Parted and Not

by einzell

- Inspired by out of darkness by sensara
Am Richtungen

Am Richtungen 001
Captain Archer regarded the message with slight amusement.

I didn't think Genevieve would want me anywhere near Soval, let alone a family function."

He mused. He felt very happy for Genie for finding a good man so soon in life, despite his misgivings.

Reading the message again, he had no doubt that she had had a lot of influence in composing it. Thinking

for a moment, he went ahead and hit the intercom. "Lt Bates, meet me in my Ready room."

Sitting back. He keyed the com again. "Lt Jasmine Sir. " Came the delta shifts commo officer.

"Lt. I need to place a call to Terra. Could you patch me through to the Vulcan Consulate in Sausalito, using these codes?"

"I'll try Sir. Should have you through in a moment." Came the reply.

"Just patch him through when he answers. Archer out."

A few moments later. Lt Bates stepped into the Ready Room. " You wanted to see me Sir?"

"Yes John. I just got a personal call and need to respond. I need you hold the flag while I'm out of contact. Should not be no more than a half hour or so. If that."

Bates replied. "No problem Sir. Ships status is still green. Were still coasting five days out from 001. So hopefully, nobody's thinking of stirring things up in the mean time. Everything ok Sir?"

"Meaning?" Jon looked at his temporary XO.

"Meaning family Sir. No one sick?"

"Oh." Jon smiled. "Nothing like that. Just a call from an old colleague I've been out of touch with for a while. Wants to invite me to a family gathering. I was supposed to contact him with the particulars. Also had something important to discuss with me."

Finished speaking. Jon raised his arms overhead and leaned back in his chair as he stretched. His spine popped pretty loud as he pressed against the back rest. Holding that position with his eyes closed. When he opened his eyes. He saw Bates still standing there grinning at him.

"What?"

"How old did you say you were. Sir?" He asked with just a little mirth.

"Not too far ahead of you. Don't worry. Your day is coming." Jon answered back with a grin.

Straightening. Reaching onto his desk, grabbed a P A D D and handed it to Bates.

"And when it starts hitting me, I'll probably be jack knifed with Parkinson's. I dread getting old." Was all Bates replied as he perused the P A D D.
"Let me know when your back in the loop Sir." He finished and headed out the door as Soval's image appeared on the screen. Jon turned his attention to the desk monitor and regarded Soval.

"I trust you just received my message Jon?"

"Indeed I did Soval. I never even knew you had a daughter. Tell her congratulations."

"Thank you. But actually, she's my niece. We had adopted her shortly after she came to live with us. She regards us as the family she should have had."

Jon could swear, he could actually sense a warmth in Soval's voice as he answered Jon.

"That's good. What I'm even more curious about is your message implied something more. It will not be a problem for me to make it to the bonding, but do you have something else in mind?"

Soval closed his eyes a moment, then leaned forward slightly. It appeared he was working on something just out of view of the pick up. Shortly, an incoming file notice popped up in the lower left corner of Jon's monitor. Soval looked back at Jon and answered.

"I am not making this request lightly Jonathan. But I would have you go over the information in this profile. Then give me your answer when you arrive at the consulate. It is imperative to have an answer sooner, but I leave it to you to make your own judgement."

Jon was intrigued by Soval's request.

"I will do so, but now I'm a bit curious as to what I'm getting myself into."

His reply seemed to spark a hint of mischief in Soval's eyes. Soval leaned forward again and it was obvious he was adjusting the video feed. The next thing Jon knew. He saw Soval seated with Genie to his right. A beautiful, petite auburn haired young lady to Genie's right. To the young lady's right was none other than Dr. Orratt. Regarding the four people who now filled the screen. He commented. "I guess it must be serious then."

"It is. However, this is a matter that is best dealt with family. Dr. Orrat has been tasked by his clan mother on the matter of a bonding concerning an allied daughter. And I will have him explain what is asked of you."

With a nod. Soval indicated Orratt take over the conversation. Jon turned his attention to Orratt and found himself being seriously regarded by the old doctor.

"Captain regarding your past animosity towards my people, may I prevail upon you my apologies concerning your father. I understand our deeply rooted sense of jurisprudence had considerably crippled his attempts to have a working warp engine for your people and that it gave you a sense of bitter animosity since he never lived to see it come to fruition."

Jon nodded. A bit puzzled.

"What has my past attitude towards your people have to do with this Doctor? I have come a long way since then and have come to respect many of your people in the prevailing years."

Jon was becoming unsure where this was heading now.

"And I assure you Captain, I can appreciate such a change being beneficial in your interactions with us. However, what we are prevailing on you to do is become very intimate with our people in a
Orratt paused a moment, to share a look at Soval, who indicated for him to continue.

"You have received a standard profile of a young Vulcan woman named T'Wen. She is now a widow and it is imperative that she be bonded soon. She suffered greatly at her mate's demise, and I'm sure Ambassador Soval can fill you in on this event."

When he stopped speaking, Jon regarded the file notice in the corner of his monitor a moment before answering.

"Soval. This wouldn't happen to be related to that incident where some extremists tried to infiltrate the Vulcan compound behind the consulate about six months ago?"

Soval sighed tiredly looking down as he did. Making eye contact with Jon. He answered.

"A group calling themselves Pouze Terra disguised as city service workers forced their way into the residential area and tried to inflict a great deal of damage to our facilities and people. We had managed to contain a great many of these terrorists, except for a small group of a dozen who had taken refuge in the service bays. They had taken several males as hostages. While we tried to fight our way down to them. Had tortured these men. T'wen's mate had been unable to shield his mate from the massive pain he'd experienced as he slowly died, and T'Wen literally got to feel him pass away. She is in a very fragile state, so this is why we are prevailing upon you to step in."

Soval stopped speaking and looked at Jon.

"It is imperative that we have your answer soon. Jonathan."

"In regards to attending Soval, I will most definitely be there, I'll go through the file, and would having an answer for you be rendered when I get there?"

Jon felt like he was about to be painted into a corner on this one. In a sense he knew he was. He didn't quite understand what point Soval wanted to make with him on this proposal.

Regarding Soval. He nodded.

"Seven days it is. I'll let you know when we make orbit. Thanx Soval."

Soval nodded as the connection ended. Jon sat back in his chair. This is kinda heavy. He thought. This is in revenge for what? His musings continued as he downloaded the file to a PADD and rose to head to the bridge.

Sausalito

Soval rose from the couch as the connection terminated. Rounding the low table in front of the couch, hands steepled in front of him. He looked down, then turned to face Orratt.

"It is a long shot, but I honestly hope he takes it. Despite evidence to the contrary, that we would be capable of emotional markers. Doctor. I should be agreeable to dismiss you for the day to take care
of needful things. I was almost ready to dismiss you entirely. However, since your Telsu initiated your bonding, there isn't much I can contribute to the matter."

He ended that by regarding Bridgett with a sharply cocked brow. Bridgett only grinned at him before looking at Genie, her grin blooming to a full smile. Genie simply looked at her with amusement.

"It seems to run in the family. Preferring older men. As I had told you before. You make this decision and stick with it. I have the inclination that you wont regret it. I couldn't ask for a more honorable man for you. I don't have any reservations about you going through with the bond, I know right now you want to get it over with and have a hold of your man, but have a little patience. It will happen soon enough."

Genie turned to Soval.

"I'm surprised you didn't mention that we finally figured out Jon was the one who fixed my paper work to join the Maco's. He will definitely think this is revenge."

Soval noted her slightly amused tone. He also couldn't help but admit, it was a good way to keep Jon in line and learn some maturity. Bridgett and Genie both could tell that Soval's eyes displayed a little mischief as he continued to regard them.

"It will be in his best interests if he accepts. He may have earned my respect, despite his human failings, but lets say he could use some improvement."

To Orratt.

"To the status of your kinswoman, Has she been made comfortable?"

"Osu, she is with the healers at this time. Her daughters are with their fore mother, and will remain there until after the bonding. I trust that Admiral Forrest has been made aware of this little enterprise?" Soval nodded.

"To quote him Doctor: This is in revenge to what. He was highly amused when we finally revealed that he was the one that had had Genie inducted into the Maco's by deception. He was in agreement that it could be used as a highly effective black mail tool."

Genie giggled at that. "Proper Justice I would say."

Sharing a conspiratorial grin with Bridgett as she spoke. Bridgett listened to the conversation with interest. And was no doubt amused by this little prenup detail from her mothers past. And trying mightily not to giggle.
Oh Lord, what have I gotten myself into?

Yorktown arrived at Jupiter Station four and a half days later, a little ahead of schedule. After docking and turning over the schedule for shore leave. In short order when techs started swarming into the ship to start maintenance and upgrades over lapped by the departing crew members starting their holiday. Jon and the command crew had transferred over to the station to report to command. Admiral Forrest met Jon and his staff at the canteen for an informal debrief, before rotating earth side.

After the short debrief Max had Jon dismiss his staff before taking him by the shoulder and steering him to the bar. Ordering a beer for each Max turned and asked Jon. His face not indicating what he was wanting to say.

"I was curious Jon if you've considered that proposal Soval sent you."

He started off by saying. Jon was startled by his peer's statement.

"I listened to what he had to say Sir. And I reviewed the lady's profile, and am somewhat at a disadvantage. I'm not very familiar with this depth of Vulcan culture and I'm not sure I'd be up for it. Despite carrying Surak's katra. I think it's a bad idea."

"I figured you might say that, and to be right truthful. I don't blame you for feeling like you're shooting out the air lock without a suit. But that was the other reason I'm here. To ensure that you go through with making it to the bonding. It's very important to me and especially for Genie as well."

Jon was struck by how candid Admiral Forrest's demeanor, and had a sneaking feeling that this was a prelude to something he didn't want to be a party to.

"Sir? I'd given Soval my word that I would be there, and I fully intend to go. But I have the uncomfortable feeling there is more to this bonding you aren't letting on. Now please don't misunderstand me. But you are giving me the impression that your escorting me there. What's up?"

Max's face melted into a grin.

"Well to be frank. Vulcan's take a betrothal seriously, and on the other hand. I had business other than greeting you and your crew. Your debrief was the last little chore I had to get out of the way before I headed home. We have time before the shuttle leaves for home, and I was asked to accompany you."

"Why? Other than family of course." Max grinned at Jon's question.

"We have some shopping to do. The Vulcans have needed to make sure you were properly outfitted for the occasion since they didn't want Star Fleet uniforms seen. In fact, there's Soval right now."

Jon turned in the direction indicated. And noted the Vulcan ambassador making his way toward them from the main gallery entrance. Coming up to them he stood facing them. After nodding to Admiral Forrest, he addressed Jon.

"I see you have arrived Jonathan. A rather uneventful trip I presume?"

"It was Osu. And I'm curious if you would answer a question before I render the answer you required. I have read T'Wen's profile and her creds are very impressive. But how would a human
bonding with a vulcan accomplish anything, especially when she was damaged? I would think that would be unleashing a dragon in a sheep pen, with me coming out in the raw."

Soval's expression saddened and Jon swore he saw the man actually flinch slightly in the smallest degree. Soval ganced at Max, then returned his gaze to Jon.

"Your analogy in normal circumstances would be quite correct Jonathan. However. In this case it would be beneficial to both of you. However....."

And he looked around the bar.

"This conversation should be carried out elsewhere, so gentlemen, we need to hasten our departure. Shall we?"

Soval gestured and as one they turned to leave. Headed out into the station's main gallery. Soval led the two down the concourse steering them to his destination. They hadn't had to go too far when Soval guided them into a small shop that catered to interstellar business people. Both Admiral's submitted to being measured and fitted into some austere, but elegant suits that were somewhat casual yet business like. Four hours later found the three ready to depart. Jon had returned to Yorktown to pack a bag. After rejoining Soval and Max. They went to the the docking ring and boarded a small Vulcan runabout. Jon looked inquiringly at Soval at the change in transport. Who gave no indication of his guests curiosity. The runabout undocked and set a course to earth. To Jon's astonishment. It went to warp after clearing the station. Jon looked at Max for an answer. And got a grin for his trouble. Entering the traffic grid, they shortly received clearance to land. Thirty minutes later they were landed on the parade ground behind Star Fleet Command's main admin center. Exiting the ship. Jon, Max and Soval headed straight for the back entrance to the building. Entering. They headed up to Max's office. And settled in. Max had asked his secretary to go get some drinks for everyone including herself. Sitting down behind his desk. He regarded Jon before speaking.

"We'll wait til Annika gets back with our drinks. She'll be needing to sit in on this as well. She has a stake in this too. And she is quite taken with the handsome Vulcan, and coincidently, the man she's taken with happens to be the twin brother to the beautiful lady that Soval would like to pair you with. Her bonding will be about a week after yours. So Jon this is about family in a manner more than you've experienced. And soon as she gets here we'll have your questions answered. And yes it is done with a mind meld. She hasn't experienced one herself, but since you have, this is something she needs to see and what Soval needs to share with you will remain between you and Soval. After your done. He will also meld with Annika because there are somethings he needs to share. This place should be safe from interruptions so you can relax after he's done."

Looking at Soval. He added.

"Thats the gist of it. Right Soval?"

Soval nodded in agreement.

"Indeed Max. We wont have much time after ward, but there is a lot Jon needs to know, and this bonding is more important than can be shared verbally."

Looking at Jon. He went on.

"You will need that rest afterward this time. I know."

Jon had been listening attentively to both of them and finally spoke up.
"It almost sounds like I'm not being given much of a choice here. I'm sure you'll tell me in the meld Soval. But why do I get the feeling that I'm going to have my arm twisted?"

Soval didn't answer. But turned to Max and nodded. Jon looked over at Max and noticed that his demeanor had changed. Almost angry. Without a word. Max reached into his desk and pulled out a small PADD and slid it across the desk to Jon. Picking it up. Jon turned it on and began to read. And the color started to drain from his face.

"You do know what that is. Don't you Jon? I knew you had a crush on my daughter and was willing to over look it provided you would outgrow it and focus on your career. Which you did. But falsifying an application for the Maco's and disrupting a young lady's life when she had made her own choice to go elsewhere with it, and if that wasn't bad enough. It was my own daughter you did that to."

Admiral Maxwell Forrest was very much in control, but it didn't allow him to contain his fury at Jon's stupid little mistake.

"I wanted to go out there and relieve you of duty and space your sorry ass. WHO THE HELL DID YOU THINK YOU WERE WHEN YOU DID THAT? THAT was MY DAUGHTER'S LIFE YOU WERE MUCKING AROUND WITH AND I AM WITHIN MY RIGHTS TO TERMINATE YOUR COMMISSION AND DRUM YOU OUT WITH A DISHONORABLE. Fortunately for you. Despite your meddling. Genie came out the other end of that fiasco stronger and more capable a woman than she went in. And since then has become even better accomplished than both of us could ever hope to be. You son had better be thankful that Soval's spooks found this. Because if Section 31 got ahold of it you would never be out of their debt. Soval suggested this as a compromise Jon and I am more than agreeable to it. You do this, and I will be willing to forget it. So far. They haven't uncovered any other indiscretions and I hope for your sake they never do. Am I clear Jon?"

Jon had never seen max so livid. His eyes cut through him sharper than any laser and Jon wanted to sink into the floor. He was shaken. The hand holding the PADD sagged toward the floor. Soval quickly retrieved before it fell. Jon just sat there. Feeling naked. Burnt raw.

"I may need to mention Jon. If you pull a stupid stunt like that again. I will act on it and you will not enjoy the value of friendship from me again. You betrayed me in the worst way possible. But you betrayed Genie even more. So you may want to be a little thank full that she suggested this. Don't muck this up."

Finished Admiral Forrest sat back in his chair. His eyes never leaving the shaken, pale man on the other side of his desk.

Looking over at Soval. He finally commented.

"I think he's ready. Don't you?"

Soval nodded seriously, but Max didn't fail to miss the amused glint in his eyes. Shortly. Annika had returned with refreshments and sat down in the extra chair to the right of Admiral Forrest's desk. Max and Soval gave no indication to the bomb shell they had dropped on Jon barely a few minutes earlier. Jon still looked shell shocked and shaken, but thank fully was getting some color to this face. And still looked for all concerned like a raped ape.

"I'm sorry I couldn't get back sooner Sir. How did the meld go?" She said.
"It's ok Annika. We had to take care of some admin details. But we got them straightened out. We were waiting before you got back before we got into the meat and potatoes of why were here. You didn't miss much and I'm sure Jon understands the importance of clearing the air."

Jon raised his eyes to Max and nodded. Then looked down. It was a very bad feeling he had about the near future
Jon was still a bit shaken after Maxwell's little revelation. Truth be known. Max couldn't blame him. After all. At the time, he seriously wanted to be a part of Genie's life. But things hadn't work out. Soval had clearly come out the chosen mate for her and he had to content himself with the fact that he would be flying solo in the cockpit. He'd carried on a relationship with Erika Hernandez. Only to truncate it when command had pulled them in their respective directions. Now here he was in Maxwell's office about to meld with Soval to see if he could do this. Sighing. He'd reached over and grabbed a drink.

"I really wonder if I can handle this."

He wondered to himself as the cold tea sluiced down his throat. Across the desk from him. Admiral Forrest was still speaking to Annika about her intentions. She sat there talking animatedly about her telsu. There view outside the windows behind her had deepened to a darker blue as evening drew on, and it was going to be a long day. Jon could tell. He felt right now about just tendering his resignation and walking out. He had honestly thought that little stunt with Genie's fraudulent application would never be found and now that it was in the open, he felt like crawling into a hole and dragging it in after him. He had read T'Wen's profile and the synopsis presented by Dr. Orratt about her status and the events revolving around the death of her A'duna. To be honest. He felt he was stepping into a kill zone. Any one who'd experienced that kind of trauma would lash out at inopportune moments, especially when there was no actual danger near by. Anyone who was near someone having the episodes he was envisioning would themselves be at risk of bodily harm. Especially if one took into account the higher body density and strength of a Vuhlkansu. T'wen was an exquisitely beautiful woman. Black hair, narrow cheek bones ,almond shaped brown eyes, willowy figure. There had been a video clip enclosed of her speaking to her children. She had a musical voice. Almost like bells. And he could not help but be captivated by her. Then his attention was drawn back to the events at the Vulcan consulate. What he had read would have been horrifying enough. But experiencing something like the brutality that Kaitek had endured would have been shattering to T'wen since Kaitek had opened the bond and forced her to experience it. He wondered if there was anything left of the beautiful woman he'd seen in the video. His attention was drawn back to the room when Annika had finished speaking to Admiral Forrest. He'd noticed that all during this time while Soval had faced Annika and Maxwell, his attention had been on Jon the whole time.

"I would surmise Jon that you are considering the development of cold feet. Am I correct?"

Soval had turned to face Jon as he asked. His tone brooked no disagreement.

"If it makes you feel better. Both Genie and Bridgett have had those moments. Admiral Forrest himself can attest that insecurity is common in human unions."

Jon wasn't sure how to answer. Looking at the Admiral didn't yield any help.

"I would guess you hit the nail on the head Soval. But her past may be a stumbling block."
"Elaborate." Soval prodded him.

"I would rather not. Do you think Annika should know what I will be up against?"

Jon finally replied.

"We will discuss that in the meld Jon. I know exactly what you are concerned about. You should be fine. We have discussed this with T'wen before we contacted you. She is willing to meet with you to see if you are agreeable for her. You must trust us in this. If you like we can start with Annika. By the time I finish with her. You should be better centered."

Jon considered Soval. Then replied.

"That would be fine."

"Very well. We should begin then Annika." Soval turned to the lady across the desk from him and gestured for her to turn her chair to face him. Soval had stood to move around the desk, moving the chair he was using with him. Setting the chair down in front of hers and sitting himself. He looked at her and advised her to relax. As he began. Jon had glanced over at Maxwell, who had been regarding him the whole time.

"Don't even think of resigning Jon. It wont be the first time an officer faced a demon from his past. Just show some better sense."

Was all he said as Soval began the meld with Annika. Jon wondered if Forrest was a telepath. But nodded turning his attention back to Soval and Annika. He watched as Soval spoke to Annik and watched her nod in understanding as Soval placed his fingers on her face, locating the meld points and initiating the meld. As he watched he was thinking if this is a good idea. From what he'd been given to understand. T'Wen had more than enough reason to liquidate every human male she laid eyes on. Regardless of the need to put that sorry event in the past for herself and her children.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

T'wen

The meditation candle burning on the small table before her blurred in and out of her visual focus as she tried to meditate. She had been slightly agitated ever since she'd been offered the chance to bond with a human and had been off balance ever since. That was three weeks ago. With a sigh, she reached out and snuffed the candle before settling back and closing her eyes once more. Recalling with sadness the final memories of her Ashaya. He had not gone quietly. Even now the vivid memories threatened to tear apart her sanity. The Kohlinar masters had been very instrumental in helping her over come the total paralysis that the trauma had caused her. Leaving her a near hysterical heap in her rooms. Afraid to go out even to face her children for fear of harming them. She would try to sleep and even then the faces of her beloveds tormentors would be sneering in her vision as they rained blow upon blow upon him. When he finally succumbed there was a faint whisper, saying faintly. "Avenge me Ashayam."

While even she had to admit that in the months since the consulate had been attacked, she had made a major improvement in her health. It didn't diminish the pain or anger that she felt toward these insane beings with their perverted sense of racial or special purity. She found herself hesitant in these moments because the sheer force of the pain and emotion she endured in Kaitek's bond sending had nearly crippled her. She considered herself thankful enough to be functional with her children present. When she had been approached by her clan mother and parents and had been presented to the Minister of the High Council. T'Pau. She was still off balance and she had to be ready to go to the bonding ceremony at the consulate in the morning. Her clan mothers representative would present her to her prospective mate and to be frank she wasn't sure if this would work. It had been a small matter to speak with Dr. Orratt and call it off. But her children were her life. She had made a major commitment to them for her Ashaya. She also had her future to re-claim. Sighing. She simply lay back on the floor and closed her eyes. In moments she had fallen into blessed sleep.

Jon

The meld had been uneventful for Jon. At least he didn't want to crawl into his boots. Sharing with Soval his concerns about T'wen's pain drawing unwanted consequences had borne some fruit. Soval had agreed that the probability was high that she could relapse, but since they were to be sequestered for a year in San Francisco and working closely with the healers at the consulate. He didn't for see any serious problems. Coming out of the meld. He was thinking that "Soval, I hope your right." Finished for the night. Admiral Forrest looked at Jon and said.

"Nine O clock at my place, then we go to the consulate."

Jon nodded then walked out of the office. Fifteen minutes later, he was in the Officer Housing Unit on the north side of the Starfleet Campus. Stripping his clothes off, he was in the shower in his assigned room, opting for hot water instead of sonics. Letting the water cascade down onto him. He wondered what logic was involved in this type of pairing. Tiredly he shut off the shower and got ready for bed. Eyeing the clothes bag hanging on the hook by the door. He had a sneaking
suspicion that he would be away from the fleet for a while. From what he little he knew of Vulcan customs, the newly bonded pair would spend up to a year of seclusion before resuming their lives. But the request to not have Star fleet uniforms seen at the ceremony was understandable. Cutting the lights as he made to get into bed, it was one of those times he missed Porthos.

Morning

Admiral Maxwell Forrest arrived bright and early to pick up Jon at Officer quarters. Jon had an interesting ride to the Consulate in the back seat with Genie's other four children. Abigail sat across from Jon, keeping up a lively conversation and doting on the children. Max simply kept his attention on the flight path, occasionally commenting to Jon or Abigail. Jon felt understandably nervous, but was able to interact with Abigail and the kids. He couldn't help but be impressed by how attentive and disciplined the four youngsters were with their grand parents. He was actually surprised he could have a conversation with Sokal and Sekir while S'ren sat politely alongside her grandmother and listened to the conversation. The baby was ensconced safely in Abigail's arms and regarded everyone with a serious look an her face. Of the four children, Little S'Rell would take after her mother. The only one of the four with Honey blonde hair and blue eyes.

Landing at the Consulate, Max and Abigail took the their grand kids and disappeared into the front door, their flitter being taken over by a security officer to be parked elsewhere. Soval had stepped out after Max and Abigail had moved the children out of sight and had Jon follow him inside and down a side corridor. Entering a small room, Jon found himself face to face with a Vulcan priest and Dr Orratt. Four several minutes nothing was said. The three simply stood there regarding each other. Soval simply stood there to Jon's left watching them. Finally. Orrat turned to Soval and nodded. Soval nodded in turn then left. Turning back to Jon He made eye contact and simply studied Jon. For several minutes. He simply stood there not saying anything. Jon handled the attention stoically. Not sure what Orratt's reasons were. He got his answer after a moment.

"Forgive me Jonathan, I am simply trying to deduce why you were the one that was chosen for T'Wen. I understand this day is for me and Bridgett. However, my clan matriarch has tasked me with this simple errand. After the ceremony. I will be indisposed for a time. And I have to have this resolved before we go in to the ceremony."

"Understood Doctor. But in all fairness. I am somewhat in the dark myself." Jon answered.

"I believe it would be easier if I had your thoughts young man. May I?" Orratt asked as he held up his hand. Jon nodded. Not too happily.

In short order, Jon was once again hosting a Vulcan in his mind. He felt or noticed Orratt sifting through his memories. All the while standing before him in the white space looking levelly at Jon.

"I believe I know or understand why they chose you Jonathan, but there was more that they never revealed to me. Since this bonding will not be for another three weeks, I have time to work with you after I spend time with my bond mate. Until then. I release you to attend the ceremony."

Jon gasped as the contact was broken. Blinking, he looked around at Orratt and the priest. Both held him by a shoulder. Once they were sure he would not collapse. They released him, then led him out into the hall way toward the main hall. Leaving Jonathan with Soval at the door, Soval escorted him to where his family was sitting near the front. Joining them. Soval had Jonathan stand to left, with Admiral Forest and Abigail. For a short interval. what little back ground noise and talking faded off, then someone came to the front. Jon watched as Dr Orratt came forward to the front of the room accompanied by three other Vulcans. Orrat stepped up on the dais to a large heavy
gong. His companions had moved around to Orrats's but stayed just off the dias and stopped forming a line facing the Dr. Orratt picked up a metal mallet, and focused his attention to the back of the room a moment, then struck the gong. It gave off a low resonance that filled the hall. Jon felt the sound penetrate through him. Everyone turned and faced the center aisle as a procession made its way down to Orratt. First came two ceremonial guards, then a reldai being escorted by a magistrate followed by Soval with Bridgett holding his arm. Two other ceremonial guards brought up the rear. Coming up to the dias, the two guard's parted to each side and stepped straight out before halting then facing Orratt. The priestess/Reldai stepped up on the dias to stand just short of Orratt then turning to face ahead as Orratt was standing while the magistrate stepped around the dias to stand next to the guard. The following two guards simply went around Soval and joined their companions alongside the dias.

The Magistrate spoke up then.

"Who comes here today to be joined?"

Soval answered. "My daughter Bridgett, who will have her?"

Then Orratt spoke up.

"I am Orratt and have come to ask for the hand of Bridgett Forrest."

Watching the proceedings, Jon had to admit that leaving out the names of the clans represented was a mercy in itself. There was no way any human could attempt to pronounce them. He watched Soval take Bridget's hand and placed it in Orratt's, then turning to join his family. As he watched, he noticed out of the corner of his eye, Annika had arrived with her prospective bondmate, and he could tell she was happy. On the dias. Orratt and Bridgett offered the Ozhestia to each other as they turned as one and kneeled. The Reldai had stepped up around and behind them and as she moved her hands to place on their heads she recited the words.

"What ye are about to witness comes down from the time of the beginning. This is the Vulcan heart. This is the Vulcan soul. This is our way."

She had placed her hands on the bride and grooms heads and paused after speaking. For a moment, it was quiet, then Bridgett gasped and opened her eyes in surprise fixing them on Orratt. She had a look of realization and wonder on her face, looking like she was going to faint from the intensity of what she'd experienced. But that smile she shared said everything. No one said anything, then Admiral Forrest started clapping. It was followed by every human in the room. Bridgett snapped out of her wonder struck moment to look around in surprise. Then that happy smile returned. The Reldai had turned and nodded to the Magistrate who stepped up onto the dias to join the Reldai. Both Orratt and Bridgett had turned and faced the magistrate. Who carried out his office.

"Doctor Orratt. Ms. Bridgett Forest. By the power vested in me in the North American District of United Earth, I acknowledge your union in the Customs of our Allied world Vulcana Rhaeger and pronounce you man and wife. Or A'dun and A'duna." Turning and addressing the room. "Ladies and gentlemen. I give you Dr Orratt and his bride, Bridgett."

Stepping back. to stand next to the Reldai. Everyone came forward and joined the couple and intermingled. Jon had drifted toward the Forrest family as they came up to Bridgett and congratulated her. He stood back as everyone had formed a line to congratulate the newly bonded couple. He was soon joined by Soval and a petite female Vulcan.

"I trust you didn't find anything dangerous in our bonding custom Jon."
Soval commented drily as he watched the goings on. Jon bit back a snort at Soval's short attempt at humor. Watching Orratt interact with Bridgett, Jon couldn't help but notice that they seemed to be holding a silent conversation as the pair interacted with the guests. No speech, but interactions as if they were speaking. More Bridgett than Orratt, but it was obvious to Jon there was a bond formed. Turning to Soval. He asked.

"I do have to ask Osu, but you mentioned that T'Wen has to remain on earth. May I ask why?"

"Very astute Jonathan. The answer at face value is obvious. She has to remain with her telsu. And further. She also is still recovering from the night mare of her mates death. This will be covered while you two will be sequestered for the following twelve monthes after your bonding. She may never be able to return to Vulcan even then. For reasons we will explain later."

Turning to the Vulcan lady and addressed her in Vulkhansu: " T'sai t'wen i la' ish-veh telsu, Jonathan Archer."

Jon did not understand Soval's statement, but had watched the lady focus her attention on him directly.

Chapter End Notes

Vulcan translations: T'sai t'wen i la' ish-veh telsu, jonathan archer
Lady T"wen I present your telsu, Jonathan Archer.
Jon found himself mesmerized by the deep emerald wells he looked into. To say that T'Wen was intense was an understatement. As a woman. She was one of the most magnificent ladies he had ever had the privilege of being acquainted with. Neither spoke. Just stood there considering each other. Soval and the Reldai stood off to the side and watched. Neither spoke. Just regarded each other and nothing else in the room had any significance. Then with a gesture, T'Wen lifted her hand indicating she wanted to leave the room. Jon nodded and offered his arm. She seemed taken aback for a moment, then acquiesced by placing her hand on his arm and allowing him to lead her past the reception and into the hallway. He looked at her indicating for her to decide which way to go, she gave a small nod then moved left guiding him down the hall. As they went out of sight around the corner. Max, Abigail, Soval and Genevieve had been observing them and turned to each other.

"Well, we can only hope that they can find something in each other to relate to." Genie's comment spoke volumes for what everyone was thinking. Max and Soval just looked at each other and nodded. Then turned back to the reception. Orratt and Bridgett stood there amongst the guests socializing. Strangely Orratt actually appeared healthier, but for a Vulcan looked pleased. Bridgett simply glowed being happy for this big change in her life. Soval and Max eventually made their way to the newly bonded couple. When they stood before the two. Soval looked over at Genie then back to Brigitte. His adopted daughter could see the approval in his eyes and her happy smile only got wider. She mouthed a thank you, to which Soval nodded. Holding up his right hand with index finger raised. He said One moment and turned to Orratt.

"I will not bother you to inquire on what you've found in your meld, it appears you have something more important to attend to. It can wait til you return. Those too may be awhile before a decision is made. Go ahead and go. This time is yours."

Turning back to Bridget, her gave her a ghost of a smile then turned away. Max stepped forward and gave his grand daughter a hug. "Enjoy yourself sweetie. Have a wonderful life."

She whispered I will. Then looking at Orratt. She nodded and her new husband took her hand in the human manner and led her to the door. And themselves took their leave. Outside a short distance down the hall from the meeting room. T"Wen had stopped and with Jon looked out upon the botanical gardens that literally wrapped around the consulate. She simply stood there in silent contemplation while Jon stood along side, allowing her this time. He kept his eyes out towards the gardens below, not intending to intrude on her. Finally she came to a decision and turned her head to look up at him.

"May it please you to walk the gardens OSU?" She asked somewhat formally to Jon's surprise.

He replied. "Sure." And led off to the near by stairs. Reaching the gardens below, she led off down the path to the right of the entrance they come out of. Jon couldn't help but be impressed by the non earth plant life that filled this sliver of ground between the consular building and the high wall that ran along the street side. And it was balmy in there. Amongst this garden had been planted several large oak trees. One that had a bench running around its trunk. Which T"Wen guided Jon towards. Coming up to it, she'd led him around til the tree blocked the building before sitting down. Leaning forward, she put her face in her hands and massaged her cheeks. Raising her head. She'd looked around for a moment before giving him his attention.

"It is difficult OSU. And I fear that my Federation Standard is not quite adequate." She led off.

"Please call me Jon, T"Wen. We need not be formal."
She raised an eyebrow at that. But nodded and appeared to think for a moment.

"May I meld with thee Jon?" She asked.

"If it helps. Then I have no objection." Was Jon's answer. She started to bring her hand up to his face, fingers starting to spread to contact his psi points when a voice cut in to the moment,

"That may not be wise at this juncture T"Sai. Not this early in the betrothal."

Both turned. Startled to find Soval coming around the trunk of the tree they'd been sitting behind. Admiral Forest beside him. To Jon's surprise. Soval came to stand before her and get down on a knee to look her in the eyes. Speaking softly.

"fai-tor du yearn tor nam-tor hau t"sai, tonk'peh du nam-tor fam dvun hakausu, ish-veh ri tor ki' ish-veh telsu yontau k' wuh flan' es du thy tushat."

She lowered her eyes. Looking like she wanted to break down. The sight was enough to shock Jon. Even when T'Pol had been compromised by her trillium-D addiction, she'd never betrayed so much emotion. Jon realized just how fragile T'Wen was at that moment. Closing his eyes. Jon sighed quietly. Realizing what he'd been asked to do. He was being asked to be her anchor when no one else would. In the eyes of any Vulcan male, she was not only damaged goods, but a hazard. A stigma that she's never asked for nor wanted. Jon turned his attention to Admiral Forrest, who'd been watching him. They both seemed to understand what they were witnessing and it saddened both of them. Soval put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed gently. As if to say it would be alright. Looking up at Jon Soval addressed him.

"Please forgive me Jonathan. But this is the first time she has been able to function in a semi-public setting. We are getting ready to dine at the reception dinner, and had came out to invite you both. If it is agreeable."

Jon looked at T"wen then back at Soval and nodded. Getting back to his feet, he reached a hand out to T"Wen and helped her up. Then the four started back to the building.

After entering the building, Jon felt Admiral Forest's hand on his shoulder gently pulling him to the side. After Maxwell excused him and Jon both from Soval. They stepped to a side door. And then Jon quietly opened up.

"Other than that transgression, is there any other you are wanting to avenge your self on Sir?" He quietly asked. Maxwell stood there looking at him but took his time in answering.

"Until a few moments ago, I'd never met Lady T"Wen, Jon. And I didn't realize the scope of the damage she suffered. I'm sorry. Soval had come to me and revealed to me that stupid stunt you pulled, and had recommended this bonding. I had figured it would be a fitting punishment for you. I can't say anymore about this. It is now up to you."

And with that. Max gently nudged Jon back out into the corridor and they continued on their way. Entering the reception area. They noted the absence of Orratt and his new A'dun with knowing grins. Jon saw Soval, T'wen and the Reldai who was accompanying her standing to one side and moved to join them. Max went to join his family.

"I'm listening Jon if you wish to object." Soval said as the Admiral came up to him.
Vulcan translation

I know you yearn to be joined T"Sai, but you are still healing, it would not do to have your telsu burned with the intensity of thy grief.

fai-tor du yeam tor nam-tor hau t"sai, tonk'peh du nam-tor fam dvun hakausu, ish-veh ri tor ki' ish-veh telsu yontau k' wuh flan'es du thy tushat.
Chapter 6

The discussion that followed was not nice or appropriate for a wedding reception but it was carried out nonetheless. Looking around, Jon could not help but notice other couples of mixed human-Vulcan pairings. While he had no doubt that such a pairing was possible, Jon found himself in a position that he may not be able to handle. Soval took his objections in stride but made it plain that Jon was going through with it. John was going to voice another objection when his prospective A’duna caught his attention. The words stilled on his lips as he saw that she was about ready to break down and cry. Looking over at Soval, he excused himself and went to her. Quietly suggesting that they go get some drinks and sit down. She quietly agreed. They made their way over to the refreshment table where after getting two tall fruit drinks, made their way over to some chairs in the opposite corner of the room. For a short moment, Neither spoke. Jon honestly felt trapped. He almost was lost not knowing how to relate to someone who would been through so much. He had lost members of his crew, had even commanded some to their deaths. Made decisions that resulted in a lot of grief in peoples lives. But clearly did not know how to handle a grieving woman trying to get back to living her life.

He simply sat along side the petite young lady, but didn’t try to talk, his gauge fixed at the far end of the room where there were some children interacting and playing with each other. He was about ready to get up and walk out when he sensed he was being watched. Out of the corner of his eye, He spied Genevieve with Soval watching them both worriedly. Soval was facing Genie so Jon had no idea of what was being discussed, other than it might relate to him. Sighing deeply, He turned his attention back to T’wen.

“T’wen. I’ll be blunt I am honestly stuck here. I honestly don’t know how to handle this and to be polite. I really don’t know if I can be the man that you need and what Soval expects of me.”

She quietly nodded she been sitting in the chair with a drink in hand her shoulders bent her tension focused forward and down. John felt his heart breaking at the sight.

“For what it’s worth. You have my condolences concerning your late A’duna, and to be truthful this was the lousiest time to bring forth an introduction. Or Soval is trying to hurry things along. I am willing to spend some time with you for right now. Because right now. You don’t need to be alone and myself. I know what it’s like to feel abandoned so I’ll stay with you if you need me. “

She raised her head and turned her attention to him making eye contact and gave a short nod before taking a sip of her drink, then both turned their attention back to the goings-on in the room.

“Most bonding receptions don’t last quite as long do they?”

John asked.

"Not particularly. Most receptions normally do not go past a quarter hour. After the bonding Ceremony Is conducted. There is a short gathering time, then the respective parties go their separate ways. The bonded pair goes into seclusion which can last up to a year and all they do in that time is to strengthen their bond and get familiar with each other.”

John nodded in response. Still keeping his attention on the small crowd.

And this is not like a mixed bonding is a novelty for them. At least for earth based Vulcan’s. But this was the first Jon had heard of an arranged bonding between two adults. So there was something that hinged on Jon bonding with a damaged Vulcan.

"T’Sai. I have noticed that they will not allow us to be completely alone. May I ask why or will they allow you to answer?"

She sat there looking out to the crowd without replying. The length of her silence evidence of her hidden pain. Jon waited still watching the goings on, not trying to push for her to answer. Out of the corner of his eye, he spied Soval had turned slightly enough to focus his attention towards the
pair. Genie still stood facing Soval, but was able to face Jon and T'Wen, had a concerned look on her face. Jon knew his past actions had landed him in this mess and he knew for sure he wasn't going to be up to the task of caring for a damaged Vulcan.

"I can not give you an answer at this time, Jon. As Soval said, this is the first time I have been away from the healers. This is unfamiliar to me."

Jon nodded. "I understand lady T'Wen. I do not wish to aggravate your weakness, only the hope that you continue to heal. Please sit at peace and relax. We can talk or do what you wish when you may."

She nodded, closing her eyes as she sat with him. Across the room, Soval had started visiting with Admiral Forrest while keeping an eye towards the pair. Genie and Abigail had gravitated towards a small group of women who were bonded with Vulcans. The children had somehow disappeared. Off to where Sorak's mate had set up some activities. Jon had noticed that while the gathering was winding down. A core group of people appeared to be remaining.

"T'Wen. Do you have any idea what's happening next?" His question had her raise her head and look across the room to the group he had focused on.

"I don't know Jonathan. Soval will let us know, since it appears he is among them." He nodded at her answer. But didn't reply. He rose to his feet and held his hand out to her. Helping her to stand. They made their way over to where Soval and Genie stood. Soval had turned to watch their approach but did not say anything until they were beside him.

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