did not say anything. But the small, humorless smile tugging at the corner of his lips, made Kirk’s heart sink.

“I hope you enjoy the show,” Garok said and marched out of Jim’s cell.

The captain of the Enterprise felt useless as he readied himself to watch yet another round of Spock’s abuse at the hands of their captors.

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“What is your mission, Commander Spock?” Garok asked, uncaring of the coughing, sputtering figure on the table.

“Wa…wa… wat..er,” Spock croaked. His throat was on fire. They had poured a ladleful of hot pepper sauce into his mouth just seconds ago.

“What.is.your.mission?” the grand vizier repeated his question.

Spock opened his mouth to say something.

But before he could form coherent words, he started coughing again. The harsh coughs shook the man’s weak frame uncontrollably. His broken ribs protested angrily at such treatment.

But Spock could not even scream.

“Prepare him,” Garok ordered his guards.

Swiftly, the taller one of them knelt between Spock’s open legs. Without any warning, he roughly shoved in a ridged finger inside the Vulcan’s dry, virgin passage.

Spock finally let out a shout of pain as his back arched, fighting to escape the intrusion. But his restraints held him in place.

“Tell us your mission and this will stop,” Gurok said coldly.

However, just like Jim, Spock did not give anything.

“S’chn T’Gai Spock… Comm..comma..nder…. 88349…8904.”

“The same old name, rank, service number…” Garok sighed. “I can tell you’ve had enough Vulcan. Just tell us what we want to know and you can have the water.”

At that statement, Spock almost wept. But no sound came out of his mouth. His mouth opened in a silent scream and more tears leaked out of his eyes.

“You give me no choice,” the grand vizier said and ordered his guards to proceed. “I am sorry Vulcan but you are going to be in a lot of pain very soon. I am asking you for the final time. What is your mission?”
“S’chn T’Gai Spock, Com..com…” Spock was unable to complete but Garok understood anyway. The Vulcan needed more persuasion. And even if he didn’t break, the captain would. Humans were a lot more fragile than Vulcans. If the shadows under Kirk’s eyes were anything to go by, he would soon start singing like a canary. They just had to keep his first officer alive till then. It was the only way to successfully manipulate Starfleet’s golden boy.

The guard kneeling between Spock’s legs stood up to fetch something. A minute later, a sizzling sound came from the back of the room. Spock tried to look what was happening but in his position, he was unable. The other guard watched with revulsion as his counterpart poured cold water over the glowing coals from which he had pulled out a thick, metal rod which was glowing a faint red.

Garok held his breath as the guard pushed the heated rod into the Vulcan’s anus. The temperature was not high enough to actually kill the commander. But even first degree burns applied to the inner walls of the rectum burned like the fires of hell.

No, Garok did not envy the Vulcan one bit.

His screams rose in desperation as the sickeningly sweet smell of burning flesh permeated the air. the guard pulled out the rod and swiftly shoved it all the way in, further tearing Spock’s rectal canal.

“S’CHN T’GAI SPOCK,” Spock screamed, obviously fighting to keep himself from telling Garok about the mission.

Unaffected, the guard contined to sodomize Spock. After a while, the screams died down to almost inaudible moans. The Vulcan was losing consciousness. And their universal translator told them that his quiet, frantic muttering in Vulcan was nothing but gibberish.

At long last, the rod was pulled out.

Spock’s anus was torn and bleeding. And the burns and blisters inside stung worse as blood continued to escape from the abused orifice.

“We will do this to you again,” Garok said. “And it will be worse next time. You cannot take this much longer, Vulcan. You know it. Give me what I want.”

“S’..S’c..S’chn…T’Gai…Spo..Spoo.. Spok,”

Spock’s breathing was labored and choppy. He didn’t even have the strength to say his own name anymore. His eyes were tightly shut. And his face had turned a sickly gray.

“Wa..wat..waer,” he choked out. His throat was hurting so badly. “Ple..plea”

The guards looked at Spock. The shorter one of them looked sick at the condition of the Vulcan. He looked at Garok, silently seeking permission to give water to the prisoner.

The grand vizier nodded.

Gently, the guard lifted Spock’s head and helped him drink a mixture of milk and water to ease his suffering. Pure water would not have helped. But milk was a natural way to combat the effects of this kind of torture. For immediate relief, it would have been better to give the Vulcan pure, undiluted milk.

But he was a prisoner. They were only doing this to prevent any serious damage. His discomfort was not important.
The moment the cool glass touched Spock’s lips, his tear-soaked eyes opened. He would have swallowed if he could have. But his entire mouth felt like sawdust and chili powder. He gratefully accepted the drink, uncaring of what might be in the tumbler. He just needed a respite from the burning.

He did not notice when they left. Unfortunately, he hadn’t been released from his restraints. His legs were still tied apart and pulling at the injury he had received as a result of the forced penetration. He could not move. But even if he could have, he wouldn’t have. There was a limit to how much abuse one could take and remain unfazed. Contrary to popular beliefs, a Vulcan could not suppress pain indefinitely. The nervous system had its breaking point.

And Spock was afraid that he was fast reaching it.

With the exit of Garok and his guards, the force field was reactivated to its full power, effectively cutting off all light and sound from the cell once again.

For a long time, Spock stared into the blackness. His body was too ill to find any rest.

He wanted to force his mind to think of something else.

But the only thought that came to him was of his dead mother, and those last terrifying seconds of her life.

“Ko-Mekh… Ko-Mekh…” he gurgled, his voice a hoarse whisper. “Ko-Mekh…”

The rest of the day passed in misery for Kirk. He had again watched Spock being tortured. And this time, his best friend had cracked. Sure, he hadn’t given up any useful information. But the sheer effort of it had taken its toll on him. However, for Spock, even the sound of the word ‘mother’ was soothing; a cheap, poor comfort in his pain-filled world.

Garok again told himself that he didn’t like doing this. He had no personal rivalry with the Vulcan. But he had a job to do. He wondered if there was another way. He was reasonably sure that torturing Kirk would not yield anything. For one, human victims of physical torture were prone to giving false information under such duress. The reason why he had chosen the Vulcan was two-fold. For one, he had heard enough about the legendary command team of Captain Kirk and Commander Spock to know that they were at the very least best friends, or maybe even more than that. Secondly, Spock was half-Vulcan and half-human. He did not have the capability to will himself dead like full-blooded Vulcans. At the same time, his mind was stronger than that of a human. His Vulcan half would force him to reveal the truth for the sake of self-preservation. Nothing was more important to a Vulcan than his mind.

Besides, Kirk was also being tormented, albeit in a different way. They had not harmed a hair on his head. They wanted him alert and in control of his thoughts. Hopefully, his human weaknesses; love, compassion, loyalty—these would force him to give them the answers they needed.

It was all perfect in theory.

But it hadn’t worked so far.

He had seen defeat and despair in the commander’s eyes today. And it had made him uncomfortable.

He wondered if Kirk would be able to stand the look in those dark eyes.
And… and there it was.

How brilliant, how simple!

Well, maybe it was time to reunite the command team. Perhaps, the next interrogation for the Vulcan would come with his captain right in front of him.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: Graphic violence, non-consensual sexual torture

Thank you for reading. I'd love to know what you're thinking. And I am sorry if this is too dark. Please don't be mad at me!
I am back with another chapter. I know I'm updating a little fast, but I want to write while I can. Also, I promise this will be a hurt/comfort story and not a total angst fest. Again, this chapter is very dark. There is a reason I have rated the story as explicit and added warnings. If you are easily triggered, please scroll down for additional warnings.

Garok was a man of his word.

He had promised no mercy to the Vulcan. And so far, he had given him none.

He had promised Kirk that if he ate the meat taken from his first officer’s thighs, he would allow food and water to the Vulcan.

It was under those orders that Bahot, the Vulcan’s assigned keeper found himself struggling to force a semi-solid mush down the prisoner’s throat.

“Unnghhh,” Spock grunted in discomfort. As a result of the pepper sauce they had forced down his throat, his food pipe was still hurting. His nose had been running all day. And he felt nothing but a severe sensation of heartburn in his stomach.

“P..plea..please,” he begged. “I.. can…not…”

“Look, Vulcan, we’ve been at this for a while now,” Bahot said wearily. “And if you don’t eat, you will be subjected to forced feeding. I can assure you it will be exquisitely unpleasant.”

“Please…,” Spock wept. He was in too much pain to care about his Vulcan dignity. His control was stretched thin. It was taking every ounce of his will to keep himself fighting. And he dared not enter a healing trance.

If no one helped him out of it, he would die.

A part of him was actually considering the possibility. The only thing that was stopping him was a strange feeling that Jim was close.

Spock knew it was illogical. But maybe, there was going to be a rescue. Maybe he would see Jim again. He did not want to suffer more pain. But even the thought of never seeing his best friend again caused him such anguish that he could not force his body to commit suicide.

Besides, he was only now starting to acknowledge it. Jim meant far, far more to him than a friend. He wasn’t sure if he was thinking straight. Perhaps all the torture had already addled his brains.

But he felt certain that he and Jim were T’hy’la. Friends. Brothers. Lovers. A bond of warriors. A bond more sacred than any in the entire galaxy.
“I will throw this away,” the guard said. “But don’t let anyone know. I’ll just say you ate it.”

And with that, Bahot left the cell.

For a few hours, Spock was left alone.

Bahot returned a while later with a large glass of pure milk.

His eyes looked shifty as if he was almost scared of being in the cell, as if he was doing something he wasn’t supposed to.

Like he had done in the morning, he helped Spock drink.

“This should make you feel better than yesterday,” he said softly as he patiently allowed the poor captive to take small sips at his own pace.

“You… you might get in trouble for this,” Spock managed to say, his voice still raspy.

“I won’t if you will not say anything,” Bahot answered, knowing fully well that even such a small kindness could potentially lead to a most painful execution for him.

He continued to think while holding the glass to Spock’s lips.

And that is why, he did not hear the light, panther-like approach of the grand vizier and his security guards.

“BAHOT,” Garok thundered at what he saw.

How dare he? HOW DARE HE?

The glass slipped from Bahot’s hand and fell to the floor with a loud clang.

“How dare you give the Vulcan milk?” Garok asked dangerously, his voice low and menacing.

“I… I apologize, master,” Bahot said, quickly kneeling on the floor with his head touching the ground. “I had a lapse in judgement. It will not happen again.”

The young guard’s voice was trembling with the effort to hold his fear at bay. He hoped and prayed inside that he would be let off with punishment.

Alas, that was not the law of Cardassia.

“There will never be an ‘again,’ for you,” Garok said ruthlessly and kicked the kneeling man onto his stomach.

“Please, master, please show me mercy,” Bahot begged wretchedly.

But the grand vizier was not interested.

He stomped on the man’s unprotected knees with his heavy, spike-heeled boots, effectively breaking both his legs.

“Aaaaaaaaarghh.” The disgraced guard let out an unearthly scream.

“Cut his tongue off and throw him to the sherakis,” Garok added.

Sherakis were similar to terran lions but much bigger. Their fur was sparse and under it they had
thick, ridged hide. A sheraki male could easily consume 200 pounds of flesh in one day.

And the grand vizier was proud of the fine specimens of these beasts that he had kept in the royal menagerie.

Everything had happened so quickly for Spock that he had been unable to say anything. The horror of what had just happened defied all logic.

“Now, Vulcan,” Garok began gently. “Did you sleep well?” he asked, casually positioning himself between Spock’s legs. His rough fingers roamed on the undersides of the Vulcan’s bound thighs.

“I take it you were unable to find release, eh?” he asked casually as he finally touched Spock’s torn and swollen entrance. The Vulcan hissed in pain, jerking in his bonds but to no avail.

Garok laughed at Spock’s pathetic attempts to jerk away from his intruding touch.

“Well, we are going to try something different today,” he said. “I have someone with me who really wants to meet you.”

Just at that moment, two guards dragged him inside.

“Jim…” Spock gasped.

“Fuck you,” Jim was saying to the guards. “You motherfucking bastards.”

“Jim,” Spock said a little more loudly this time, his voice choked with emotion. He was horrified that his t’hy’la had been thrust into this situation with him. But oh, he was so relieved to see him.

It was shameful.

Spock hated himself in that moment. If they had brought Jim… then… horror ripped through him at the thought that his captain would be subjected to the same treatment as himself.

“Jim,” Spock said again, but his voice sounded utterly broken.

Kirk finally looked at Spock. Up close, the Vulcan looked in far worse shape than he had thought. There were dark circles under his eyes. His entire torso was mottled with dark yellow-green bruises. The mutilation wounds on his thighs looked grotesque and nauseating. Mercifully, from his position, he was unable to see the state of his friend’s intimate areas. Considering how terrible the rest of his body looked, Jim had no doubt that Spock’s injuries down there had to be equally bad if not worse.

“Spock… I have missed you,” he managed to say.

“Jim…” Spock sobbed.

“Isn’t that romantic, now,” Garok said, amused at the powerful reactions of the two men. He was almost certain now that there was a lot more between them than they let on. They could not be anything else but lovers.


Kirk swallowed roughly at the crudeness of the nobleman’s language.

“Kirk, I am not interested in knowing,” Garok said, this time with no mocking humor in his voice.
“All I want from you, are details of why you are here and what is your mission. You tell me and we will send you both to a military prison. Those are harsh, rough places. But you will live. Nothing worse than what has already happened to your Vulcan, will happen there.”

“No…” Kirk said softly, knowing he was condemning Spock to yet another round of torment.

“Just like last time, you leave me no choice,” Garok said and turned around. As if on a cue, a weak-chinned, mousy-looking man stepped out of the shadows.

Meanwhile, the guards forced Kirk into a chair and bound him tightly.

“Go ahead, Healer Jadeil,” the grand vizier said. “They are all yours.”

Both Kirk and Spock were surprised when they heard this new man being addressed with the title ‘healer.’

Was he here to treat Spock’s injuries?

Something told Kirk that wasn’t the case, not by a long shot.

And Spock, he could not stop worrying about Kirk. He watched everything with frightened eyes, scared that they would do to Kirk what they had done to him.

Moments later, however, to his utter terror and immense relief, the small man walked right past Kirk.

He pressed a hypo to Spock’s neck and emptied a thick, clear liquid into one of his veins.

“This should keep you awake,” he muttered. “The grand vizier does not want you to lose consciousness through this.”

“I am sorry,” he added almost inaudibly as he moved between Spock’s legs.

The Vulcan’s legs twitched involuntarily as if aware that if they didn’t close themselves, the consequences would be severe.

But they could not close. And that is why, their owner braced himself for whatever was coming to him next.

He did not have to wait long.

Without warning, the doctor took another hypo and plunged into the outer cavity of Spock’s already-injured anus.

The Vulcan clenched his teeth to keep himself from crying out.

“What are you doing to him?” Kirk managed to say, petrified at what he was seeing.

The so-called healer did not answer. Unbothered by anything around him, he emptied another hypo into Spock’s anus.

“What are you…doing…to…me?” Spock said, his lips grimacing as the pain in his intimate parts intensified with an intensely painful sensation.

“Saline injections,” Jadeil said without lifting his eyes. Nonchalantly, he continued to inject Spock with 8 more injections of the highly saturated saline solution.
“Ahhhh…Ahhh…” Spock took deep breaths as he felt numerous little pricks oozing blood. He could also feel the excessive swelling and bloating that the saline solution had caused. And the worst of it had not even started yet.

As a scientist, he knew what was going to happen.

He prepared to deal with it.

But it was too much for even him. His swollen rectum tried to expel the saline by emptying it into his inner canal. But after yesterday’s punishment, the salt water felt like acid on his burns.

He cried out.

“SPOCK… What…SPOCK,” Kirk shouted.

He knew Spock was in agony. He knew saline water was extremely uncomfortable with his existing injuries.

But Spock had remained silent for several minutes before screaming.

Right now, Jadeil was standing two feet away from the Vulcan and Spock’s terrible shrieks of pain were rising as if his torture was escalating.

“Please…please, help him, you are a healer…” Kirk begged Jadeil. “PLEASE,” He yelled.

The civilian man gave no sign that he had heard Kirk’s desperate begging. Nor did he looked affected by Spock’s screams.

Calmly he moved closer to the Vulcan and this time, he placed his hand on Spock’s flaccid penis.

“NO…NO…” Spock managed to shout out even through his mostly incoherent cries.

But the healer would have none of it. He coated his fingers liberally in a mixture of rubbing alcohol, salt, and the juice of a lemon like fruit.

With excruciating slowness, he took Spock’s organ in his hand and began masturbating him.

“No…” Spock screamed again, struggling mightily to break his bonds.

While Jadeil pumped Spock’s penis with one hand, he used the other to caress Spock’s injuries. He brushed his fingers across the open wounds on his thighs… and then lower on his grotesquely swollen, misshapen anus.

Spock started crying.

“JIM… JIM…” He screamed as he wept, unable to stop the doctor’s probing fingers.

“Stop…. STOP You fucking bastard…. Fucking STOP,” Jim screamed. He had been screaming curses and desperate pleas ever since the torture had started.

But this time, one of the guards forced a large leather gag into his mouth and tied it behind his head.

“Mnnmmhmm” Jim tried to force the gag out but he only managed to split the corners of his lips.

Unfazed, the healer continued to furiously masturbate Spock. To the Vulcan’s absolute horror and shock, he felt himself hardening.
A minute later, the doctor took another saline hypospray and pushed it into the glans of the Vulcan’s penis. A second injection was emptied into Spock’s testicles which had also gotten enlarged and hence, become visible thanks to the erection he had been forced to achieve.

“PLEASE STOP…PLEASE STOOOPPPP,” Spock screamed again. Snot and tears mingled with the sweat running down his face in numerous rivulets.

“Shhhh…it will all get better soon,” Jadeil said and stepped back.

At this, Garok said softly to Kirk. “Has your beloved commander suffered enough yet?&quot;

“Kirk’s gag was pulled out of his mouth. His eyes were rimmed red and he looked like a man going to his own execution.

“We don’t have anything to tell you,” he said. “You captured us before we could engage in any sort of mission. You have foiled our plans. There is nothing left,” he lied through his teeth.

“Still, I wish to know… for informational purposes,” Garok said. “Come on, Kirk. We both know the Vulcan will die at this rate.”

Jim looked at Spock’s whimpering, shaking form. Bile rose in his mouth as tears continued to leak out of his beloved’s eyes.

But he could not condemn billions of people to death.

Cardassia was at war with three different planets and each of those worlds had been set to join the federation. Cardassia had attacked in order to prevent the signing of the final treaties. And knowing that it was only a matter of time before they had a full-blown war with the federation at their hands, they had started building a stockpile of weapons of mass destruction. The Gillissomati were the only people standing between them and total annihilation of multiple federation and non-federation planets.

No, Kirk could not tell them anything.

In a dead voice, he said, “James T. Kirk, Captain, 2753903.”

Garok only shook his head.

A moment later, Kirk found himself at the receiving end of one of the hyposprays of “healer” Jadiel.

“What…what..is…this?” he asked, gasping as he immediately felt a fire consuming him.

But before he could say anything more, all coherent thought fled him and he was James Kirk no more.

XXXX

He was back in his cell.

And judging by the deafening silence, he was alone.

For some reason, his thoughts felt scattered and sluggish and not quite whole.

And there was a throbbing pain in his head.

And just then, he realized that the last thing he remembered was Spock’s torture at the hands of that
fake healer.

He scrambled to move closer to the edge of his cell and peer into Spock’s cell.

However, he realized he was naked from the waist down. His torn pants had been carelessly thrown in the corner.

It was very strange.

For a terrifying moment, he wondered if he had passed out because they had done something to him. But he was in no pain except for a headache.

He looked down to take a look at his penis.

He felt his heart stop. He could not believe what he saw.

“GAROK…” He let out an angry shout. Hot tears spilled from his eyes.

His penis was thickly covered in green blood.

He looked around wildly.

And then he saw it.

Spock’s naked, motionless form lying less than three feet away. Dark blood pooled under his legs and the smell of copper assaulted Jim’s nostrils.

He panicked and rushed to Spock to make sure the Vulcan was still alive. Frantically, he placed his fingers on the side of Spock’s neck.

Mercifully, after a moment, he felt a weak but regular pulse.

And then, he forced himself to move away.

He had done this to Spock.

And he could not, would not touch him again.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: Non-graphic rape, sexual torture, manipulation, minor original character death

So, what do you think? hope I haven't scared you away. Please don't be mad at me. But feel free to leave feedback. You know how much I love it :}
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Hey everyone, this chapter is slightly easier than the last ones. It features very slight comfort also. But be warned, there is a graphic account of the things Kirk does not remember from the previous section. If such stuff triggers you, do not read this.

As always, I'd love to know what you are thinking. And sorry if this story is too dark for you.

The long hours of the night felt like years to Kirk. Spock did not wake up. A few times, he moaned in his sleep. Kirk debated with himself if it was a good idea to go to his first officer and perhaps offer him some comfort.

For a while, he only watched from a distance.

But when Spock let out a whimper, he was unable to stop himself.

He took slow, measured steps.

Tentatively, he placed his hand on the prone man’s cold cheek, which was still wet with the tears that had not stopped even in sleep.

But the moment Jim’s hand touched his cheek, Spock flinched violently.

“Rai,” he almost screamed. And then he sobbed brokenly, “Sanu kroykah… kroykah…” He still did not wake up.

Kirk’s heart broke. He wasn’t particularly proficient at Vulcan but he knew it was a bad sign that Spock was screaming in Vulcan. Besides, he knew enough to know that ‘Rai’ meant ‘no’ and ‘kroykah’ meant ‘stop.’ He did not want to think that he was the monster in whatever nightmare Spock was trapped in.

This was not the first time he and Spock had been taken prisoner. This was also not the first time they had been roughed up by their captors. But yes, this was the first time they were being used against each other. This was the first time Spock had been tortured so violently in such a short space of time. This… this was the first time he had been raped… and that too by his commanding officer, his best friend.

Even Vulcans broke when subjected to such horror. And Spock was slowly getting there. Kirk could see it. And no, this particular Vulcan would never betray Starfleet. But he would lose himself and his sanity in the process.

Helplessly, he continued to watch Spock. He longed to draw the dark head into his lap and massage his temples. He wanted to hold the man close to him and warm his cold, sore body. But he dared not do any of those things. No, he was now one of them, the people who had caused the hurt.

After a while he managed to fall into a light, troubled sleep.
The grand vizier came a few hours later to rouse him.

“Good morning, captain,” he said loudly. Kirk woke up. He had not slept properly and he was a light sleeper anyway. He wanted to tell Garok to fuck off. But he didn’t say anything. Every action of his would be used as an excuse to hurt Spock more.

“I see, the silent treatment eh!” Garok said. “Well, I’d like you to eat breakfast with me. Remember, if you eat, he eats as well.”

But Kirk’s eyes only widened in alarm. The last time he had taken a meal with this man, Spock had suffered severe mutilation of both his thighs.

And Garok seemed to sense Kirk’s terror when he saw the captain’s eyes frantically darting between the still unconscious Vulcan and him.

“Don’t worry, we don’t consume meat for breakfast,” he said. “Your first officer is safe. For now. If you cooperate.”

Kirk swallowed roughly and stood up to follow Garok. Like the last time, he was bound and let out.

His handcuffs were loosened a little bit to allow him freedom of movement to eat. And when their dishes were placed before them, the fear in Kirk’s eyes was palpable.

Gingerly, he uncovered his dish.

Sweet relief filled his face when he saw an assortment of fruits and some kind of bread with a dressing.

“I am a man of my word, Kirk, and no matter what you think of me, I don’t take pleasure in cruelty,” Garok said as he took a sip of water.

Kirk should have stayed quiet but he couldn’t help it.

“If you think what you did to my first officer wasn’t cruel then you are not only cruel but also irredeemable,” he said scathingly.

“That’s rich coming from you,” Garok said. “Everyone has a darkness inside them Kirk. And I saw yours yesterday. I’m sure you saw the evidence of your savagery on your own member as well. Maybe you need a blow-by-blow account. Come, let me show you.”

And with that, he opened a video on his PADD.

Kirk knew what it was and he had no desire to see it. But he wanted to know how they had managed to get him to hurt Spock so badly.

“What did you inject me with?” Kirk asked when he saw the scene of him being injected with something, pretty much the last thing he truly remembered from yesterday.

“Now, I cannot tell you the names of the compounds,” the grand vizier said with a relish in his voice. “But I will tell you this, under the influence of our strongest aphrodisiac and hallucinogen, and a special little something that brings you close to climax but does not allow you that relief for at least a few hours-- you were a delight to watch. A morbid delight. But a delight nonetheless.”

Kirk watched, horrified, as he growled like an animal and positioned himself between Spock’s legs.

“No, Jim,” Spock begged him. “Jim, I am Spock, your friend, your first officer. Jim, please, do not
do this to us, Jim...."

But his please fell on deaf ears.

With one savage thrust, Kirk pushed his entire length into his best friend’s abused body, eliciting an earth-shattering scream from him. And it was brutal. And it happened again and again and again. At one point, in his frustration at being unable to find release, he brutally twisted Spock’s testicles, making the Vulcan shout and thrash in his bonds.

The video ended there.

“You went on a bit longer, perhaps an hour more before you climaxed,” Garok said almost conversationally. “Your Vulcan wasn’t even conscious by that point. I’m not sure when he passed out. But you did not stop. I didn’t count how many times you hit him in your anger. On his face, his testicles, his stomach. In the end, you passed out as well.”

“Spock will die,” Kirk said desperately. “He cannot take this anymore. He has been bleeding this whole time. He will die.”

“That would be a shame,” Garok said. “You can give me what I want and he can have proper medical attention. Till then, I’ll give you some supplies to patch him up. Get him ready for the next interrogation if you intend to continue with your foolish resistance.”

Kirk hung his head in defeat.

“Finish your meal and I will allow you to take some for the Vulcan as well,” the noble man said, covering his own dish.

Kirk ate slowly, hardly registering the taste. He wasn’t hungry and after what he had just seen, he had no desire to eat even for the sake of keeping his strength up. But he needed the supplies and some food and water for Spock.

A few minutes after finishing his food, he was led back to the cell. A servant brought them a basic anti-septic ointment, a few bandages, a plate of some kind of mush, and a pitcher of water with a tumbler.

Spock was still asleep.

Kirk did not want to disturb him. But he needed to take a look at his injuries.

He started with his thighs. The mangled flesh was already starting to show signs of an infection. First, he took some water in the tumbler and used one of the bandages as a washcloth to clean the wounds. Then, he squeezed some of the ointment onto his hand and gently applied it. It wasn’t enough by a long shot but this was the best they could do. He wasn’t sure if he should bandage the injuries. But he was worried that if he covered them, they would turn into a breeding ground for the infection.

Next, very gently and slowly, he opened Spock’s legs. He was extra careful because the bruises around his broken pelvis had turned a dark shade of green, indicating further damage in addition to the fracture. It was no surprise. Spock had been left bound for so long that all his injuries had gotten exacerbated thanks to such prolonged stress.

Finally, he forced himself to look at Spock’s private areas.

He had to fight to keep himself from vomiting. The area did not look like it was a part of a living,
breathing person’s body. Swollen beyond recognition, dark, burnt, and bleeding, it made Kirk wonder if there was anything at all he could even do.

He had no idea how to even begin treating this mess.

He steeled himself and proceeded to clean the area with another bandage and some water. Spock moaned at the touch and instinctively, his legs tried to close themselves. But weak as he was, Kirk was able to stop him with minimal effort. He swallowed multiple times as he continued working. Like before, he finished with the ointment and decided not to apply a bandage.

Kirk looked at Spock’s face. There were dark bruises along his right cheek, his jaw, and his throat. His right eye was swollen. Garok had said that Kirk had hit him.

Fresh tears fell from his eyes. He did not remember anything. But Spock would. He would remember that he had been cruelly violated by the one person who had sworn to protect him always.

Kirk had hoped to eventually explore his feelings for Spock.

However, after this, it was unlikely that Spock would even want to look at his face.

But he would take that. He just wanted to get out of here and take Spock somewhere far away where no one would be able to touch him like that again.

And even if Spock chose to never see him after that, it would all still be worth it.
“You are here to hurt him again, aren’t you?” Jim asked when the grand vizier came to their cell in the evening. “Too bad he hasn’t woken up since last night. You cannot torture an unconscious guy.”

Garok looked at the pale, injured Vulcan. It was true, then. He was very ill. Perhaps, being half-human meant that he wasn’t as strong as full-blooded Vulcans. But then again, they had gone a little too far with him perhaps.

“No, Kirk,” Garok said. “Since I have not gotten answers from you, I am here to tell you that when he awakens, we will seek answers from him.”

“You have been doing that already,” Kirk answered. “I know you asked him your questions while hurting him.”

“Yes, but now we shall ask him those same questions while hurting you,” the nobleman explained.

Kirk’s eyes widened for a moment before he answered.

“Go ahead and do your worst,” he said and spat at the grand vizier’s feet.

Jim was afraid. Obviously. He had seen the kind of savagery the Cardassians were capable of. He knew he would either break under their brutal ministrations or if luck was on his side, die before he reached that point.

As a Vulcan, Spock would be able to use his logic to stay silent. It was unthinkable to Jim that Spock would reveal anything simply to save the captain from torture. No, he did not doubt the Vulcan’s loyalty. He was simply putting his faith in Spock’s rationality to save this mission even at the cost to themselves. But yes, he was beyond terrified. He was not looking forward to the treatment he would receive in a few short hours from the Cardassians.

He was sitting with his back against the wall when a groan came from the other side of the cell.

Spock was waking up.

Jim stood up and turned around. Spock’s eyes were half open, his breathing was still too labored. But he was awake.

Slowly, Jim walked closer to him.

“Spock,” he said gently and knelt beside him.
“Captain,” he acknowledged, his voice pained and his eyes glassy. Jim wondered if his first officer remembered what had happened. He tried to touch Spock’s cheek with his hand.

But Spock flinched away violently, jarring his injuries in the process.

He bit back a cry as his broken pelvis sent shooting pains through his whole being.

“So sorry, sorry, I won’t do that again, sorry.” Jim said frantically, his heart breaking at the utter fear and apprehension in his best friend’s otherwise blank eyes. “I’m moving away. Okay. I’m in that far corner. I won’t touch you. Okay. I promise…”

And with that, Kirk moved back to his position at the other corner of the small cell. But from the corner of his eyes, he continued to watch Spock.

It was not easy. The Vulcan’s position on the cold, stone floor was awkward. He was completely naked and even from a distance, Kirk could see that he was shivering. And he knew Spock was already sick with a fever. The momentary contact with Spock’s skin had testified to that. The man was burning up.

Jim swallowed roughly. He could not even touch Spock without scaring him. And thus, there was nothing he could do to offer comfort to his injured companion.

A few hours passed. Spock had fallen into an uneasy sleep again. Kirk knew it was only a matter of time now before the arrival of the hated grand vizier. And he wasn’t disappointed.

“So, Kirk, are you ready?” he asked as one of his guards kicked Spock in the ribs to wake him up. Spock did not cry out but his face contorted in a mask of absolute agony. The guards did not care. They forced him to his knees, uncaring of his injuries. Spock struggled to stay conscious and to keep himself from screaming in pain.

“So, Mr. Spock,” Garok said to him. “Since we have not had any success with your captain, we believe it is his turn on the table. And you get to watch. No more pain for you. And if you tell us what we want, he will be spared what has been done to you.”

Spock didn’t seem to register the nobleman’s words. His glazed eyes relayed his confusion.

But Garok did not repeat himself for his benefit. He watched patiently as Kirk was stripped of his shirt and bound.

Without warning, a guard swung a heavy steel baton and hit him in the stomach. Jim’s world exploded in agony but he only grunted, never taking his eyes of Spock, whose expression was now one of utter terror and revulsion.

The next blow caught him on his thigh and caused him to fall down. A sickening crunch indicated that his femur had cracked. Kirk screamed in pain. Spock tried to block the sound out. He could not bear to look at Kirk. He could not see the man who had violated him. And he could not see his captain and best friend getting hurt. However, at the moment, he was unable to decide what was causing him more distress.

And their captors seemed to understand this too well.

“So, Vulcan, what will it be?” the grand vizier asked. Spock was hyperventilating by this point.

“I… I do not understand,” he managed to say through his short, jerky breaths. “What do you wish me to do?”
Garok looked at him for a long moment before turning back to Kirk and nodding to the guard. This time, Kirk’s head was pulled back and a metal chain was wound around his neck.

For one horrifying moment, Spock thought they were going to kill Kirk. He was struggling to breathe but even he couldn’t do much against the iron grip of the chain against his throat. But then suddenly, the chain was released. Kirk collapsed on the floor, gasping for breath. There were angry red marks around his neck.

“Tell me what I want to know,” Garok said to Spock without taking his eyes off Kirk. “What is your mission here?”

Spock looked at his captain. And he looked at the ruthless nobleman whose brutality knew no bounds. He had almost compromised himself when they had been torturing him.

He did not want them to hurt the captain like that. He could not compromise the mission.

“I cannot tell you anything,” Spock whispered, lowering his eyes.

“As you wish,” Garok said smoothly. And then he ordered his guards. “Take his pants off.”

“No way, you bastard,” Kirk said, futilely trying to clench the fabric between his legs. Spock watched Jim’s failing efforts through a haze of tears. After what seemed like hours but was barely a few minutes, they managed to get Kirk completely naked.

“Impressive,” Garok said and stood up. He walked up to Kirk and brushed his hand against his genitals. The fear and disgust and pain on Jim’s face was too much for Spock to handle, who was also trying very hard to now block the terrible rush of memories of his own rape.

“Please stop,” he said brokenly.

Garok stopped fondling Kirk’s genitals and turned around.

“What was that, Vulcan?” he asked. “You wish to tell me something?”

“I will tell you everything,” Spock answered, determinedly staring at the floor. “Please don’t hurt the captain.

At this, Garok threw his head back and laughed.

“This is unbelievable,” he said with undisguised glee in his voice. “So after all this time, you are telling me that all I needed to do was rough up this human a little and the Vulcan would sing.” Then he turned to Jim. “Wow, Captain Kirk, you could have saved your first officer a lot of pain had you told me he loves you like a lovesick puppy.”

“You… YOU CAN’T DO THIS, SPOCK,” Kirk yelled. “That’s an orde..”

The guard backhanded him hard enough to split his lips.

“No.. No…. Please,” Spock said. “I will tell you what our mission was.”

“Go on, Vulcan,” Garok said eagerly. “No time like the present.”

“SPOCK, NO,” Kirk screamed again.

“SHUT UP,” Garok said. “Gag him.” He ordered his guards.

“Yes, Mr. Spock, you were saying something,” the grand vizier said once Kirk had been subdued.
Only his muffled groans could be heard from behind the gag. But that did not bother Garok.

Spock glanced at Kirk only for a moment. But he was unable to stare into his captain’s eyes and see the betrayal reflected in them.

In a shaky, blank voice, he started talking.

“We were in Cardassian space as a matter of duty,” he began. “However, our mission was an unplanned, unexpected one.”

Kirk did not want to hear Spock’s traitorous, treasonous testimony. But he forced himself to listen.

“We were carrying classified federation documents on our ship on an encrypted PADD. Normally… such files may be shared through a secure connection. However, we received an anonymous tip from someone on the ship that there was a spy in our midst. He was human and not a part of the crew. One of the members of our science department realized that this person was an imposter and alerted the captain,” Spock stopped to take a deep, calming breath. It was obvious that in his fevered state, talking was also taking its toll on him.

But Kirk’s focus was not on Spock’s physical condition.

To his absolute surprise, it dawned on him that Spock was stalling for time by giving them a made-up story. From this point onwards, he heard carefully. If they were going to play this dangerous game with the Cardassians, they could not afford to make even one mistake.

And so he listened with undivided attention.

“In the end, we had no choice but to come to Cardassia,” Spock said at last. “We did not know what those encrypted files contained. But we were ordered to retrieve those in any way possible. However, for the sake of our crew, only myself and the captain were made aware of the operation. Our ship was under instructions to leave without us if we failed to make contact in six hours.”

“But before you caught this spy, you were captured by us,” Garok said more to himself than to Spock.

“That is correct,” Spock answered.

“And you say you are unaware of the contents of the encrypted files on that PADD?” Garok asked. “Why should I believe you?”

“Vulcans cannot lie,” Spock said softly. “Sensitive information is often shared only on a need-to-know basis. The Enterprise did not need to know and hence, was simply asked to deliver the files from Starbase 3 to the headquarters on Earth.”

“Well, too bad,” the gran vizier said. “However, these files that you speak of. They must be extremely important. How were you planning to look for this spy on Cardassia?”

“The captain recognizes him. But before we could apprehend him, he managed to steal a shuttle from the ship and escape. And he prevented us from following him by sabotaging the warp drive, which cost us precious time,” Spock said, staring into Kirk’s eyes, pleading with him to play along. Kirk, on the other hand, had no idea what was going on in Spock’s mind. But they had nothing to lose. Being tortured to death was hardly a plausible option if they could find any sort of way out of it.

“Hmmmm...” Garok said. “Well that changes things. Now the question is this,” he added turning back to Kirk. “The Vulcan has already derailed your mission. There is nothing to be gained from
silence. Whatever is on those encrypted files, has already fallen into Cardassian hands. However, if
the PADD had been delivered, I would have heard about it. This spy of yours is underground. If you
can help me get to him before the files are delivered, I will see that you are transferred to one of the
better facilities. I will hold your Vulcan here till you get me that man. You will have the help and
cooperation of two of my agents to help you. I will give you 12 hours. For every hour after that, the
Vulcan will suffer one broken bone. And don’t even think about any funny business. If you escape, I
will sell your pet to the most notorious brothel in all of Cardassia. Remember the steaks?"

Whatever Kirk had been expecting, he hadn’t expected this.

So now the grand vizier wanted Kirk’s help to gain an upper hand in Cardassia’s internal politics. He
looked at Spock wondering what he wanted Kirk to do.

But there was nothing in Spock’s eyes. There was a calm sort of emptiness. And… And…

Acceptance.

Spock wanted Kirk to take this opportunity to run away. They both knew the Enterprise wasn’t
actually too far away. The both knew Kirk would be able to request immediate beam out the minute
he was out of here.

“Spock,” Kirk whispered. He knew he would never be able to leave Spock behind. But if he refused
to go, they would know Spock was lying. And there was no telling what they would do to him then.

The Vulcan pretended to not hear Kirk’s soft voice. He was pale and quiet. And all this effort had
drained him of what little strength he had managed to regain after his restless, pain-filled sleep.

It broke Kirk’s heart to see Spock’s struggle, his pain, his sacrifice.

But he knew they needed this chance.

And no matter what Spock was thinking, Kirk knew he would come back for him. He never left his
friends and comrades behind.

“I will do it,” he said to Garok.

In return, the grand vizier gave him an oily smile that did not reach his eyes.
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Hey everyone, this is the next chapter of Invisible. The plot is starting to thicken. I hope you like where this story is going. Let me know what you think. I love hearing from you.

The guards dragged Spock back to the cell and dumped him unceremoniously on the floor. He was unconscious by this point. And even though Kirk begged them to give him the medical attention he so desperately needed, they ignored him.

Meanwhile, Jim was half-dragged, half-carried to another part of the facility. His broken femur protested at the rough treatment. But he couldn’t do anything about it.

It took him a few minutes to realize that he was being brought to some kind of sickbay.

He was placed on a stretcher. A few minutes later, a healer approached him.

“You?” Kirk spat at the man when he realized who it was. It was Jadeil, the mousy-looking fake doctor who had tortured Spock with those terrible injections.

“Be quiet, Kirk,” he said in a thick Cardassian accent as he carefully applied a bone-knitting laser to his patient’s broken thigh. A dermal regenerator was used on Kirk’s neck and abdomen to heal the bruises there.

“I am fine,” Kirk managed to say, stumped at the fact that he was receiving treatment. “It is Spock who’s hurt worse. Thanks to you.”

“The grand vizier does not care about him,” the healer responded coldly. “He has no more use to us. So we don’t have to heal him. But he is useful to you. So do what you have been asked to do fast and then you can nurse him back to health or hold him as he dies if your efforts fail.”

“You are so callous,” Jim said with utter disbelief in his voice. “How can you call yourself a healer with such a casual attitude towards another intelligent sentient being?”

“I do not answer to you,” Jadeil sidestepped the question. “I only follow the orders of my superiors.”

And with that, he helped Kirk to his feet and gave him a fresh pair of plain black pants and a maroon shirt. Wordlessly, Kirk got dressed. Then, they led him to the grand vizier’s room.

“Welcome Kirk,” Garok said. “I see you are all healed. Ready for your mission, Captain?”

There were a hundred thousand things Jim wanted to say but he stayed quiet.

“I know you are ready because you have no other choice,” the nobleman said without looking up. He was cleaning his nails with some kind of filing tool. “You care about your Vulcan pet. And so, you will do everything I want.”

“I will try my best,” Kirk answered solemnly. Sure, Spock’s story had miraculously worked. But he
didn’t have the faintest idea of how he would actually contact the Enterprise if they were sending out
guards with him.

“And remember, if you aren’t back in 12 hours, the Vulcan will suffer a broken bone for every hour
after that,” Garok reminded the captain. “And if you are not back by 24 hours, I will sell your
Vulcan to a brothel. I am sure you don’t want that fate for him. Besides, he may not even survive
very long after that.”

Kirk swallowed roughly and nodded. Finally, a comm. unit with a monitoring device was given to
him. And he was told in no uncertain terms that if an unknown signal was transmitted from the unit,
it would simultaneously deliver a powerful electric shock to Spock. Kirk knew that Spock wanted
him to take this opportunity and get back to the Enterprise. He also knew the Vulcan had accepted
that he would die on Cardassia.

But even though the situation looked terribly bleak, Jim could not accept this. He didn’t know how
yet, but he would find a way to get Spock out of there. Alive.

He was given two guards and two agents to work with. He wasn’t given the names of the guards.
But the agents, he found out, were called Depalik and Athot.

“So what is the description of this individual?” Athot asked in a rough, guttural voice as they walked
out. It was difficult to understand him because between his voice and his accent, most of the words
did not really resemble the vocabulary of standard English.

“He is about as tall as the grand vizier,” Kirk said, conjuring up an image in his mind that would be
believable yet hard-to-find. “Not as dark, though. Medium length hair, deep-set eyes, gray pupils,
and I think his skin had a faintly yellowish tint.”

“Do you know his name?” Depalik asked.

“I… no,” Kirk answered. “We only figured out he was an imposter because a gas leak in the science
labs melted his disguise. I and my security personnel ran after him but before we could catch him, he
damaged our warp drive and stole a shuttle in order to flee.”

“Then how are you so sure about his description?” Athot asked.

“The science officer was,” Jim answered. “And she gave me a detailed description.”

The agents looked at each other. So Kirk didn’t actually recognize this spy. He had a second-hand
description from someone who claimed to have seen him.

“If you are wrong, your Vulcan will die,” Athot said to Kirk to reaffirm to the human how serious
they were about finding the spy. And as far as he could understand, this whole search was going to
prove entirely futile.

“I’m sure there’s a way,” Kirk answered. “Maybe we should split.”

“NO, we cannot split,” the agent said. “Depalik, we can try the record system and filter out people
based on these characteristics.”

And with that, they made their way to the archives office of the union. Kirk was scared that if the
search yielded no results, his game would be up. But surprisingly, a moment later he realized that his
problem was going to be very different.

Based on his description, the computer returned 1,249,876 results.
“Now what, Kirk?” Athot asked. “You will have to look at each picture and tell us who that man was… unless you can remember something else.”

“This will take more than 12 hours,” Kirk said, panicking. His rudimentary plan was falling apart. He had hoped to pick a face and start searching for it. And in the process, lose the agents and the guards and grab a civilian comm. unit. However, he had only 12 hours. And based on such a staggering number of search results, he knew he would not be able to do everything in 12 precious hours.

“Then you better start looking,” Athot said. “Maybe the Vulcan will be spared too many fractures if you can work fast enough.”

Kirk quickly modified his plan. And this time, he decided that in the next two hours, he would pick a face anyway. Of course, he would have to be careful. But there was no other way of saving time. Besides, he knew he would have to take at least two hours to identify someone so as to not rouse suspicion.

He started looking at the pictures. And to be honest, most of them looked the same to him. Furthermore, he did not want to simply condemn an innocent civilian to certain death. He had to choose someone who was off-planet and had been so for a while.

But all of this would be so much simpler if only he had his phaser on him.

Finally, after about two-and-a-half hours he saw a promising image. Kekaat, a 40-year-old carpenter whose current status was off-planet. On looking further down on the file, he realized that this man had not set a foot on Cardassia in 16 years. Perfect.

“This guy,” Kirk pointed at the screen.

“Are you certain?” Athot asked, frowning at the information of the man. “This man has not been on Cardassia for 16 years.”

“But you said he is an agent,” Kirk said, thinking quickly. “He probably has been on the planet and no one except for his direct superior knows. I am positive this is him.”

“That is possible, Kirk,” Depalik said. “Let us go and meet his family.”

“His family?” Kirk asked, flabbergasted. “Are you crazy. If he is an agent, how do you know his family is here. And if he has been off-planet, then, his folks are out with him.”

Depalik gave him a cold, humorless smile.

“You have a lot to learn,” he said softly. “After all, you were but a pup when they made you captain. It is the law on Cardassia that no more than three members of a family can be off-planet at a given time. We value family very much. And our security. In those three people who are off-world also, the relationship should not be husband-wife, child-parent, or siblings. This man has people he loves on the planet. And we will get to him through them.”

Kirk swore to himself. This was going to end in disaster. He had messed up big time. But at this moment, he needed to go along with them. There was nothing he could do to change the person he had chosen.

It did not take them too long to get to Kekaat’s listed residence.

But in the half hour journey, Jim tried to learn and absorb what he could about Cardassia and its
people. For the most part, they appeared to be like any other intelligent civilization. The farms, shops, marketplaces, all seemed familiar.

But the differences were there.

For one, there was a certain amount of cruelty and aggression in how these people treated each other. Every woman seemed to have at least six or seven children. Most people had scars on the visible parts of their body. And in the shops, bloody meat of various unidentifiable animals hung from hooks fixed on the ceilings.

Jim could not do anything to rationalize what he saw. But it only made him more determined to get Spock and himself out of this situation, no matter what the cost.

His reverie was broken at last by the loud revving of the engine as it was shut off.

“This is Kekaat’s home,” Athot announced as he and Depalik disembarked from the vehicle. A minute later, the guards helped Kirk get out as well.

“So, shall we?” Depalik asked Athot. He nodded and the little party entered the house with no trouble. As soldiers of the empire, their identities were enough to grant them entry anywhere at all.

And the fear with which this society operated, was visible on the face of the middle-aged Cardassian woman, sitting in the far corner of the open-air courtyard with 11 children of various ages huddled all around her.

“Where is Kekaat?” Depalik asked the woman in a no-nonsense tone.

“I don’t know,” she answered bravely. “He has not come back after all these years. These are his grandchildren.”

“And where are the children?” Athot asked.

“We only had a daughter before Kekaat left the planet,” the woman answered. “She died giving birth to her last child,” she said gesturing to the sleeping baby in her lap. “Her husband is also off-planet.”

“You are lying, banejek,” Depalik said in a steely tone, insulting the woman by calling her the vilest word for barren. Without a warning, he yanked her to her feet, almost making her drop the baby.

“I am not” she roared even as she was dragged to the center of the room. The other children watched quietly, horrified at what they were seeing.

“Kekaat is an agent of the Obsidian Order,” Depalik said. “How do you not know where he is?”

At this, the woman began to laugh.

“You are a funny one,” she said, wiping tears of mirth from her eyes. “You are a military agent then. Because you obviously don’t know that the agents of OO don’t even tell their families about their work for the union.”

“Then how do you know this, bitch?” He asked her, pulling her head down by her hair.

“It seems you want me,” she said, unfazed by the violence. “But I don’t want you. And I don’t have answers for you.”

“Then I will kill this babe in your lap,” he said and put his phaser to the child’s temple.
But before he could actually pull the trigger, a burst of phaser fire came from behind him and hit him in the skull. Just as Athot turned around to see what had happened, another burst of phaser fire hit him right in the heart, killing him instantly.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Hey, everyone, so sorry for the long wait. Here is the next chapter of the story. Please let me know what you think. I love hearing from you. Your comments absolutely make my day.

Kirk slowly turned around with his hands in the air.

To his absolute surprise, it was the two guards who had shot Depalik and Athot dead.

“Are you alright?” one of them asked the shaken woman.

“I am,” she answered.

“We will be leaving now,” he said and then he turned to Kirk. “Follow us and we will explain everything to you.”

Kirk only nodded and made to follow them.

“So who are you guys and why did you shoot those agents?” he asked once they were outside.

“Shhhh, not here,” the other guard answered and motioned Jim to keep walking.

A few minutes later, they arrived at a seedy-looking house. The walls around it were dirty, with graffiti all over them. Kirk couldn’t read Cardassian. But he was pretty certain that the writing involved choice swear words referencing crude nicknames for genitals.

“These are our headquarters,” one of the guards said. “My name is Alpha Z.”

“Wait, that sounds more like a code name of some sort,” Jim said.

“It is,” Alpha Z confirmed. “And my friend here is called Black Korb, after the fiercest animals on our planet.”

“Wow, so there’s no logic to your names?” Kirk asked incredulously.

“There isn’t,” AZ (As Jim had dubbed him in his mind) said. “If there was a logic, it would make us vulnerable to intelligence personnel searching for patterns.”

“Makes sense,” Kirk agreed. “Now who are you guys?”

“We are the Gillissomati,” AZ said. “And we are aware that your first officer managed to send those classified documents to the ship. Had he failed, we would all have been captured or killed by now. It is thanks to him that we were able to keep our cover as guards.”

“Well, I don’t know how much you know but if you were in in that prison, you know Spock doesn’t have too long,” Kirk said, his voice a low, tormented whisper. “And we have wasted a lot of time already. I have nothing to take back for Garok. We just have to get Spock out of there.”
“We are aware, Captain,” Black Korb said, speaking for the first time. “And we knew you were bluffing right from the start. It was obvious to us as members of the resistance. But we were not sure of what exactly you were planning. It seemed strange that you chose to get out while leaving your first in the hands of those animals.”

Kirk could sense that for Black Korb, he had effectively betrayed Spock.

“It was Spock,” Kirk explained quietly. “When they started torturing me to get him to talk, he concocted a bullshit story to stop them. And then Garok decided to let me go on the condition that I would bring back the so-called spy from Spock’s imagination. He gave me 12 hours.”

“And what happens after that?” AZ asked.

“He will torture Spock till I get back to him,” Kirk answered. “And at the end of 12 more hours, he will kill him.”

The two Cardassians looked at him pityingly.

“We are sorry for your loss,” Black Korb said. “But we assure you, his sacrifice won’t be in vain.”

“Hey, hey, hey, wait a minute,” Kirk said, panicking. “What sacrifice? We are going to break Spock out of that place. I can’t leave without him.”

“You have no choice,” AZ answered. “It is one thing to get you back to your own ship. Quite another to break the Vulcan out. We cannot risk ourselves or other members of our group for him. And as a Starship captain, you cannot put yourself in a position where you and your friend can be manipulated against each other. Alone, the Vulcan will resist interrogation. And from what we know of his condition, he will pass on soon. His suffering won't last long.”

“I don’t believe this,’ Kirk growled. “You are so callous about him. You said not more than five minutes ago that Spock’s actions saved your lives also.”

“At the same time, he knew the costs of beaming the documents to the ship but not himself,” Black Korb retorted. “The union has ways to track beaming signatures. And your Vulcan knew this. We are willing to take a calculated risk in order to beam you out. But we cannot do anything for him.”

“I. AM. NOT. LEAVING. WITHOUT. HIM,” Kirk all but yelled and started walking out of the den. But the two rebels were too quick for him. Within seconds, they caught him and pinned him to the floor.

“We do not care what your relationship with the Vulcan is,” AZ ground out. “But we will not endanger our cause for your foolish emotions.” And with that, he hailed the Enterprise.

“Your captain is injured and needs immediate beam out,” he said to Scotty over an unfamiliar communicator. Kirk remembered that these people had been given access to a particular frequency expressly for such emergency situations.

“Scotty, NO,” Kirk started. But Black Korb placed his hand on his mouth.

“Your first officer did not survive,” AZ continued saying. “And if the captain isn’t immediately beamed out, he will die.”

Without waiting for further orders, Scotty beamed Kirk up.

XXXXX
“Sire, do you really intend to break one bone for every hour Kirk is delayed by?” Pakal, one of Garok’s minions asked.

He was not a guard. But he was close to the grand vizier. He and his brother, Felkun, were Garok’s eyes and ears in the union’s imperial court. They knew the grand vizier was planning something big. Something phenomenal. Something terrible—something that would make him the leader of all of Cardassia Prime.

And because he was ruthless, they knew he would succeed. And when he did, they would sit at his side, as his chief advisors.

Even the idea of such unfettered power made them giddy with pleasure.

Speaking of which, they had heard the Vulcan’s delicious screams on that recording of his captain’s last interrogation.

And they couldn’t wait to hear them again.

“I will do no such thing,” Garok answered. “There is nothing to be gained by needlessly crippling the Vulcan. I was only threatening Kirk. If he actually does not return, I will sell the green-blooded demon to one of the brothels in the old city. Injured and marked, he will not fetch me much. But his green blood should bring in a small fortune.”

“Did you get a chance to sample him yourself?” Felkun asked with undisguised glee.

“No, I am committed to Daasa,” Garok answered, referring to his wife.

“We are not committed yet to anyone,” Pakal said. “And all this strategizing, dodging the spies in the court, balancing out dangerous diplomacy… it takes a toll on us.”

“What are you suggesting?” Garok asked although he had a fairly good idea of what he was trying to say.

“You are right, we don’t have to break the Vulcan’s bones,” Felkun said, coming to stand closer to his brother. “But his ass is not off-limits.”

“He may not be strong enough to take the two of you,” Garok said half-heartedly. However, he knew he would not say no to them. The Vulcan was of no real importance anymore. Besides, he really did need Pakal and Felkun on his side for at least a while longer.

“He is Vulcan,” Pakal said, making a lewd gesture with his hands. “He can take it.”

“Alright, you two,” Garok relented. “Use him as you wish to. But do not damage him.”

“We won’t,” Felkun said as he and his brother turned to leave. “Much.”

Thirty minutes later, the brothers entered a private chamber. Spock had already been brought in and chained to the table in the center of the room. For nearly an hour, the only sounds that came from the small room were muted groans and those of flesh slapping against flesh.

And then, a bloodcurdling scream.

After that, for the next two hours, the chamber’s soundproofing had to be switched on to protect the sanity of the people outside, some of whom perhaps had no idea of what was going on inside.

XXXXX
“Captain, we are so sorry about Mr. Spock,” Scotty said as Kirk materialized on the transporter pad.

Dr. McCoy rushed forward when he took in Jim’s horizontal form.

“Where are you hurt?” he asked even as he waved the tricorder around him.

“I’m fine,” Kirk answered, getting to his feet immediately. “They lied. Spock is alive and still trapped. I need to go back down there.”

“But, Captain,” Scotty started saying.

“Just do your job, Scotty,” Jim cut him off. “Scan the entire planet and look for Vulcan life signs.”

“It doesn’t work, sir,” Scotty answered with a sad, dejected look in his eyes. “That is why we were unable to come to your rescue.”

“The hell,” Kirk muttered angrily. “Well, then beam me four miles away from where you just beamed me up. I have to go back,” Kirk said.

But just then, Uhura’s voice came through the shipwide channel.

“Mr. Scott, we have an emergency transmission from the rebel group,” she said. “They say it is urgent.”

“I’ll take it,” Kirk said and practically ran to the bridge.

“Captain…” Uhura exclaimed, surprised to see him instead of Scotty.

“Put it on screen,” Kirk said, without wasting even a moment.

“Yes, sir,” Uhura answered and did as she had been commanded.

“Captain, we are sorry for the manner in which we sent you back to your ship,” AZ said. Behind him, a number of other rebels stood at attention. “We believe you are going to try and beam down in order to rescue your first officer. We simply wanted to inform you that that would be unwise. Even as we speak, the war rages on around us and at the prison facility where you were held hostage.”

“I don’t have all day,” Kirk said impatiently. “What do you mean?”

But they did not answer.

A moment later, the sound of a deafening explosion came from the speakers.

“What was that?” Kirk asked, his eyes wide with shock.

“One of our members just mounted an attack on the grand vizier’s detention center,” AZ answered. “A suicide attack. I doubt anyone survived. Not even your Vulcan.”

“YOU BASTARDS,” Kirk yelled at the screen. “YOU TOTAL BASTARDS, HOW DARE YOU?”

Tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Uhura, cut that transmission,” he ordered his communications officer.

He refused to believe Spock had been killed.
He ran back to the transporter room.

“Scotty, I need you to scan the entire planet again for Vulcan life signs,” he ordered. Maybe after the explosion, the dampening effects would be gone.

“Yes, sir,” Scotty said, even though he was reasonably certain that there would be no results.

But to his absolute amazement, faint Vulcan life signs showed up on his tracker. But just then his joy turned into horror.

“We cannot beam him up, sir,” Scotty said to Kirk, fighting to keep his expression professional. “He is too unstable to beam up. Someone will have to go down and bring him back on a shuttlecraft or stabilize him before he can be beamed up.”

“Bones, let’s get down there,” Kirk said and stepped onto the pad. Wordlessly, Dr. McCoy followed him. A few seconds later, two security officers joined them as well.

“Good luck, captain,” Scotty said. And at Kirk’s command, he beamed them all down to Spock’s location.
Heya, I am back. So sorry for my slow update speed. I am trying to find a job and it is not working out very well. Between the bumpy recovery from the surgery and the stress of unemployment, I am just no able to give as much time to writing as I would like to. But thank you for staying with this story.

Also, this chapter has dark elements. Please proceed with caution. Scroll down to the end for clear trigger warnings.

Please let me know what you think. I really love reading your feedback.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Spock tried to resist. He knew he had shamed himself over the last few days by screaming in agony, even begging for them to stop. But with Jim getting thrust into the situation, he did not know what to think. His captain, his T'hyla had been forced to take him. He had almost been hurt that way himself.

And Spock had been unable to do much. Now, he was chained to this table in this unfamiliar room. He was in pain, he wanted to weep at their odds, he hated how obscenely his legs had been tied apart, he loathed his vulnerability, and he feared for Jim’s safety.

“So, Vulcan, do you give good head, eh?” The hook-nosed Cardassian’s voice cut through his thoughts. “I am Pakal. And you are mine for today.”

“I do not understand,” Spock said, being deliberately obtuse. He had a fairly good idea of where this was going but he was going to try anyway.

“It is either you or that pretty captain of yours,” Pakal said. He knew the Vulcan would yield to such a threat. Bluffing was such a delicious way to mess with his mind.

A jolt of fear shuddered through Spock.

“What do you require from me?” he asked weakly, almost managing to keep his voice from shaking.

“Oh nothing much,” Pakal said casually.

He came closer to Spock and placed his cold, ridged hand on Spock’s left cheek.

“Such a pretty face, such soft, plump lips…mmm, mine…. All mine,” he whispered and lowered his own mouth to Spock’s. He began by kissing his victim softly at first but when Spock did not respond, he growled in anger.

“Am I not good enough for you? Is that how you return a kiss?” he asked dangerously. “I bet that Kirk knows how to treat his superiors. Clearly, he hasn’t taught you anything. Maybe I will get my pleasure from him.”
“No… please,” Spock said softly. “I have.. I have never…” he fumbled for words.

Realization dawned upon Pakal.

“Holy fuck, you are a virgin,” he said. “No wait, not anymore,” he added with a cruel laugh.

“Felkun,” he called out. “It is time we enjoy our bounty.”

Spock couldn’t immediately see who Felkun was. But soon, he found out.

The large, brutish man came to stand between Spock’s legs.

“You are disgusting down here,” he remarked. “If you were a whore I had to pay for, I wouldn’t have given you a single credit.”

The Vulcan did not respond. He knew he was “disgusting down there.” But it wasn’t as if he had done anything to make it so. It wasn’t as if he wanted these men’s attention. He was so tired of it all.

“Perhaps, you can find better prospects with a sex worker,” he said, trying to inject a sense of calm in his words. A sense of calm he did not feel.

“But you come for free, forced to take everything we dish out to you,” Pakal said. “Not even the priciest whore can give us that. Anyway, enough talking. It is time for us to get better acquainted Vulcan.”

And that’s how Spock found himself choking on two Cardassian penises an hour later. His lips were split and he could not breathe. He struggled and sputtered to draw in air but it was becoming increasingly difficult to do so. Tears flowed from his eyes as his nose was pinched again and again to keep his mouth open. He had been forced to endure penetrative sex from both the brothers twice. And he had reached a level of pain he had never thought existed.

“He doesn’t scream much,” Felkun said, frustrated. “Those screams of his on the recording. I wanted him for those. These tears and whimpers are pathetic.”

“Well, we cannot damage him too much,” Pakal said, withdrawing from his victim’s mouth in order to give his brother deeper access.

“Well, we both know he will fetch nothing at any brothel,” Felkun retorted. ‘We will donate him to a brothel if it comes to that and give something to Garok to keep him happy. How many times will we get to experience a Vulcan?”

Pakal thought his brother had a point. They had spent years trying to sample as many alien races as they could. Orion, Andorian, Betazoid, Bajoran, Ferengi, even Klingon. And they had never come across a Vulcan prostitute. They had never heard a Vulcan scream except for this one on that recording.

This was a treat. And Pakal wanted to feel the Vulcan thrashing under him as his lithe, powerful body was punished over and over again.

“Let’s do it,” he finally agreed.

That was all Felkun needed. He took his penis out of Spock’s mouth.

“So, what do they say about Vulcan hands?” he said mockingly, before cruelly twisting Spock’s wrist and breaking it.
“Bring the flogger and the lighter,” he said to Pakal. “Oh Vulcan, I will be so sorry to see you go. And that is why we must enjoy you tonight. It is only logical, don’t you think.”

Spock thought he had known pain before. He was so very wrong.

The scene that greeted the landing party was one of utter chaos. The prison facility had been blown to smithereens. A haze of hot, black smoke hung in the air. A number of fires had broken out. And there was screaming, so much screaming, and the nauseating smell of burning flesh. Dr. McCoy was having great difficulty in controlling his gag reflex.

“Over here, I found him,” Jim shouted. “Oh my God…Oh my God…” he said as he desperately removed chunks of stone and wood from Spock’s legs. The Vulcan was in a bad way. He was far more injured than he had been when Jim had last seen him. And he could tell that all the damage hadn’t come from the blast.

‘Bones, please save him,” Jim almost cried.

“Sir, we must leave,” Lt. Kyle, the security officer said to Kirk. “We cannot be discovered by the Cardassians. If they think we have something to do with this…”

He did not have to complete that thought. Jim knew the consequences of getting caught. They would become the cause of the impending war. And they would be labeled terrorists by Star Fleet in order to save face.

“Spock’s in no condition for a beam out but we have no option,” the doctor said after he completed scanning Spock with the tricorder. The look on his face was somber, grief-stricken. But years of medical training allowed him to mask his raging emotions.

“I hate to do this. But for his sake and ours, we need to risk it,” he said to Jim.

What his scan had told him was so horrendous that he wasn’t sure they’d be able to do anything for their dying first officer. But he couldn’t tell that to Jim. They needed to get back to the ship first.

“Five to beam up, Scotty, directly into med bay,” Kirk spoke into in communicator. A moment later, he felt himself dissolve into golden shimmers.

Spock had been in surgery for hours. Kirk was tired and sore himself. But he couldn’t bring himself to leave the med bay. He was terrified that someone would take Spock away again.

“Captain, we will inform you once the commander is out of surgery,” Nurse Chapel came out to persuade him to go back to his quarters and get some rest.

“I need to know if he will be okay first,” Kirk said stubbornly.

“Please don’t force me to call Dr. McCoy,” Chapel said softly. “He cannot be interrupted while he is operating. But if you refuse to listen to me, I will have no choice. The ship’s first officer is already compromised. We cannot allow the captain to be compromised as well.”

Jim swallowed roughly at that. He knew she was right. They were still not too far from Cardassian space. They could still be pursued. They could still be captured.

“Alright,” he gave in at last. “But the moment Spock is out of surgery, I need to be informed, no
matter how late it is.”

“Yes sir,” the blond-haired woman said and escorted Kirk out of the med bay.

Dr. McCoy really needed a drink. He had spent the last six hours trying to put Spock back together. And for now, he had told Nurse Chapel to refrain from informing the captain. The damage had been appalling.

Two broken ribs. Four shattered. Pelvis broken in three places. Both wrists broken. Right index finger and right thumb shattered. Severe burns on the palms of both hands. Ulcers in the mouth and throat. Strictures in the food pipe. Both nipples mutilated. Scrotal sac mutilated. Both thighs mutilated Contusions on 76% of the body surface. Whip marks on the buttocks and penis. Second and third degree burns and severe tearing in the rectal canal and parts of the large intestine. Shattered kneecaps, fractures in both legs. Soft tissue injury to the spinal cord. Severe blunt force trauma to the head and soft tissue injuries to limbic system in the temporal lobe of the brain. Memory and motor skills may be affected. Mobility may be affected.

Anal swabs revealed the presence of Cardassian and human sperm in the commander’s body.

Human Sperm. Jim’s sperm.

McCoy wanted to cry. He had been unable to speak to Jim about what had happened down there. Spock had crashed on the operating table twice. He was still so badly injured. And from the looks of it, Jim had probably been forced to hurt Spock as well. He just couldn’t imagine that the two had had some kind of comfort sex in that prison. Nor could he believe that Jim had actually raped Spock of his own accord.

He did not know how to approach him anymore.

“Nurse Chapel,” he called out. “Please leave a message for the captain informing him of the surgery’s success. Do not relay the prognosis. I… I will do that myself.”

“Do you want him to come here right away?” she asked gently. She knew better than anyone else what the doctor was going through. Her own control was in tatters after seeing the savagery that had been committed upon Spock’s person. And to think, the captain had been forced into something like that.

“No… I am going to sleep for a few hours,” McCoy answered, refusing to meet the nurse’s eye. “He can come down and see me at the beginning of the Alpha shift.”

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: Rape, Torture, Description of Injuries
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Hey all, I am back with another chapter. I hope you are enjoying this story (or as much as you can "enjoy" a story as dark as this.) Anyway, let me know what you think. I really love reading your comments and reviews. Honestly, it makes me sad when you guys don't review (illogical, needy, I know!!!). Stop reading the note now if you don't wish to know certain things about my personal life. But if you are interested, continue reading.

I write fanfiction because i want to improve my writing. And because I am lonely. There. I said it. I could choose to write a diary, I suppose. But writing fanfiction feels like I'm actually talking to someone instead of just to myself (which I also do. But why would I write to myself when I can simply talk?) In any case, I was mostly curious about why you read or write fanfiction. And I don't but sometimes, I feel better when I talk about what's bothering me but more often than not, I don't have anyone to talk to. Does it take away from your reading experience when an author does that through notes like these?

“How is he, Bones” Kirk asked tiredly.

He had drifted off to sleep at some point during the night. And he wanted to be mad at the med bay staff for not calling him the moment Spock came out of surgery. But one look at the CMO’s face and Jim knew that this would be one of the toughest conversations he would ever have.

“Do you really need to hear it from me?” the good doctor said, for once unable to inject his southern brusqueness to deal with the seriousness of the situation.

“I… will… I mean,” Jim tried to talk. But he was failing miserably. He swallowed roughly before trying again. “Will he be okay?”

“Come inside, kid,” Bones said gruffly and led Jim into his office. He poured them both a generous amount of the strongest bourbon he could find in his stash. For this particular discussion, they would need it.

“Drink,” he said to the captain. “I'd rather not be sober for this. It's against protocol. But damn, I didn't sign up for getting my hands guts-deep into someone I care about.”

"So you do care for him," Jim said, slightly amused. "Pointy ears and all. Last time I checked, you were comparing him to Sly and Gobbo."

"Sly and Gobbo?" McCoy looked puzzled.

"Yeah, the goblins from Noddy," Jim answered as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. But Bones looked even more confused. "Never mind," Jim murmured. For one, the doctor was perhaps in no mood for such lame humor. And secondly, it felt strange even to him, trying to crack jokes when it felt as if the universe was coming apart piece by piece right in front of his eyes.
“Bones, I don’t know where to begin,” he started to say but McCoy cut him off.

“You raped him,” he said bluntly. “I don’t understand how or why, though. What happened down there?” he asked more gently. The doctor in him was mad at Kirk. The friend in him was confused and hurt. The CMO in him was trying to do his duty by Spock. But the man who had almost vomited on him knew that there was a lot more to the story.

“They injected me with something,” Kirk said softly. “I don’t even remember doing it. One minute I was watching him getting tortured. The next minute I was back in the cell with his blood on my hands and body. I have no recollection of what happened. Nada. Zip. But he… he will remember everything. He begged me, Bones, he fucking begged me to stop. And I didn’t. I… didn’t.”

Kirk couldn't finish what he was saying. He was openly sobbing by now. His words were a slurred, incomprehensible mess.

“How do you know he was begging you to stop if you don’t remember anything,” McCoy asked him, forcing a hard edge into his voice. It was taking every ounce of his professionalism to keep himself from going to Jim and comforting him. He had to constantly remind himself that his priority at this moment was Spock and the injustice he had been subjected to.

“The grand vizier forced me to watch a video of what had happened,” Kirk answered shakily. “To make me talk. He promised they would hurt him more if I didn’t talk.”

“And did they?” McCoy asked.

“Did they what?” Kirk mumbled.

“Hurt him more?” McCoy clarified. “Were there more sessions that you were forced to witness or… or…,” he swallowed uncomfortably. “Or made to participate in?”

“No,” Jim said slowly. “The next time they started to torture me in order to get Spock to talk. He talked and saved me.”

“Spock gave up classified information?” Bones asked in disbelief.

“No, he did a Jim Kirk on them,” the captain chuckled darkly. “Told them a bullshit story to save me and ended up giving me a chance to escape.”

“How long ago were you forced to… “ McCoy asked, hating it that he was having to ask all these questions. But he could see that Spock wasn’t the only one who had been raped. Kirk had been forced into it unwillingly as well. And sexual assault was about a lot more than the act of penetration.

“Three days, I guess,” Jim said, not entirely sure of his sense of time.

“Well, we need to take a blood sample from you,” Bones said and stood up.

Jim nodded and allowed the doctor to draw the sample. He knew that if there were still traces in his body of whatever they had given him, it would perhaps help the investigation.

“Jim,” McCoy said after capping the sample bottles. “You do know that if your blood comes back clean, I will have no choice but to report you. I believe you. But the evidence from Spock’s body revealed that one of the people who assaulted him was human. I had to check the databases to see if there was a match.”

“One of the people?” Jim asked, puzzled by McCoy’s choice of words. “Bones, I was the only one
who was forced to... hurt him. Everything else that they did was... was done using foreign objects and...” But he trailed off at the pitying look in his best friend’s eyes.

“Jim,” the doctor said quietly. “Spock was also raped by at least two Cardassians. In the last 24 hours.”

Kirk’s face paled at that. But McCoy had more information for him. “After we beamed Spock back to the ship, Scotty scanned the surface for any other human life signs. He figured you were under too much stress and that’s why you hadn’t remembered about the security officers that had been captured alongside you. But, he didn’t find any human life signs. You need to report their deaths to Starfleet and to their families.”

“Oh my God, Bones,” Jim said heavily. “Oh my God.”

“You also need to tell Sarek about Spock’s condition,” McCoy said. “But if you want, I can do that. We don’t need to give him specifics. Not yet. Would you like to see Spock before you leave?”

“Yeah, yeah I would,” Kirk said and followed the CMO into the intensive care unit.

Even though he had witnessed most of Spock’s ordeal, he was unprepared to deal with the sight of his first officer lying so still, covered in bandages, unable to breathe by himself.

“They tortured him after I left that prison,” he said. “I wish I could go back and kill that bastard. Fucking lizard.”

Then he turned to the doctor.

“Can I stay with him for a bit?” he pleaded. “Please, I am scared. I need to be sure no one will take him away again.”

“We are warping through space, Jim,” Bones said, exasperated. “No one can steal him on a starship moving faster than fucking light.”

“Please,” Jim said.

McCoy steeled himself to deliver the terrible blow to Kirk. “I can’t allow it,” he said. “According to evidence, you are one of his abusers. I don’t have the authority to put you in the brig, a mercy for which I am glad. But as his doctor, I cannot leave you alone with him.”

Jim looked like he had been slapped. But he understood. Without another word, he turned on his heel and walked out of the med bay.

XXXXX

Who said Vulcans couldn’t feel? They sure were green-blooded but they were not computers. McCoy would have to think of a new nickname for Spock.

If, Spock ever came back to them. He had not told this to Jim but there was a very likely chance that their beloved hobgoblin would perhaps never be the same again. He had crashed twice on the operating table. The first time, he had been revived in less than a minute. The second time, it had taken them a little over nine minutes.

And with his existing injuries, there was every chance that he wouldn’t be himself anymore.

“Dr. McCoy,” Sarek’s impassive voice cut through his internal monologue. Leonard forced himself
to look at the pale, lined face of the ambassador. He was controlling his reactions pretty well. But yeah, it was obvious that he was feeling every bit as wretched as McCoy would expect a parent to feel after being told that their son might suffer extensive memory loss or even brain damage as a result of his injuries.

“Maybe it would be kinder to let him go,” the older Vulcan said softly. “I cannot bear the thought of my child suffering the debilitating effects of such disability.”

“But sir, we will not know until he wakes up,” McCoy said. “And he hasn’t entered a healing trance yet but we coul…”

“If his telepathy has been affected, he will be unable to undergo a healing trance,” Sarek said. “Desire and hope are illogical. Yet, in my son’s case, my logic fails me. I wish to believe in your hope, doctor. However, I cannot feel his bond with me anymore. It may be too late to truly save him.”

“You… can’t feel anymore,” Bones was aghast. “Maybe a Vulcan healer can do something.”

“No healer on New Vulcan is willing to aid what they consider a terminal case,” Sarek answered tiredly. “But Elder Selik and I will make arrangements to rendezvous with your ship at the earliest.”

YYYYY

“You have never tried candy apples?” Jim said to Spock.

“Negative, Captain,” Spock answered, unable to see what was the appeal of these chocolate covered apples. Frankly speaking, it was obvious he was even slightly disgusted by the sheer amount of peanuts and candied sugar stuck on the chocolate. “I do not see the appeal to try one now either. And neither should you. The quarterly physical is no more than two weeks away.”

“That’s fine,” Jim said, taking a large, messy bite from his apple. “We are on shore leave. On Earth. In the middle of Universal Studios. Come on, Spock, live a little. We’ll go back and gym a lot. That should keep Bones happy.”

If Spock were human, he would have rolled his eyes. So far, the captain had forced him to accompany him on a roller coaster, a boat, a carousel (!!!) and the ancient Harry Potter ride which they had gone on three times. Spock did not admit it to Jim (but Jim knew it anyway) that he had secretly enjoyed the sound of his captain’s childlike pleasure—the whoops when they came close to a life-sized, computer-operated dragon, the fast rotations of their car as they followed the protagonist through the fictional game of Quidditch.

“Go Gryffindor,” Jim had yelled. And Spock had had to work extra hard to keep himself from smiling.

“This place has been around for more than two centuries. And if you read the history pamphlets they give you, you’ll see that apart from Harry Potter, most rides were changed in less than 15 years because that’s just how pop culture is. Not our Harry though. He is the boy who lived.

Spock looked thoroughly confused by that. “Did his other companions not live?” He asked innocently.

“You’ve never read Harry Potter?” Jim asked his first officer, absolutely horrified to know that the brilliant, amazing Vulcan had never read the finest children’s literature since Gulliver’s Travels.

“Your education is lacking in critical areas, Spock. And we must correct that,” he said.
Spock dubiously nodded and Jim led him to the bookstore in Diagon Alley…

But they never actually got around to reading the books. Jim woke up with a start. He needed to read them to Spock now. Without bothering to put on a shirt, he stumbled out of bed and tore his quarters apart, looking for the prized limited edition copies made out of actual paper.

It took him the better part of an hour to find them.

However, he took less than three minutes to dress up and rush to the med bay. It was only 5:00 am. McCoy was probably not even up yet. The Gamma shift staff still had three hours of their shift left.

“I need to see Commander Spock,” he said to Nurse Chapel.

She looked up from the magazine she was been reading.

“Good morning, captain,” she said with a forced exuberance. No doubt, she knew everything. It was standard procedure to have the CMO and the CNO know all the details of all the cases in the med bay. “Dr. McCoy has not cleared Mr. Spock to receive visitors yet.”

“Please, I know he likes being read to,” Jim said, almost begging to be let in. He didn’t want to tell the nurse that Spock’s mother had often read to him when he was a child, particularly when he was sick or hurt.

Chapel warred with herself. Medical training told her that she needed to obey Dr. McCoy’s orders without question. But instinct told her that this was important.

“Only an hour, captain,” she said. “And you sneaked in here without any inside help.”
Hey everyone, I am back with another chapter. I hope you like it. I am so happy you guys are still reading this story. As always, please let me know what you think. Scroll down to the end notes for warnings if you are easily triggered.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“‘Now, you two – this year, you behave yourselves. If I get one more owl telling me you’ve – you’ve blown up a toilet or –’”

"Blown up a toilet? We've never blown up a toilet."

"Great idea though, thanks, Mum.”"

“Jim, what are you doing here?” Dr. McCoy interrupted his reading. He had been watching for a few minutes now and while he really hadn’t had the heart to say anything, duty demanded that he did. “You know you’re not allowed in here.”

“Bones!” Jim exclaimed. “You’re here. I… I was just reading to Spock. We bought these books when we went to Universal Studios and I…”

“Your test results are back,” the older man said.

“And…?”

“There were traces of DMT, PCP, Methamphetamine, Scopolamine, and a little known Orion aphrodisiac called Orowurta Erotikeya in your blood,” McCoy answered. “That combination of hallucinogens, psychedelic drugs, and aphrodisiacs would render anyone incapable of rational thought. In fact, the only reason they’re still in your bloodstream is that they didn’t give you enough water to flush them out of your system. And you’re alive because they let you… they let the drugs run their course as you…” The doctor was unable to complete that sentence.

Jim was alive after all those drugs because the dosage had been controlled and he had been allowed to go through with the madness induced by them on Spock. And only after that, they had been rendered inactive, making him faint due to sheer exhaustion.


“And you were raped as well,” the doctor replied. “You were as much an unwilling participant in this as he was. You didn’t take those drugs yourself. You didn’t ask to be left alone with Spock in that state. Jim, I am not justifying what happened. But you cannot wallow in guilt when he is going to need you in order to recover.”

Kirk didn’t know what to say. But he was sure Spock would want nothing to do with him after this. And he said as much to Bones. But the doctor only responded with a hollow laugh.

“Do you have any idea how badly he is hurt?” he asked. “He may not ever be the same. And yes,
maybe you cannot do anything for him directly. But you can protect him from Starfleet. You can make sure he gets his due. You can do everything in your power to make the rest of his life as comfortable as possible.”

“You’re talking like he’s disabled for life,” Jim said dismissively. Spock was hurt. Badly. But he would make a full recovery.

“Jim, he may well be disabled for life,” McCoy said quietly. “He was mutilated. And that bomb blast didn’t help matters. Shattered his legs.”

“This is the fucking 23rd century,” Jim almost growled. “What do you mean by disabled for life?”

“There are limits to what medical science can do,” the CMO said. “He is alive because it is the 23rd century. Do you know how much blood he lost? Almost 40% of his body’s entire blood volume. They cut off his nipples and his scrotum, injured his testicles. He may never recover full function. It is a mercy he wasn’t castrated. His large intestine—damaged to such an extent that I had to remove some of the lower areas during surgery. His hands—burned. His spinal cord, his brain, all injured. You can read a full account in the log. But in addition to all that, the rapes… Jim, medical science is not magic. Be glad he’s alive.”

“Should I be?” Kirk asked wretchedly. “What should I be glad about, Bones? That I got him back but not soon enough? Or that he’s been reduced to this…?”

The doctor didn’t say anything for a long moment.

“His father said the same thing,” he whispered. “That it might be kinder to simply let him go.”

“Why?” Jim demanded angrily. “I thought Vulcans were all about the mind. So what if his body isn’t going to be the same anymore.”

“That’s the trouble, kid,” McCoy said. “His damned mind may not be the same anymore either.”

“What?” Jim asked, shock evident on his face.

“He was clinically dead for nearly nine minutes after he crashed on the operating table,” the CMO said. “I have no way of knowing the extent of the damage. All his scans are showing somewhat normal neural activity. But it could be purely anatomical. His brain may be keeping his body alive. But I don’t know if he is still in there.”

“Fuck, fuck, fuck,” Jim said, unable to say anything else.

“Do you believe in God?” McCoy asked, a strange look in his eyes.

“I don’t,” the younger man answered. “Not really.”

“Maybe it is a good time to start now,” the doctor responded. “Come let us go down for breakfast. You can come back and continue reading a little later.”

XXXXX

McCoy replicated an egg salad sandwich for himself and a plate of eggs, sausage, and hash browns for Jim. Normally, he would not allow the captain to eat such an unhealthy breakfast but after everything he had been through, he deserved something more substantial than fruit and cereal.

Jim sat at the table with a lost look on his face. He had insisted on going back to his room and
showering before coming down to the mess hall. McCoy didn’t comment on it but he did notice that Jim’s shower had been too long and that his skin was red. But he couldn’t say if it was because of scalding water or excessive rubbing.

“Coffee,” he said, placing a cup in front of him. “And today, you can have cream and sugar if you’d like”

“Wow, you’re being nice to me, Bones,” Jim said. “Careful, you’re turning into a big, ol’ softie.”

“Make hay while it lasts,” the doctor joked. “The quarterly physical is in a week.”

Between his guilt, tiredness, and worry for Spock, he hadn’t realized just how hungry he was. And now that he realized it, he didn’t like the feeling.

He hated being hungry. It brought back unpleasant memories of Tarsus.

“A loaf, just one loaf, please…”

“60 credits.”

“Please be reasonable.”

“Okay, how about you earn it.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Help us clear out those bodies.”

And that was what he had done. He had hauled stinking, rotting corpses of men, women, and children into mass graves. For weeks after his rescue from that cursed planet, he had smelt the stench of death on his skin. For years, the nightmares hadn’t stopped.

And the hunger; the painful, gnawing, all-consuming hunger—It still made him nauseous.

“Eat, Jim,” McCoy urged him. “You’re expected on the bridge in a few minutes.”

Jim nodded and took a bite of his sausage with a little bit of the egg.

The sensation of warm, juicy meat in his mouth was wonderful. He savored the saltiness of the egg, the distinct flavor of the pork, the spiciness of the herbs. Fresh, green herbs.

Green herbs.

Green…

Green steaks.

And suddenly, the meat in his mouth felt too chewy to be sausage, too fibrous for consumption. The juice was coppery, it was…

And he spat it out, coughing, sputtering, gasping for air.

“What happened, are you ill?” McCoy said and rushed to his side, thumping his back. “Did you choke?” Is it all out?”

“I can’t,” Jim said loudly. His eyes were alarmingly red and soaked with tears. “I can’t eat that.”
“Is something wrong with it?” Bones asked. “I should ask Scotty to look into the programming. These replicators never work properly…”

“It’s not the replicators,” Kirk managed to say. “Look, I’m just not hungry. Okay? I’ll have lunch later.”

“But…” the doctor tried to protest.

Jim, however, practically ran out of the mess hall. He had no desire to tell Bones what had happened to him just now. And food… ironically, even the thought of food was making him sick.

He still wanted to go back to his room and puke his guts out till he couldn’t feel Spock on his tongue anymore.

But he determinedly made his way to bridge. There was work to be done. And he had never allowed his circumstances to get the better of him. It was a status quo he had no desire of changing.

XXXXX

The atmosphere on the bridge was subdued.

None of them had been allowed to see Spock yet. But they all knew he was still in the intensive care unit. It was obvious they wanted to ask Jim about it. But they didn’t dare. They hadn’t seen him since after he had beamed back with Spock.

And the dark shadows under his eyes, the haunted look on his face—all of it said ‘back off.’

“What?” he asked. “Have a grown an extra head? Get back to your stations.”

With a chorus of ‘aye, sir,’ everyone went back to what they had been doing prior to his arrival.

“Status report, Mr. Chekhov?” he asked.

“Vee are maintaining warp factor four to star base Bombay-V,” the young navigator answered. “Vee shall be there for two days, sir in order to pick up supplies and for the scheduled shore leave.”

Jim acknowledged the report with a nod.

The silence on the bridge was oppressive. His tunic felt too tight, the collar of his undershirt seemed to be suffocating him.

He needed to get out of here.

“I must go down to engineering,” he said, trying to inject his usual confidence in his voice. But even he could tell it was pathetic. “I need to look at some of the new changes Mr. Scott is proposing as he repairs the nacelles for wear and tear.”

“But Meester Scott is not…” Chekhov started to say. But Sulu lightly stamped on his foot.

Jim noticed it but he didn’t say anything. “Sulu, you have the con,” he said and left the bridge.

But the minute he walked out, he knew he wasn’t alone.

“Captain,” Uhura’s anxious voice came from behind him. “How is he?”

“I am not at liberty to say,” Jim answered. “You can ask him when he wakes up.”
“Jim, please,” she pleaded.

“Lieutenant, get back to your station,” he said and entered the turbolift.

Uhura stared at the doors of the lift for a full 30 seconds before making her way back to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: Drug use, Manipulation, Description of injuries, allusions to cannibalism
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Hey all, I am back with a new chapter. Let me know what you think. The part you are all waiting for anxiously is fast approaching!! As always, make a girl happy and leave a comment. You know it makes my day :)

Jim spent the next two days preparing for the arrival of Spock’s father and Elder Selik. Dr. McCoy had finally pronounced Spock stable enough to remove his breathing tubes. However, while the Vulcan had shown some signs of waking up, the doctor had chosen to keep him sedated.

“He’ll be more comfortable that way,” he had said to an irate Jim. “I’d rather Selik were here when we finally wake him up.”

“I miss him, bones,” Jim had responded in a broken whisper. “He should be here by my side. I can’t focus on my work without him. I don’t want to command this ship without him. I don’t want to answer the admiralty. I don’t want to be debriefed. Hell, I can’t even eat my lunch without him anymore. Bones… I… It feels like Tarsus. And it doesn’t. I… Am I like Kodos? I condemned him to die.”

McCoy looked at his friend with a mixture of concern and pity.

“No, Jim,” he said gently. “You did what you could. Billions of lives were at stake. You had to think about them. Even if it isn’t going to be easy to live with it, Spock understands this.”

“What if he’s not the same anymore?” the subject of his ultimate fear slipped from the young captain’s lips.

“Don’t torture yourself,” Bones answered. “We just need to wait for his folks before we can know exactly. No point worrying till then.”

Finally, they would be here today.

Jim didn’t know what he was expecting. But he was desperate to know if Spock was going to recover. A part of him was absolutely certain that his best friend would pull through. He was the strongest person Jim knew. But then again, he wasn’t an idiot. He had been a captain for more than two years now. He knew reality was not so simple. He had lived a miracle by coming back from the dead after Khan. He certainly hoped and wished and yearned for a similar miracle for Spock.

But they had no super blood this time. No, Jim’s quota of miracles was probably over.

There were only four hours to go before the arrival of the guests. It was definitely not a good time to drink. But Jim’s nerves were stretched thin. He hadn’t been able to eat or sleep these last few days. He did not want to present his wretched, miserable face to Spock’s father and old Spock.

So he drank, hoping it would help him feel more confident.

It didn’t. Not really.
Sarek had looked drawn and pale to McCoy on the vid screen. In person, he looked like death warmed over. His eyes were sunken in and his face looked pinched. Even though it was Spock lying pale and unmoving in the biobed, his father looked every bit as ill as him.

It was obvious he was holding up only because Selik was there with him.

“Parental bonds are very strong doctor,” Selik explained quietly. “Sarek and Spock stopped shielding the bond from each other after the passing of Amanda. For him to be able to sense what was happening to Spock…” he trailed away and shook his head sadly.

“I am adequate,” Sarek said. His voice was impassive as usual but it lacked its ambassadorial strength. “How is my son now?”

McCoy took a deep breath before answering.

“He is out of his coma but I have kept him sedated,” he said. “I believe there could be some brain damage. I… I wanted you to be here before he woke up.”

Selik nodded. As the youngling’s counterpart, he was probably the only one in this entire universe who understood how such trauma had affected him. But at the same time, he was not the Spock of this timeline. He was not the Spock who had lost his mother so violently. He was not the Spock who had been taken captive and tortured so brutally.

“When do you believe would be the best time to wake him up?” he asked the CMO.

“Perhaps, tomorrow morning,” McCoy answered. “God knows I am both terrified and relieved about it.”

Sarek, who was sitting only a few feet away did not say anything. He was holding his son’s bruised, still healing right hand in his own. And even though there was so much he wanted to convey to him through this touch, he could feel the emptiness where there used to be a quiet but healthy bond.

“I wish I knew how to embrace you,” he whispered, remembering the ease with which Amanda had always been able to offer comfort and warmth to their son in his younger years.

Both, the CMO and Selik watched the scene unfolding before them with a quiet reverence. Sarek brushed the hair away from his sleeping child’s forehead, murmuring words of reassurance even though they were probably stiff and formal. But perhaps they would in fact comfort Spock.

Finally, McCoy could not take it anymore. He nudged Selik and asked him to follow him. Five minutes later, they were both sitting in his office with two glasses of bourbon set in front of them.

“I didn’t know you drank,” the doctor remarked, taking a long sip from his glass.

“I do not,” Selik said with a faint smile. “However, certain friends persuaded me to engage in social drinking from time to time.”

“But alcohol doesn’t affect Vulcans.”

“I am half Vulcan, doctor.”

“Damn, what wouldn’t I give to hear our hobgoblin admit it,” McCoy mused, tickled at Selik’s easygoing humor, so unlike the uptightness of their own Spock.
“An arm, a leg, your antique stethoscope, and the vintage tractor that belonged to your great-grandmother’s grandfather.”

There was a twinkle in the elder’s eyes.

“Yeah, I would… wait, what? How do you know this?”

“You ARE Dr. McCoy, even if you aren’t the one I grew to call a friend.”

“Hah! Hell would freeze over before our pointy calls me a friend.”

“It might,” Selik closed his eyes, suddenly exhausted. “After what he has been through, hell might certainly freeze over before he recognizes any of his shipmates as colleagues, let alone friends.”

The night passed slowly for everyone. Selik felt completely out-of-place on the Enterprise. This was his first time on the ship. He had hoped it would be under better circumstances. Alas, what was, was. It didn’t help matters that everything was the same. Yet it wasn’t. Everything was familiar. But it was also completely foreign.

And the drink he had shared with Dr. McCoy; it hurt to think about the death of his own McCoy. Logically, he knew humans had shorter lifespans. His universe’s Bones had lived a long, fulfilling life before retiring to his farmhouse in Georgia. He had died surrounded by friends and family and grandkids and shipmates from the Enterprise. Similarly, Jim had lived a long, happy life before finally passing away. He had spent blissful days and nights with Spock, reveling in his presence.

Selik could still smell the warmth of the home he had built with his T’hy’la.

It was painful to be around the McCoy and Jim of this universe. It was painful to know of what they had both lost already. It was painful to know that this Spock was probably not going to make it.

As an elder who had almost completed Kolinahr, Selik knew a lot more than everyone, including Sarek, about what to expect.

And it wasn’t good.

But he didn’t have the heart to say anything. So, he remained silent. It was illogical, but he chose to be hopeful. Maybe something would be different about this universe that would bring the young one back and spare his loved ones from the misery of losing him.

Sarek, on the other hand, spent his time meditating. He tried to focus on the flickering flame of the votive candle in front of him. But it proved to be very difficult. The pale, bruised face of his son would not leave his mind. He tried very hard to not think about the suffering that had been inflicted upon his child. But he could not.

Worse of all, he felt as if he had failed Amanda.

“He doesn’t have me anymore,” she seemed to say in his mind. “But he has you. How could you fail him?”

Of course, it was illogical to have such thoughts. Amanda was dead. She could not speak to his thoughts. And he had not failed to protect Spock. His son had been hurt in the line of duty. It wasn’t something Sarek could have done anything about anyway.
But the heart didn’t always bow down to logic. Grudgingly, Sarek had to admit it to himself.

While he spent his night trying to meditate and failing, Jim Kirk refused to fall asleep. The last time he had slept, he had dreamed about the time he and Spock had gone to a football game. Before that, he had dreamt of their trip to Universal Studios.

These were happy memories.

But considering what had just happened to them, these were like nightmares in Jim’s mind. Each one sought to remind him of everything he could lose if the prognosis for Spock’s recovery was negative.

He didn’t want to sleep.

He wanted to stay awake till it was time to wake up his beloved Vulcan.

But after almost six hours of teetering at the edge of wakefulness, Jim dozed off, tear tracks still fresh on his face.

“Hey, Spock, have you ever been to a state fair? He asked his first officer.

Spock looked a little uncomfortable in the crowded fairground and Jim realized this was a stupid question. Obviously, there was no such thing as a state fair on Vulcan. Unsurprisingly, that was exactly how the Vulcan responded.

“Hmmm,” he said thoughtfully. “Let’s get you something awesome. I know!! Corn on the cob.”

And with that, he dragged Spock to the stall selling the best corn on the cob in all of Iowa.

“What do you want yours topped with?” he asked.

Spock looked overwhelmed. There were so many choices.

“I do not wish to…” he started to say but Jim gave him a stern mock glare.

But then a grin broke free from the corner of his lips.

“Buttered,” he said. “That’s how you should have your first one. Dripping with ooey, gooey, melting goodness.”

Honestly, the description didn’t sound all that appetizing to Spock. But he would try it; for Jim’s sake.

And it was a great decision.

The priceless wonder on Spock’s face as he took his first bite would remain with Jim forever.

He dreamt on about this happy memory, recalling everything else he had done with Spock at the fair- the rickety, old Ferris wheel, the ridiculous barn dance for which he had gotten Spock to wear an old-fashioned farmer’s dungaree, the wine slushies he had made him taste, and of course, the second corn on the cob he had begged him to eat, this time with lemon and pepper on it. It hurt him to think that Spock would probably not eat something like a corn on the cob again. He had read McCoy’s report. It was possible that Spock would have to be on a special diet for a very long time, perhaps all his life considering the damage to his large intestine.

But maybe, just maybe, it wouldn’t be so.
Maybe, he will someday be able to take Spock to the state fair again and make him try the sriracha flavor.
Hey all, sorry about such a late update. This chapter is short and it was supposed to be longer. But the next part didn't really fit. So I decided to keep this short and make up for the shortness in the next chapter, which I will try and update faster.

As many of you (those who are also reading finding Spock at least) are aware that I am super stressed about finding a job. If I don't find work in the next two months, I will have to leave the country. One of my readers suggested that I ask you all if you have any leads or ideas. I have a bachelors in Political Science, a masters in International Relations, and a masters in Magazine, Newspaper, and Online Journalism. I have worked with a magazine and two nonprofits over the last 5 years. You can check out my work on my blog- Deltavie.com

As for the Vulcan sentences in this chapter. They are 'my son,' 'I am sorry,' and 'I am sorry, too.'

Let me know what you think. Your girl can do with some cookies while she's unemployed and poor!

The med bay of the Enterprise was cold. Technically, it was warm and comfortable as always but with their nerves stretched thin, there was no warmth to be experienced by the four men who now occupied the CMO’s office.

“I don’t think we should all be around him when he awakens,” Dr. McCoy said. “I will have Nurse Anderson call you in once I’ve assessed Spock’s condition. Since last night, we have been steadily reducing the sedation. It’s about time. So gentlemen, if you wait outside…”

“But Bones…” Jim started to say. However, Sarek cut him off.

“The good doctor is right, Captain Kirk,” he said. “We must do what is best for Spock. I agree with the physician’s medical judgment.”

Selik didn’t say anything. He was struck yet again by how young this Jim Kirk was.

McCoy ushered them out.

He came back inside and looked at Spock’s still form for a long moment. There was no activity in the fingers or toes to indicate that he was waking up. Only a slight flicker of his eyelashes and rapid movement in his eyelids told McCoy that they were close.

Normally, he would have asked a nurse to help him.

But he wanted to do this alone. He had no idea of what to expect and he didn’t want anyone to be here in case they were in for a disappointment.

He gently administered the stimulant and increased the incline of the bed to 45 degrees.
And then he waited.

At first, there was nothing.

But then slowly, Spock opened his eyes.

“Spock,” the doctor said softly. “How do you feel?”

The Vulcan did not respond. There was not even confusion in his eyes. He stared at McCoy blankly.

“Do you know who I am?” he asked, a little more urgently this time.

Spock opened his mouth as if to say something. But his thin lips stretched into a twisted sort of smile as he struggled to make sound.

“Arkhhkll…”

“I… I don’t understand,” McCoy said, his heart sinking.

“Deh…dehll…”

And then, as if too tired and frustrated, Spock closed his eyes with a tiny huff.

“No, no, wake up, can you do this?” the doctor asked and raised his right hand.

Spock looked at McCoy’s hand and craned his neck towards his own.

For a moment, the doctor wondered why Spock was just staring at his hand.

But then, in a moment of horrifying clarity, he realized what was wrong.

Spock was trying to lift his hand. But he was unable to.

“Oh, Spock,” he whispered, swallowing a lump. He had hoped against hope that his medical judgment would be wrong this time. Apparently, no god had been listening to him.

But no, he couldn’t give in to his despair. He needed to ascertain the extent of the damage.

“Can you try and do this?” he raised his left hand and asked, trying hard to keep his voice calm and professional.

Again, Spock only stared.

But just as McCoy was about to look away, the fingers on Spock’s left hand twitched. And slowly, he raised his arm.

“Oh God… Heavens to Betsy,” he was so relieved. The last two minutes were quite possibly the most eventful in his entire medical career.

Spock retained a certain amount of communication skills at the very least. He was mercifully not brain dead. And secondly, the left side of his body was definitely not paralyzed.

“So you know who I am?” he asked again, daring to hope once again.

The Vulcan opened his mouth to try and speak.

But he only managed to croak out “N…n…nu….”
It was close to the word ‘no,’ but the way it had been spoken was heavy, sloppy, and messy. It was obvious that speaking was going to be an issue.

“Do you know where you are?” McCoy asked.

Spock didn’t say anything this time but stared at the CMO blankly and then jerked his head to signal that he didn’t.

Well, at least he still understood standard. That was a good sign even if there was some memory loss.

At long last, McCoy turned around to leave. He had originally planned to ask Nurse Anderson to call the captain and the others in. But considering Spock’s less than ideal condition, he felt he should be the one to go and prepare them.

Just as he was at the door, a low, keening sound reached his ears.

He turned around.

And his heart broke into two.

Spock’s shoulders were shaking.

And silent tears flowed from both his eyes.

The poor doctor could not tell if Spock’s mind was intact or if he had some memory of himself or if he even understood what he had lost.

He just knew his patient was hurting.

Against his better judgment, he went back to Spock and gently gathered him into a hug.

“I’m so sorry, Spock,” he said, his voice thick and choked. “I am so, so sorry.”

For a few minutes, he allowed Spock to weep silently.

And then, he carefully settled him back into bed.

“I will be back in a minute,” he said and quickly rushed out of the room before he dissolved into a sobbing mess.

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The hope on the three faces was harder to handle now that he knew Spock’s condition.

Jim looked at him expectantly. Sarek tried to keep his face neutral but it was obvious how anxious he was.

And Selik. Well, he was Spock. Technically.

And even though there was an air of calm around him, the doctor could tell he was expecting bad news.

“Bones, what’s with the suspense?” Jim broke the silence. “Take us to see him. How is he?”

“I… erm…” McCoy fumbled for words.

“The…” he coughed and cleared his throat. “Spock suffers from severe hemiparesis on the right side
of his body. I thought he was hemiplegic but later, I saw both his shoulders move so… I don’t think it is complete paralysis. The left side of his body seems to be fine.”

“What about his mind?” Selik asked.

“He didn’t know me, didn’t know where he was but he does understand that something is very wrong… I am so sorry.”

Sarek slumped in his chair.

“All this is temporary, right?” Jim asked, obviously trying to control his rising panic.

“I don’t know, Jim,” Bones answered quietly.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Jim yelled. “This isn’t the 21st century anymore. How can you not know?”

“I’m a doctor, not a magician,” McCoy yelled back. And then he said more gently, “But yes… with more surgery, some extensive therapy, mobility devices, and lots of love and care, he will improve. But I won’t lie to you, kid. His days of Starship duty are over.”

“No, no, no… That can’t be right, Bones,” Jim said as if talking to a child. “You are getting it all wrong. He has to be here, on the ship. He can’t be anywhere else.”

But just as McCoy started to answer Jim, a quiet sound cut through their argument.

“May I see my son?” Sarek said. There was an unmistakable sense of loss and torment in his voice.

“Of course, Ambassador,” the CMO said.

They all made their way to Spock’s room.

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Years of medical training and practice had allowed McCoy to keep his composure upon seeing Spock’s condition.

And years of strict Surakian discipline gave Sarek and Selik the strength to keep themselves from recoiling in horror.

Jim, who had had no such training or experience, reacted the most strongly. Without waiting for anything, he rushed in and enveloped Spock into a tight embrace.

“Oh Spock, you’re okay, right… you’re okay,” he repeated over and over again hysterically.

“Let go of him NOW,” Bones’ angry voice came from behind him.

Only then did Jim look at Spock’s face and at the utter terror reflected in his eyes.

“NUUU… NuuuHuuuu…” Spock said in his hoarse, cracked voice. His body was tilted to the left side of the bed. It was obvious he would have moved away had he been able to. But as it was, they all knew he would perhaps never move freely under his own power again.

Jim jerked back as if burned.

There was so much pain in those dark brown eyes.
“Spock, please,” he said brokenly.

“Nuhh…nuhhh,” the Vulcan said and looked away, his breathing still uneven and his body still tense as if bracing itself for a blow.

“Sarek, your son needs you,” Selik said and motioned the ambassador to go to his son.

Wordlessly, he complied.

“T’nash-veh sa-fu,” he said, placing his hand on his child’s cheek. “Ni’droi’ik nar-tor.”

A single tear slipped from Spock’s left eye.

It was unclear if he knew his father or not. He probably didn’t.

But then, he parted his lips and spoke.

“Ni’droi’ik nar-tor, isha…”
Hey all, i am back with another chapter. sorry for the wait. I am trying to get faster. trust me, I am. I am sure once i am a little less stressed, it will get better. Meanwhile, keep your reviews coming. I devour them like a patient of starvation. Also, in a side note, if any of you know someone or would like to volunteer to talk to me about non-violent sexual assault, please let me know. I'm trying to understand a few things and I want to talk to someone experienced.

Secondly, an update on my job search. I have applied through a number of job portals like Glassdoor, Indeed, LinkedIn etc. Is HeadHunter like that? And oh, I am open to positions in other countries, if you guys have any more ideas.

Onward to the chapter. Phew!!! As always, since I have no money, I could do with the cookies you leave me here :)

“Could I have access to the ship’s kitchens, captain,” Sarek asked Jim.

That was a strange request but he nodded his approval and sent a message to the maintenance department to allow the Vulcan ambassador to use the kitchen. These days, it wasn’t really something that was needed or used often. Replicators had replaced true kitchens in most homes and all ships. But even then, for special occasions like weddings, certain major festivals, and important diplomatic meetings, they had a fully functional kitchen with a chef who otherwise worked in housekeeping.

When Sarek left, Jim took a few minutes to think about how all of this had affected him. He had seen how the ambassador lightly touched Spock's cheeks and forehead ever so often. It was abnormal for Vulcans to be so touchy-feely but he knew why Sarek was doing it. Illogical as it was, he was always trying to reassure himself that his son was real, that this was not a cruel dream from which he would wake up only to realize that Spock was still a captive somewhere or worse...

He had a fairly good idea why Sarek had wanted access to the kitchens. Vulcans also needed comfort food after all. And from personal experience, he knew that comfort food always tasted better when made fresh from a scratch. But still, he had never thought Sarek would believe in such illogical human ideas.

Chef Ramirez was also a little surprised by the request too but he hid it well.

“Is this kitchen stocked with ingredients to cook clear tomato and cilantro soup?” Sarek asked him, taking in the cramped space and the numerous shelves stocked with bottles of all kinds of condiments.

“We have all the spices but you will have to replicate the vegetables,” Ramirez answered. “Other than that, what do you need?”

“That is all I require,” the Vulcan answered. “Where are the utensils located?”
The chef pointed him in the right direction and Sarek promptly got to work.

For the next hour or so, he worked carefully. He chopped and blanched tomatoes, prepared a fresh vegetable stock, picked cilantro leaves from their stems—He had never really appreciated how much effort Amanda had put into preparing every meal with her own hands. He had deemed her labors fanciful and illogical. Today, grateful for his eidetic Vulcan memory, he was able to recall her exact recipe. No, he had never taken the time to actually read her little recipe diary. But he had seen her make this soup often enough that he even had the program code for its replicated version in his mind, down to the final command that would place exactly six 1*1 sized bread croutons in the dish.

However, he had been unable to bring himself to replicate it for Spock. And that was why he was in the kitchens, cooking with his hands for the very first time in his life. He wished he had done it earlier. He wished he had done it while Amanda had been alive.

Sarek sighed. There was no meaning to such yearnings. Spock was alive and he needed to focus all his energies towards caring for him.

He had been awake for a few hours now and he hadn’t really spoken much since then. It was obvious his memory loss was severe. He understood a little bit of Standard but was not really useful. He was skittish, scared, still weak and in pain.

Dr. McCoy had been doing everything to keep him comfortable but his injuries were still too severe to fully heal so fast. He would require more surgery. He would also require extensive physical therapy.

As for his mental state…

Sarek closed his eyes and clamped down on the wave of despair that threatened to consume him once again.

While Spock recognized him, he did not remember that he was his father. Worse, he had been unable to read anything in Vulcan even though he retained the ability to speak somewhat clearly. And he had struggled to count the five fingers Dr. McCoy had held up for him.

Sarek would have been grateful if he could have been certain that this was all. But he knew it wasn’t. There was more damage, more pieces of Spock that been lost.

Each one would hit them like an exploding brick.

A few minutes later, he ladled the soup into a bowl and made his way back to the med bay.

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Uhura was sitting next to Spock’s bio bed. Sulu, Chekhov, and Scotty had come to meet him a while ago. But the visit had upset Spock. He had tried to shrink into himself at the sight of the three grown men he hadn’t seen before. And without the two Vulcans around, he had panicked.

Chekhov had almost vomited at the wretchedness of the pleading sounds coming from Spock’s throat as he struggled to scoot away but was unable to.

“I think vee should leave,” he whispered to Sulu and Scotty. Shaken to their core, the three men wasted no time in turning on their heels and practically fleeing from the med bay.

Uhura watched everything through a haze of tears. She couldn’t believe what Spock had been reduced to. The brilliant, proud man she had once dated was gone. In his once sharp eyes, she could
see none of his old self-assuredness.

And it hurt her.

“Spock,” she said softly. “Kal-tor etwel telv-tor?”

He looked at her but didn’t say anything. She took that as a yes and opened her PADD to read him something from his favorite childhood book, Alice in Wonderland.

She had only read two sentences when Spock whispered.

“Rai,” he said softly. “Yuk-tor… Yuk…”

“You want to sleep?” she asked. If she remembered correctly, Yuk-tor meant ‘sleep.’


“Sleep?” Did you mean to say ‘sleep’?” she asked him urgently.

“KROYKAH…” He screamed at that. “KROYKAH… Stislak… Kwes.. Slaeip…”

“What the hell is going on in here,” McCoy’s angry voice spoke two seconds before he entered Spock’s room.


“What is he saying?” McCoy asked helplessly as he prepared to sedate Spock. It was obvious he was experiencing a full-blown panic attack. And if this continued, they would be in deep trouble. Had Spock been able to stand, McCoy was sure he would have broken something in his state of psychosis.

“He keeps saying the words ‘sleep,’ ‘monster,’ and ‘hurt’ but his sentences don’t make syntactic sense,” Uhura answered. “I can only tell he is afraid and maybe having a flashback because he has said ‘no’ and ‘stop’ multiple times. I think we should all start wearing a universal translator while interacting with him. Even if he speaks incorrectly or mixes the two languages, the translator will be able to sort through it and put it into plain Standard. It will make it easier for us to understand what he’s saying.”

The doctor listened but he didn’t respond.

Spock was still whimpering when McCoy injected him with a light sedative.

Just then, he noticed the green stain on the bedsheet.

“Can you call Nurse Anderson?” he said to Uhura.

“Sure, but is something wrong?” she asked him, concerned at the abruptness of the doctor's tone.

“I don’t know if I can tell you,” McCoy answered truthfully.

“I dated him for almost three years, you know,” she said. “I know everything there is to know about him. I held him for hours when the shock of his mother’s death finally got to him.”

The CMO swallowed roughly.

“Well,” he said after several moments. “He’s bleedin’ again. We gotta change the sheets. And… and he’s going to need a new bandage and… well, a new diaper.”
Uhura gasped.

Bleeding? Diaper? Change the sheets?

“I knew it would make you uncomfortable,” the doctor murmured on seeing the stunned expression on the communication officer’s face.

“No, no,” she said. “No… I just… I didn’t realize how bad it was. Can’t you use the dermal regenerator to fix him?”

“Oh, what a great idea, why didn’t I think of it?” McCoy retorted harshly. “Wait, I did. It didn’t work because there are somethings that no technology can heal.”

The doc’s sarcasm could be brutal at the best of times. And right now, even though she wanted to feel hurt about it, she couldn’t. He was under a lot of stress. They all were.

“I’m sorry, Leonard,” Uhura said gently. “I didn’t mean to insult you. I’ll go get the nurse.”

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By the time Sarek came back with the soup, Spock had been changed and made to lie down in a clean bed. He was still asleep thanks to the sedative he had been given.

“He had a panic attack,” McCoy explained to the Ambassador. “You can keep that soup warm for him in the hot case. And if you want, you can go sleep for a bit. I highly recommend it.”

Sarek nodded placed the soup in a small, portable stasis box. But he didn't go to his quarters to sleep. Like he had done countless times over the last few days, he sat down beside Spock's bed.

McCoy shook his head and left the father and son alone.

Meanwhile, Sarek took the time to think about thoughts he had had several times since Spock's childhood. But of course, he had never actually paid this much attention to his child before. He had never devoted so much of his time and energy to Spock’s needs. And now that he had been forced to do so, he was afraid it was too late.

He was still lost in thought when Selik came in and slipped into the seat beside him.

“I presume you did not suffer through an ordeal of this nature in your own timeline,” he said to Selik. It was still hard to believe that this elder was an alternate version of his son.

“I did not,” Selik answered. “Mercifully, I was able to escape my captors before they could begin with the interrogation. One of the guards made a grave error in securing my cell.”

“In that case, how did you know that my son would not be so fortunate?”

“When we were informed of Spock’s condition upon his return, I checked the databases of Cardassian citizens,” he answered. “The guard in my timeline was called Kekaat. The Kekaat of this universe has not been seen or heard from in sixteen years. It is unclear if he is alive or dead.”

The two men did not speak after that.

Sarek was glad that someone was here with him. As a Vulcan, he could not admit it but he was burning with guilt. He couldn’t shake the feeling that somehow he had dishonored his love for Amanda by not saving Spock from this hell.
Each time he meditated or tried to rest, his mind conjured up her image, her lovely eyes loaded with a profound sadness, her lips curved in a resigned smile as if she had known to not expect anything from him.

Unbeknownst to him, a strange woman was in Spock’s dreams as well. He didn’t know her. But something about her was warm and soothing.

He didn’t know who she was or what she meant to him.

But he was certain she loved him and that she would not leave him behind to suffer any longer.
Dr. McCoy was not one to believe in things like providence. But the situation he was facing was enough to make anyone think the “whole goddamned universe” was conspiring against Spock.

With the best of modern technology at his disposal, it should have been easy to regenerate the skin and muscle tissue required for the reconstructive surgery that Spock needed for his thighs, scrotum, lower large intestine, and hands.

But despite all experiments yielding promising results initially, every single regenerated tissue sample had reacted violently with Spock’s immune system. His body would not accept these grafts.

In the last two days, he had subjected Spock to a number of tests. And each one had left the Vulcan fevered and shaking with exhaustion. McCoy was starting to doubt his own capabilities at this point. He had told Jim to not be too hopeful. Heck, he had even anticipated some of these problems. But he had never imagined that in addition to his brain injuries, the physical ones would be so tough to heal as well.

“Doctor, I appreciate everything you are doing for Spock,” Sarek said to him after yet another day of testing. “However, the failure of the experiments is in no way indicative of your own prowess or the lack of it as you imagine. Spock’s unique biology was an anathema to Vulcan scientists as well. He was conceived after extensive genetic manipulation. And while the embryos engineered before him did not survive long enough to reach viable fetal status, he did. It was fascinating because there was no difference in his genetic makeup and the genetic makeup of the previous embryos. If a mutation took place, it was natural and unexpected and therefore, never found even though he was subjected to extensive testing for much of his childhood.”

McCoy heard this entire explanation patiently but inside, he was seething.

“You treated him like a lab rat, you mean?” he said scathingly.

“You misunderstand, doctor,” the Vulcan answered. “We simply wished to ascertain if Spock would live to attain maturity and if he was developing normally.”

“Well, thank you for telling me,” the CMO said. “It doesn’t change anything though. I will keep
trying. Maybe he will get lucky for the second time. Pity we don’t have his umbilical cord anymore.”

At this, a sharp pain went through Sarek. He knew McCoy was thinking about embryonic stem cells discovered in the late 20th century. The technology to harvest these cells had obviously improved over the course of two centuries but Spock’s umbilical cord had been lost with Vulcan that was. And his mother, the combination of whose genes with his own could save his life; she was no longer there either.

It was illogical to believe in luck. But at this point, Sarek didn’t care about logic. His son had been dealt a really rough bunch of cards as the humans would say it. And while he had seen humans perform miracles solely on the basis of “luck” and “hope” and “gut feeling,” he didn’t think there was anything in them for his son. If any of these could lead the doctor towards a solution, he would gladly give up logic a thousand times over.

Just then, McCoy’s pager beeped. He was being called back to his office.

Of course, while he wanted to spend all his time searching for a cure for Spock’s problems, he couldn’t do that. He was the CMO of the ship and there were over 400 other crew members who needed his services.

“I cannot leave you in the lab alone,” he said to Sarek.

“I understand, doctor,” the ambassador said. “I should go and sit with Spock for a period of time.”

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“Stay still, Commander,” Nurse Anderson said to Spock who only looked at the other man with wide, wet eyes. He had just had another panic attack and in his fear, he had lost control of his bladder. Again.

“God, I am sick of cleaning your mess all the damn time,” Anderson murmured under his breath as he unceremoniously spread Spock’s legs. The Vilcan whimpered in response, his eyes still reflecting his terror. His knees jerked feebly in an attempt to draw closer to each other but Anderson ignored it. He gingerly unwrapped the soiled diaper. Like always, it was soaked with green blood and bodily waste.

“You are going to be a pain to anyone who gets stuck with ultimately,” he grumbled darkly. “I can’t imagine your uptight ambassador father wiping your ass.” A quick flash of shame passed through Spock’s eyes and he lowered his head. He lay there like a doll as the angry nurse roughly wiped his genitals and his butt. Fear clenched at his heart when the scratchy washcloth scrubbed against his still raw and sore anus but he forced himself to give in to whatever was happening. He knew something or someone had caused him excruciating pain down there but he couldn’t remember exactly what.

Meanwhile, oblivious to Spock’s inner torment, Anderson continued with his task. Considering how bad the area looked even after surgery, he shuddered to think just how much damage had been wrecked on the Vulcan. For a moment, he felt sorry for him. But then, almost immediately, he wondered why they had even bothered rescuing him or why the Cardassians had left him alive. He would have been better off dead. And while he wasn’t normally so vicious, he couldn’t control his anger and frustration while getting so up and close to the Vulcan’s intimate areas. The look and smell of the whole mess was revolting. He wanted to throw up, he wanted to hit somebody, but more than anything, he wanted to kill Dr. McCoy. He hated him for assigning him to Spock’s care. The Vulcan was a difficult patient. He couldn’t even wear his diaper for very long. It had to be changed every two hours because of blood or urine or shit or all three. It was disgusting!
And then, he couldn’t feed himself. His left side was more or less okay but the doctor insisted on having the Vulcan fed by hand till he could start his PT. All he had allowed Spock was a little button which he could use to summon a nurse if he needed something. Unfortunately, he hadn’t used the button even once so far. They didn’t even know if he knew what they were trying to tell him. But McCoy believed he understood standard even if he was having trouble speaking it so far.

Well, in Anderson’s opinion, none of it was going to help. Commander Spock was gone. This pale, shaking figure on the bed was nothing but a quivering mess of wounds and liabilities.

“Try to keep that diaper on,” he said as he made to leave the room. “Press. That. Button. If you need to go to the bathroom.”

And with that, he left Spock alone in his room once again.

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Jim wasn’t sure he could go down and see Spock.

He had finally figured out what was the trigger. His yellow shirt. That’s what Spock remembered of the monster. And that is why he was terrified of Sulu and Chekhov. Less than an hour ago, Lt. Mendelsohn from navigation had gone to see how the commander was doing and Spock had screamed as if in pain. Before that, he had reacted much the same way after catching a glimpse of Lt. Ahmad who had been in the med bay for a minor burn injury from a malfunctioning console in the weapons division.

He had changed into a plain black shirt in order to go down but he couldn’t shake off the feeling that he was an imposter of some kind. Even if Spock didn’t recognize him, he was the monster from his fragmented memories.

His desire to see his friend warred with his instinct to protect him.

In the end, his desire won and he decided to go.

He hesitated for a few moments before entering in. Again, he wondered if he should go back. But no, he couldn’t hide away from Spock forever. He had even brought their copy of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone with him.

After several more moments of consideration, he entered in.

He waited for Spock to scream and fly into a panic.

But a whole minute passed. Nothing happened. The Vulcan simply stared at Jim with his dark eyes, surveying him, almost as if he was seeing him for the first time.

“How are you feeling, buddy?” Jim asked tentatively, taking a seat beside his bed. “Look, I got a book for us to read.”

At this, Spock’s eyes seemed to lighten up. Or maybe Kirk imagined it. Hope sometimes created powerful illusions. But Kirk had no way of knowing if the passing emotion in his indisposed first officer’s eyes had meant anything or not.

He started reading from the beginning again. Last time, Spock had been asleep and Kirk didn’t know how much of the story he remembered. So he was reading again. He had to suppress a chuckle as he read aloud the part where Hagrid found the Dursleys.

“….A great, big, muggle like you…”
Jim paused his reading.

“T….zzz..x…z..t.” Spock’s mouth was open. He was trying to speak and there was an open, heartbreaking expression on his face.

“Yes, Spock, what is it?” Jim asked softly, closing the book and stepping closer to the Vulcan.

“TJJK…TZZZ..T..” Spock tried to speak again. But he was unsuccessful. It was a very strange situation. On some days, he was able to speak a few full sentences in Vulcan. And some days, he had immense trouble stringing letters together. Today seemed to be one of those days.

“It is okay, Spock, I’m here,” Jim said, loosely hugging Spock, afraid that he would pull away any minute.

But miraculously, he leaned closer, awkwardly trying to bury himself into Jim’s embrace.

“Th…Thh…Th….Th’l…,” He had to stop to catch his breath. Jim didn’t say anything. He simply held him. This was important to Spock and he would give him as much time as he needed in order to say whatever he wanted to.

He didn’t have to wait for too long.

“Th…Thh’aiy..laa..th’hy’laaah,”

For a desperate moment, Jim couldn’t believe his ears.

But before he could say anything about the momentousness of what had just happened, Spock went completely limp in his arms. His exhaustion had finally dragged him under.

But Jim didn’t settle him back in the bed. He maneuvered himself into the bed and drew Spock’s head into his lap.

Maybe, just maybe, they would be fine. For the first time since he had been forced to hurt Spock, Jim allowed himself to believe that he and Spock could still have a future together. And even if it meant giving up Starfleet, he would do it.
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Hey all, I am back. This chapter isn't super long but it is longer than usual. I am still tied up with a host of personal stuff and that is taking a toll on my writing focus but I will not leave this story unfinished. I still don't have a job, the visa clock is ticking away, and there is an incredible amount of pressure on me from my family to get married (Patriarchal societies!). I hope you understand. Like always, fanfiction is my escape into a world away from this one. And I absolutely love it when you engage with my work. Your reviews and comments make my day.

“I think I have it,” McCoy said suddenly. He and Kirk were in the cafeteria. Jim looked up from his pesto primavera.

“Have what?” he asked.

“Selik… he’s also Spock,” McCoy answered. “I’ve had no success with tissue regeneration from Spock’s DNA but maybe I can use a bone marrow sample from Selik to harvest adult stem cells for Spock.”

“Erm, Bones,” Kirk began skeptically. “Haven’t you tried harvesting them from Spock’s bone marrow? I mean if his body rejected his own cells, why would it accept anything from Selik?”

“It may not work but I need to try it. Spock’s body is exhibiting a hyper immune response to counter the effects of his torture. It is also recognizing his own cells as enemy cells, thereby attacking his healthy cells. But Selik’s cells are foreign enough to buy us time but similar enough to stand a chance.”

“Hyper immune response?” Jim sounded confused. “Like an autoimmune disorder? Can that even happen just because of injuries?”

“Not in humans, not usually, no,” the doctor answered. “But unlike humans, Vulcans fight injuries, infections, and illnesses telepathically. Their passive immunity protects them from everyday environmental pathogens but their active immunity remains dormant for almost their entire life unless there is a drastic need for it. Spock’s telepathy is a mess after what was done to his hands. He can feel everything, control nothing and his responses to all physical and mental stimuli is so strong that his body is fighting extra hard to keep his vitals stable. Besides, I don’t need to tell you he was unable to go into a healing trance. The combination of all these factors has triggered his active immunity.”

“Yes, but how is that a bad thing?”

“Active immunity is supposed to be short-term solution. No more than a day or so. It is supposed to act only until a mind healer can intervene and induce a healing trance. Since Spock’s nerves in both hands are almost irreparably damaged, his active immunity has turned into a hyper immune response which is slowly consuming his body. It isn’t a full blown autoimmune disorder yet. But it could turn into that unless we bring his physical symptoms under control.”
“Fuck,” Jim cursed. “Bones, I don’t understand all your medical jargon but aren’t most autoimmune disorders… terminal.”

McCoy’s eyes softened.

“They usually are,” he said. “But I won’t let him go down without a fight.”

He couldn’t remember believing in ghosts.

But he knew what they were supposed to be. Apparitions that could travel through veils of consciousness, never interacting with the physical world but existing in it nevertheless. They didn’t belong. They were unwelcome. And people feared them.

They were him.

And the others? He didn’t really know who they were any more.

He had words but he didn’t know what they all meant. He knew the older Vulcan man who came and sat with him for hours. Father. He was his father. There was an elderly man too. He didn’t know him. But he seemed very familiar.

And there was the blue-eyed human. He was T’hy’la. The meaning of that word was not entirely clear to him. But something told him he needed the human. The human made him feel less like a ghost. He made him feel real. But he also terrified him. There was something about the human that was dark.

Everyone else was… just there. He could sense their wariness, their pity, even vestiges of fear. But there was a screen between them and him. He could not reach out to them even though he wanted to.

And his outer body did not feel like his own. It was like he was directing a puppet to follow his commands. But the puppet was broken. The puppet felt pain. The puppet exposed him to shame, anger, darkness, terror, and hatred.

The humans who touched him… most of them hated his puppet. But they didn’t know he was in there. Or did they? Did they understand that he was different from his puppet. Did they hate him? Did they hate him and the puppet? He wished he could get rid of the puppet. But he couldn’t even make it move properly anymore.

The brown-haired human was here again.

He was scared of that human.

“You still haven’t learned to use that button,” the human said. “Vulcan Vegetable… Done this thrice already… Gotta get another assignment… disgusting....”

The human’s mutterings were angry. He was angry with him. And he was sickened by what the puppet had done. There was something sticky and wet under the puppet. And the puppet was feeling pain. He did not care about the puppet.

But why did this human treat him like he and the puppet were one and the same.

The human pulled the sheets roughly from under the puppet. They were stained green and dark brown. The puppet had made a mess again.
He wanted to tell the human he had tried to stop the puppet. But the puppet just hadn’t listened. The puppet had tried too but ultimately, the strain had been too much.

“You are filthy, you know that?” the human said. “Dirty. I have been a nurse for three years now. Never thought I’d be cleaning your shit, commander.”

And then, to his absolute horror, he reached closer to where the puppet’s legs were joined together.

“Kroykah…, sanu kroykah…” he tried to say. “Kroykah…” he said weakly. But the human angrily asked him to “Shut up.”

So he shut up.

The human continued to pull and prod at the puppet’s most private place. He didn’t know why it was private. But something was telling him to keep that area hidden. It was not for everyone to see. But this human was seeing it. He was touching it. And he hated doing it.

He could tell from the human’s curses, the horrible emotions flowing through him, the things was thinking but not saying.

He did not want this human. He did not want any humans. They didn’t like him. They didn’t like the puppet. And they always treated him like he was the puppet.

But maybe the blue-eyed human knew the truth. Maybe that human would come and see him again.

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Sarek reached the med bay after completing a call with a Vulcan healer. It had been futile. They were willing to accept him into a hospice for the mentally ill but not into an actual treatment facility.

“I wish to see my son,” he said to the nurse on duty.

“In a few minutes, ambassador,” she said politely. “Nurse Anderson is attending to him right now. You can go in once he’s done.”

Sarek stood outside the ward to wait.

A few minutes later, the nurse came out.

“Didn’t sign up for this… damn Vulcan… makes me sick…”

His muttering was low and fast but thanks to his superior hearing, Sarek heard it. Anderson did not take notice of him and continued to walk out.

The older Vulcan’s heart squeezed painfully as he thought about the humiliation Spock was being subjected to.

But he couldn’t do anything about it. Spock needed intensive care and the nurses of the ship were giving it to him. They couldn’t force anyone to do it happily as long as they were being professional enough.

Of course, Sarek had no idea of the extent of Anderson’s resentment towards Spock.

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Uhura’s shift was over. Normally, her free time was spent in the rec room with her guitar, or a
romance novel, or with her friends..

But today she was busily working in a corner.

Elaina from nursing came to call her for a game of rummy but she refused. Scotty brought her a glass of wine but it sat untouched on the table.

Hanukkah was beginning in a week.

Spock’s mom had been Jewish. And every single year, she had made him a sweater, a scarf, or a hat. And Spock had worn them even to lectures. She fondly remembered that time when he wore the blue scarf with white polka dots to the class. He taught them the first six rules of phonetics in Bajoran that day. But she had been unable to pay attention to anything other than how cute, how human he looked in that scarf.

Back then, she hadn’t known it was a gift from Amanda. But once they started dating, she saw her influences on his life. He didn’t ever do any other rituals but like a good Jewish boy, he lit the menorah on all the days of Hanukkah. And he sent his mother a selection of assorted terran teas even though he firmly maintained that gifts were illogical.

The memory brought a smile to her face but she had work to do. The yarn and needles in her hand would not turn into a sweater by themselves. She continued to knit.

It had been a while since she and Spock had broken up. He had been awkward, a little unsure about their relationship. He had cared for her. But after his mother’s death, his acceptance of his humanity had ironically caused him to become even more conflicted than before.

Constantly, he had feared that he wasn’t enough, that she deserved better than him. And ultimately, it had taken a toll on their relationship. That had hurt.

But seeing him now, tormented beyond imagination, broken… what wouldn’t she give to have him back, awkwardness and all. Life was so cruel sometimes.

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Jim was waiting outside McCoy’s office. Selik had readily agreed to donate a sample of his bone marrow. But he was nearly 160 years old. This was not without its risks.

“Do not worry, Jim,” he said gently to the young captain. “I have complete faith in the abilities of Dr. McCoy.”

Jim looked up. There were lines of fatigue around his eyes. He was scared and he had not slept properly in days. The nightmares kept him tossing and turning. The fear kept him awake.

“This could kill you,” he said.

“But the probability is incredibly small,” Selik said. “If this procedure endangers my life, it will be due to my advanced age. Besides, I wish to see Spock recover. I have lived my life. His has only begun.”

Jim nodded slowly, unable to speak. They didn’t know if this would work. But they had no other options. They had to take this chance. If all went well, both Spocks would be alive and well at the end of it. If not, well, he was not going to think about it.

This would work. Jim Kirk wouldn’t have it any other way.
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

Hello, Everyone, I am back with another chapter. This chapter is a little different from other chapters but I hope you like it. I have a small update on my job search. I have found an unpaid internship with the Jewish Federation of my town and I will be doing social media, video editing, photography, and writing for them. But since it is only an internship and that too unpaid, I am looking for more permanent, paying positions. I am still resisting the marriage pressure. But if it comes to that, I will let you know. My last suitor (who I wasn't interested in, by the way) told my family that he wasn't interested after seeing my photos on Facebook. Apparently, I look like I'm retarded and he anyway doesn't want a wife who has a congenital heart condition (even though I am healthy now and my prognosis is good.)

Also, I uploaded the first chapter of Finding Spock- Part II a few days ago. You don't necessarily need to read the first part to understand the second part but I highly recommend you do.

Please proceed with caution in this chapter. There are mentions of sensitive themes in this chapter. Scroll down to the end for specific Trigger Warnings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Drinking till he passed out… or puked. Jim had not done this for years. He really should have been downstairs in the med bay. But he did not have to courage. Nor did he have the will.

Due to Selik’s advanced age, McCoy had been able to harvest only a very small amount of adult stem cells from his bone marrow, hoping that they’d start dividing under the right condition. But it had not worked. The replication was slow, unpredictable… basically, not viable for full transplant.

Dejected, the doctor had finally been forced to choose one site for the treatment. He had chosen the spinal cord. If Spock’s time was limited, thanks to the hyperimmunity, then he should have the use of his limbs if possible. It would be cruel to keep him confined to a bed. Besides, if the treatment didn’t work, there would be no further loss to his abilities.

The stem cell transplant had worked only partially.

Spock would probably regain his mobility. Mercifully, his body had not rejected the treatment. But his telepathy, his brain functions, his motor coordination would not improve. He would still not regain what he had lost. To top it all, Selik was on life support. The drugs he had been given before the bone marrow extraction had reacted badly with his system. Jim chuckled darkly. Spock and his uniqueness-- some things were universal constants. Transuniversal constants.

Damn that. He deserved another drink. Swaying on his feet, he reached for the nearly empty bottle of whiskey. His hand shook. The liquid sloshed dangerously and he upended the bottle to pour the last of the amber liquid into his glass.
Just then, his comm. unit beeped.

“FUCK,” He exclaimed angrily. “Fuck you all… can’t even piss if the cap’n’s outta the fuckin’ chair.”

He answered the call.

“Captain,” Christine Chapel’s voice spoke from the other end. “Dr. McCoy wants you to come down. We are ready to bring Commander Spock out of sedation.”

Jim blinked several times to clear his head.

“Ca..n re… repeat that?” he said, trying very hard to not slur his words.

“Are you drunk, sir?” Chapel asked sternly.

“Who? Me? Dr..dru..drunk?”

“I will inform the CMO that you cannot come down right now, sir,” she said and hung up.

“Fuck you too, Chapel, fuck YOU!”

And then, he burst into tears.

Jim Kirk didn’t cry often. He didn’t cry when Frank hit him. He didn’t cry when Winona packed him off to Tarsus. He didn’t cry when his host family on the planet was shot at point-blank range by Kodos’ soldiers. He didn’t cry when he buried bodies after bodies for a handful of grain.

But now, he could not stop weeping. Spock was never coming back.

And he would have to live with it. Or would he?

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“Indisposed?” McCoy spat. “Jim doesn’t even use words like that. Did he tell you why he is… ‘indisposed’?”

“No, sir,” Chapel lied. She didn’t want to say the captain was drunk. Not in front of Ambassador Sarek.

“Are you okay with the captain not being here?” McCoy asked Sarek, worried about Jim and torn between his duties of friend and doctor.

Sarek only nodded. It probably would have been good to have the captain. But he didn’t want to wait. Impatience was an illogical, un-Vulcan trait. But as he had already accepted, his logic failed him where Spock was concerned.

Overcome by a very strong sense of deja vu, McCoy administered the stimulant, hoping and praying that this time, the result would be different.

He stepped back and waited with bated breath.

A few minutes later, Spock opened his eyes. The first person he saw was his father.

“Sa...ss..ss..sa-merrrkkh…” he whispered, his voice slurred and raspy.
“Yes, my son, I am here,” Sarek said and stepped closer to Spock. “How is your current state of being?”

“Ku..kyu...Kus..sut…”

“I am aware of your pain. It will cease with time. You must be hopeful.”

To everyone’s surprise, Spock responded to this with a dark chuckle that suddenly turned into uncontrollable laughter.

“Riolozhikaik…” he said in flawless Vulcan. “RIOLOZHIKAIK...RIOLOZHIKAIK…” He screamed and then burst into quiet sobs. “Illogizhiakoal….illo...zhikaik….”

“I presume he thinks your hope is illogical,” McCoy said, pity and horror clearly reflected in his eyes. “But… we need to see if the procedure worked.”

With that, he turned to Spock.

“Can you raise your right hand for me Spock?” he asked gently. “No, no, the right one. This one,” he said when Spock raised his left hand.

“Gas’rak?” Spock asked, his voice small and unsure.

“Ah, Spohck,” Sarek said, encouraging his son. Reassuring him that it indeed was his “gas’rak” or right hand that he needed to raise.

For a few seconds, he seemed to struggle to make his arm move from its position on the bed. McCoy’s heart sank. But then, with some difficulty, Spock slowly raised his right hand into the air.

“R...rrrr...rrreghit,” he said, obviously trying to say “right.”

“Yes, right,” McCoy said, fighting to control the flood of emotion he was experiencing. “You’re a rockstar, kid, you know you are!”

“Ri..gh..Ryte,” Spock whispered, a tiny smile tugging at the corners of his lips. It was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen, as far as McCoy was concerned. This was such a tiny step. But for him, this was so much more. They could only climb up from here. Spock would get better. Hyperimmunity, loss of telepathy, whatever… this old country doctor was not giving up on his stubborn, amazing Vulcan patient.

He wished Jim was here to see this.

Well, now that he knew the surgery had been successful, he would go and share the good news with Jim himself. And while he was basking in the relief and joy of what had just happened in that private ward, he continued to worry about Selik.

He had always thought the old man to be VERY senile. The idiot had dared to hang the fate of the entire world on the assumption that Jim would be able to take over command from Spock. And he had even lied (or implied as he put it!) about space-time paradoxes just because the golden command team needed to come together organically.

Jesus Christ! Organically... like they were a new variety of eggplant.

McCoy could not forgive Selik for endangering Earth like that, for endangering his baby girl like that, knowing what Nero had done to Vulcan.
But now, those grudges were throbbing differently. Spock would walk because of Selik. But the old man would probably not live to see it. Vulcans seldom came back from life support. He wished he had been nicer to him, a little kinder. But that was the strange thing about hindsight. He could see everything differently now but he couldn’t do a damn thing to change it.

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“Jim, you’re in there, I know,” McCoy said for the third time. He was standing outside Kirk’s quarters and had requested access four times already. “Look, I don’t want to use my medical override. You won’t like it if I do that, would you? But I swear on all the corn in Kansas, that if you don’t open this door, I will come in anyway and this will go on your file. At least let me know you’re alive in there.”

Still no answer.

His fingers ghosted over the keypad on the wall. He was about to enter his override code when he remembered Chapel had not told him why exactly Jim was indisposed. And just then he realized that if it had been some ship business, Christine wouldn’t have hesitated to say it out loud in front of Sarek.

No, this was personal.

A terrible thought crossed his head. Unbidden, he remembered the faint marks on Jim’s left wrist. He had shrugged them off with some bullshit about his first crush refusing to date him when he was 12.

But what if?

“Oh, no, no, no,” he muttered frantically and punched in his override.

“JIM,” he shouted as he rushed to the weakly convulsing figure on the ground. Jim’s eyes were half-lidded and his face, neck, and shoulders were stiff as a board. There was an empty bottle of whiskey on the floor and a tiny bottle labelled ‘Strychnine.’

The CMO fought to control his panic and sent an urgent signal to the med bay while administering a basic antidote that he always carried in his pocket specifically for toxic reactions, thanks to Jim’s impressively long list of allergies.

“You bastard,” he exclaimed angrily, as a triage team rushed into the med bay.

Dr. Alfina placed an oxygen mask on Kirk’s face and two orderlies lifted him onto an anti-grav stretcher.

“You bastard, you… you…” tears rolled down McCoy’s cheeks as Nurse Chapel and her team of junior nurses took the captain into the operation theatre for immediate pre-op preparations.

He had just spent hours in surgery trying to restore a part of Spock’s old life. And now, he would again spend hours in the OT, to save the life of his other best friend.

“I’m a doctor, not a leaking faucet,” he said to himself as he roughly wiped his face. Ideally, he should not be the one to perform surgery on Jim. He was emotionally compromised.

But something told him that he needed to do this. He didn’t trust anyone where Jim was concerned. And today, he was going to prove the strength of his friendship yet again.

Chapter End Notes
Trigger WARNINGS- Mentions of self harm, description of suicide attempt
Chapter 18

Hey all, here is the next chapter. I've been covering Hanukkah events at my workplace the whole week so it has been a little busy. Read and review please. It makes me happy :) And Happy Hanukkah!!! If you'd like to see what we've been up to, follow the Instagram account I just created for our center. The username is jcc_syr.

The rich air of Earth was so different, so much more refreshing than the recycled air of the Enterprise. He took a deep breath, filling his lungs with the sweet, clean scent of freshly cut grass. Normally, they all went to their respective homes for shore leave. But this time, they are all staying at the Kirk farmhouse.

Uhura had insisted on it. Spock has nowhere to go. And she cannot bear the thought of him staying by himself in a hotel room somewhere. She wanted him to come and stay with her. But he didn’t want to impose. And that’s when Jim stepped in.

Officially, this is a team building exercise. In reality, it is just the Enterprise family having a good time together.

“He offered to cook,” Uhura says, sitting next to him. There is a delicious aroma coming from the kitchen but obviously, it isn’t the communications officer who’s cooking. Chekhov can’t even make a cup of coffee from a scratch. And Sulu… well, he cooks. But if he started cooking today, the meal would be served after two days.

“It is the way of tradition,” he says. But they all know that’s just his way of making sure they never ask him to cook again.

Bones is a decent cook, Jim thinks. But he is not here. He is visiting Niagara Falls with Joana; bonding with his daughter.

“What is he cooking?” he asks Uhura. “I didn’t know Vulcan dishes could smell that good.”

“They usually don’t,” she answers. “But he is using his mother’s recipe.”

That explains it. He can imagine Amanda making her own additions to bland, boring Vulcan food.

“How long will it take?” he asks. “And what is he making?”

“Spinach and Artichoke stuffed Kreyla with Ulan soup.”

“Sounds impressive… but why is he going through all that trouble?”

Uhura hesitated before answering. She didn’t want to betray Spock’s trust in her. But she also thought Kirk should know. Spock would need his captain’s support in order to deal with the aftershocks of the Narada incident.

“He wants to use the spices and foodstuffs his mom sent him last Passover,” she answered. “That was almost 10 months ago. And Vulcan stuff lasts long because it is all desert bred. But it doesn’t
last longer than a year.”

“He doesn’t want to waste it… It would be illogical.”

“That’s not what he said to me.”

“What did he say, then?”

“He didn’t say anything. But would you want to be alone while you prepared a meal with the last of your world’s produce?”

“I guess not,” Kirk said, standing up. “I’m going to take a nap. It’s been a long day. Wake me up when he’s done cooking.”

And with that, he left.

He groaned with relief as he finally rested his back on the mattress. And before he knew it, he was fast asleep.

But moments later, someone was calling out his name.

“Jim?” A gentle voice roused him.

“G...g..wainy...g’way...” Jim said, burrowing his head under the sheets.

“No, Jim,” the gentle voice said. “You need to wake up. They are waiting for you at the table.”

“M...m..bed’s warm..t’ll get cold,” he whined, his voice still thick with sleep.

“I’ll keep the bed warm for you,” the voice said softly. “I promise.”

“'Kay… I’m going... You keep it warm.”

“I will.”

Dr. McCoy was sitting in his office when two alerts went off simultaneously. The Captain was waking up. Dr. Wallak and Nurse Chapel were on their way to his bed right now.

The second was the emergency red alert which beeped once and then stopped.

Selik was gone.

The physician swore and practically flew out of his chair.

“Two units of epinephrine,” he barked at the assisting nurse who had also rushed in on seeing the alert.

But even that did not help. After 20 minutes of Cardiac massage, McCoy was forced to give up.

“Damn you, old man,” he whispered angrily. But there was no bite in his words. Only pain. And immense amounts of regret.

“Doctor,” A timid voice came from behind him. It was Nurse Chapel.

“The captain is awake,” she said.

“I’m on my way,” he said and then turned to the orderlies. “Clean up and move Elder Selik’s body to
the morgue. And don’t say anything to anyone yet. I will inform Ambassador Sarek myself.”

Jim was sitting up in bed when McCoy came in.

“So, sleeping beauty?” he said. There was no humor or jest in his tone. He was angry and exhausted. “Welcome back to the land of the living.”

The captain looked suitably chastised.

“When am I going back?” he mumbled.

McCoy looked at him. And then he motioned the nurse and the other doctor to go out.

“Going back where?”

“Home. To Earth?”

“Why would you need to do that?”

“Come on, Bones. I am emotionally compromised. Unfit for command. Whatever you wrote on my file.”

“Accidental poisoning due to an allergic reaction.”

“What?”

“That’s what’s on your file.”

At that, Jim shut up.

After a long moment, he whispered. “I owe you, Bones. I owe you.”

“You do, kid,” McCoy agreed. “You can repay me by never doing that again.”

"How is Spock?"

"He is okay. Haven't had him walk yet. Was too busy saving your ass."

"I love you too, Bones."

McCoy's eyes softened at that. Jim looked so young and vulnerable sitting in that bed. He swallowed roughly at the thought of how much the young man had been through. And now, he had lost Selik.

"I need to tell you something," the doctor said.

"It is about Selik, isn't it," Jim said. It was a statement rather than a question.

"He is..." And with that, McCoy lowered his head, unable to meet Jim's tormented gaze.

"I know, Bones," he said quietly. "You don't have to... say it."

"I'm here, Jim, if you need anything," the doctor said, the words feeling useless and inadequate on his tongue.

Jim only nodded.
There was nothing to say.

Spock knew something was wrong. He could feel it in his bones. But so far, no one had come in to say anything. Not that they usually did. But the golden-haired human had not come in since yesterday. The doctor had not come. His father had also not come.

Only the brown-haired human had come.

And it had been unpleasant.

He could still feel the stinging heat of the slap he had received from the nurse yesterday evening for being unable to swallow a spoon of soup in one go. Spock was scared of the nurse. And that is why he had pretended to be asleep this morning when he had come in with another bowl of food.

He could not bear being hit like that. It made him feel like a dog. He was not a dog. He was the same as the brown-haired man. He looked the same.

But he was different too. He could not raise his hand like that and hit so hard. He could not hold the spoon steady. Things fell from his hands if he held them up for too long. And his fingers shook all the time.

The doctor had said he would teach him to walk today. But he hadn’t come even for that.

Maybe something was wrong with the doctor. Maybe that was the unpleasant feeling in his bones.

But it didn’t feel right. Something was wrong somewhere else. Something dark, something gentle, something final.

Sarek waited patiently in his quarters. Dr. McCoy had requested that they meet there. The request seemed odd but he had no problems obliging. And so, he meditated as the clock on the table ticked away.

These days, his thoughts were never far from Spock. He worried about his son incessantly. And while Vulcans did not dream, he often thought he heard voices in his sleep. Sometimes, they were incomprehensible whispers.

Sometimes, it was the conversations he had with Amanda over the 34 years of their marriage.

But sometimes, it was snippets from Spock’s childhood.

Last night, he had dreamt of the time he had taught him how to play C-major scale on the lyrette. That had been the first lesson. And for the next several hours, he had seen images from various lessons. And they had all been calm, comforting, and easy on his mind.

Except for the last one.

The last lesson had had an audience. Three goats. One large, wizened old animal. Two young ones. And with the last note of the final piece, the old one had come closer to Spock and placed its head at his feet.

“He wants the lyrette, father,” Spock had said in his high, childlike voice. “It would be incorrect to refuse.”
And so, young Spock had placed the small instrument in front of the old goat. The animal had quietly shuffled away, dragging the lyrette behind him. The two little goats had followed the old one quietly.

And Spock had watched in silence.

Sarek did not remember any more. That was most unusual. He would have to meditate on this.

Just then, the CMO knocked at his door.

The ambassador let him in.

“I have some bad news, sir,” McCoy began gruffly.

Sarek closed his eyes in despair. It had to be about the captain.

“Elder Selik is no more.”

A ripple of shock and remorse went through him on hearing that.

“Are you certain?” he asked softly.

“I am,” the physician said. “His body is in the morgue right now. And his belongings are being packed, I wanted to know if it is okay for us to bring those to you?”

Sarek nodded.

“I am so sorry,” the CMO said again. “I am so very sorry.”

“You do not need to apologize for an inevitability that must eventually come to every living being”

“Inevitability or not, it still hurts, doesn’t it?”

Sarek did not respond and the doctor took his cue from that. But on reaching the door, he turned around.

“The captain is out of danger and awake.”

“That is welcome news. I thank you, doctor.”

For several moments, there was an uncomfortable silence in the room. Ultimately, it became unbearable for McCoy and he left.

Sarek was once again alone with his thoughts. The meaning of what he had seen was troubling. And he did not like troubling images, especially when they were obviously unreal.

For the next two hours, he meditated undisturbed. He knew he needed to go out and see how Spock was doing. But he needed to achieve his own equilibrium before that. But when he realized he wasn’t getting very far, he gave up.

As he extinguished the votive candle and folded the mat, someone knocked at his door.

“These are Elder Selik’s things, sir,” the yeoman said, placing a small duffel bag and a wrapped packet just inside the door. “There wasn’t anything else.”

There was something impossibly sad about these meagre belongings. There wasn’t much. And while
Vulcans didn’t believe in hoarding, it was strange even for them to have so little to show for a life of 160 years.

But at this point in history, Selik was no different from any other Vulcan. With the death of their planet, each one of their people had nothing of significance in the name of possessions. And what they did have now was shared because the colony on New Vulcan was still struggling, still unstable, still vulnerable.

But Selik wasn’t from here.

He wasn’t really Selik either.

He was Spock from a different lifetime, a place where he hadn’t been reduced to a shell at the mere age of 33.

This was Spock as he would have been.

This was also Spock that would never be.

With a sigh, Sarek held up the small, wrapped packet.

“To Spock,” It said.

Sarek knew it would be wrong to open the packet. It was obviously intended for his son.

But Selik had been his son too. In another universe, a universe that had been kinder to him than this one.

Against his better judgement, he opened the packet.

Inside, was a book of terran fairy tales and a small note.

“Spock,
I did not bring anything with me when I crossed into this universe. And what I did bring was lost with my ship. However, I remembered the title of the book my mother used to read from, to me and to my adoptive sister, Michael. I am aware that Michael Burnham did not come to live with your family in this universe. Mercifully, her parents survived and she has continued to lead an uninterrupted life on Earth after the Klingon attack.

This book is a collection of European fairy tales. Our mother, as you are aware, was of Norwegian ancestry. Many of the stories in this collection are from Norway. My personal favorite was ‘The Three Billy Goats-Gruff.’ I hope you will enjoy reading them as I enjoyed listening to them as a child.

Selik.”

Vulcans did not smile. But in that moment, Sarek did.
Chapter 19

Chapter Summary

I am so, so sorry about such a late update but way too much was happening for me to be able to focus on writing. For one, my American grandma broke six ribs in her back after slipping on the stairs. Then my oldest guinea pig died and the two younger ones are sick. My American grandpa's sister-in-law passed away recently after a long battle with cancer and we have all been under the weather because of the cold and these various unfortunate events.

Secondly, I have been enjoying my internship greatly and learning a lot too. One of my latest projects included talking to Holocaust survivors and to people who lost family members in the Holocaust. Interestingly, I mentioned in one of my articles that some of these survivors were glad to reach Israel after being liberated from the concentration camps. Since then, I have come under a lot of attack from many of my friends who think I have turned into a Hasbara activist simply because I believe in a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Anyway, I have been rather upset and overwhelmed because my American grandma is herself a Holocaust survivor.

Onwards with the chapter now. Thank you for sticking around.

The atmosphere in the room was subdued. Nobody was saying anything. And it was obvious that the thick tension in the room was making Spock nervous. He couldn’t understand what was wrong. Less than an hour ago, he had walked. Walked!

Granted that it had been shaky and painful and he had fallen down after merely six steps. But he had moved. He knew that was a good thing. There would be no more accidents. The nurse would not have a chance to hit him again.

But why wasn’t everyone happy? They had been happy just a few minutes ago. And then they had left him alone and gone out. But now they were back. And they were unhappy… or…or angry. That was scary to him. If they were angry, they would hit him like the nurse or like the other people he didn’t remember properly.

And where was the old Vulcan-- the one with the wrinkled skin, the one who seemed so very familiar. This other Vulcan was his father, he knew that much. But he wasn’t looking at him. But the doctor was staring at him with a strange expression on his face. Was he making them sad? Had he done something wrong? Maybe he should have walked more. Maybe if he had not fallen down after only six steps, they would have still been happy.

McCoy looked at Spock’s face. The open expression, joyful and confused at the same time; it broke his heart. But he could not agree with the captain.

After a long moment, Jim finally spoke.

“Bones, for the tenth time, he walked,” he said. “He can stay on the ship. We can look after him just fine.”
“And for the tenth time, how will you justify that to the admiralty?” McCoy was surprised at how unreasonable Jim was being. “The amount of danger we run into all the time, kidnappings, hostage situations, skirmishes along the various neutral zones-- It’s not safe for a civilian on the ship, much less one that is disabled.”

“Stop saying that word.”

“Well, I will say it a hundred thousand times if that’s gonna get it through your thick skull.”

“Spock is not disabled, Bones,” Jim said softly. “He walked. And he is not a civilian. He is Starfleet. Commander. That’s his rank. He stays and that’s my final decision. Besides… he… he called me T’hy’la….”

“You don’t know if that is what he meant to say. And what about the staffing issues? Don’t think I haven’t noticed how exhausted Sulu is because of his double duties… or the science department which is working itself to death trying to keep up with all the projects they had started under Spock. They need a new science officer and you need a new first officer. And since there are no other Vulcans in the fleet, you’re gonna need two different people to fill those positions.”

“Spock will recover,” Jim said but it was obvious he did not really believe it. “I can’t let him go. You… you weren’t there in that prison. You didn’t see what they did to him… and he… he tried to give me a way to escape even when he was hurt… he… he wanted me, expected me to leave him behind. And… and I did. He is in this condition because I left him behind.”

“Did you have another option, Captain,” Sarek asked at last. While he was touched by the devotion Kirk had for Spock, even he knew that his son could not remain aboard the ship. He was in no condition to serve. He would only be a liability.

“So you’re just proposing to take him where?,” Jim said, surprise evident in his voice. “To New Vulcan? I thought you said there wasn’t a single healer willing to come with you and Selik. And didn’t you tell me that he doesn’t qualify for a care facility either?”

“You misunderstand me,” Sarek clarified. “It is true that Spock will not be accepted by a long-term care facility. Those are indeed reserved only for those who have no family left. However, that does not mean he does not have a home to go back to. Like all other Vulcans, he has a home on New Vulcan. He shall reside with me in the embassy’s residential complex.”

“No Sarek… we both know he… they… your people don’t even like him,” Jim fumbled for words, unsure how to make them see his point of view. “And he should be by my side. I just told you we are T’hy’la”

Sarek looked at Jim pityingly.

“I am willing to believe that you may well have been T’hy’la,” he said. “However, Spock’s telepathy has been damaged to such an extent that allowing the bond to mature will only endanger you. He is in no condition to handle a bond as complex and permanent as the T’hy’la bond. It is for the best if it is not allowed to develop. It is a mercy that you are human. You will not even feel its absence.”

“But what about him? He will feel it. His place is here with me.”

“Be as that may, Spock is still Vulcan and his rightful sanctuary is by his own people. As his father and his legal guardian, this is my final decision.”

Jim looked away.
“Fine. Take him away,” he said in a cold, hard voice and left the room.

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“Spock, I am so sorry,” McCoy said gently. He was sitting next to the Vulcan, trying to explain that he would be leaving the ship in less than four hours. So far, he had not responded to the good doctor in any way. That he was upset, was obvious. But nothing came out of his mouth. Except for a slight widening of his eyes, he didn’t react at all. He had known he was going to leave. He had heard the others talking. And if they were not happy, there was no reason for him to be happy. Leaving didn’t feel right. But his father thought it was good to leave.

Just then, Jim entered.

“They are sending us a new first officer and a new science officer.”

“Who?” Bones asked, not bothering to look up.

“Commander Gary Mitchell and Lt. Commander Carol Marcus.”

The doctor turned to look at Jim.

“Mitchell? I thought he was a tenured professor at the academy… and Jeez, Carol is okay with coming back the ship?… brave of her!”

“I don’t know Mitchell very well,” Kirk admitted, slipping into a chair at the foot of Spock’s bed. “I was in his 8-week diplomacy workshop. But that was about it. And well, at least we’ve worked with Carol before. It could have been worse. But that’s not important. You know what’s interesting, Bones?”

“What?”

“My request for the new officers was approved immediately. No excessive paperwork, no pointless back and forth. It’s almost like they knew Spock was not going to be able join back any time soon.”

“Of course they knew, Jim,” Bones answered. “Everybody did… except for you.”

“But they knew because you told them. I thought it was protocol to let the captain know if you were declaring a crewmember permanently unfit for duty”

McCoy remained unfazed.

“I did tell you, Jim. You didn’t expect me to lie, did you? Lying on his official file could cost me my license.”

“And lying on my file would not? I mean, it wasn’t really an allergic reaction, was it?”

“That’s different, Jim… Spock…”

But Kirk raised his hand to silence him.

“No Bones. The only difference was that you make exceptions where you like. And Spock is just not important enough to you. Maybe you are glad to finally get rid of the hobgoblin.”

McCoy flinched at those harsh words. He couldn’t believe what Jim was saying. Anger boiled in him like lava. But one glance at Spock’s blank, tired face made him swallow the enraged shout that was threatening to burst from his lips.
Instead, with a cool, professional demeanor, he turned back to Jim.

“You are emotionally compromised, captain. I believe you should return to your quarters in the interest of my patients and the rest of the ship. You are relieved of command for the next four hours.”

Jim opened his mouth to say something but the anger and hurt in his CMO’s eyes made him stop. Without saying another word, he left the room.

After several long moments, McCoy managed to compose himself.

“Sorry about that, Spock,” he said softly. “He’s just hurt and upset that you’re leaving.”

He didn’t expect Spock to say anything, which was why he was surprised when Spock craned his neck to look at him with his lips straining to form words.

“I…. I kno...know..”

It took McCoy a long moment to react.

“You… you know? And you… you can speak standard again?”

“I… I… know… Jim sad… sad....I do not....”

Spock couldn’t say anything more. His jaw was shaking with the effort of having to form words in standard. But at least, he could do that again.

“Oh Spock, I don’t want you to leave either, y’know,” McCoy said gruffly. “You don’t believe Jim, do you?”

“Hurt… Leave… hurt... think… think hurt...hurt…” And with those words he clutched his head tightly.

A lone tear slipped from his right eye. It was obvious that while he was fully in his senses and had an almost complete understanding of what was happening around him, he knew something was very wrong with him, that it hurt him to think.

“You’ll be okay… you’re a fighter.”

Spock smiled. A sad, open smile that made the doctor very uncomfortable. It was easy to say that he’d be okay. But what if he wasn’t. The CMO had not taken the time to think about the implications of Spock’s condition. And now that he did, it made something yelp inside him like a wounded animal. He had never taken the time to think about what Spock had come to mean to him and to the rest of the crew. But now that he did, it made him sick to his stomach to think that there would be no more pretentious bickering over dinner with the pointy-eared computer, there would be no more subtly sarcastic insults delivered in a smooth, even cadence. There would be no more normalcy. Oh sure, the ship would move in and work would go on as always.

But it wouldn’t be the same without Spock. Not even close.

XXXXX

Six hours later, the Enterprise docked at Starbase Ningkasaka. Uhura, Chekhov, and Sulu helped Sarek pack up Spock’s belongings. Everything fitted neatly into two suitcases. These along with Selik’s coffin were loaded into Sarek’s personal ship. They all knew that a new first officer was coming on board.
“Is it okay if I call you sometimes to talk to him?” Uhura asked Sarek tearfully.

It was on the tip of his tongue to say that Spock would probably be in no condition to really talk over subspace calls. But he pushed it down. After Amanda’s death, he had come to appreciate the way humans reached out to each other. Even if Spock wasn’t capable of holding a true conversation, it would cheer him up to see his shipmates. After all, Uhura was among one of the few people he had actually felt comfortable around.

“That would be acceptable,” Sarek said. And then he turned to Kirk.

“I am thankful for everything you have done for my son.”

“I didn’t do anything, Sir,” Jim said ruefully. “But I hope you will no hesitate in contacting me if you need something. I have already put in the official paperwork to have him approved for special medical benefits and a year’s paid leave with full salary in addition to his disability allowance.”

“You have not applied for his discharge from the fleet. Why?”

“I don’t believe in no-win scenarios. He will be back.”

For the second time that day, Sarek could not bring himself to acknowledge the illogic of humans.

Finally, Jim turned to Spock who was sitting in a wheelchair.

“Bye, Commander,” he said simply. “It has been an honor. Take care of yourself.”

And that was it. Ten minutes later, the T’Paari took off from the starbase while the crew of the Enterprise made their way to a bar. They all needed something strong to deal with a goodbye that hadn’t offered them any closure.
Chapter Notes

So sorry about such a long wait for this chapter. Life is still pretty crazy and maybe it will remain this way now that I'm adulting full time. This is my first time being an adult and I'm still figuring it out. So thank you for bearing with me. Secondly, I apologize for not answering your reviews, I really wanted to respond to each one but I just didn't find the time. So I am going to address a few common grievances here. First of all, I haven't forgotten about the nurse. There will be justice. It is a part of the plot and I hope you will like where I go with that. Secondly, Spock is not facing just a mobility issue. In the chapter before last, we find out about the problems he is having with his immune system. That coupled with his disability is just a lot. Lastly, Starfleet is military. Even though ableism is frowned upon in all other spheres of life, the military is one of the few places where ableism is practiced actively, without any shame or real criticism. Also, while his mind is mostly intact, his telepathy is damaged. For Vulcans, it is like having their sight taken away, except-- telepathy is sight and more. This story is called Invisible for a reason. And it is going to be pretty long. But it will have a closure.

The dead barrenness of New Vulcan was alien to Spock. He remembered Vulcan. He remembered the Koshvar, the disaster that Nero had brought upon them. And now that the fog in his mind had cleared up some, he remembered that his mother had also been taken from him; swallowed up by the blackness that had consumed his hot, unforgiving, formidable home.

This dry rock with nothing but miles and miles of sand was not home. But what did he know of home? He had never been home on Vulcan. However, somehow, it had seemed better than this place he did not remember.

Of course, that was a lapse of his memory. He had made a number of runs to New Vulcan during the first few months after the Koshvar. The willingness of Captain Kirk to do something a cargo vessel would normally do, had touched him. Kirk had tried to give Spock as many opportunities as he could to see his people, help them rebuild something from their shattered existence.

But Spock did not remember that. After what had happened to him on Cardassia Prime, he had no recollection of ever having set foot on New Vulcan.

Sarek watched his son’s face carefully, searching for a reaction, hopeful and fearful at the same time.

“Spock, this is our home,” he said softly in Vulcan. Mercifully, he didn’t have to speak Standard all the time anymore. Vulcan came more naturally to him and he was so tired after the last few days that he was relieved to feel the clean, sharp syllables of Vulcan on his tongue.

“New home?” Spock asked with a small tremor in his voice. “New Home,” he repeated as if to let it sink in. His face was relaxed, devoid of emotion. And he didn’t have to struggle anymore either. As in the case of his father, speaking Vulcan was comfortable, familiar. Everything else had been taken from him.

“Yes, son,” Sarek said. “Let us go in.”
And with that, he set Spock’s chair to the hover function. The wheels couldn’t go up the stairs after all. Behind them, Sadur, Sarek’s personal attendant, brought their luggage in. Elder Selik’s body would be taken to the new Katric Arc for its last rites. Sarek had already made arrangements for that. But neither he nor Spock would be attending. It was illogical but the ambassador did not have it in him to say farewell to a man who was his son in another plane of existence.

“I have not yet made the arrangements to accommodate your needs,” Sarek said. “However, workmen will arrive tomorrow and fit the kitchen, the washroom, bathing chamber, the bedroom, and the living space with mobility devices and accessories. I have asked Sadur to prepare a light meal for us. I trust Bertakk soup will be agreeable. You were fond of it as a child.”

“I want to sleep,” Spock said suddenly.

“You must take some nourishment before you rest, son,” Sarek said. “It has been an exhausting journey and you did not consume anything on the ship.”

“I… I hurt… Sleep….”

This time, there was a note of desperation in his voice.

“... Please,” he added in a whisper.

He did not respond to Sarek’s reassurances that the house would be made more welcoming for him. Somehow, it did not matter. The older Vulcan sighed.

“I am aware of your discomfort,” he said. “Very well. However, I must help you wash and change into suitable domestic attire.”

This was not a task Sarek was looking forward to. Dr. McCoy had told him how to help Spock change, how to change his… his diaper, how to help him wash without startling him. But… it was still going to be unnerving. Vulcans were a very private people. Nudity was considered shameful. Children even as young as four bathed and dressed themselves independently. Bondmates also never saw each other naked except for when they engaged in coitus or if one of them was too ill. But Spock had no bondmate. And as his only surviving relative, Sarek was the only one who could take care of him. He had never seen his son naked, not even when he was a child.

Well, now was the time to test the strict mental disciplines he had practiced all his life.

He switched the chair’s function back to wheels and put the brakes on.

“Come, son,” he said moving to stand in front of Spock. “Let us go to the bathing chamber.”

“Ba..bathing, Sa-Mekh?” Spock whispered. He stared at the arm his father offered him.

“Affirmative.” Sarek said.

Spock tried to push himself out of the chair. Sarek moved to help him but the younger Vulcan flinched just as his father placed his hands under his arms to help him up.

“Nooo… No.. please,” Spock said, trying to push himself again. His face contorted in pain as he struggled to get his back muscles to cooperate.

“Please, son,” Sarek said gently. “Let me help you. You will regain your strength some day. You do
not have to…”

“Please, no,” Spock whimpered, close to tears. He wasn’t sure why he was experiencing such a strong onslaught of emotion and a terrible empty void.

Spock finally stood up shakily, leaning heavily on Sarek’s arm. His legs shook with the strain. But after several moments, he felt steady enough to continue.

After several more agonizing seconds, he took a small, shaky step towards the bathing chamber. Sarek stood beside his son patiently as he took tiny steps. It broke his heart to see his proud, strong son reduced to this but it also reinforced that idea that bringing him home had been for the best.

Three steps later, Spock stumbled and he would have fallen to the floor had Sarek not broken his fall.

“Th...Thank you, Sa-Mekh,” he said as he stood for a few seconds to regain his balance.

It took them nearly ten minutes to cover the 30 feet distance and by the end of it, Spock was shaking and sweaty.

“Here, son, hold onto this bar while I undress you,” he said and helped Spock curl his still healing fingers around a high bar fixed into the wall just under the sonic shower. Spock winced when his hands touched the cold metal. His hands had not healed properly. And they were not going to heal anymore. A thick layer of tissue had had to be removed because of infection. And the remaining tissue was extremely sensitive in some areas and completely dead in the others.

Sarek noticed Spock’s discomfort but didn’t comment. He knew this process was going to be gruelling. He had no desire to make it even more unpleasant with unnecessary commentary. Gingerly, he removed the dark, heavy robe off his son’s back.

But no amount of discipline could have prepared him for what he saw.

There were scars of various kinds on his legs, thighs, and back. Sharp, thin, raised scars that looked like lash marks. Satiny, raised mounds of flesh. Keloids from the burn injuries. Dark, raised marks that could have only been knife wounds.

And there were much older scars too-- scars he had no idea about. What other horrors had befallen his son? What else had happened to him?

He dared not turn Spock around. He wasn’t sure he would be able to keep the shock off his face. He moved lower to take off the diaper. The moment his fingers touched the plastic waistband, a hitched sob escaped his son’s throat and his body tensed.

“If you are able to remove the diaper yourself, I will let you do it,” Sarek said and took a step back.

Spock jerked his head and his right hand clutched the bar tighter as he lowered the left one. With excruciating slowness, he slipped two trembling fingers under the elastic belt and tried to pull it down.

But it didn’t work. The diaper slipped a little but not all the way through. He let out a frustrated sigh and tried again. With each failed attempt, the trembling in his fingers grew worse.

“I cannot do this,” he said at last. “I am not good, Sa-Mekh.”

Sarek swallowed roughly before answering.
“Let me help you, son.”

Spock didn’t say anything. He simply raised his left hand again to the support bar.

Sarek took that as his cue. He stepped forward again and removed the diaper. This time, he was better prepared but that didn’t make it any easier to bear. The horrific signs of abuse. The welts, scars, burn injuries, abrasions… and more fresh blood.

He cursed himself yet again. After all, it was his obstinate desire to have his own biological child with Amanda that had given Spock this hybrid biology which rejected tissue grafts, blood transfusions, dermal regeneration, and most other kinds of regenerative treatments.

“I am going to begin the bathing process,” he said, forcing himself to focus on the task at hand. “I do not wish to make you uncomfortable. You must let me know if you experience any discomfort at any moment. We shall stop immediately.”

For a long moment, Spock not answer. But then he said, “Please proceed.” There was a lifetime of acceptance and loss in those two words but Sarek could not dwell upon them. Without saying anything, he took a warm washcloth and soaked it with disinfectant. Taking extreme care to be as gentle as he could, he started scrubbing his feet. For several minutes, father and son didn’t say anything. Spock stood straight and relatively steady while Sarek worked his way up. But as expected, when the time came to scrub his upper thighs, the younger man let out a strangled gasp and gripped the bar tighter. His knuckles turned white and the pain in his hands intensified as the delicate, still-injured muscles were stretched beyond their capability. His cheeks became flushed as he tried to rein in his terror and his frame shook with the effort.

Sarek sensed his son’s fear and his hand paused. He wasn’t sure they were ready for the next part of process. He needed to clean Spock’s buttocks and genitals. He had to make a decision now. He could either forego this process or he could simply go ahead and get this unpleasant task over with. Dr. McCoy had been very clear that thanks to his rapidly developing hyperimmunity, even the smallest of infections could prove to be fatal.

No, there was no option.

He went ahead and started cleaning Spock’s buttocks.

The response was immediate.

“NO…” Spock shrieked. His hands slipped and he tried to run out of the bathing chamber. But in his weakened state, he only managed to fall down. The side of his head collided with the edge of the door. But he still made a scramble to crawl out.

“Spock, you are safe,” Sarek said, rushing to his son’s side. “You are safe here. This is not a prison. I am your father.”

“NO… NO… NO…” he continued to scream and blood poured out from the cut just above his left ear. His arms flailed about uselessly because he was unable to move. And in his panic, he hit Sarek square in the face.

The force of the blow almost made the older Vulcan lose his balance. And in that moment of desperation, he had no choice but to nerve pinch his son. Instantaneously, Spock’s eyes rolled back in his head and the bathing chamber was quiet once more.

Over the next hour, Sarek dressed Spock’s head wound and finished cleaning him up. It wasn’t an easy task to perform all by himself but he was not going to shame his child by asking for help from
Sadur. After dressing Spock in a loose, warm robe, he carried him to the bedroom and tucked him in.

And then, he sat down beside the bed to wait. Vulcans often claimed not to feel. But now, he didn’t see the point in lying to himself anymore. He could feel. And right now, he was feeling despair.

Chapter End Notes

Here you go, peeps. Let me know what you think. You know I love hearing from you. Also, if you have been following the news, you know what is happening in Syria. I’m trying to raise money for the IRC and for Doctors Without Borders, two organizations that are doing yeoman service in Syria. Here is the link to the fundraisers. Please donate, it would mean the world to me and to the innocent people trapped in that conflict zone: https://deltavie.com/2018/02/27/syria-beyond-facebook/

I have also started a project called The Firgun Project, which aims to help people from difficult socio-political backgrouds to tell their stories, learn skills in storytelling, and plan their careers. If you know someone who needs that kind of help or if you would like to volunteer, here is the link with all the details: https://deltavie.com/the-firgun-project/
Dr. McCoy was not happy with how the crew was performing. The short break on Ningkasaka had been good for most of them. But the bridge crew’s efficiency ratings were down. Also, Uhura and Kirk had not logged in their meals for the last two days. He had not seen them in the cafeteria. But he had caught Uhura nibbling at an apple during the afternoon break. She had always been close to Spock. He remembered how worried she had been during the week of his and Jim’s captivity. He remembered how she had forgotten to eat or sleep in her desperation to comb through as much stray transmission as she could. He knew how heartbroken she was now that Spock had left the ship.

But she would be okay. He had seen her watching a movie in the rec room with Chekhov and Sulu. He also knew that she was finding a measure of comfort in talking to Scotty, unexpected as that was. Not to mention that his “wee dram” had something to do with it as well. Uhura was not usually big on alcohol. But Spock’s suffering and his subsequent departure had hit her hard. It had hit all of them hard.

And that is why, the CMO was worried about the captain. He had not known that Spock and Jim were T’hy’la. He couldn’t say he was shocked exactly. The fact that their team was like butter on bread said a lot. But even then, from what he understood of the T’hy’la bond, it was the rarest, most sacred bond that two people could ever share with each other. Vulcan mysticism was shrouded in mystery but it was often speculated that a T’hy’la bond could not be dissolved even by death. Katras (were they like souls?) could find each other through a million lifetimes even.

Of course, McCoy did not know how much of that stuff to actually believe. He was a man of science, for Christ’s sake. But even if a tiny grain of this mumbo-jumbo was true, then he truly didn’t know if Jim would ever get over what had happened to him and Spock.

And that brought him back to the point of Jim’s health. Unlike Uhura, he wasn’t even trying to cope. Since Spock’s departure three weeks ago, he had tried to give Jim some space. But this afternoon when he had walked into Jim’s room after being hailed by the housekeeping crew, he had been
appalled at its condition.

The bed was a jumbled mess of sheets and something that had once been a feather pillow. Dirty laundry was strewn around carelessly. Candy wrappers were littered about the floor. And in a corner of the table was a bowl of days-old soup. In another corner, there were a number of empty liquor bottles and a half-finished can of beer. The stench in the room was horrendous.

But that wasn’t why the cleaning crew had called him.

They had called him on finding a long, rusty knife under the bathroom sink. Jim’s sullen mood and anger was not hidden from anyone on the ship. And Ensign Patterson who was in-charge of cleaning the captain’s quarters thought it his duty to inform the CMO.

“I’ll take it from here,” McCoy had said gruffly. “Don’t breathe a word of this to anyone.”

Now, six hours later, he was sitting in his office and staring at the old knife. He had run some tests on it just to be sure. Thankfully, he had found no organic material on it. But that was only a small comfort.

Jim needed to talk to someone. And now that Spock was no longer his patient, he could focus his energies on taking care of the captain. His decision made, he got up and carefully placed the knife in the bottom drawer of his filing cabinet. Then, he locked his door and made his way to the cafeteria.

Ten minutes later, he was outside Jim’s quarters with a tray of harmless coleslaw sandwiches (no meat, he had to remind himself), two cups of hot chocolate, and a bowl of strawberries. Simple, nutritious food.

Jim opened the door.

“Hey Bones, come…” he started to say but then his eyes fell on the tray of food.

“I already ate,” he said with a forced smile.

“I haven’t,” McCoy said, trying to keep his voice casual. “And I didn’t wanna eat alone. You’re always up for a snack. So humor me.”

With that, he walked right past Jim and placed the tray on the coffee table in the living area.

“You are a terrible liar, you know that?” Jim said and settled himself into a chair. “You’re concerned about me. You think I’m not eating.”

“Well, you aren’t.”

“I am, doc. I ate soup and salad and a brownie for lunch. For breakfast, I ate eggs and toast.”

“Jim, how much do you know about your ship? Specifically the healthcare department?”

“Well, enough as a captain. The rest is of course your domain. I’m assuming you’ll tell me if something needs special attention.”

“Okay, well, here’s a new nugget of knowledge. The ship’s CMO has access to everyone’s replicator logs. Yours included.”

As expected, Jim’s eyes widened and his mouth fell open.

For several seconds, he didn’t say anything.
“You had no fucking right,” he said through clenched teeth. His face was flushed and his eyes showed how betrayed he felt. And even though McCoy had been prepared for this, he had to use every ounce of his courage to stare back defiantly into Jim’s eyes.

“I have every right,” he said calmly. “I am the CMO, remember.”

He expected Jim to say something more. But the younger man only turned around and went back to sit in his easy chair.

“What do you want, Bones?” he asked tiredly. “You want me to eat? Fine, I’ll eat. Will that make you go away?”

He didn’t wait for McCoy to answer. He picked up a sandwich from the plate and took a large bite.

“Luff…M’eatfing,” he said through a mouthful of food while chewing vigorously. And then he took another bite. And then another.

In three bites, the sandwich was gone.

But Jim didn’t stop. He picked up another sandwich and like with the first one, he bit off half the sandwich in one go.

“Hey, hey, hey,” the doctor said and came back to sit opposite from Jim. “Slow down. The sandwiches aren’t going anywhere. You don’t wanna choke.”

“Slow down? Bones, you want me to slow down? Why? Everyone wants me to eat. I’m so damn lucky. That lizard wanted me to eat to. And I did. I ate all the shit he asked me to eat and he still did what he had to. Why should I eat? But then again, why shouldn’t I eat? Who the fuck ever listens when I say I don’t want to eat? Who the fuck listened when I said I wanted to eat? Here you go, doc. I’m going to eat another sandwich. And then, will you fuck off?”

Dr. McCoy watched the wild look, the desperation in Jim’s eyes as he continued to wolf down the sandwiches. He felt ashamed of himself. He should have anticipated it that given Jim’s experiences on Tarsus, he would take out his frustrations on food. Even in the academy, he had had a complicated relationship with food. There was a reason why he had always carried a snack in his pocket and insisted on buying groceries in bulk.

Quietly, he picked up the now messy plate of sandwiches, the untouched mugs of hot chocolate, and the strawberries.

“I’m not done yet. Still eating, can’t you see?”

But despite his words, Jim didn’t stop him. With a heavy sigh, McCoy emptied the dishes into the trash chute and placed the utensils into the recycler. All through it, Jim didn’t say anything.

However, just as he was leaving, he stopped him.

“Thank you for checking on me,” he said

“I don’t want to see you fall apart, kid,” McCoy said softly. “You are a fighter. You gotta fight some more.”

Jim looked down and stared embarrassedly at his feet.

“I… I don’t know how to fight this…” There was so much pain and vulnerability in that admission
that the doctor wanted to gather Jim in his arms and comfort him like he would do for his Joanna. But he had to remind himself that Jim was not a 12-year-old child. The horror he had been subjected to would take a lot more than a fatherly hug to heal.

“I know what you need,” he said gently. “You’re gonna start talking. And I’m gonna be the one listening. 4:00 pm in my office tomorrow.”

For a brief moment, he feared this advice would be refused.

But a moment later, Jim nodded.

And for McCoy, that was a tiny but significant confirmation that there was light at the end of the tunnel.
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Hello everyone. I know I am updating after almost 22 days. That's awful. But it's been so busy. To those of you who’ve been reading the second part of Finding Spock as well, I have not abandoned that story. The fourth chapter is ready and sitting on my computer. I will edit it and post it as soon as I can. Also, today my family in America is celebrating Seder. Happy Passover everyone. This is a beautiful time of the year. I am sending blessings and love and good wishes to all of you.

Let me know what you think of this chapter. I love long reviews.

“I regret interrupting your routine work with this message, however, the circumstances are dire.

Sincerely,

Ambassador S’chn T’Gai Sarek of the House of Surak”

His finger lingered over the send button. He had just sent a message to the Vulcan Family Services. He was not hopeful about their response. Right now, he was debating whether he should send his next message. He didn't want to disrupt the routine of the intended recipient and that's why he was hesitant. There was a third message he needed to write as well but that would depend upon the response to the first two.

Sarek did not normally get so stressed about mundane matters like his personal staff. As a senior diplomat, he had a personal secretary, a personal attendant, two office assistants, a housekeeper, a staff manager, and a number of part-time workers including but not limited to chefs, cleaners, launderers, mechanics, and even a healer.

But absolutely none of them was willing to take on the additional task of caring for Spock. The junior staff was paid 20 credits an hour, which was 7 credits more than the minimum wage. The senior staff received 35 credits an hour which was also pretty generous considering most Vulcans were now forced to live in poverty thanks to the destruction of their planet and the extremely slow pace of rebuilding their civilization on this barren, nearly inhospitable planet. He was appalled that not one person on his staff was willing to look after Spock even for a few hours in the morning. He had offered them 50 credits per hour for it and still they had refused. And he was bothered by the fact that they refused because they were disgusted by Spock. They considered him weak, not Vulcan enough. Of course, no one had said it openly but he sensed it. Living with Amanda had taught him to be highly perceptive of the sentiments Vulcans never vocalized but also didn't care to truly hide. He had noticed T’Sel’s disregard for Spock’s nutrition. She cooked Vulcan food but did not care to add probiotics, fiber, and vitamin B supplements even though Spock’s prescription said he needed them. Sohiz, the mechanic had fitted the house with temporary ramps but he had neglected to put the railings and handles that Spock would need in order to use the ramps with ease. T'Hana, the healer had chosen not to perform even a rudimentary meld with him because she was unwilling to subject herself to the weakened mind of an already emotional half-blooded Vulcan.

Ultimately, Sarek had taken it upon himself to look after his son’s needs to the best of his abilities. Every morning, he woke him up and helped him to the bathing room. Every morning, ablutions were
performed with difficulty. On the good days, Spock managed to use the toilet successfully and even sponge himself clean sometimes. On the bad days, his legs shook, he lost control of his bladder, wept in utter despair, and fought like a cornered animal when Sarek attempted to clean his intimate areas and change him. This alone took a few hours. After that, they sat down to eat breakfast. Mercifully, Spock could feed himself but he ate very little. And the one time Sarek left him to eat alone, he threw away the contents of the bowl into the recycling unit. And when he was caught, he spent an hour apologizing, guilty beyond belief that he had done something bad by wasting food he had known he wouldn’t be able to eat.

The rest of the day was spent in futile attempts at meditation and reading. Spock still enjoyed reading but he couldn’t focus for too long. He was still fascinated by the computer in the study but he stayed away from it, worried that he didn’t know how to use it anymore. In the evenings, Sarek sat down with him to help him regain his vocabulary in Standard and to work on his memory. Needless to say, many of these study sessions ended badly. Memory loss was an unpredictable, terrible thing and for the Vulcan mind, it was even more brutal. When repressed memories were relieved, often the accompanying emotions were too strong for Spock to handle. Only a few days ago, Lt. Uhura had sent a scarf, a hat, and a sweater for Spock. A present for the terran holiday of Hanukkah. Sarek had not even remembered it. However, Amanda had celebrated it every year and included Spock in every aspect of the celebration. Sarek had thought it a good idea to give his son the gift during one of their evening sessions. But it had ended badly. It had brought back memories of Amanda.... And then, those of her passing and the destruction of Vulcan. Spock had needed to be sedated for the remainder of the evening.

It killed Sarek to see his son’s suffering but he knew he must continue again the next evening. This was the only way to help his son. Besides, he needed to start his physical therapy too. His hemiparesis would not worsen any more thanks to Dr. McCoy’s surgery but in order for him to get stronger, he needed to exercise. But right now, that was not possible. In addition to all these practical issues, Spock was suffering from an upper respiratory infection. Sarek was not allowed to give him antibiotics unless absolutely needed. They would interfere with the steroids he was on to counteract the hyperimmunity.

And then there was the exhaustion that he himself was experiencing. He was not certain he could care for Spock in this way for too long. He had his ambassadorial duties to attend to as well.

Dejected, he had asked the Ashakir Hospice if they had any recommendations for home care. They had been of no help. The temple at N’Drai Amonak sometimes had young trainees who were trained in homecare as a way of humbling their own spirit through service. But they had no one who could take care of Spock. They had no trainees. Everyone who was able was engaged in concrete tasks that needed immediate attention-- scientific research, mining, agriculture, factory work, healing, teaching, construction, and trade. Other pursuits, even those of the mind had taken a backseat.

Sarek had contacted a number of other facilities but most had given him similar responses. Well, now the Vulcan Family Services was his last hope. If they did not have anyone either, he would be forced to take a long, unpaid leave of absence in order to stay home with Spock. It wasn’t a particularly viable solution. While he was indeed more well off than other people, he was not exactly wealthy. All his material wealth had been consumed into nothingness with Vulcan-that-was. Now, he earned some benefits and luxuries only because of his active work as a diplomat. A leave of absence would take away all those privileges. That leave request was the third message. He had not yet typed it out. He was afraid that he would have to.

He swallowed roughly at that thought. He hated himself for it but he wondered yet again when Spock’s disability allowance would be released. The ‘special medical benefits’ and a year’s paid leave which had been promised by Kirk had also not been approved yet. He wanted to write to the
captain and ask when the said money would be accessible. But so far, his dignity and respect for his son’s former position on the ship had kept him from asking. However, he wasn’t sure if that was wise anymore.

The shadows on the wall grew and he blinked for a long moment. He was tired. Finally, impulsively, he hit send. The second message was on its way… to Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise.

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“That’s it, Bones, that’s… that’s everything,” Kirk choked out. He had spoken to the doctor for over four hours. The glass of bourbon next to him was untouched. The coloring sheet in front of him was full. Once he had started talking, he had spoken without a break. Everything he felt for Spock, the guilt-- for how he had taunted her over his mother’s death, for every time he had been hurt in the line of duty, for not telling him how important he was, for everything he had suffered in that Cardassian prison.

“I did this to him… I,” tears streamed down the captain’s face.

“It is okay, you can cry,” McCoy said gently. Sometimes people just needed to talk. And that is exactly what Kirk was doing. As his doctor, he could help him by simply listening with a sympathetic ear.

“I wish I could do something for him. I wish I could see him. I avoided him. I don’t know how he is. Not really. I don’t.”

McCoy knew that. And in order to get over his guilt and self-hatred, Kirk would have to come to terms with what had happened to Spock and what that was going to mean in the long term.

“I have an idea,” he said. “It is a little controversial but I think it would work.”

“What’s the idea?” Kirk asked.

“You spent practically no time around Spock after his rescue. But I have videos that document his progress. Some of it I recorded. Milestones after the surgeries, first steps, stuff like that. Some of it is from the monitoring camera I installed in his ward. I won’t show you anything too private but watching some it will help you accept Spock’s current situation. It will also help you figure out what you can do to help him now.”

Kirk pondered that for a moment.

“I don’t know if I can handle that?” he said softly.

McCoy understood his fear.

“You don’t have to do this,” he responded. “We can just have sessions like this one and talk so that you can get over your own issues. But if you want to keep Spock in your life and your thoughts in any way, you need to acknowledge him. That means acknowledging his current reality.”

“Okay, when do we start?”

“Day after tomorrow. Same time.”
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

You have every right to kill me. But before you do that, take the time to read this chapter. And if you're interested in knowing why I took such a long hiatus, read the end note.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Jim’s eyes stared unseeingly at the blinking cursor on the screen. His entire frame shook with anger. He gripped the edges of the table to control his rage. A half-consumed cup of coffee sat forgotten at the edge of the desk. The liquid in the cup sloshed dangerously.

“... Vulcan authorities are not in a position of offer assistance to Spock. My own personal wealth, while adequate for the foreseeable future, will not suffice for my son’s long term needs if I am forced to take leave in order to care for him. I regret interrupting your routine with this message, however, the circumstances are dire.

Sincerely,
Ambassador S’chn T’Gai Sarek of the House of Surak”

Jim was surprised. He had signed the papers for Spock’s disability allowance and medical benefits soon after his departure. It was very strange that the funds had not been released. He had less than two hours before his appointment with Bones. Maybe it would help to discuss Sarek’s message with him. But it was only 2:15 pm. His appointment with Bones didn’t begin until 4:00 pm.

What the heck! He was the captain and this was an administrative matter. He could handle this without McCoy’s advice. He picked up his cup of coffee and took a sip, only to wince at the stale taste before chucking it into the recycling chute.

He wasn’t exactly sure what was the best way to go around this. Maybe the payment to Spock’s account had been delayed because of the snail-paced ways of Starfleet bureaucracy. There was no reason to suspect anything else. First, he called up the ship’s accounts department.

“... We outlined Commander Spock’s benefits and sent our recommendations to command for final approval... have the funds not been released?” Lieutenant Commander Damra, the chief accountant asked.

“Um.. yes,” Jim answered. “Can you check what the issue might be?”

A minute later, she had the answer-- an answer she knew the captain would not like.

“I am sorry sir, I should have noticed this earlier,” she apologized. “Starfleet has placed an indefinite hold on Commander Spock’s account. And it is out of our jurisdiction since this is a matter of the central administration.”

“Oh.. oh..that’s weird... well, thank you,” Jim said. “I’ll look into it.”
He couldn’t understand why there would be an indefinite hold on Spock’s account. And why had he, his commanding officer, not been informed? Maybe it was time to place a call to the finance department at the Command HQ.

He punched in the number into his long-distance com unit. A few minutes later, a young blond receptionist answered the call.

“Good afternoon, Starfleet Central Administrative Services, how can I help you?” he asked in a deep baritone voice which surprised Jim because the kid couldn’t have been older than 19. He grinned and chided himself mentally for making assumptions about the young ensign. Taking a deep breath, he introduced himself.

“Ensign Hart,” he said, quickly reading the name on the receptionist’s badge. “This is Captain Kirk of the USS Enterprise, I need to speak urgently to Commander Gillian McMahon from the finance department.”

“Good afternoon Captain Kirk,” Hart said. “Just give me a moment to locate Commander McMahon.”

While the ensign looked up where the finance officer was and if he was free to take a call, Jim took in the scene behind the ensign’s desk.

A sea of red-clad administrators answered calls, filed reports, and resolved routine tasks. The indistinct buzz of the average office environment calmed Jim’s nerves. A moment later, the ensign was back.

“Sir, Commander McMahon cannot speak to you right now,” he said solemnly. “However, I can take a message if you’d like.”

Jim seethed with anger but controlled his reaction.

“No, thank you… that will be all,” he said and was about to hang up when he changed his mind. “Actually, can you connect me to HR?”

“Sure,” the ensign said, transferring the call to the Personnel Division.

Moments later, A pale, dark haired woman’s visage replaced that of Ensign Hart’s on Jim’s screen.

“Personnel Affairs Office, how may I help you?” the woman asked in a cool, disinterested voice.

“Erm… I am Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise. My first officer, Commander S’chn T’Gai Spock has been placed on extended medical leave but his benefits have not yet been approved. I need to know why.”

She took a moment before answering. “Sir, that information is classified.”

But Jim wasn’t having it. No way.

“Look, I am Spock’s commanding officer and if anyone has a right to know why his benefits have not been approved, it’s me.”

The woman refused to budge.

Maybe a different tactic would work.

“What is your name?” he asked with his most charming smile that showed all of his perfect teeth.
She opened her mouth to retort with yet another refusal but was taken aback by the new, completely unrelated question.

“I. Sir… my name?” She stuttered. “Um… Lieutenant Zoey Finkel, sir.”

“Right, Zoey…. You know who I am?” Jim asked sweetly.

“Yes, sir, who doesn’t know you?… your bravery is legendary sir… as are the exploits of your ship.”

“Well, you do know that you are sitting pretty in that chair and talking regulations at me because Spock and I saved the whole goddamned planet from Nero. And also, we saved the building you’re in right now from Khan… including you and your desk and of course, your chair.”

Something dark flitted through Zoey Finkel’s eyes but she remained unfazed.

“I and the other members of Starfleet are grateful for what you have done, sir. But I don’t understand what the relevance of that is in this call. You should bear in mind that these calls are recorded and monitored for quality-assurance purposes.”

“I don’t care who’s listening,” Jim said coldly. “Can you or can you not release Spock’s account information to me?”

“No, sir,” she answered.

“Okay, then put me through to Admiral Komack.

“I cannot do that either, sir,” she said. “This is the Personnel Affairs Office. Admiral Komack is…” she was cut off by a loud beeping accompanied by a green light coming from her PADD. She had an urgent message.

“Well, looks like I can connect you to Admiral Komack’s office,” she said looking up from the PADD. “Your request was heard on the monitoring channel and approved.”

“Thank you,” Jim said sincerely, all trace of angry cockiness gone from his face. Finally, he could stop running in circles around the bureaucracy.

Little did he know, bureaucracy was going to be the least of his troubles.

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“I do not know the correct way to respond,” Sarek said. His expression remained neutral but inside, it felt like he was being eaten alive by emotional pain. The bare walls of the temple seemed to close in on him. The soft velvet cushion on his seat did nothing to alleviate his discomfort. And the warm midsummer air of the planet did nothing to calm his racing pulse.

“Rom-staya is the only honorable recourse left to your son,” Elder Saharon said, oblivious to the ambassador’s internal torment. “It is difficult but you must yield to the logic of your circumstances.”

“You wish me to subject my son to euthanasia,” Sarek repeated as if unable to grasp what he was hearing. “I do not desire to argue emotionally. However, I have already been parted from my bondmate. I do not wish to be parted from my son. Besides, our people each one of us, no matter how infirm or disabled.”

“That may have been true, Sarek,” the elder said with just a hint of compassion in his otherwise impassive voice. “However, a Vulcan whose mind is perhaps irreparably damaged is no Vulcan. It
would be a mercy to Spock to release him before his existence becomes a wretched one, an object of scorn."

Sarek did not even wish to entertain this idea.

"Forgive me, Elder," he said respectfully. "But I cannot allow Spock to be euthanized. If it has been ordained for him to lead a wretched life, he will bear it. I will bear it with him. He is all I have left."

"You have allowed your emotions to get the better of you," elder sighed pityingly. "However, we understand that this is a matter that must be discussed and decided upon by your clan. We shall interfere no more."

"Am I also to understand that no aid from the Vulcan Family Services will be made available for Spock?"

"Indeed. Our supplies and resources are limited. It is only logical that none be wasted on your son as he is unlikely to recover."

Sarek swallowed inaudibly and shuffled away. While in his private craft, he drafted a letter to the United Federation of Planets-- a request for indefinite unpaid leave. It was humiliating but he was no longer the revered ambassador he once was.

Many years ago, in another lifetime, Vulcan had been among the strongest, most powerful members of the Federation. Today, he and his people were seen as little more than beggars. He would not be approved for leave; not even unpaid leave. He would be asked to resign for good.

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Admiral Komack was a severe man. Some people compared him to an old lion. Of course, his rather ferocious manner, imposing personality, and no-nonsense approach to security had something to do with.

As a cadet, Jim had admired the man but never been scared of him.

Right now, even though he was the captain of the fleet’s flagship, a decorated war hero, he felt small and unsure of himself.

"Kirk, so good to see you again," Komack said with a smile that didn’t reach his eyes. "What can I do for you?"

"Sir, very good to see you as well," Jim answered. "It’s not a major thing but…"

"If it’s not major, why ask for me? I don’t deal with administrative matters, son."

"Sir, please… I need your help. It is about our last mission. To Cardassia Prime. Spock was injured pretty badly and his allowance has not been released."

"Okay… but I don’t handle finance… how does this concern me?" Komack asked, getting up from his chair. He turned around and started to make a cup of coffee for himself. Jim watched incredulously from the screen.

"Sir, there is an indefinite hold on his account and the finance and HR departments refuse to release the account information to us."

"Oh… that. There was a hold on your account as well but it was lifted pretty quickly. It is routine
procedure."

“There was a hold on my account? Why?”

“You were captured by the Cardassians. Starfleet needed to ensure you did not engage in any acts of treason while in captivity. Once the investigation was completed, the hold on your account was lifted and the debriefing report from your ship’s CMO was accepted.”

“That’s great. So why is Spock’s account still frozen?”

“It is really quite simple,” Komack said, coming back to sit in his chair with a cup of hot, steaming coffee in his hand. “Commander Spock is still under investigation. If he is found guilty, there will be formal proceedings against him. If not, his benefits will be released.”

“Wha.. what? Spock is still under investigation. You’ve got to be kidding me,” Jim leaned forward. “I was there. I saw every single interrogation. I can tell you he revealed nothing.”

“No you cannot,” Komack said softly. “Because you did not see everything. We have our spies on Cardassia Prime as well and from what we have gathered, including video evidence of the interrogation sessions-- Spock was in Cardassian custody for at least nine hours longer than you. And for six of those nine hours, there are no recordings, no witnesses. What do you think happened in those six hours?” He paused for a moment as he allowed Kirk to ponder the rhetorical question. "Exactly, we don’t know either. But we intend to find out.”

Jim started to respond but Komack ended the call before he could say anything.

Chapter End Notes

First of all, thank you to everyone who sent prayers and good wishes my way. My internship people applied for a work visa for me which was approved a few weeks ago. So now, I can stay in America for 3 more years. Yay!

Secondly, I have always seen myself as an atheist-- mostly because I saw people doing terrible things to each other over religion. But last year, my surgery had complications with a rather scary near-death-experience and thanks to that, I have regained my appreciation for life and for faith. I live with a secular Jewish family and even though they are not very religious, they celebrate festivals like Hanukkah and Passover. Somehow, with the very first blessing spoken on the first night of Hanukkah, I felt a great sense of calm and peace. A few months later, I was at a synagogue for a story and it filled me with the same sort of joy again. I am now studying under a Rabbi and I might be converting to Judaism. I hope this won’t change how you see me or my writing. But since it has been wonderful for me so far, I wanted to share it with you all.
Hi Everyone,

I know you're probably either mad at me or thinking that I've forgotten about this story. That is not true. I have been sidetracked a little and I am suffering from a big writer's block. I started writing for an Indian fandom called Baahubali last month in the hopes that it would jump start my writing again. And it has worked. The next chapter has been ready for a few weeks now but I just haven't had the time to proofread, edit, and make sure it is consistent with everything. However, I am going to grab the bull by the horns and I will update this story on the 20th of September no matter what. And after that, this story will be updated every 7-10 days. That is a promise. If you're still reading, please comment underneath and let me know.

Thank you. Love you all :)}
Hello folks, as I promised. Here is the next chapter of Invisible. I hope you like it. It is a little wooly but I assure you it will get better. I am still coming out of my writer's block but once I'm fully out of it, I will make the chapters more substantial. Thank you for reading and staying with this story. Let me know what you think. I live for your comments.

Dr. McCoy sighed impatiently. It was 4:30 pm. Jim was late.

In all likelihood, he had probably forgotten all about the appointment. Funnily enough though, the CMO was somewhat relieved. The radical treatment he had suggested to Jim the other day was going to backfire spectacularly.

It was considered unethical to watch a patient’s security/monitoring tapes unless there was a very good reason for it. It was even more wrong to share the tapes with someone not directly involved in the patient’s care.

The only reason Leonard had been okay with having Jim watch some of the tapes, was to help him come to terms with Spock’s condition. However, just to be sure, he had skimmed through the tapes himself in the morning.

And what he had seen, had left him angry, ill, and full of guilt.

Nurse Anderson was currently in the brig. But the captain had not yet been informed.

McCoy had thought to wait for their appointment to tell Jim. But as it was, there was going to be no therapy session today. At 5:30 pm, Greta Daniels from the engineering department was scheduled for a scar-removal procedure.

He would talk to Jim at dinner. It would probably not go well but he had no choice.

Out of sheer habit, he leaned back in his chair and reached under his desk for his bottle of bourbon. But just as he touched the cool glass surface of the bottle, Spock’s stern voice rang in his ears.

“Drinking while on duty will impair your ability to make sound decisions, doctor…”

“Damn you, hobgoblin,” McCoy muttered angrily. “Why do you have to be right all the time?”

But even as he grumbled, the whiskey remained unopened. Instead, he fixed himself a cup of tea; peppermint black tea, one of Spock’s favorites.

It was 4:45 pm. Lt. Daniels would come in any minute and Nurse Myers would have her fill out some pre-procedure paperwork. The workday would go on as usual.

He sat back in his chair and sipped the strong, bitter liquid. He winced at its vile taste but appreciated the minty freshness of its flavor.
His comm. unit rang.

“Uh, Bones,” It was Jim. “I am sorry I missed the appointment. I have something really important to discuss with you. Can I come now?”

“Um, sure,” McCoy answered against his better judgment. “I have ten minutes to go before my next procedure.”

“Can you re-schedule it?” Jim asked. His tone was serious. The CMO realized this had nothing to do with their therapy session. This was something official and not the good kind.

“I’d rather not,” he said. “Why don’t we talk over dinner, at 7?”

“Done. Meet me in my quarters. We’ll eat there.”

Sarek had a response from the Federation.

Just as he had assumed, his request had been denied. They could not allow him to be on unpaid leave for an extended period. He would have to resign.

The reason was simple. Vulcan did not need more than one senior diplomat to Earth. And if he was going to be on a long leave with no specific date of return to active employment, someone else would have to be offered a permanent position. That was Federation policy and while they would have bent the rules for him in the past, they were not going to do so now.

In fact, in their response, they had asked if he had a possible candidate in mind to take his place. As a Vulcan, he was expected to take rational, logical decisions with no hint of malice. And out of respect for Vulcan diplomatic policy, he had been asked for his recommendations.

So that’s what he did.

He contacted Ambassador Talok, one of Amanda’s former students who was now actively involved in brokering compassionate aid deals with several different planets to speed up the rebuilding process of New Vulcan.

Talok had a team of accomplished people under him. If there was anyone who could take on the added responsibility of ambassadorship to earth, it would be him.

Sarek switched off his PADD and went to wash his hands. It was almost dinnertime.

Spock had spent all evening watching a holovid about the evolution of krikinaras, the giant four-legged felines that roamed Vulcan before the advent of bipedal Vulcanoid species.

Sarek often felt bad about not being able to take a greater role in Spock’s recovery and… dare he say, re-education. But he was hopeful. In the last one week itself, Spock had shown remarkable improvement. He had been fitted with a universal translator for people with speech and language disabilities. It had pained Sarek to see his brilliant son struggle with words and syntax, and so it had been necessary. The communication between them had become a lot easier.

He had also tried unsuccessfully to find a teacher who could help Spock. But now that he was going to be home almost the entire time, there would be no need for a separate teacher or a caretaker.

How he missed Healer Sobik, the charismatic, unconventional healer who had always been there for
the House of Surak in their hour of need. Sobik had been the only one who had accepted his marriage with a human woman. He had been present at the official naming ceremony of his son. He had understood when Amanda had insisted on naming Spock according to earth traditions, specifically, her Jewish traditions.

Sarek was certain no one knew Spock’s full earth name. Raviv Ben Amah. Raviv, son of Amah.

Raviv in Hebrew meant dew or rain. Indeed, for Amanda, Spock had been the rain that cooled the heat of Vulcan’s cold logic and its rejection of everything she had held dear.

Sometimes, Sarek wondered if it would have perhaps been better to raise their son on earth.

However, this was not the time to dwell on such thoughts.

He eased the frown on his brow and made his way to the dining room.

Spock was already seated at the table.

“Father,” he said. He tried to hide the eager expression on his face, but his eyes gave him away. “Your day was good?” he asked.

“Yes, Spock,” Sarek answered. “My day was satisfactory. How was yours?”

“I saw film. Big cats from which Vulcans evolved.” There was childlike enthusiasm in his voice. It was obvious he wanted to talk about everything he had learned from the film, but it was not proper and somewhere, he understood that. For several minutes, he did not say anything and ate his soup in silence. He struggled to keep the spoon steady. A few times, he ended up spilling the broth down the front of his robes.

Sarek did not reprimand him. He simply handed him a napkin. The third time it happened, he folded the napkin loosely around Spock’s neck and over his chest.

Spock was embarrassed by this. His lips tried to form an apology, but he stopped just in time.

Father did not like apologies. They made him upset. He wasn’t sure how he knew that since father’s expression was always the same.

He had also learned over the last two days that his father liked him to finish his meals. Even though he was scared to continue eating for fearing of making a mess again, he was determined to finish his soup.

Sarek watched his son from the corner of his eye.

The elders were wrong. Spock was not beyond repair. Yes, today was one of his better days. It was true that on the bad days, the situation seemed bleak. It was entirely possible that this would be the extent of his life, that he would never be the accomplished scientist again, that he would never regain the Vulcan way of living, and that he would perhaps not recover from the hemiparesis and the hyperimmunity. But he was not a candidate for Rom’staya. Spock would live.

And he would live as well as he possibly could.

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Ambassador Talok received Ambassador Sarek’s message.

He didn’t know what to make of it. On the one hand, it was a great opportunity. He was a young
diplomat, not yet old enough to be given such an important charge. On the other hand, though, he was one of the few surviving Vulcans with a certain degree of negotiation experience.

That was the reason why he had immersed himself into the compassionate aid missions. That, and the void in his mind left by T’Saya’s death.

He had been bonded to her only six years ago just before the onset of his first Pon Farr. He would experience the blood fever again sometime in the coming year but he had no bondmate anymore and the violent way in which she had been taken from him; the pain of it was sometimes too much to bear.

A part of him was looking forward to his time. It would be excruciating but at least, everything would end after that. And he would be able to follow T’Saya’s katra into the Source.

However, another part of him was disgusted by his emotionalism. He didn’t dare admit it to anyone but his illogical desire to see his next Pon Farr end in his death was sacrilege, a complete rejection of the Vulcan way.

But what could he do?

He had a young daughter, T’Zam. He did not wish to have any more children. He loved his child and she meant everything to him.

He understood why Ambassador Sarek was resigning. If Spock’s condition was as bad as they said it was, he would need constant care. And knowing his human frailties, Vulcans would be unwilling to offer help.

Talok felt bad. He had sometimes joined the other students in the seminary as they tried to elicit an emotional response from Spock. But mercifully, he had never engaged in the cruelty displayed by the likes of Stonn.

Stonn.

Wasn’t he bonded to T’Pring? Spock’s intended.

Indeed. Talok remembered that quite well. He had come into his time soon after the destruction of their home and T’Pring had demanded that she be released from her betrothal with Spock because she wished to save Stonn’s life by bonding with him. His bondmate had been killed as well, just like T’Saya.

Spock had done the honorable thing.

Stonn and T’Pring were residing on the Rekalser Research Station on Alpha Ceta II with their three-year-old son, Sanim.

Talok accepted the ambassador’s offer but requested a meeting with him as well. He had a lot to learn before he could take on this responsibility. And for some odd reason, he wished to see Spock and wish him well in person.
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

This chapter was supposed to come a lot sooner but it took so long because it was written twice before I finally decided to publish it. I don’t want to make Spock's recovery seem rushed or unrealistic but this is where that part of the story begins. Unfortunately, this chapter isn't as long as I'd have wanted it to be but at least it is done.

Secondly, I have been pretty heavily involved in an Indian fandom called Baahubali. It is based on two excellent Indian movies produced entirely by People of Color. The story is set in medieval India and it is absolutely perfect. I would love it if you watched the films and also got involved in our fandom. The films are called Baahubali: The Beginning and Baahubali: The Conclusion. They are available on Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube. Please watch and join our fandom if you like the films. That way, we can double the fun :)

The last few weeks had felt like a lifetime to Spock. In a way, this was a good thing. His physical injuries were mostly healed even though his hands would never be the same again. His joints would probably always be stiff. And unfortunately, he would probably always have to wear padded undergarments.

He didn’t feel like a puppet anymore either. Slowly and steadily, his awareness had come back to him but even as he knew who he was, he wasn’t entirely sure of who he had been before he reached this point. He remembered serving on a ship. He remembered doing complex tasks, leading people into tough situations, and attending the weekly staff meetings. But he didn’t understand why he was here now. He didn’t know how he had gotten so injured. He couldn’t remember why he had been made to leave the ship.

He knew hadn’t always been so weak and shaky. He remembered being in an altercation with a far stronger being than himself. He remembered beating him and subduing him. He remembered the rage and grief that had filled him… because Jim was dead.

Jim.

Spock felt a wave of despair engulf him as he thought about him. He didn’t think he would see Jim again. But a part of him thought it was for the best. Jim would want nothing to do with him. The only person who truly wanted to be with him was his father.

And Spock was grateful for that. Sarek was a very typical Vulcan. His dedication to logic could almost be cold and merciless at times. But with his son, he had allowed his emotions to guide him—to the point that other Vulcans did not wish to associate with him anymore either. His conduct was disgraceful in their eyes.

But to him, it did not matter. Even through the bad days, he had seen his son regain something of his old self each day and no sacrifice could ever be too great if it would help Spock find his way back home.

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Jim wanted to talk to Bones like a friend tonight. It had been an exhausting few weeks and while he needed to discuss Spock’s upcoming inquiry, his frozen account, and the various legal issues surrounding his disability, he also needed to just be himself for an evening. Plain, old Jim Kirk.

He had not touched alcohol since his foolish suicide attempt. Every night, sleep eluded him as guilt ate away at his conscience and the images of Spock’s torture in that Cardassian prison refused to leave his mind.

Like a good captain, he continued to do his duties. But it was tough. Just existing was hard. He had to force himself to eat. Meat was never on his menu. Green vegetables were a no as well.

It made him feel weird to replicate a simple tomato lasagna, but he knew his best friend would understand.

At 7 pm sharp, McCoy knocked at Jim’s door.

“Come in, Bones,” Jim invited him in.

The doctor took in the captain’s casual attire. He had just showered. His hair smelt of his favorite apple-scented conditioner. His quarters were clean and organized.

“Wow, Jim,” he said before he could stop himself. “One therapy session and you’re already doing so well. That’s great.”

Jim smiled ruefully.

“I wish,” he sighed. “The problem is here,” he continued, as he pointed towards his heart. “But I realize that if we are to help Spock, I need all my wits about me. I need to update you on what the higher-ups are doing. They are trying to screw him over. And we cannot let that happen.”

“Well spoken, buddy,” McCoy agreed. “I too have something to tell you, but you need to sit down for this.”

“What’s it about?” Jim asked, dread evident in his voice.

“Well…” the doctor swallowed roughly. “It is about one of my medical staff, a nurse called Anderson…”

Sarek accepted Talok’s request to see him and Spock before officially assuming the position of the new ambassador to Earth.

He wasn’t sure why he wanted to see Spock, but he was grateful nonetheless. Friendships were uncommon on Vulcan. But even acquaintances tended to visit the sick or injured members of the community.

No one had come to see Spock. Not even his once-betrothed, T’Pring.

It was also custom on Vulcan for guests to prepare the meals for their hosts but Sarek didn’t think Talok’s visit would entail such formality.

Instead, he asked Sadur to prepare light refreshments for their guest. Besides, this was the way things were done on Earth. Talok would do well to start learning Earth customs. And nothing was better than a practical lesson.
What Sarek didn’t realize was that Talok wasn’t coming alone.

His daughter, six-year-old T’Zam accompanied him.

The little girl hid behind her father as he was welcomed into the family home of the House of Surak. Despite her tender age, she was well aware of the significance of Surak and those who claimed descent from his good name.

“Dif-tor heh smusma, Sarek,” she said softly. Her father only nodded.

“It is an honor to welcome you to my home, Ambassador Talok,” Sarek said as he led them into the meeting room.

“It is an honor to be your guest,” the younger man responded. “However, I see you have already laid out refreshments for us. Do you not wish for us to prepare the meal?”

“No, Talok,” Sarek answered. “Since this is a rather uncustomary visit, the usual customs do not apply. You are also about to assume the leadership of the diplomatic mission to Earth. On Earth, hosts prepare the meals for their guests. Since my wife was human, some of her traditions continue to be a part of my household.”

He expected Talok to disapprove or even say something condescending. But to his absolute surprise, the response was only one of remorse and shared sorrow.

“I grieve with thee,” Talok said.

“My wife was your teacher, was she not?” Sarek asked.

“She was. I still have her books on Xenolinguistics for Diplomats, American Cultural Hegemony in Earth Diplomacy, and Vulcan-Human Relations in Pop Culture.”

“You were interested in pop culture?” Sarek asked with some amusement. “It isn’t a subject that fascinates the Vulcan mind.”

“That may be true for civilians whose interactions with the outside world are limited. But as a diplomat, it is imperative for me to understand how human beings think, where their emotionalism leads them, and what drives their illogic.”

“A fair point,” Sarek conceded. “Please help yourself to the refreshments. I have prepared a PADD with all the details of my last four years in office. Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask.”

“I appreciate your willingness to help,” Talok said as he poured his daughter a cup of tea. “Pardon me if it is rude of me to ask but will Spock be joining us presently?”

As if on cue, Spock walked in.

Had Talok not been Vulcan, he would have been unable to hide his shock. But as it was, he did not bat an eyelid at his old schoolmate’s altered appearance.

But inwardly, he had to admit that the change was so drastic, it was almost hard to believe that this was Spock.

He was painfully thin, much too thin even by Vulcan standards. Gone was the subtle roundness of his cheeks that had caused him to be picked on so mercilessly throughout his younger years. He
leaned heavily onto his cane to walk but even then, his steps looked clumsy and uncoordinated.

But his eyes were still human. Even veiled and shadowed by illness or trauma—Talok couldn’t tell—those eyes looked alive in a way that was uncommon, even vulgar in polite Vulcan society.

T’Zam was oblivious to her father’s turbulent thoughts. To her, this new Vulcan looked a little strange but not so strange that she’d forget her manners. She placed her cup of tea back on the table and stood up to greet him.

“Dif-tor heh smusma, Spock,” she said. And with that, she again picked up her cup and continued to sip her tea.

At first, Spock was taken aback but he knew he had to respond to her greeting.

“Sochya eh dif,” he said, but he did not look at her. His eyes remained glued to the floor.

“Sit, my son,” Sarek said and gestured towards the seat next to his own.

Talok wondered if it would be appropriate to ask Spock if he was well. Generally, such a question would be considered proper but, in this case, he didn’t know if it would cause undue distress or awkwardness.

Contrary to popular believe, there was indeed such a thing as awkwardness in the Vulcan culture. While most Vulcan adults of sound mind had no trouble verbalizing thoughts in the plainest way possible, individuals with mental trauma and injury struggled with it.

Talok didn’t know enough about Spock’s condition to make an accurate assessment. All things considered, he looked relatively normal. But then again, he had been refused help from every care facility in the colony. There had to be more to it.

Finally, he mustered up his courage and asked, “Spock, are you well?”
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

I am updating after exactly two months. I know it is terrible. And I have no excuses. I continuously tell you guys about my life and all the weirdness that comes with it. Let me just say that the latest weirdness has been diagnosed and is on the road to recovery. I used to think I have a huge writer's block or bad time management or that I am losing interest in Trek writing. None of that is true. I suffer from a pretty extreme case of anxiety and I am possibly on the autism spectrum though we are not sure of that yet. However, the anxiety itself leads me to have constant panic attacks and they leave me drained and unfocused, thereby preventing me from writing. But, like I said, it has been diagnosed and will be taken care of. I am not giving up on this story nor on Finding Spock. In other news, I am traveling back home to India later this month for a few weeks. I haven’t seen my baby sister and my grandma and my aunt in two years. I am super excited. Also, I am looking forward to eating samosas and momos.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For several moments, Spock stared at Talok. At long last, he folded his scarred hands in his lap and answered.

“I am well,” he said. He had a vague memory of this man but he was not sure of his identity. Wasn’t his name Tarok? Or Talik? Or maybe it was Kalot.

“What is your name?” Spock asked. He did not feel any shame in asking. Everyone knew something was wrong with him. He knew something was wrong with himself. The stranger would not be offended because it was illogical to be offended by a sick man.

“I am called Talok, of the House of Rachim,” the young ambassador answered, not unkindly. “We were a part of the same cohort at the seminary. And this is my daughter, T’Zam.”

“You will forgive me,” Spock said, lowering his eyes. “I do not remember you.”

“I am aware.”

For several minutes, no one said anything. Sarek poured a cup of tea for Spock.

T’Zam watched the adults around her with a burning curiosity. Even she could sense something was not right. And had she been just a little older, she would have refrained from asking her questions.

But a six-year-old could be very Vulcan and still childlike in her need to know things.

“Spock, why are you shaking your hands?” she asked. “Can you not keep them still?”

The words were sharp and hurtful but from the lips of a child, they lacked the malice that would usually accompany them.

“I cannot control the shaking,” Spock answered calmly. “However, if it bothers you, I will keep my
hands under the table."

“It does not bother me,” she said. “It is illogical to be bothered by that which has no consequences upon myself nor that which does not cause harm to anyone.”

Her wordy explanation caused Spock to smile. But the sight of a smiling Vulcan was too much for the little girl. She let out an involuntary gasp of fear, and that promptly caused Spock’s smile to vanish.

He knew smiling was strange, but he wasn’t entirely sure why. He wondered if he should apologize to T’Zam. But Sarek got there first.

“My apologies, T’Zam,” he said gently. “That Spock’s smile made you uncomfortable. His mother was human. He is half-human. And it is not uncommon for humans to smile. It is a unique part of my son’s human heritage.”

“Do all humans express emotion to readily?” she asked.

“They do,” Sarek answered. “Expression of emotion is a form of non-verbal communication in human society, not unlike the telepathic form of communication on Vulcan.”

“Fascinating,” T’Zam said, awed by this perspective. “They do not teach this at the seminary.”

“There is a universe beyond the seminary, T’ZamKam,” the old Vulcan said. “Your father will introduce you to it perhaps.” He looked meaningfully at Talok who looked a sheepish… or maybe that was Sarek’s imagination. Full-blooded adult Vulcans did not look sheepish after all!

“I intend to expand her reading,” Talok said. “However, I have had little time over the last several months.”

“Is T’Zam accompanying you to Earth?” Sarek asked.

“I do not know yet. There were no other survivors from my clan. My bondmate T’Saya’s sister survived. However, she is stationed at a research outpost on Ceta-IV. I have considered the student housing at the seminary but T’Zam is as yet too young for such independence.”

“There is a seminary for the offspring of diplomats at every Vulcan embassy across the galaxy. In my opinion, she would benefit greatly if she were to accompany you.”

A heavy silence hung in the air as Talok tried to discern the meaning of Sarek’s words.

“Do you spoke from experience?” he asked, glancing at Spock.

Sarek did not respond immediately. Instead, he turned to T’Zam.

“T’Zam, would you be interested in the rose garden planted in the backyard of our home? Roses are a terran plant with a unique and subtle scent that is considered pleasing by many. Perhaps Spock can show you the amber roses he has been working on this past week.”

Spock stood up. He was indeed proud of the roses he had planted. Sarek had ordered pre-prepared rose plants in full bloom that had only needed to be transplanted into their own flowerbed. And it hadn’t really been a lot of work, especially since he had not done even that by hand. The gardener, Tapan, had done it while Spock had asked him questions about the grafting process and the calibration of the soil and weather conditions in the New Vulcan Central Greenhouse.
But if father wanted him to show T’Zam the roses, he would gladly do so. He did not know if he would be able to answer the young girl’s questions, but he would try his best.

T’Zam also stood up.

“It would be fascinating to see these terran plants you call roses,” she said and followed Spock out. She walked faster than him at first but then she realized she didn’t know where to go. So, she waited for him to catch up. It was disconcerting to see a young, adult Vulcan relying on a cane, but her father had told her that it was impolite to ask questions about someone’s infirmity. She had already slipped once today by asking Spock about the shakiness of his hands.

Talok and Sarek waited for the Spock and T’Zam to leave before continuing their conversation.

“You asked me if I speak of terran education from experience,” Sarek said, bringing them back to the topic of their discussion. “On the contrary, I speak from regret. I insisted on raising Spock away from all influences of human culture, but I have come to realize that it was an unwise decision. And that is why he ultimately joined Starfleet; a decision that saved the lives of our elders during the Vashaya.”

“Perhaps you offer good advice,” Talok said and then took a moment before continuing. “I wish to discuss another matter with you. And with Spock… if you are in agreement, that is.”

“What is it that you wish to talk about?” Sarek asked.

“I do not know if you have read my professional record at length,” Talok began. “There is little-known fact about my pre-academy education that I wish to share with you. Prior to enrolling at the Vulcan Academy for Policy and Diplomacy, I was a student of Master Dokam at Gol. I was on the path to Kolinahr. However, just prior to the final ceremony, I decided against it. I was already betrothed to my mate, T’Saya and it was the thought of doing wrong by her that unsettled me to a great degree. And in that moment, I knew that completing the Kolinahr would be a salvation attained through a great moral crime.”

“Your betrothal would have been automatically considered void once you were considered a Kolinahr,” Sarek said, not exactly following the younger man’s reasoning.

“T’Saya loved me,” he answered. “I believe I loved her as well. Even though there was nothing illegal or uncustomary about breaking the betrothal for a higher spiritual calling, this would have been an act of emotional dishonesty. And how could I be a true master if my mastery over emotion were based upon desertion instead of dominance and avoidance instead of accomplishment.”

“You speak truthfully,” Sarek said, suitably impressed and intrigued. “However, why did you choose to share this information with me. Since you are neither a Kolinahr nor on the path of becoming one, it is not relevant to your association with me or the diplomatic office to which you are now being appointed.”

“That is correct,” Talok said. “My experience as a Kolinahr candidate offers little of value to my duties as a diplomat. But it does offer an opportunity for Spock. I do not make any promises, but I believe I can aid his healing.”

T’Zam followed Spock out into the backyard.

And just as Sarek had insinuated, the garden was indeed full of brightly colored flowers with tightly whorled petals. It was truly a marvel that the same bush hosted three, even four different colors of the same flower. On another bush, the rims of the rose petals were crimson while the rest of the body
was a soft pink.

“Fascinating,” she exclaimed.

“Indeed,” Spock responded, marveling at how easily these flowers managed to mesmerize him every single time.

“I have studied the phenomena of co-dominance and incomplete dominance, but I had never expected to see them expressed in nature,” T’Zam said, carefully smelling the delicate fragrance of the blood red rose nearest to her. “Is it indeed a common phenomenon in terran plants?”

Spock hesitated for a moment before answering. Instinct told him that the correct answer was in the affirmative. But he didn’t quite know how he knew it.

“I believe that is correct,” he said slowly. “However, I am not certain.”

“Did you not attend Starfleet Academy on Earth?” the little girl asked.

“I… I believe I did,” he said, again, not entirely sure.”

“Then you must have seen other specimens of terran vegetation too. Is it possible to grow terran fruits on New Vulcan as well?”

“I do not know but I can find out if you are truly keen.”

“I am keen.”

“Then I will procure that information, and have it passed along to you.”

“I thank thee.”

“Incidentally, which terran fruit do you wish to grow?”

“Mango. The terran scientific name for it is *Mangifera Indica.*”

Spock smiled at that. He knew mangoes were delicious too, but he also knew somehow that he hadn’t tasted one in many years. And while a part of him was suddenly curious to taste a mango again, another part of it was consumed with grief. But the most frustrating thing was he his memories were so fragmented. He was not sure of what was real and what wasn’t. Unbidden, a scene from his childhood came back to him.

“Spock… look what’s for breakfast,” Amanda’s warm and soothing voice called out in the distance.

“That does not appear to be my usual breakfast, Mother,” Spock said, gingerly cutting into the fleshy yellow fruit.

“It is my favorite terran fruit. I just planted a tree in our garden. And hopefully, the accelerated growth mechanism will work like it is supposed to. Next season, it will give us large, sweet mangoes just like this one. I had a whole crate ordered from Earth, so you could have some this season as well. What do you think?”

Spock slurped out the juice from the fruit in as dignified a way as he could but even then, a few drops fell on his pristine white napkin.

“It… is… rather messy,” he said. But then he noticed his mother’s hopeful expression and hastened to add, “However, it has a pleasing taste.”
“Good,” said Amanda. “Now off you go. I will make some mango pudding for the evening. Let’s see how you like that.”

Mango pudding. He did not remember what mango pudding tasted like. And it bothered him. Father had reminded him not too long ago that his mother had died with Vulcan that was. Maybe that was why he was so unsettled.

He did not remember that the last time he had eaten a mango, had been over 6 years ago, when his mother had visited him on Earth.

He had not been able to bring himself to eat a mango after her passing.

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A small team of security officers tried to restrain the captain as he tried yet again to lunge at the bleeding man on the floor.

“Sir, due process must be…” Lt. Michaelson tried to reason with him but Jim was in no mood to listen.

“THERE WILL BE NO DUE PROCESS,” Jim bellowed. “You don’t know what he did. Let me get him.”

“Sir, control yourself,” Lt. Cmdr. Weiss said sternly. “It does not matter what he did. He is in the brig. Dr. McCoy will formally lodge the complaint against him. If he is dead before that can happen, we will all be in a lot of trouble. Each person on this ship.”

“Jim, he is right,” Bones said softly. “Look, people are going to wonder and they are going to connect the dots if you make a scene.. er… make a bigger scene.”

Jim took several deep breaths to calm himself down.

He could not believe Anderson had abused Spock like that in the sickbay right under the nose of the CMO and the entire medical staff. Such lack of observation, such insufficiency.

“Dr. McCoy,” he said at last, his voice cold as ice. “You and your entire department are on probation. There will be an internal inquiry to assess how Nurse Anderson was able to get away with patient abuse and why such gross negligence and incompetence is tolerated in the rest of the sickbay staff.”

McCoy almost staggered back when he heard those words.

“Have you lost your marbles, Jim?” he seethed. “You can’t place the entire department on probation. You have an issue with me, you take it out on me. My staff was…”

“Irresponsible,” Jim finished for him. “Your staff was irresponsible with regards to Commander Spock’s care. And unless I know exactly what motivated that callousness, I am not going to risk the wellbeing of any other patients on my ship. While you’re on probation, Dr. M’Benga can take over.”

McCoy recognized a lost battle when he saw one.

He wondered if it had been a mistake to allow Jim to come down to the brig. He had seemed so professional while listening to the account of Anderson’s wrongdoing. Why had he snapped on seeing him?
… Because that’s what Jim did. McCoy should have known. Considering the depth of the bond Jim and Spock shared, everything they had been through together, and the overwhelming guilt that consumed Jim each day—Anderson’s chances had been worse than those of a snowflake in hell right from the start. He was lucky that the worst he had to show for it was a broken nose and a blackened eye.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Comment and let me know what you think. I am very active on Tumblr and I would love to talk if you're interested. My writing is helped if I have short, one-word or one-sentence prompts to write 200-300 words fics on Tumblr for the person who requests them. I did a couple of those for my other fandom, Baahubali. Let me know if you want me to write stuff in the same vein for Trek as well.
Send me an ask or a message. Happy Holidays and Thank You for sticking with my stories. You are all wonderful. I love you.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!