Summary

Jamison Kirk and Spock have been happily bonded for three years. When Jamison Kirk became pregnant, it was a miracle seen as an impossibility with Spock being sterile. Betrayed and hurt, Spock breaks their bond believing she cheated on him. It's the only logical explanation despite her continued insistence that it was his child.

With the bond torn away from her mind and the divorce finalized, Jim is alone. Spock had been so emotionally compromised it hadn't broken properly, leaving Jim with continuous agony, seizures, and a multitude of other problems. She leaves the Enterprise, Bones accompanying her, and becomes an instructor at the academy.

When Lily is born, her DNA is a perfect match and Sarek discovers his son's actions and confronts Spock. Can he fix what he did? Or is he too late?

Notes

This story is way in the beginning stages and will not be updated as fast as I'd like but I just feel the need to post it. I hope it's ok and I am debating endings. I may post both endings to let the reader decide which they want but it's a long way from finished.
Chapter One

"Jim, honey? Are you ok?"

Jamison Kirk startled at the sound of her mother's tentative voice and scrubbed her eyes furiously. She tried to rid herself of the evidence of her crying and her heartbreak at feeling so alone despite the many people in her home supporting her.

"Yeah, mom. I'm fine." She answered in a hollow voice. The words came automatically. She'd said them so many times to force herself in an effort to believe them. There was an aching emptiness in her mind but it wasn't just an emptiness. It seemed like more. It was almost like a raw, bleeding, festering wound but it felt empty and she had to ignore it. She needed to. Someone more important than herself; more important than anything in the universe needed her and she'd be damned if she let herself be so selfish as to deny her anything but her best but he should be here. If not for Jim then for the baby.

A small whimper dragged her from her morose thoughts and Jim looked down at the warm bundle in her arms. Her daughter, Lily T'Priah, Lily meaning innocence and purity, T'Priah for after the pre-reform Vulcan goddess of fertility, burrowed closer to her breast and a sensation of calm flowed through Jim, soothing the jagged edges in both her heart and mind, healing her in ways she couldn't explain. She'd chosen names both human and Vulcan for her. Jim had wanted to honor both aspects of her heritage and she hoped she'd done it right.

Her little girl helped to ease the daily agony from the broken bond Spock had left her with and it broke Jim's heart just a little more that this amazing little person loved her so much. There was no judgement, just a pure love that flowed into Jim's mind. Jim had once thought she'd found that with her former husband and bondmate but that was not to be. She was now so blessed to have it with their daughter despite Spock not believing she was his.

God, she loved Lily so much. She was her everything. Jim gently stroked the soft, black hair, running her fingertips over the delicate pointed ears and she smiled at the tiny yawn from her. "Hey. Shh. Mommy's here."

Jim closed her eyes and tried to welcome the warmth from her daughter but an insistent sudden pounding in her head that had been a chronic thing for almost a year caused her to falter. She could feel a stabbing sensation behind her right eye and Winona moved closer, recognizing the signs of an oncoming migraine and she quickly closed the blinds to obscure the blue of the Pacific Ocean from her bedroom window to shroud the room in darkness. It was too reminiscent of a funeral when Lily's birth should be a celebration but the selfish part of Jim welcomed the dark to help with the pain.

"Do you need something for the pain?"

Jim tried to shake her head but the nausea started too quickly for her to deny the severity of this episode and she barely had time to shift her newborn daughter before she turned her head and vomited up her breakfast into the trash next to her bed.

Jim quickly handed over Lily to Winona the moment she felt Sadie, her seizure aid dog, lay her golden head on her lap and give a single bark to warn her.
"Damn it!"

Her mom sprang into action and gently placed her granddaughter into the bassinet attached to the bed. Jim saw the familiar visual halos signaling another seizure and felt the sting of the hypo to her neck right before everything went black.

Winona Kirk watched in horror at the sight of her daughter stiffening and staring straight ahead, her hands twitching slightly and she started counting in her head even though the medical monitoring bracelet was doing it for her and would alert her if she needed a second dose of meds and a trip to the hospital. This was a bad one. It had been over a month since she'd had an episode that had broken through the meds Leonard prescribed. She hated this. She hated not knowing what was causing this. She hated Spock for the way he'd left Jim and abandoned his daughter. She just hated everything.

It was a tortuous three minutes before Jim let out a shuddering breath and Winona let out one of her own in relief but it was short lived. Jim's eyes were vacant, almost glazed over by the careful mix of the Ativan/morphine medication and was struggling with the effects of a postictal phase following a severe seizure.

She carefully sat next to her little girl, careful to not touch her for fear of overwhelming her with sensory overload. Jim turned to face her, her expression showing confusion and Sadie whimpered and jumped onto the bed to lay across her lap to prevent Jim from wandering in her current state.

"Who are you?"

The words were slurred and she ached to do more but she was helpless. It was the worst feeling in the world. "It's me, sweetheart. It's mom."

Jim tilted her head in confusion and she reached out a hand to gently run her fingers over her cheek as if to check she was really there but her normally vivid blue eyes were looking straight through her. "Mommy?"

She choked back a sob and cupped her hand over her daughter's. She hadn't been called that since Jamison was a small child. "Yeah, baby. I'm here."

She blinked slowly and frowned. "I'm so tired."

"Then you rest. I'll be here when you wake up." She helped her lie down and covered her with the homemade quilt that Leonard's mother had made her.

Lily started crying in distress and Winona carefully lifted the small bundle to comfort her. The baby's cries had just turned into small hiccups when Dr. McCoy burst into the room with his medkit. His eyes were wild but his hands steady and sure as he pulled out his instruments.

"I'm so sorry, Win. I was out in the yard and forgot my comm."

The older blonde waited anxiously but put out the illusion of calm as he placed a sensor on Jamison's forehead and took scans of her brain to determine if she needed to be transported to Starfleet Medical.

When McCoy's body relaxed, so did she. "She's stable but I think I might increase her Banzel dosage."

"Dammit, Jim." He murmured softly.
Running a hand through his hair, she noticed just how tired he was. She was so grateful that Jamison had him. Since that green-blooded bastard had broken their bond her daughter had suffered so much. Leonard had been a rock for her. He'd moved in and become a constant support for her but Jamison had hated feeling like such a burden on him despite him constantly telling her she wasn't.

McCoy sat on the bed next to her and pushed an errant blonde strand of hair off her forehead and she sighed in her sleep and leaned into the touch.

Winona's eyes burned with unshed tears. "Will she ever be ok?"

Shaking his head, Jim's former CMO clenched a fist but was nothing but gentle as he touched her daughter. "I just don't know. Vulcan bonds and how they affect the brain aren't my specialty even though neurology was one of my focuses in medicine. There just aren't enough healers available to see her and it might be a normal reaction for a human when a bond is broken. The human brain just isn't equipped for telepathy like a vulcan's."

As Winona rocked her grandchild, she couldn't help but feel so much fear that she was losing her daughter. "Have you gotten a response from the embassy about this?"

The doctor scowled and replaced the tools in his medical kit. "Yeah. They told me that minor discomfort is normal after any bond breaking and that it couldn't be that. They said that I should dismiss this obsession and xenophobic belief of mine and focus on finding the true cause of Jim's illness or it may be that I'm an incompetent medical doctor. They also said to stop harassing them."

The doctor looked down at his hands, his shoulders slumped and his eyes defeated. "I know that's what it is! It has to be! I've ruled out everything else."

Winona adjusted her grip on Lily to be able to reach her daughter. Mirroring McCoy's earlier actions, she ran her fingers through the sweaty strands. With how bad this latest seizure was, Jim was deep asleep recovering. It was more of a comfort to her then to Jim. "She's dying, isn't she?"

Looking up into hazel eyes, she could see the torment, the agony, and guilt displayed as easily as she could see the pain her youngest child continuously pushed past to continue living for her own child despite the challenges she was struggling with.

"Yes." He told her simply.

She felt numb. She'd been expecting this, suspecting it but it still shocked her.

"How long?"

Sighing, the doctor looked far older than his years and he seemed to consider his words but Winona didn't want the truth to be sugar coated and he knew that. "Five years. Maybe less."

So soon? "How long until she's no longer her? How long before I truly lose my daughter?"

McCoy looked down and watched Jim breathing for a minute before answering. "Four. Maybe three."

The older woman turned away from McCoy, letting the news sink in. "Does she know?"

"No. Not yet but I think she suspects it."

A huff of laughter escaped her lips. "She wouldn't be a genius if she didn't know."
A large hand reached over and surrounded her shoulder, squeezing it in a show of support that did little to soften the blow.

"I want to implant a vagal nerve stimulator that should help with her epilepsy some. Sadie will be able to be trained to activate it using a magnet on her collar. It's an archaic method but effective."

Her chest tightened and she pressed a kiss to the soft, fuzzy hair of Lily.

"I won't give up on her, Winona. I promise."

"No-win scenario, huh? Seems like Jim's behavior and habits have worn off on you." She huffed a laugh and McCoy smiled back but it was weak.

"If there's anyone who could beat this, it'd be Jim."

She hummed in agreement. Pressing her lips into a moue of displeasure, she struggled to remain calm. "And any response from Spock?"

McCoy's hand tightened on the hypospray he was putting away to the point his knuckles turned white. "He put a block on all communications from me. His last comm was from his attorney sending a no-contact order and the one before that was the paperwork dissolving the human aspect of their marriage." His face flushed in anger. "He also sent the forms signing away any and all rights to the child that he is denying as his." He growled and shoved the equipment back into place with more force than necessary. "The reasons stated were that Jim was unfaithful and carrying a child that resulted from her 'supposed infidelity'. It also said that Jim's allegations of the child being biologically his are false and he refuses to do paternity testing despite the supposed low probability of it being his." He snorted in disbelief. "He actually used my own work against me by citing his physical from when he first came on board the Enterprise which showed that, at the time, he was infertile."

Winona tilted her head signaling they should move their discussion to another room and McCoy hit the camera monitor to keep an eye on his best friend, the woman who was like a sister to him. Transferring Lily to the crib next to Jim's bed, they moved out of earshot and into the kitchen where McCoy poured himself a small measure of bourbon.

Winona frowned and took the bottle to pour herself a small glass to join him. "How is that possible then?"

"I don't know but I do know I tested her DNA and Lily is genetically descended from that green-blooded bastard. He's not the father because to be a father you have to give a damn and he sure as hell doesn't. I consider him to be nothing more than just a cold, heartless, robot of a sperm donor." He threw back his drink and growled in disgust. "Jim loved him and he threw her away like garbage. He threw them both away and I think, despite what the healers say, that he did this to her. I can't find any other reason why this would be happening to her! She'd never have cheated on him and she sure as hell would never have lied about it or about carrying his child."

Winona gripped the man's arm. "I know Leonard. I know." Sighing, she sat heavily on the couch and patted the seat next to her, happy when he joined her.

"I just don't know what to do. She's wasting away right in front of me. It's like my worst nightmare all over again. If this continues she's going to be dead in less than five years, six if she's lucky but the Jim we know might be completely gone by then." Blowing out a frustrated breath, Winona
reached out and grasped his hand in a show of support.

"She's strong, Leonard. She'll claw herself up from the depths of hell if she has to because of that little girl in there."
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Hi all! Wow! I'm so overwhelmed by the positive responses to this story! You guys are all so amazing!

Now, it's time to bring the story back to where we see just how things came to be. ;)

One thing I'd like to note, I'm sorry I had to turn on comment moderation. I had a sort of stalker harassing me under an anonymous account writing foul and cruel things on multiple chapters of my works and it was very distressing for me. I'm all for constructive criticism but simply writing horrible stuff is not ok. That isn't what this community is about.

Speaking of community, omg! There have been some amazing K/S fictions posted lately! I've been totally procrastinating because it's been so much fun reading them. Lol! I think I might start posting recs on each of my chapter notes because to miss these would be a crime! Does anyone have any recs for me? I'd love to hear from you!

Just as a heads up, things are about to get pretty E rated in the next chapter.

DarkWaters

Chapter Two

*Ten Months Prior*

Jamison Kirk was normally impatient and ready to leave events and diplomatic missions, preferring the excitement and action-packed event of finding new planets and exploring space. The Xerathi people though? They were exception to the opinion.

Jim wandered the large reception, enjoying the peace and beauty of the party. The mission to admit the planet Xera had been simple and actually quite fun. The planet was a veritable paradise and everyone had been so welcoming that it was a nice change to the usual hassle of negotiating with new species. Normally, a new planet expected visitors to adhere to their cultural beliefs and protocols to an extreme level but people had been nothing but respectful of the Federation envoys and the crew of the Enterprise that had been sent to finalize the admittance to become new members of the United Federation of Planets.

They didn't have valuable minerals, metals, or even inventions that had tempted Starfleet or the UFP. What they did have was a rich and beautiful culture that welcomed those who wanted to visit. Their spirit was strong and their sense of adventure rivaled that of so many of the Federation's members. Already the planet was planning and building resorts, hotels, and everything possible to encourage tourism and Jim knew that it would be a hotspot for many who wanted relaxation, peace, and those who appreciated beauty.

Jim wandered around the reception hall and sipped the local wine that had been supplied, enjoying the sweet flavor that burst on her tongue. An occasional child ran through the throng of adults playing a non-Terran version of tag and she couldn't help smiling at the sight of them. The Xerathi were humanoid but their skin had a slightly darker hue to it. Their eyes though were a bright cobalt hue that gave them an exotic beauty that Jim found fascinating.

Jim's eyes crinkled in amusement as she caught view of her best friend, Bones, leaning against the
wall with a lazy smile and definitely bringing a little 'southern charm' to one of the diplomats. He
must have agreed that they had an exotic beauty that he appreciated himself. Snorting into her
drink, she scanned the crowd. Sarek was standing and speaking with Prime Minister Toray. Over
the past three years that Spock and her had been bonded the Ambassador had slowly started to
warm to her and accepted the fact that he was her father-in-law, going so far as even attending both
their bonding ceremony/Koon-ut-kal-if-fee overseen by Lady T'Pau and their human wedding on
Earth. Jim's fear of the intimidating Ambassador had been a never ending source of amusement for
Spock.

The assignment they had received from Admiral Hayes was a simple one. They were to attend the
final festivities and the signing of the initiation of Xera into the United Federation of Planets as a
show of support. Afterwards, they were to transport Sarek and his diplomatic aide, Stonn, to
Starbase 42 so they could be transported back to the Vulcan Colony. They'd been on-planet for
over six months negotiating the contract after the diplomatic vessel, USS Amicus, had dropped
them off. Jim couldn't imagine being in one place for so long but, looking around, she supposed it
couldn't have been too bad.

Xera's main landmasses where the majority of the population resided was relatively close to the
equator, a series of islands that were tropical environments that appealed to many. While heat had
clearly been having one positive effect on Spock, the humidity had the opposite. It was a sad
dichotomy that he had been forced to accept for this mission but he withstood it with his typical
stoic demeanor. While they couldn't 'talk' to each other per se through their bond, she could sense
his discomfort and feelings on the matter when they weren't shielding for privacy.

The festivities also, coincidentally, fell on the Xerathian holiday of family and the symbolism
wasn't lost on Jim as the people were accepting their place among the universe as a sort of
extended family. The culture of the planet celebrated the blessing of children. Uhura had explained
in her briefing that, before the advancement of their medicinal skills and technology, the people of
the planet would frequently suffer infertility, miscarriages, and the death of their children through
unknown illnesses and so every child was a treasure. Many families were large and even same sex
couples were blessed through surrogacy, adoption, and sperm or egg donation. No child was ever
left behind, so to speak. It was amazing.

Uhura was in linguistic heaven and had been enthusiastically studying the nuances of their speech.
She had a singular skill at learning and interpretation that rivaled her idol Hoshi Sato, the linguistic
specialist from the first Enterprise under Captain Archer who'd paved the way for the development
of the universal translator. Jim had met her as a child on Tarsus IV before her death saving so
many colonists when she'd sacrificed herself to get a message out to Starfleet.

The planet hadn't been a very tech-y place so Lieutenant-Commander Scott had elected to remain
on the ship but the rest of her senior staff were here and the planet had welcomed the remainder of
her crew to be able to have shore leave in rotating shifts.

With the relaxed atmosphere, Jim wasn't in her formal dress-grays, instead opting for a modest
length off the shoulder cobalt dress with yellow heels and her wavy blond hair pulled up in a loose
style. Spock had, himself, elected to wear more relaxed attire with a long-sleeved loose green
Vulcan tunic and black slacks. It was still strange, though, seeing so much color. The banquet hall
they were in was filled with vividly bright flowers and tapestries depicting the history of the planet.
It reminded her of Hawaii or Risa. It was amazing.

Jim suddenly had to jump back to avoid being hit by two Xerathi children running through the
throng of people. High pitched squeals and almost musical giggles following in their wake. They
were at the buffet-style table and she saw Sulu slip the pair a few of the sweet biscuits that they
A small smile lit her helmsman's face and Jim knew he had to be missing his own daughter and husband back on Earth.

"Captain Kirk?"

A deep voice interrupted her thoughts and Jim turned to face Sarek's aide, Stonn. His hair was in the traditional bowl-cut style but he had rounder features than that of her husband. His eyes were the biggest difference. Unlike Spock's, or even Sarek's, they seemed darker and almost cold. It unsettled her for some reason. It must have unsettled Spock as well because he would alternate avoid him and when he would come near her he would appear at her side. He almost seemed to be staking a claim and it irked her to no end. She could handle herself and it hurt that Spock didn't seem to share her opinion.

She forced her features into the most pleasant she could manage, one that she frequently used when dealing with those she'd rather not. "Stonn, I am surprised you are attending the festivities. I had been given to understand you were going to spend the evening writing up the summary and reports of your and Sarek's work here. What can I do for you?"

Stonn seemed to scrutinize her and it only served to make her uncomfortable but she refused to show weakness by fidgeting. "I completed my work some time ago and believed it prudent to respect the ceremonies of the planet we have been working with."

Jim nodded and waited for more since he clearly wasn't done.

"I also wished to extend my greetings. I am learning the skills necessary to interact with aliens and I am eager to practice." There seemed to be some sort of double meaning and insult to his words and Jim's lips thinned in suspicion but she had to maintain a polite demeanor.

Stonn held out his hand, offering a handshake and Jim stared at it for a moment in shock and suspicion. Vulcans almost never touched and they certainly never touched those that weren't family or bondmates. She really didn't want to shake his hand but she couldn't be rude so she had no choice. Shifting her wine glass to her left hand, she grasped his hand and he slowly moved his arm up and down. His grip started to tighten almost to the point of hurting and he used it to pull her closer.

"You look aesthetically pleasing tonight, Jamison." He practically purred. Jim's smile turned into a sickly grimace.

She didn't want to cause a scene and started to pull her arm back to try and get him to release his hold on her but he only held her hand tighter utilizing his strength and it was actually hurting at this juncture. Jim could feel her fragile bones grinding together. His hold on her was, at this point, far longer than what was appropriate by either Vulcan or human standards, too.

Jim's teeth ground together as she fought to not make a sound to show she was hurting. "Thank you, Stonn. You can let go, now."

He jerked her closer, enough that she could feel his hot breath on her ear. Moving close enough to whisper, Jim brought her knee up and into his crotch. His hand spasmed and released her as he curled inwards. She leaned down. "Don't ever touch me again." She hissed into his ear and the answering glare she received only made her smile sweetly.

She only had about a minute before she felt Spock's concern and a spike of white hot anger tore through their link. An answering shift of air behind her signaled his arrival.
Jim turned and smiled at Spock who regarded the curled in Vulcan with an air of interest and smug satisfaction. "Captain, is everything alright?"

"I was just giving Stonn here a lesson in human etiquette when he almost collapsed." She smirked. "I don't think he's feeling too well at the moment and may want to leave the party." Her eyes narrowed in warning. "Don't you, Stonn?"

At Jim's question, he almost snarled but it was ruined by his face twisting with pain as he straightened. "If you will excuse me, captain, commander." He sent her a significant that was as transparent as glass that both Spock and Jim had to be blind to miss. "Our conversation this evening was...stimulating."

They watched him as he walked away with a slight limp and Jim shook her head in disgust. "What is with him?"

"I do not know but, I suspect that he still has antagonistic views of me from our youth despite the many years we have been apart." Spock continued to ensure his departure while Jim tried to surreptitiously bring the feeling back into her fingers and dispel the pain from her forceful 'handshake' with Stonn. The action did not go unnoticed and he immediately focused on her hand, noting the swelling and bruises beginning to blossom.

"Do you require Dr. McCoy's services?"

Jim jerked her head in the negative and used her left hand to discreetly brush her fingers against Spock's in a kiss. The sensation of warmth and affection suffused her body and pushed away the dark clouds that had plagued her with Stonn's presence. Even after three years of being bonded it still filled her with awe at being able to 'feel' Spock in her mind. It was an amazing thing that she would never tire of. "Nah. I'm good. I'll go by the medbay later."

"Commander Spock!"

One of the Xerathian delegates was practically sprinting across the room and Spock sighed very unvulcan-like at the interruption. The woman had been bugging Spock all night with questions and, while Spock valued curiosity, it had gone on for long enough that it was wearing on him.

"Duty calls, Mr. Spock." She smirked.

"Indeed."

Throwing a thumb over her shoulder, she started to walk away. "I'm just gonna get a breath of fresh air."

Spock raised a brow in question and Jim chuckled at his antics. Who said Vulcans don't have a sense of humor. "You know what I mean. Don't lie."

His lips twitched and fond affection drifted across. "A Vulcan never lies."

"No but, they do omit." She teased, ignoring his look of 'please, help me' and left him to the tender mercies of the delegate. She dumped her glass on a passing server's tray as she made her way outside.

Stepping out into the warm night air, Jim breathed deeply in appreciation. Shipboard recycled air had nothing on this. She could smell the planet's flowers that were like Earth's orange blossoms and the salty tang of the ocean just beyond the garden wall. The laughter of children reached her ears and she lowered herself gracefully onto a stone bench to watch a group of them kicking a
bright purple ball. While the adult Xerathi citizens tended to have almost white hair, the youth had a lavender color to theirs which would change as they got older.

There were eleven children of various ages playing happily and Jim carefully raised her shields to allow herself a moment of privacy from Spock. The topic of children was a sensitive one to the pair. Spock, as a human/Vulcan hybrid, was infertile and wouldn't hear of the idea of adoption or sperm donation so the subject had been forced to remain closed.

Melancholy threatened to overwhelm her as she watched them with a sad smile on her lips. She was soon to hit thirty-one and the thought of children had been on her mind lately. The Enterprise had only started it's second five year mission two years ago so it hadn't been an immediate want but it was a want that wasn't going to happen no matter how much she wished.

Shaking herself, Jim forced herself to remember all the positives. She had her career and her beautiful ship. She had her family and her friends. She had the respect of colleagues. Best of all, she was married and bonded to the man she loved more than anything.

The ball rolled over to rest at her feet and a small boy that looked to be about seven came up with a gap-toothed smile. Jim returned it and picked up the ball, tossing it to him with a flourish. He caught it and his chest puffed out with pride before he went to rejoin his friends.

"Children are what give us life. Wouldn't you agree, captain?"

Jim jumped and turned to see Prime Minister Toray standing right behind her. Her golden gown flowed around her and only seemed to enhance her beauty. Her skin was a dark chocolate and her hair a dark lavender and she seemed to glow in happiness as she gently stroked her heavily pregnant belly.

Smiling sadly, Jim nodded. "That they are."

The woman seemed to notice her sadness and her face turned to one of empathy. "Are you alright, captain? This topic seems to create such sadness within you."

Jim shrugged and looked out to the group of children still enjoying their game. "It does, but I do have happiness as well."

"Does your career forbid you to have children?" She asked.

Jim knew how important an answer to this was. Family was a central focus for the people here. "No. Many Starfleet officers have families and children. The Enterprise isn't a generational vessel, but there are some ships that are and many beings serving in Starfleet also take outpost assignments and planetary ones to have their families with them, too."

She nodded in understanding. "Did you wish to have to children?"

"Not in the cards for me."

"But it is something you wish for." She pressed.

Jim debated lying. She really did but the Xerathi tended to have almost a sixth sense when it came to deception. Maybe it was because they had so many kids that they learned to read people so well. Her mom had that skill when it had come to her and Sam especially when they had been up to some mischief or not doing their homework and later when they were adults and not sleeping enough in her opinion and other such things.
"Yes, but my husband and I-" She blew out a frustrated breath. ")-we can't have kids. He-" Shaking her head, Jim stopped that line of answering and forced herself to brighten. "We've got a ship full of officers that are family to us and that's plenty."

"If you could have the ability to have children with your mate, would you want to? Would you both want it?"

And there it was. A question Jim had asked herself several times over the past year. She knew it wasn't possible but it still didn't stop her from occasionally daydreaming about it. A blond-haired boy with gently tapered ears, a little girl with ebony locks and blue eyes, so many possibilities but it wasn't to be. Spock had hoped that once he'd have had his Pon Farr and reached maturity that things would have changed and he'd have been able to have children but, even after he'd gone through it, tests had revealed that he was still unable to produce viable sperm. It had taken a lot of consoling from Jim to make sure he knew that as long as she had him she was complete. She was. Besides, she had an adorable nephew on Antares to spoil.

"If we could then probably yes, but it's not to be." It didn't hurt to say it anymore. She'd made her peace with it but it did still cause an ache within occasionally. It wasn't only that she wanted kids for herself, she wanted them for Spock, too. She'd seen just how lonely the ambassador had been after his Jim's death. Odds were that Spock would outlive her and she didn't want him to be alone. As Spock would say 'Kaidith. What is, is.

Her eyes softened in empathy. "I understand."

There was a moment of silence as they both watched the children finish their game. "I think it may be time to rejoin the celebration inside, Captain."
Hi everyone,
Wow! This chapter was a hard one to write. (No pun intended!) I'm pretty sure you can guess what happened so I'm not gonna go into too much detail. I just hope that it's ok. Now, just a warning, this chapter is the main reason this story has a E rating.

Also, I discovered a really good fic that I want to recommend. It's called "The Promise" by coffee666. I haven't gotten to the end but I'm really enjoying this story. It's fun to read and I hope everyone will like it.

Anyway, back to the story here. I hope it's ok and I'd love to hear from you! I haven't had it beta'd so any mistakes, I'm sorry!
DarkWaters

Chapter Three

Jim was so tired. The party was still going full swing late into the night. Xera had a much slower planetary rotation than that of Earth so both days and nights lasted far longer than she was used to. The children were long gone and asleep and Jim only hoped that they would be soon. Thankfully, the last of the parting ceremonies would be a late lunch in accordance with Xerathian tradition as a way to say 'see you soon' rather than 'goodbye'. It was sweet.

Jim promised herself that once she had leave and if she was close by to the planet that she'd try to come back. She was eager to see just what would happen here once things settled.

"Looks like your beau is getting into the swing of things."

Jim turned to see Bones pointing with his glass of juice at her husband. He had an amused smile on his face and she followed his glance to see Spock swaying slightly with a slight green flush to his features. Jim raised a brow in surprise. That was odd. Normally, it was Jim that was at risk for drinking too much. Spock always behaved prim and proper as protocol dictated. Considering a vulcan's metabolism, Jim wondered just what he was drinking that'd cause such a potent reaction in him.

"They don't have something chemically similar to chocolate, do they?" She asked.

Her friend shook his head. "No. I scanned and checked everything, as far as I'm aware." He grinned. "With you being such a special snowflake and all, I had to be sure."

She couldn't help the slight frown that crossed her features. "Huh. That's weird."

Turning to face McCoy, she smirked at the disappointed expression as his eyes drifted towards Sarez, the aide he'd been flirting with earlier. "Struck out?" She asked with a smirk and a small amount of sympathy.

Snorting into his glass, a surly expression took over. "Like a blind man being thrown a curve-ball."
"Ouch." She told him with sympathy.

Bones' attention shifted back to Spock who was accepting another glass of something. He looked...almost eager? Jim carefully lowered her end of the bond. She didn't like invading his privacy without him knowing but she needed to check on him. A hazy, warm, and euphoric sensation flowed into her.

"I think it might be time for last call with him." Bones warned and Jim agreed. Even though the sight of a tipsy Spock was kind of funny to her, she knew he'd be mortified at the loss of control and she loved him too much to let him suffer that. Thank god Sarek had excused himself for the night.

"Yeah. I think so, too." Jim agreed and made her way across the room.

When Jim got to him, he was accepting another drink off a tray from a server and was sipping it with relish. She didn't recognize what it was and hadn't seen it before but, the Xerathians would never hurt them or offer them something dangerous so Jim ignored it. Maybe it was some kind of farewell treat. "Hey, buddy. You ready to call it a night?"

"Jim!" Spock quickly latched onto her and pulled her close with an arm around her waist and Jim's hand automatically went down to his. Spock's fingers lightly brushed against hers and a feeling of lust to hit her like a freight train through the contact. Jim almost gasped at the onslaught and her face turned beet red as her entire body felt hot.

Spock twined his pointer and middle finger around hers in a lewd enough vulcan kiss that had they been in the presence of other vulcans it would be akin to sticking his tongue down her throat in the throes of passion right in front of everybody. They had an unspoken rule about PDA that they would be subtle because of it being seen as inappropriate and unprofessional for a captain and her subordinate to be engaging in that sort of behavior.

"Spock, maybe it's time to head back to our room." She tried to disentangle herself but he held firm and polished off another drink too quick for her to stop and picked up another from a tray a server was offering to them with a happy smile only to press it into her hand. "You must try some."

Jim glanced around and could see that a few people were looking their way. She debated refusing but she couldn't appear rude so she took a large swallow and immediately gagged. Unlike most of the other drinks she'd been partaking in this one had a bitter, spicy flavor that was very strong. It was like the fire tea that Spock liked and Jim hated. She forced herself to finish and it was when she felt Spock nuzzling her neck that she knew she had to put an end to this.

Signaling a nearby server, she relinquished the empty glass and started to edge away from the vulcan plastered to her side to guide him to the doors so they could get to the room that the Xerathians had kindly provided them. "Alright, big guy. I think it's time to go."

A hot huff of air behind her ear made her shiver and she patted his back. "You smell so good."

She couldn't help rolling her eyes and giving him a fond smile. God, he was so cute. "I should. I used that perfume that Christine Chapel gave me last month."

"No. It is not that. You smell like-" Another breath and this time goosebumps erupted on her arms. "-terran apples and...fav'nit blossoms."

"Jim? Do you need help?" Bones stood next to them and Jim didn't even have a chance to reply when a rough tongue carefully traced the shell of her ear and a sharp nip followed causing her face
to flush crimson. "Uh-" She squeaked, mortified. "Maybe?"

"Your ears. They're so small." Spock murmured and Jim glanced at her friend to urge him to help her get Spock the hell out of here when she saw Bones shove a fist into his mouth to stifle his laughter.

She glared and it only made him laugh harder at her situation. "Oh, you can just go to hell."

"Sorry, kid. You've gotta admit it's pretty funny."

"I'm laughing on the inside." She deadpanned.

When he finally came to help the increasingly heavy Vulcan hanging onto her, a dangerous, low growl caused him to back off fast. "Yeah. Not in the mood to get strangled. You're on your own kid."

Jim sighed and adjusted her hold on Spock. She loved him but, he was damn heavy and his own grip on her tightened as if he was scared she'd run away from him so her balance was off.

A weird low undercurrent of arousal was under her skin and Jim blamed it on her husband's roaming hands that stroked across any bare skin that he could reach. Jim felt hot and her skin was sensitive. It was like her clothes were stifling her but, Jim had enough of her wits about her to keep going. Occasionally she would have to bat wandering hands away from straps or zippers and one time she'd had to tug on Spock's ear to get him to stop his nibbling on the sensitive skin behind her ear.

It was a good ten minutes; the longest of her life before she got them into the privacy of their room. The entire way he'd started whispering Vulcan words of endearment and a few filthy things that had even caused Jim to blush which was saying something.

No sooner had she closed the door when she was pressed against the wall with a very heavy and very horny vulcan on her front. Deft fingers found the hidden zip on the side of her dress and slowly pulled it down. Lips and tongue trailed a burning path down her neck, ending at her collarbone where he started sucking a bruise on her. Her knees felt weak and as she started to fall, a strong arm gripped her around the waist to keep her upright. It just felt so good. Jim moaned Spock's arousal bled over in their bond and it made it hard to think. Gripping his shoulders, Jim started pushing him away but he was unmovable like stone. "Spock, what's wrong with you?"

A deep growl met her as she pushed against him again and Jim held still. When it looked like she'd stopped resisting, a rumbling purr reverberated through his chest which made her roll her eyes. "Ok, Spock. I love you, too but, I think we need an early night."

A sharp nip and Jim gasped. Spock took that as an invitation to kiss her and, like everything he'd ever done in his life, he did it thoroughly, expertly, and perfectly. Soft, firm lips pressed against hers and Jim tried resisting. It was so hard though. She felt like she was trapped in a fog and when Spock's fingers ghosted over her psi points, everything ratchet up another notch. Jim's mouth opened to welcome him in and his tongue twined with hers, clearly determined to conquer and claim her as a vulcan warrior would do in his species' past.

"Taluhk nash-veh k'dular, k'diwa." He breathed the words in her ear and she shivered, flushing head to toe at the sensation. She could feel an insistent hardness at her hip and it made her core throb in sympathy. She squeezed her legs together to try and relieve some of the pressure as the kiss heated up.
Spock's head lowered and soft lips started to gently press open-mouthed kisses along her clavicle, up her neck, behind her ear, and back down. Spock knew her neck was her weak spot. That was just playing dirty. Her grip on his shoulders loosened and she slid her hands to his chest. Her head started to feel pleasantly fuzzy and she stopped resisting as he slowly lowered her dress for it to pool at her feet.

Spock's pupils were blown black with arousal as he looked at her exposed body clad only in her underwear, only thin rings of brown surrounding them. "Jim." He breathed the word as if it was a prayer and Jim wanted to answer that prayer so much.

She reached out for the hem of Spock's tunic and pulled it over his head. The sight that met her was one of her favorites and she'd never tire of it as long as she lived. Jim ran her palms over his chest and Spock shuddered at her touch causing Jim to smirk. Touching him just felt so good and so right. She couldn't explain it. Her protests were fading the longer this went on.

She fumbled with his buckle and went to kneel to return his wish to worship him but, he stopped her with a firm grip to her bicep. Her eyes met his and they were full of a fire she'd never seen outside of his 'Time'. He pulled her up quickly and she could feel his hand in between them undoing his pants while his other went to the back of her neck to control where he wanted her head. He smashed his lips against hers savagely and she fucking loved it! So many times she was forced to be in control. It was always such a relief when he would take it away, if only for a short while.

"Mine!" He growled and Jim wasn't sure whether it was a threat or a promise but, it didn't seem to matter. She could feel herself growing wet at his possessiveness.

He kicked his pants, underwear, and shoes behind him and he was finally gloriously naked! He thrust against her and she felt him sneak into her underwear, slowly running his fingers along her wetness and dipping a finger in her. Jim tore her lips from his and threw her head back at the sensation. He pumped in and out of her and he twisted his touch to bring his thumb into play to circle it over her clit, her breathing speeding up as the same rhythm of his movements. Her hips jerked in small aborted thrusts and her bondmate shifted his stance and began to lick a line down her chest to kiss and suck at her nipples, turning them into pointed peaks.

Jim's hands flew to his head, running her fingers through the glossy hair and pressing him to her. It was like a line of electricity was directly from there to where his fingers were playing her like a professional would a stringed instrument. Her skin was so hot and too tight. She went to remove her underwear to give him better access but he pulled away and batted her hands from there.

Spock sank gracefully, like a cat, down to his knees in front of her and pulled the offending garment away. Jim whined at the loss. She had been so close! Spock looked up and a thrill ran down her spine at the predatory smirk crossing his face. Fuck! She knew that look. It was the one word when he would destroy her entirely.

Kicking off her shoes, she widened her stance and he lifted one of her legs to throw it over his shoulder and he used his hands to press her hips against the wall to keep her still as he lowered his face to her and at the first touch of his tongue she screamed. She'd never been this sensitive, this turned on before and Spock clearly knew it.

One slow lick from her vagina to her clit and he stopped. Jim tried to thrust into the movement to encourage him further and a dark chuckle only made her growl in frustration as he easily stopped her thrust pinning her exactly where he wanted her. Jim put her hands on his head to try and exert some control and he hummed in approval, the vibrations only causing her to moan so loud she worried their neighbors would hear.
He began to suck and lick and kiss her so intimately at every part of her that he could reach, occasionally dipping his tongue deeper. Spock moved to the inside of her thighs to give a gentle bite, soothing the sting with an apologetic lick. Then he moved to the crease between her hips and thighs to suck a bruise there and Jim bucked at the action. Once he moved back towards her core, she sighed in happiness but he was being too light with his touches, too focused on everything else as he explored what licks and where his lips pressed and kisses caused what reactions. It was like she was some science experiment that he was determined to crack. He was going everywhere but where she wanted him most, her orgasm continuously out of reach as the spring wound tighter and tighter.

"Spock, you bastard!"

She could feel his amusement through their bond and she tightened her hold on him in desperation. There was something he wanted though. Something from her. She could feel it and it took a minute for her to figure it out. He wanted her to submit. To submit to...him and what he wanted. He'd never wanted that level of control before except one time and Jim decided, there and then that she wanted to give it to him. She had to. She slumped in his hold and his reaction was immediate.

His mouth started to suck and that was finally what did it. She screamed as her orgasm ripped through her, Spock taking it and he lapped and moaned as she tightened and her walls rippled around his tongue.

Spock surged up and pulled her hair as she was pliant in his arms and he plunged deep into her core as she spasmed around his cock. He forced his tongue just as deep and pulled her up with one arm. She couldn't move, she was weak and her legs automatically went around his hips. His hips went wild and the slap of skin was all she heard as he chased his own release.

Bright lights flashed behind her eyes and she felt him cum inside of her with a groan. She weakly rubbed his sweaty back as he rested his forehead on her shoulder.

That was when Jim felt it. He was still hard inside of her. Jim's eyes widened in shock and surprise and he met her gaze with a feral grin.

Spock carried her to their bed, remaining inside her and used one hand to hold her wrists above her head as he started to thrust in and out of her. His fingers pressed vulcan kisses against hers and it was like she was on fire. The best kind and Jim's legs fell open to let him have easier access. Pleasure and happiness filled her and Jim arched her back, her hips moving up to meet his.

Fingers found her temple and her world exploded again as pleasure shot right into her brain. He pressed in, his penetration into her body just as deep as his mind and he stilled as another orgasm overtook him. She squeezed and pulsed around him to draw him deeper and he pushed against her harder as if he could permanently be a part of her.

He collapsed against her and he softened, slipping out of her and she winced in discomfort. He pressed lazy kisses on her jaw, her chin, her eyelids; anywhere he could reach and Jim returned the favor.

It felt like the heat and desperation was leaving them and she sighed in contentment as he rested on her. There was a gentle sense of love and peace in her mind and she hummed and enjoyed the closeness that they had.

"I never knew you were such a kinky control freak." She murmured softly.

There was a small vibration against her sternum and Jim instinctively knew he was chuckling even
if it was subtle and she couldn't really hear it. "And I never knew you enjoyed such...a 'kinky control freak'."

Jim smiled down at her bondmate, her love, her husband and continued to massage his scalp. He was almost asleep when Jim shifted and scrunched her face at the feeling of wetness in between her legs. "Come on, Spock. I need a shower and I think you do, too."

"Mmm."

He didn't move and Jim sighed. He was too heavy for her to move and she poked him in the shoulder. "Shift, mister. That's an order."

"You may have to charge me with insubordination, captain."

Jim rolled her eyes at his sass. "Up. I feel gross."

Spock only got heavier as he started to fall asleep and Jim knew she wasn't going anywhere soon. It wasn't long before soft snores met her ears and she knew he was asleep. "Asshole." She grumbled fondly.

She carefully pulled the comforter over them and wrapped her arms around him. She wasn't sure if she'd fall asleep with her Vulcan blanket on her but she did and she did fairly quickly.

xXx

Morning came far too quickly for Jim and it had been a while since they'd done more than gentle lovemaking so it was a relief to have a hot shower to loosen sore muscles. It was a good ache though. It was one that was from the best kind of sex. Passionate and all consuming.

Jim wiped the fog of condensation off the mirror and smiled at the various love bites and hickeys that covered her body. It was a pleasant reminder of their 'activities' from last night. It had been so long. She pressed on a bruise he'd left on her breast and the sight of them made her feel claimed. She couldn't stop the blush as she remembered everything from last night. He'd woken several more times in the night and they'd made love again. Sometimes rough and sometimes gentle. She'd left her fair amount of marks on him and it had been wonderful.

Jim looked closer and she seemed to have a glow about her that made her smile widen.

Jim quickly pulled on her uniform, grateful that it his everything. She may love it when Spock marked her but, she still preferred to maintain a level of professionalism.

Spock was already waiting for her and in his own uniform in the main room of the quarters they'd been assigned. He reached out two fingers in the ozh'esta and Jim met him with a smile. Affection and a deep love traveled up her arm that made her feel a warmth in her chest.

"I love you so much, Spock."

"And I, you, ashayem." He replied.

xXx

Closing ceremonies were brief and soon over. Jim was pleased that, for once, this was an easy assignment. It was a nice break from the chaos that usually happened when they were meeting and negotiating with representatives from new planets.
Bags were packed and Captain Kirk was standing next to her First on one side with Sarek on the other providing a welcome barrier from Stonn. He'd been eyeing Jim with an interested gleam in his eyes that made her irritated and anxious.

"I wish you good fortune, Captain Kirk and Commander Spock."

"Thank you, Prime Minister. I wish you well, also."

Prime Minister Toray smiled at them and bowed her head slightly before turning to Sarek and Stonn. "Thank you Ambassador for your assistance in creating an equitable and fair treaty. We look forward to future interactions with the people of the United Federation of Planets and are excited to be a part of such a peaceful Union."

Sarek bowed in the traditional farewell and when he rose he raised his hand in the ta'al. "We come to serve. Live long and prosper."

Jim raised her communicator. "Kirk to Enterprise. Four to beam up."

The feel of the transporter as the hall faded in a gold shimmer caused Jim's heart to leap in excitement. Despite the fact that she'd enjoyed her time on Xera, she was looking forward to what was going to happen next.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Hi all! Well, we're getting closer to the issues causing everything but, there will be more before we get to that. This chapter will have a little more *ahem* adult time but, some drama. Hope it's enjoyed! It was hard to write for me since I was a little stuck despite having the plot and storyline written out. Things will be moving faster soon! I love hearing from everyone and want to say thank you for your kind words and kudoses! Any advice on how to make this story better is always appreciated!!! On a good note, our daughter's old school district that hurt her settled. It wasn't satisfying to us since it means they get away with it in regards to their records nor was it an amount that I was hoping for considering everything they did to her but, it is over which is what I was hoping for. Hope all is well with everyone and thank you for all of your support!

Darkwaters

Chapter Four

Spock could see how anxious Jim was. Despite being captain of Starfleet's flagship, praised as the hero she was for being instrumental in saving Earth...twice, saving the Yorktown station, and her many other notable accomplishments, she still worried about other people's perceptions of her.

Spock had wondered if it was a human behavior when meeting with a significant other's parents or if it was just Jim. He had spoken with his father about it and had discovered that his mother had exhibited the same behavior when meeting with T'Pau. He also considered Jim's past. She'd frequently been subjected to judgement, abandonment, and, at times, outright scorn. Her former step-father before her mother had divorced him, peers from school, the hounding of the press during her her life as they followed her growing up in the wake of her father's death and during her career, as well as her classmates at the academy. She'd had so many people critique and judge her that it hurt Spock to think that she thought so little of herself.

Spock regarded Jim with heartbreak at her low opinion of herself but, it was underlined with a small amount of fond amusement. He knew that his father thought of Jim with nothing short of affection. He'd told her this so many times that he'd wondered if Jim was simply 'messing with him'. While he'd explained that Sarek was teasing her, much like how T'Pau would with his mother, Jim had always ignored his words.

"Spock? Come on! Do I wear my dress grays?"

Jim was in the middle of pulling out the seventh article of clothing out of her closet and discarding it in the bed in her search for what to wear to a simple dinner. Leaning back, he wasn't able to stop the corners of his lips from turning up in a fond smile.

"Jim, I believe that you are overreacting."

Rolling her eyes, the blonde picked out a blouse and, just as quickly as every other thing she'd picked out, she discarded it as an option and tossed it haphazardly onto the pile. "Spock, I have to get this right. Your father is scary."
His eyes sparkled with humor. "I do not find my father scary."

She only spared Spock a quick glare before she resumed the task of destroying their, formerly organized, closet. "Well, of course you wouldn't but, I do."

Sighing, Spock got up and went to his bondmate. As her fingers danced over the hangers he pressed up behind her and put his arms around her. Jim leaned back in his embrace and accepted the comfort offered. Was it that she thought Sarek would separate them? Or that Spock would choose his father over her? When she was in this state, she always blocked the bond between them and he was unable to sense her levels of distress. When he'd asked for a reason as to why she did this, she'd simply shrugged and told Spock she didn't want to subject him to her more negative emotions and hurt him. He'd attempted to dissuade her by explaining that the bond was a two-way support system and that it distressed him more that he couldn't ease her pain but, as always, she was a stubborn, self-sacrificing, too caring bondmate.

He pressed his chin on her shoulder and kissed the sensitive skin behind her ear. "It is nothing more than dinner. Do not concern yourself so."

His words didn't seem to have the effect he was hoping for and she reached forward again to sort through her clothing. He wondered how it was that a woman seemingly so confident in everything else could be so self-doubting at times when there was nothing to doubt. She was amazing in every way. Why could she not see what he saw?

"I need to make a good impression. I just can't decide what would be appropriate."

Sighing, Spock leaned around her and picked out a simple forest green blouse, black leggings, and ankle boots. While he was not well versed in female human's fashion, he'd seen her wear this ensemble once before.

Jim accepted the offered items with a skeptical smile. "Are you sure? Don't these seem a bit...relaxed?"

He refrained from rolling his eyes. Barely. "My father has seen us at our worst. He has also seen us at our best. He will not particularly care what you are wearing...unless it is an Orion slave girl outfit."

Jim turned and smirked at Spock's teasing. "We'll save that for date night, huh?" At seeing Spock's brow raised in amusement, she laughed, a high, rich sound that always put Spock at ease. "I always knew you were a kinky bastard."

"Perhaps." His lips twitched and he lowered his mouth to her ear. "Or maybe sooner." He whispered with heat and Jim grew warm under his touch.

Spock's fingers brushed gently across her exposed skin and, despite Jim's shields being raised, he could still detect a faint glimmer of unease. Stepping around to face his beloved, he placed both hands on either side of her face and brought his forehead to rest against hers. "Let me in." When he felt her facial muscles tense in his hold, he closed his eyes in pain at the implied rejection. He did not like it when Jim tried to protect him. "Please." He begged.

A deep breath in was the only warning he got before he was bombarded by an onslaught of emotions strong and focused enough to rival a Vulcan's as she lowered the walls. Intense fear and feelings of inadequacy were at the forefront but, they were underlined with a faint sense of determination.
He swallowed hard and focused his own thoughts, drawing on the teachings of his people to follow the strong rope that was their bond anchoring them to each other. "Oh, Jim. My shi'masu. How can you think that he would convince me to leave you?"

He sent everything he could; his love, his devotion, and his reassurance to attempt to calm the swirling maelstrom of emotions that tortured his t'hy'la's mind. He pulled back, only enough to press gentle kisses on each eyelid, her cheeks, her forehead, ending with a chaste kiss to her soft lips. It was far too long before the storm calmed and light came back to her eyes.

"Thank you." Jim breathed and Spock stepped away to lower his hands and slowly grasped the hem of her duty uniform tunic to pull it up and off. As his fingertips skimmed across the soft skin revealed to him there was a low thrum of arousal building that reflected back and forth between them. Jim raised her arms to help and once it was off, her hair fell in waves onto her shoulders.

He touched a gentle finger to her temple, projecting love and appreciation of her beauty, both in mind and body and Jim smiled. Turning into his hand she lifted her own to hold his to her lips. A kiss pressed to his palm before she lifted his own shirt.

She branded his chest with her touch, her lips, and sank to her knees, kissing her way lower. Spock shook in anticipation as she skimmed her fingers along his waistband. He felt himself grow hard under her ministrations and groaned as Jim slowly made her way to her goal. Deft fingers unfastened his pants and lowered them just enough to release his hardness to her.

Carding his fingers through her golden hair, he gazed at the woman he loved offering herself to him. She looked up, sapphire blue as clear as the oceans from her home planet found his and Spock could feel the absolute devotion she had for him. Gripping him to steady his cock, she pressed a reverent kiss to the tip and Spock's hands tightened their hold in her hair.

"I love you so much, Spock."

A slow stroke sent a thrum of pleasure through him and he couldn't help but close his eyes as Jim licked and gave open-mouthed kisses along his shaft. Her tongue swirled around the olive tinged head and she licked a drop of precum from the tip. Spock's gasp only served to make her smirk and she slowly opened her mouth, her lips around him. Wet heat engulfed him and Spock gasped at the gentle suction.

Spock keened and his hand remained steady on the back of her head; not pushing but, allowing her to feel what he felt as her head began to bob up and down, alternately providing suction and running her tongue along the vein on the underside of his penis. One of her hands fondled his testicles and she used her other as a counterpoint to her movements. He could feel his balls draw tight as her tongue rippled and she increased her suction. His orgasm was so close.

"Jim." He keened.

His breathing sped up and he opened his eyes to look down at the sight before him. Jim met him and kept her gaze as she watched his reactions to what she was doing to him. This wasn't about submission for her. It was her way of showing her love and Spock was honored.

He struggled to not thrust into her mouth as she pressed forward and swallowed around him. The tightness and feeling of her as she sucked and stroked started to unravel him and he gasped in frustration as she pulled off but continued to stroke him.

A slow tingling started at the base of his spine and his abdominal muscles tightened under the sensations. Jim kept her face turned up towards him, her pink lips swollen and turned up in a
loving smile. "Patience, Mr. Spock." She teased.

He swallowed, his throat dry and Jim went back down. She reached back to push his hand against the back of her head, giving him permission and Spock pressed her towards him as he thrust forward, his cock hitting the back of her throat.

Even with her mouth full, he could feel the smirk and he couldn't help but think how beautiful she was. She sucked harder and her hand stroked faster, encouraging him as he thrust into her mouth.

"Oh, Jim! Taluhk-Nash-veh k'dular. I cherish thee, k'diwa." He moaned and Jim sent her love through her touch like lightning through their bond and that was it for Spock. He groaned in pleasure as his orgasm rushed through him, powerful enough to make his knees shake and Jim stroked him through it.

He pulled her up as fast as he could to pull her into a desperate kiss. Her mouth crashed into his and he gripped her around her waist to press her slight frame against his. Their tongues twined in a duel that Spock was powerless to win but, Jim let him. He backed her towards their bed, only stopping when the backs of her knees hit the mattress.

"Spock, we don't have time." She reminded him between kisses and Spock growled.

"I find that I do not care, t'hy'la."

Jim's answering laugh only caused him to know that he would have to step up his game. Mission accepted. After all, his bondmate should not be laughing when she should be crying out in pleasure.

xXx

They were fifteen minutes late by the time that they made it to the private dining room on the Enterprise, Jim still smiling wide and looking far too pleased with herself for Spock's comfort. She couldn't help the chuckle that occasionally escaped and could practically feel the fond eye roll that Spock was trying to suppress.

While she was still nervous about seeing Sarek in a more private setting, she felt more relaxed with knowing that Spock was 'in her corner', so to speak. He'd never been one to pander to her beliefs and opinions, always calling her on her bullshit so his words and support meant more than he could ever know.

Jim had finished and approved all of the orders and paperwork for getting the Ambassador and his aide, Stonn, to Starbase 42 so it would be a matter of two days before they'd be off the ship and on their way back to the Vulcan colony for some well-deserved rest. She couldn't imagine being in one place for so long, especially one that was completely foreign and not her home. The Enterprise was different. There was always something new and exciting that made it worth it. Not to mention the fact that her crew was family.

They arrived at the VIP guest quarters and she stood straight and respectful as Spock pressed the chime. Sarek, as imposing as always, opened the door. Jim could see that Spock had inherited a great deal from his father. They both had a strong, square jawline, the same high brows, and the same shape of their eyes but, the actual eyes themselves? They were Amanda's. There was a sharpness to Sarek's that made Jim nervous as if she was a child that had done something wrong. Occasionally, though, she did see love and pride shine through when Sarek looked upon his son. They say the eyes are the window to the sound and she was a firm believer in that.
"Jamison. Spock." He tilted his head in greeting and Jim mirrored Spock lifting the ta'al.

"Sa-mekh." Jim could feel Spock's happiness at seeing his father and it made Jim smile. She knew that they had had a strained but, not awful, relationship growing up and had become closer over time after Amanda's death.

"Ambassador Sarek, thank you for-"

Jim's greeting died on her lips. Standing near the table was Stonn placing a pitcher of juice on the table.

Spock's surprise was etched all over his stance as he stiffened next to her. Sarek stepped aside to let them in and Jim wasn't sure what to make of Stonn's presence. It was supposed to have been a simple 'family meal'. What was he playing at?

"Stonn has requested to join us this evening as his duties have allowed him the time." Sarek looked less than pleased at this latest development but, ever the diplomat, he had accommodated the request of another. Jim had been under the impression that Sarek had had something important to discuss tonight but, maybe she had been wrong.

Jim's gracious smile in no way reached her eyes. There was a tension in the room that was oppressive and seemed to weigh down the occupants but, it didn't appear to affect the interloper currently moving forward with his own greeting.

xXx

Conversation between the group during dinner was stilted and focused on professional topics that held no personal touches or information. Jim wasn't aware of the specifics of just how Spock and Stonn had come to hate each other but, she knew better than to let it have an effect on her for Spock's sake. She kept their connection wide open and Spock's gratitude at her support kept him balanced.

Sarek and Spock took away the dishes while Jim was left alone with Stonn.

"I see that Spock has the same emotional defect of his father in choosing a human for a mate."

"Mm." She wouldn't let him get to her. It just wasn't worth it.

"Is it his half-breed genetics that do not allow him to produce children or it is your weakness as a human?" He continued and Jim's grip on her glass of wine tightened imperceptibly.

"Is it your job as an errand boy or your tiny dick that makes it to where no woman will have you, alien or otherwise?" She quipped back. She had a singular skill at being able to piss off others and Stonn was no exception. His eyes narrowed at the rude comment but he didn't show any other indicator that her words bothered him.

His lips quirked in a sneer. "Perhaps the rumors of humans are true."

She looked unconcerned as she swirled the rich, red wine in her glass. "And what would that be?"

"That humans, like Spock's mother, are little more than whores that only seek aliens because their own species rejects them."

Jim's mouth pressed into a thin, white line and she fixed her gaze at Stonn, refusing to rise to his bait. "Well, if that's true, then the reason no one will take you, even us whore humans, that you are
alone is that you must be bad in bed."

Stonn's features twisted into an ugly snarl as Jim calmly sipped her wine. His expression cleared quickly into practiced neutrality as Sarek and her bondmate returned with after dinner Vulcan brandy as a nightcap.

Spock later cornered her once they had a minute to themselves and Jim laid a reassuring hand on his arm. She knew this had to be hard on him. He'd retreated into himself as the perfect image of a vulcan male, all stick-up-the-ass and no emotion and Jim hated it but, she understood it. She'd been the same when they'd had to have dinner with Admiral Komack and had been forced to endure his snide comments about her inadequacy to be captain of the Enterprise. She wanted to let him know that he was better than this.

"Spock, holding a grudge against a Stonn is illogical. Let go of this anger you are holding onto. Yeah, he's a dick but, I know you can be the bigger man in more ways than one." Waggling eyebrows at the double meaning and Spock shook his head in exasperation.

"I understand your logic but, it is...complicated."

She wanting to hit the point home. "Look at the bright side. You are the first officer of the fleet's flagship and run the entire science department. You get to make new discoveries and explore new worlds while he gets to serve tea and is little more than a glorified errand boy and note taker to your father."

"There is significantly more involved in being a-"

Laughing at his attempt to argue, she kept it up. "Own it, Spock. You win. Epically. He's a little man with little power, no status, and so very little value and intelligence that he has no place. Hell, he hasn't even been able to find a mate that will accept him since he has no place because of his poor attitude and tiny dick."

Spock raised a brow in question at her statement. "How do you know this?"

Shrugging, she almost burst out back into laughter. "Women talk. Even Vulcan women, Spock."

"Fascinating."

It may have not been the eloquent confidence boosting speech a normal person would have given but Jim had always been of the opinion that normal was boring.

The evening was drawing to a close when Spock's comm went off and interrupted Sarek's description of Xerathi traditions in regards to their anthropological history of their reason for the celebration of their celestial bodies. Jim was fighting the temptation to put her chin in her hand and fall asleep in boredom. While she loved hearing about the cultures of other planets, Sarek had a tendency to make even the most interesting facts uninteresting.

Stepping away, Spock only spoke with whoever was on the line for about a minute and Jim couldn't make out more than a few words which included 'science lab one' and 'ruined' before he was returning to the dinner table. This meal was rapidly turning into an utter shitfest.

"I must apologize for the late notice but, I will have to depart for the evening. A situation has occurred that requires my attention."

Jim perked up. "Do I need to come, too?"
There was disappointment in his whole body as he faced her. "Negative. It is regarding the science department. I will provide a full report of the incident but, you are free to remain."

Traitor! They really needed to work on Spock's ability to imply. Old Spock had had that skill in spades and Jim wondered how long it had taken him to cultivate it.

With a respectful nod to the trio, perhaps a little more stiffly at Stonn, he left them. Jim was stuck with the father-in-law who terrified her and the vulcan who was an absolute ass. Fun.

xXx

It was another hour before Jim was able to determine that it wouldn't be rude to leave for the night. Drinks were put away and conversations were drawing to a 'logical conclusion'.

Whatever had called her husband/First Officer away from them must have been significant since she hadn't heard from him or received an update. She was almost out the door and freedom was so close but, of course she wasn't that lucky.

"If it would be permissible, I would appreciate a tour of the Enterprise. I must admit to curiosity as to what it is that Spock finds compelling to remain on board rather than joining our people in rebuilding our race."

Stonn's words caused Jim to grit her teeth in annoyance at the utter gall to insult her and her ship so blatantly and while in front of Sarek.

"Perhaps another time."

"My time here is quite limited, captain. Tomorrow, I am to finalize my reports and will be indisposed. If you are too fatigued then I understand your limitations."

Oh, hell no. "No, I'm alright. I just figured that it might be a little much what with being in so so late. I thought you might want to rest."

"Vulcans have the ability to remain awake and alert for days and not require rest unlike your species. I would welcome the experience." He argued and Jim just held in her tired sigh.

Sarek's interest was peaked at their posturing but, he remained silent. He had to know that Stonn was being a xenophobic jerk! She needed a buffer. She wasn't comfortable with being alone with him for an extended period of time considering their last encounter.

"S'haile Sarek, would you like to accompany us?"

"I am in need of rest and meditation. It has been a...trying and long time since I have had the opportunity."

Looking closer at Sarek, she could see the truth of his statement. His robe seemed to hang looser around him and there were tense lines around his eyes and mouth that she hadn't seen before on the older man. She knew he was reaching his nineties, still a young man in his prime by his species standards but, it was understandable that such a long assignment would be wearing.

There wasn't any way she could get out of this without seeming rude and unreasonable. Fuck.

"Of course, Ambassador." She turned towards Stonn who had a cruel gleam in his eyes that made Jim want to punch him but, she refrained for the sake of damn propriety. "If you will accompany me?"
Chapter Five

Jim grit her teeth and it took a lot of effort to be able to conduct this farce of a tour with Stonn. She knew he didn't truly want it. He was doing it to mess with her and if she'd refused then he'd say something to Sarek. If she begged off citing the excuse of fatigue, she'd look weak. So, she had to play diplomat for a little while longer.

Her senior staff were all in bed at this hour so she was having to give the tour without them. She generally preferred doing these with alpha shift since the staff were relatively used to visitors but, her crew was the best of the best. She did rotate them frequently to ensure fair amounts of the action so, most of them were used to the rare tour and the like since not all planets rotated on the same time perceptions as the Enterprise nor did all species sleep during the night but, she liked her command crew to explain the various aspects of her ship because of their being experts in their field.

Stonn stood in her engineering department as Lieutenant-Commander Sala explained the capacity of their warp engine. She was careful to ensure that the discussion was thorough and interesting without giving out classified data about the ship.

"And as you can see, the ship is powered by a matter/anti-matter core in a single column."

Jim had to work hard to contain her smirk at Stonn's reluctantly impressed expression. Although, maybe it may have been closer to one looking like he'd swallowed a lemon. She'd always been proud of her ship and everyone who worked on her. Sala's enthusiasm was infectious and Jim had to try and maintain a level of poise to show her position as captain as she continued her description of engineering and its capabilities. Commander Scott would be proud.

Moving to one of the side alcoves, the young Trill engineer pulled open a small compartment under
a workstation. Inside, Jim could see the multi-colored isolinear chips. "As you can see, we no longer use data cards. With the refit that was done at the end of our last five-year mission, we upgraded our computer tech. Dr. Richard Daystrom was the scientist who designed and supervised the installation of our computer systems. We are the first to have this system and, so far, the only one as of yet. The USS Andromeda is next in six Earth Standard months."

"Fascinating."

Hearing Stonn say the word Spock frequently used made her scowl. The tone was like he was superior despite the fact that she could see the intricate engineering details were way over his head.

This was taking too long. "Thank you, Lieutenant-Commander. We've taken enough of your time."

The engineer's cheeks turned red which only made the spots on her neck and sides of her face stand out, slightly embarrassed at her enthusiasm. Looks like Scotty had competition for his love of his 'Silver Lady'. Jim chuckled good-natured at Sala and she relaxed slightly. "You did great."

"Of course, sir. Thank you, sir."

Jim showed off hydroponics and moved through the sensor lab as fast as possible. Throughout the tour, she kept as neutral and professional as possible but, she felt more uncomfortable the longer it continued. She broadcasted as loud as possible to her husband but, she could see he was busy. She'd checked on him earlier when Security Chief Hendorff showed him the brig but skipped surveillance due to clearance level.

Apparently, a 3rd year trainee cadet had accidentally spilled an alkaline based chemical on several set of slides. The science department had been studying the development of a potential serum for seven months to help with curing the terminal disease xenopolycythemia.

Spock was currently in Science Lab One desperately trying to save whatever he could so it wouldn't be a total loss but, a lot of work would have to be started all over again. She well knew duty came first. She'd been guilty of it when she'd had to leave him in sickbay to complete the task of being captain. Jim decided to skip the labs to not disturb him.

She did wish she could dump Stonn in the brig. Throughout the entire trip, he'd slowly moved closer into her personal space and his presence unnerved her. Even Hendorff had noticed something was off and Jim was thankful for his instincts. It was what made him one of the best in his chosen field. She knew he'd be watching closely.

Sickbay was last on her list and she was surprised to see Bones up since he'd been on Alpha earlier. Although, maybe she shouldn't have been considering the issue in Science Lab One. He'd been co-researcher with Spock in the Xenopolycythemia research.

At her entrance, his eyes darted up from his PADD that he'd been studying and he scowled at the pair. He missed nothing when it came to his domain. She'd once joked he had ESP. He hadn't appreciated it.

The moment he saw her companion, though, he scowled. His eyebrows drew down and hazel eyes seemed to give off angry sparks. Bones. Her big, overprotective brother from another mother.

Despite his clear dislike of Stonn, he still remained professional for Jim's sake and reputation. She appreciated this more than he could ever know. He'd frequently had to put his feelings on certain topics on a back burner in public even when she could see them loud and clear behind his expressions. He would loudly and vociferously voice them in private the second he got a chance.
though when the VIP guest wasn't present.

Not that Stonn was a VIP in any sense but, who he reported to was.

Bones came out of his office, walking stiffly and broadcasting his animosity as he met them.

"I'd like you to officially meet my Chief Medical Officer, Lieutenant-Commander Leonard McCoy." Turning to her 'guest', she gestured to Stonn as respectfully as she could with her own unpleasant feelings on him barely held in check. "Dr. McCoy, this is Stonn, Sarek's diplomatic aide." She added. She knew he hated the fact that he was a lowly aide and it gave her a bit of pleasure to piss him off a little.

As expected, Stonn's eyes flashed in anger but, Jim honestly didn't give two shits.

"He requested a tour of the Enterprise." Jim explained and McCoy's eyebrow rose in skepticism.

"He did, did he?"

Jim's smile was strained at the hidden, dark undertone to Bones' words. "Yes, Doctor. I was hoping you wouldn't mind accommodating us."

McCoy started to smile and it unnerved her slightly. He never did that.

"Well, I'm afraid I'm not really able to since I have a large amount of work that suddenly came to my attention but, I'm sure lieutenant Ghee P'Trell wouldn't mind substituting for me."

Jim's posture changed rapidly at his suggestion and she tensed. Horrified eyes met devious ones as he called the young andorian over. Bones knew of the bitter history between the two species. The Vulcans had annexed the planet Weytahn after the Andorians had terraformed it and they had been in a Cold War for centuries after, tensions between the two escalating after the discovery of the spy station in the monastery at P'Jem during Archer's time.

Lieutenant P'Trell looked perversely thrilled at the opportunity and Jim vaguely wondered if an all out stellar war was about to start in sickbay.

"I would love to show the aide-" The young andorian's antenna's twitched with excitement and he said the low ranking title with relish, knowing it would irritate Stonn to no end. "Stonn around. I'm concerned he may not be able to understand the complicated science behind what we do here considering his position."

Stonn practically snarled at the implication of his lack of intelligence.

"Now, I'm afraid I need to borrow the captain for a minute while you enjoy your tour of my medical bay. There's been an important development in my current research I need her help on." Bones lied and Jim struggled to restrain the urge to rub a tired hand over her face. While she would normally enjoy taunting the asshole, she needed to make a good impression.

Her friend practically dragged her away to his office before Stonn could protest and turned on the privacy filter to darken the windows.

The minute they were alone he pulled out a tricorder and began scanning her wrist. She'd long ago gave up trying to figure out where he hid those things and let him do what he wanted without much protest.

"How's the wrist?"
Jim rolled her eyes but, she was touched by his concern. "It's fine."

Harrumphing at her minimal answer, he reluctantly put his equipment away. "Jim, what the fuck is he doing here. I know damn well he's not here to see the sights." His eyes narrowed. "He's up to something."

Sighing, Jim took a seat on the couch he kept in his office. "Yeah. I know it, too. I just can't figure out what. I think he just wants to antagonize me and make me appear unprofessional." Her mouth pressed into a thin line. "He's a jerk and I don't know why. Spock's been tight lipped on the subject and it frustrates me to no end." She admitted reluctantly.

Bones' expression matched hers and he joined her, sitting close enough that their hips and legs touched. "You know my feeling on Spock and you know them on this green-blooded bastard out there."

Jim well knew them. He'd never really taken to Spock, taking on the role of a disapproving big brother. Oh, he respected him professionally but, it was a different story on a personal level. The only reason he accepted him was the fact that he made her happy.

"Yeah. I know."

Sighing, Bones shoved against her and it helped alleviate some of her bad mood. She was curious about something. "Hey, Bones?"

"Hmm?"

"I thought you were on Alpha. What are you doing up at this hour?"

The older man shook his head. She could see the disappointment settle in the way he held himself. Looking around his office, there was more than a dozen PADDs littering his desk.

"That clumsy cadet ruined my project and I'm working with Spock to try and do what I can to collect as much data as possible. I doubt there will be much and he probably set us back at least five months." The lines around Bones' eyes deepened and she could see how tired he was. This had been his baby and to have it delayed that much had to hurt.

Laying a hand on his shoulder, she gave a squeeze in sympathy. "Sorry."

"The only consolation is that I know that kid will learn from this. It's fucked up but, it'll make him better in the future."

"There you go! Always looking on the bright side." She slapped him on the shoulder and he gave her a filthy look that caused her to laugh. He didn't mean it and his answering smile only confirmed it. Her mood lightened at the gentle teasing. "I knew you were an optimist."

It wasn't long before he became serious again. "I don't like that he's here and I certainly don't trust him to not have an ulterior motive."

Jim shrugged and tried to push away her own negative feelings. "What's he gonna do? I'm nearly done anyway. All that's left is the bridge and then I can dump him."

"Maybe."

xXx
After sickbay, Stonn's mood had darkened further. She was looking forward to finishing and being able to go back to her quarters to decompress.

"I have seen some of the limited schematics of the Enterprise and was curious as to the observation lounges." He was giving off a sinister vibe and Jim grit her teeth. She would not let him intimidate her. He wasn't worth it. "I have heard that the windows are transparent aluminum and wrap around a small portion of the saucer section giving a fascinating view of the stars."

"Yeah. They do." She said cautiously. "However, the bridge is next on our stop of the tour."

"A short detour would not add significant time and I wish to be able to tell the Ambassador of all of the ship's amenities."

Jim bit the inside of her cheek and wanted to kill the enthusiastic PR rep who'd made those tourist schematics public. Again, to refuse would show weakness but, being alone with him was something she really didn't want. Spock had been teaching her the Vulcan martial art of suus mahna and it made it possible for her to have a fighting chance against stronger species. There was no way he'd do anything to her on her ship. It'd be tantamount to political suicide. He'd be shunned and possibly imprisoned for attacking a Starfleet Captain. He wouldn't be that stupid.

"Sure. We can do that." Holding out an arm, she led him along the quickest route to the observation deck on the port side.

They'd gotten to the doors and the hairs on the back of her neck raised. She wasn't about to turn her back on him and she opened the door to encourage him to enter before her. He complied, his dark robes swishing around him reminding Jim of an overgrown bat.

After she entered fully, the door automatically shut behind her. "Computer-" She'd barely had time to register the darkened room, the stars streaking at warp providing the only illumination before her legs were kicked out from underneath her.

Jim landed on her back. She'd been an idiot to not expect this from him. She kicked up her legs and sprung into a traditional fighting stance, her hands claw-like and ready to inflict serious damage.

The darkness of the observation deck put her at a serious disadvantage. She knew that vulcans had superior eyesight due to the fact that they had evolved on a planet with no moon to light the night.

She could barely make out the shadowy figure in front of her. What was worse, she couldn't see his own fighting stance to be able to properly predict his moves.

"Computer! Li-"

Stonn moved faster than she'd anticipated and, once again, took out her legs. The dark shadow moved to stand above her and Jim pulled in her knees and kicked out, hitting him in the stomach and rolling away before he could initiate contact.

Jim jumped up and went for the wall comm but, before she could get to it, she was pulled back and slammed against the wall. That was when she realized that Stonn wasn't attacking to hurt or bruise her but, was trying to simply subdue her.

She could work with that.

But first, she needed to see him better. "Compu-umphf"
The bastard managed to grab her hands and press against her to where they were pinned between them with an inhumanly strong hold, his other hand covering her mouth. Despite the darkness, she could see an evil glint shining in his eyes.

With his hand pressing her head against the wall she wasn't able to head butt him but, her legs were free. She hooked her left around the back of his knees and thrust her hips forward hard enough to knock him off balance. His hand that had been covering her mouth and holding her hands changed direction as he grabbed at her top to catch himself. Buttons flew off and the front was ripped open, exposing herself to him and she landed on top of him.

She wasn't in the best position for defense. The whole point of suus mahna was to use an opponent's strength against them. With her legs on either side of his hips and her hands free, it gave her one small advantage and she went to strike with the heel of her hand but, Stonn could see better and her move was too obvious.

It was a fatal mistake and she Jim realized it too late. Her sides were exposed and he delivered a painful strike to her belly, hard enough to shock her into a gasp but, not enough to injure and he pulled his arms in when she pulled back. He hit her in the chest to shove her away and then grabbed her shoulders to throw her to the ground beneath him and in between her legs.

Her head hit the deck and stars erupted before her eyes, stunning her into inaction. Stonn shoved her upwards and his hands snaked up to grasp her wrists and hold them above her head. The carpet under her rubbed her lower back raw and only served to pull her pants and underwear down her hips, barely staying on. Stonn's robes billowed around her and he lowered his head. Jim could feel his hot breath on her face and see the white glint of teeth as he smiled savagely down at her. She really did panic then. Rapid bursts of air escaped her as she started to thrash in his iron grip. "C-compu-

She was cut off by a savage mockery of a kiss designed to silence her. Her legs kicked futilely but, only became tangled in the fabric of Stonn's robe, wrapping it tighter around them and creating a prison that she couldn't escape from.

He pushed her further up and her pants fell further, the carpet rough against the skin of her backside. He thrust against her and Jim's cry was muffled by his mouth pressing against her lips. She could feel a hardness and Jim tried to pull away but, he was so strong!

Jim's mind blanked in absolute fear. She reached out desperately to Spock, using their bond to try and call for help but, he was still blocking it as they always did when on duty to prevent distraction. She didn't know what to do anymore. It was, literally, the first time during her adult life that she was experiencing a true no-win scenario. She didn't know what to do. Calling for lights would do nothing. She needed to press the button on the wall panel to call security.

Jim twisted her face away as he lowered himself against her again. "Perhaps a true Vulcan rather than the half-breed should show you your place as a weak, inferior species."

Oh, God! It was like Frank and all those times on Tarsus. Her mind blanked in terror as she tried to take herself to another place, anywhere but here! She broke out in a cold sweat and screamed inside her mind. Hot tears stung her eyes.
"Computer! Lights!"

It was as far as he got Stonn immediately jumped up and removed himself, leaving Jim trembling and frozen on the floor, half naked. Stonn blocked her view of her savior as he twitched his robes back into place. Jim closed her eyes in relief.

Once he moved aside, Jim opened her eyes and saw Spock standing inside the doorway, his own eyes wide and shocked. The wall between them dropped and Jim could feel the full onslaught of unchained Vulcan emotions hit her full force. Hurt, anger, and some unidentifiable emotion shocked her and she felt such shame.

She knew Spock had felt that emotion from her when his shields slammed down hard enough to make her wince in pain.

Jim quickly stood and pulled her pants up, holding her blouse closed. A ragged sob escaped her and her face crumpled at the expression on Spock's features. It was the first time she'd ever seen him express such open emotion in front of another Vulcan other than his father. He looked like he'd been punched in the gut, shock, betrayal, and agony was as obvious as the nose on his face. Jim could see that the blood had left his face, leaving him a sickly white that twisted a metaphorical knife in her side and guilt streamed through their bond. Her guilt was strong enough to break through his strong block and his head darted between Stonn and Jim like a morbid tennis match.

Stonn smirked at Jim and her breathing increased as she gasped to try and take in air desperately to try and stop the spinning of the room. He spun on his heel, adjusting his robe obviously in front of Spock even though it wasn't necessary to advertise that he had been naked on top of Jim just minutes ago.

He was looking at Spock, a satisfied look in his eyes and, although his words were addressed to Jim, he was very deliberate in his phrasing to ensure that Spock understood the false double meaning. "Thank you, Captain. The tour you gave me was most satisfactory. It was...stimulating in more ways than one."

Spock was a statue and Stonn had to step around him to leave. The pneumatic hiss of the door was loud in the deafening silence.

"Spock, it wasn't what it looked like. I swear!"

He faced her and Jim's face screwed up in pain, tears burning a trail down even hotter cheeks as she flushed in shame. She knew what happened wasn't her fault but, she still blamed herself. She should have fought harder, done more, maybe screamed louder. The rug burn on her back and buttocks hurt and she wanted to run away and hide. Memories of her past that she'd thought she'd been able to lock away threatened to overwhelm her.

"I believe you." He whispered softly and Jim's legs collapsed under her in relief.

Spock caught her before she fell and held her tight. She returned his embrace, hiding her face in his chest and soaking his blue tunic with her tears. As she shook and cried, she couldn't help the feeling that he didn't truly believe her.
Hi everyone!
Sorry for the slow update. I've just felt a little off lately and have been tired a lot. I have been busy with my daughter who has been sick a lot lately and health insurance has been fighting us on everything. She needs a new wheelchair so bad, but they're trying to say no. She outgrew her current one and can't even wear a winter coat because the straps on her chest harness are so tight that it won't close with one on since it's so small. We finally get the new chair in a couple of weeks.

The other issue was that they wouldn't approve one of her life-sustaining epilepsy meds that she's been on for years and that has kept her stable. I had to pull everything out of savings and max our credit cards to pay for a month's supply while I fought them. It took 3 weeks and $3,000, but I finally got it approved. The medication costs such a ridiculous amount. So, yeah, Christmas is ruined. Credit cards are maxed and there's nothing in savings to save us, but she does have her meds. It just sucks because it's too late to even apply for any form of Christmas assistance and the insurance company won't reimburse us.

Gotta love America.

Anyway, enough whining. I finally found the time to write and I hope it's ok.
Anyway, I just read a wonderful Kirk/Spock slash that I highly recommend. I was skeptical with the summary, but it was a wonderful story! The characters were spot on and it was so much fun to read. It's called "Strive Seek Find Yield" by Waldorph. If you haven't read it then you HAVE to read it!!!
Anyway, hope this chapter is ok and, again, sorry for the long wait!

DarkWaters

Chapter Six

Spock held Jim as she cried. She cried because of her guilt. She cried because of her shame. She cried because she'd been afraid. She had not cried since she was a teenager after she had been practically forced to in therapy after Tarsus IV.

She hated it. She hated how it made her feel weak as if she wasn't able to cope, but this time? It had been like she had been forced to relive everything that had happened to her in her past.

It felt like she had cried for hours and she was exhausted. Her head ached and her eyes were puffy and red. She knew she needed to go to the medbay for the various aches and pains making themselves known, but she couldn't do it just yet. She couldn't bear to have anyone see her like this.

Through it all, she couldn't help but, notice that Spock's end of their bond was blocked away behind an impenetrable, steel wall. It almost hurt more than the near miss she'd had with Stonn.

Turning her face up to meet that of her husband's, she was surprised to find he wasn't looking at her. Spock seemed to be far away in his own thoughts and, going by the frightening blankness that was etched on his face, she knew he wasn't coming all the way back to her anytime soon. "Spock?"

She decided to try gaining his attention by speaking louder. "Spock."
He slowly lowered his head and faced her and it was like a stone had been dropped into the pit of her stomach. There was nothing there. No indication of how he was feeling or what he felt towards her. It was unnerving. Over the past several years, she'd learned to read Spock by the minute expressions he had and his body language, but it was like she was looking at a stranger right now.

"Why are you blocking me?"

"You need to be seen by Doctor McCoy."

Her eyebrows drew down at his deflection. "Spock? I need to know why you're blocking me."

She could see him visibly swallow and his shields wavered slightly. Enough for her to feel such powerful anger that it stole her breath away.

"My control is weak. I fear that I may overwhelm you with such strong emotions." He explained, his voice strained.

Jim well understood just how much it had taken for him to admit that and she nodded in understanding. "Okay, Spock. Okay."

Spock slowly leaned down, gentle, hesitant fingers stroking her cheek as he pressed his lips to hers. It was chaste, sweet, and helped her feel more secure, but it didn't feel like it was enough. Leaning his forehead against hers, Jim could see the absolute torture in his eyes reflecting back at her. "Jim, I do not wish to harm you with my thoughts. You deserve-" He paused and his voice cracked. "You deserve comfort. I cherish thee, my adun'a and I will not harm you any more than I would stop my lungs from taking in air. I am here for you, but I need a moment to calm my anger for the one who dared harm my t'hy'la; my precious mate that is the center of my universe."

Jim hiccuped a sob and just held him close.

It was another hour before Jim felt composed enough to make the trek to see Bones. In that time, her back and hips had begun to ache along with the stinging burn she had received the friction of the carpet after Stonn's assault.

Spock guided Jim through the doors, gently steering her inwards. As she looked around the sterile, white environment that was the sickbay, she had to repress the instinct to shiver. She'd never been one to feel comfortable with medical and it was tolerable when she visited her friend but, she despised the area when she was a patient.

"Jim!"

Bones ran forward and she hugged herself tight. She just felt...wrong.

The doctor stopped about a foot away from her and the frown on his face. "What's happened?"

Jim opened her mouth to speak, but had to clamp it shut when the words became to difficult to say out loud. At Jim's lack of verbal response, McCoy's eyes darted to Spock. "Spock?"

Clenching his jaw, Spock's next words only made the situation feel more real instead of some abstract thing that Jim had been trying to mentally distance herself from. "The captain-Jim-" He corrected, "-has been assaulted by Stonn with the intent to rape her. I walked in as the crime was being committed."

Spock's eyes blazed with an anger that reminded Jim of the fight they had had on the bridge shortly after Amanda's death and it caused her to shudder. "She requires treatment and full documentation
of her injuries, Doctor."

His delivery of what happened was stiff and Jim selfishly wanted him to show the man she'd married and to be less...vulcan. It wasn't a frequent occurrence, but one she wanted. She respected both sides of his heritage, human and vulcan but, she craved Spock right now. Not who was present.

As Bones stepped forward, Spock moved away and Jim tried to hold his hand, seeking the comfort of her husband, but her hand only met empty air. She reached out using their bond and was met with resistance that only served to hurt her more, making her feel unworthy of his compassion despite the fact that she knew he loved her.

McCoy practically radiated sympathy and understanding, gently encouraging her to come to him rather than making Jim feel as if she was being forced into something. He knew of her history by virtue of having access to her medical records as her primary physician and CMO, but he also knew because of him being her friend.

When Jim had given him permission to be her doctor back at the academy, he'd read her limited record. She'd come back to their double occupancy room to find him frighteningly silent and with a bottle of bourbon, two glasses on their small coffee table. They'd spent the night talking about everything, solemn and slowly savoring the drink together. Bones and her had woken with matching hangovers but, they had felt closer than ever with the fact that she had trusted him enough to talk to him about one small part of the worst of her turbulent past.

"C'mon, Jim. I can see you're hurting. Let me help you." Bones raised a hand and Jim clasped it. The warmth of a supportive touch bolstered her and she nodded, walking side-by-side with her friend and doctor.

As she entered the private exam room, she realized that Spock wasn't following. The blonde abruptly stopped, sudden enough that it caused Bones to accidentally yank on her arm. Turning with a questioning look at Spock, she saw him staring at her, a volatile mix of anger, pain, regret, and sorrow reflecting back.

McCoy's body tensed next to her, likely sensing the dangerous lack of control Spock was exhibiting. While Jim had only seen it once before, Bones had seen it twice. Once on the bridge during the Battle of Vulcan and the other after her death in the warp core. He subtly moved away and Jim could hear him quietly requesting M'Benga's presence.

"Spock? Are you coming?" Jim asked quietly.

His eyes cleared as they settled on her properly and he nodded stiffly as he followed her into the private exam room, Dr. McCoy and nurse Lou trailing behind in sort of morbid procession.

A privacy screen went up and Jim almost snorted at the absurdity of it since almost every part of her was going to be seen and documented. Spock helped her change into her gown and, despite his desperate attempts to shield, Jim could feel some of his emotions leak through each brush of his fingers against her skin through his touch telepathy.

He touched her wrist where handprints that Stonn had left and there was sorrow. The back of his hands brushed against her left hip where significant carpet burn had reddened her skin and there was anger. Placing a palm on her right hip, Jim hissed in pain as a bruise she hadn't known about caused her to flinch away from both the hurt and Spock's extreme regret. Through it all, Spock's negative emotions were starting to hurt her far more than her injuries.
As each minor injury made themselves known, she could sense Spock distancing himself from her further, physically and mentally. Oh, their bond was still locked away tighter than old Fort Knox, but she'd always been able to read him even before they'd bonded. He was beginning to take on a dangerous calm that only served to put Jim on high alert.

Once she was gowned up, a thin blanket covering her for the illusion of modesty, Spock called back in the doctor. Bones had pulled the metal tray containing his equipment and he started the standard scan on her using his handheld. At his frown, Jim knew he was going to go into further detail and she wasn't proven wrong as he activated the biobed and turned it on for a deeper reading, a display of her injuries highlighted on the screen next to her.

As Bones rotated the image, Jim saw the back of her head where she'd hit the floor lit up, her hips and lower back, wrists, right ankle, and her upper arms marked for needed examination as well. They were lit in varying shades of yellow signifying that the injuries were minor and easily treated with the minimal amount of fuss. Spock's eyes darted rapidly over the screen and they blurred as if he had a case of nystagmus. She could see a muscle working in his jaw and his hands were behind his back.

Turning to her, Spock was tense and he nodded curtly. "Captain, if you will excuse me, I have the matter of Stonn to attend to."

Jim grit her teeth as frustration began to set in. "Spock, you need to stay here."

Damn it all to hell but, she wanted him here with her. Not just physically but, mentally, too. Not only that, but less than an hour ago Spock had basically admitted he was far from okay. Fucking Stonn.

He started to turn and Jim felt the faint stirrings of anger. "Spock, get back here, now." There was a hint of danger in her voice and she knew that everyone could hear it. Jim turned slightly towards Bones, but kept her eyes trained on her husband and XO. "A minute?"

He didn't look happy about it, his eyes darting from Spock to her before nodding. "You've got two minutes and then I'm coming back in, Jim."

Spock froze, his body strung tight enough that it reminded Jim of the strings on his Vulcan Lyre just waiting for the slightest touch to snap. "Spock, you can't do this."

Pinching the bridge of her nose, Jim hated what she was about to do. "I ask for very little from you and, Spock, I hate doing this, but right now, I need you here."

"While I do want to be here for you, I have to arrest Stonn." He swallowed hard and it looked like he was in physical pain.

"That's what security is for."

His head snapped up and Jim knew-she just knew that it wouldn't end with Stonn in the brig.

More like he looked like he was about to choke a bitch.

"He assaulted a Starfleet officer-my wife and bondmate." His eyes betrayed him and were suddenly filled with a sadness she had rarely seen. "He very nearly raped you and, while you are here in sickbay, I must do what needs to be done."

"Spock, this is too personal and close to home for you as well as for me. It's a conflict of interest." She despised having to admit a weakness; any weakness. "You're emotionally compromised."
Spock remained silent and Jim bit back a sigh. "I know that you are struggling and angry."

She didn't know how it was possible but he straightened further. "I believe you are projecting your emotions onto me in an effort to minimize your own pain. I was not the one who was attacked, Jim." His voice broke on her name and so did Jim's heart upon hearing it.

She stood up and limped over to him, placing her hands on either side of his face to make him look at her. She needed to get his attention and she felt so honored to have someone love her so much; who was willing to do anything to keep her safe and avenge those who had done wrong against her. However, she couldn't let Spock place himself in a position where he could do more harm than good to himself. "Taluhk-Nash-veh k'dular. I cherish thee and ask that you share your burden." She begged. Smiling sadly, the blonde stood on her tiptoes and pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead. "There is a human saying. 'A burden shared is a burden halved.' Please."

"I-" She watched him close his eyes and take a deep breath. It hurt her more than anything to see him struggle so much. "I cannot ask this of you."

"Spock, I may have been the one attacked, but that does not mean you weren't hurt as well. I know that vulcans, even half-vulcans have a strong sense of duty when it comes to protecting their mates."

She was relieved when he pulled her to him, cradling her skull and he held her close. Her hand went to his heart and she could feel it beating rapidly in his side. "Please."

Spock shook in her arms and she just held him tighter. She prepared herself to receive what he gave her, grateful at his willingness to accept and share himself with her when she felt his shields slowly lower.

It was like a swirling storm. His powerful vulcan emotions were unchained and Jim could feel everything and it took her breath away. There was so much anger at what had happened and so much worry for her. Her eyes burned as tears fell from them with the strength of his emotions bleeding into her. She'd never been so thankful in her life for the strength of her bond with him as she desperately tried to navigate what he felt. She mentally held her ground and pushed aside her own hurt to provide a sort of touchstone for him; to give him an anchor to focus on, but it was just too much for her human mind. He pushed and pulled. Jim hid her own pain and hurt as best as she could and encouraged him to give her a part of his to shoulder, but he rapidly instinctually pulled it back to himself in an effort to not hurt her any more than she already was and it fueled the storm within like pouring gasoline on a fire. There was no control and Jim was helpless to help him.

She'd never experienced something like this in the years they'd been bonded. He needed more help than what she could provide. To let him get near her attacker would only feed his fury and it could destroy him. It was this moment that she saw Spock was so close to the behavior of his ancestors. It was an instinctual response and was why the vulcan race tried to work so hard to suppress their emotion to exert control over themselves.

It built and built and built and it was too much. It burned and seared her mind. Her mouth opened in a silent scream and Jim trembled in his arms as they held her so tight she could barely breathe. Her breath left her in staccato bursts and her knees weakened as her hands curled into his uniform in an effort to keep herself upright.

"Spock, I can't-I can't." Jim gasped, trying to draw air into her lungs. Her chest felt like an iron band was squeezing her and it was killing her. Oh, God! All of her own pain and fear broke to the surface and her head hurt with the force of it. "Spock, please. I can't!"
Spock suddenly released her and Jim had to catch herself with a hand on the edge of the biobed. She pressed her knuckles to her chest to try and rub away the memories of her husband's chaotic thoughts.

"Jim!"

It was still there. The room swam in front of her as if she was under water and she couldn't shield. She had to. It was hurting so bad! Everything physical had been pushed aside as she focused on-on-

A metal door slammed in her mind and, just as quickly as they had appeared, Spock had closed the link between them. The memories of what he was holding in worried her. In their time on the Enterprise, she'd been kidnapped, held hostage, and various other acts had been done to hurt her, but this was different. She knew it was personal and not some random act of desperation by some stranger. She knew that Stonn was something else to Spock and that had pushed him over the edge. She needed him to admit it. He had to acknowledge just how affected he was and she needed the full picture.

"Spock, you know him from before. Why is this so bad compared to other things done to me?"

Jim felt herself starting to slump to the floor and strong arms caught her before she hit the ground and helped her to sit on the bed.

The warmth from his body comforted her as she leaned into it and he carded fingers through the mess of her wavy, blond hair. "He was-Stonn was one of the only persons who broke my control when I was younger. He constantly harassed me and made it...difficult for me."

Translation: Stonn was a fucking bully.

"Then it is personal." She tried to lean back but he just held her tight. "You cannot be involved. It's a conflict of interest. If I am-If I am upset by this then I know you are, too." Spock's grip tightened around her at her words and Jim's own hands gripped him harder. "Possibly more so considering your culture's beliefs regarding Vulcan mates and the fact that it happened to the one you love."

Jim almost squeaked in his arms as they became almost like iron bands as he hugged her. At the noise of distress, he suddenly released her and his eyes were everywhere, but on her. "While you are hurt, captain-" Swallowing hard, he stepped backwards and he faced her head-on with his eyebrows furrowed and showing so much pain that it stole her breath far more than his hold moments ago had. "-Jim, I must take your attacker into custody. He cannot be allowed to escape justice."

The blonde wondered just what kind of justice Spock meant when he told her that. She feared that he meant his own brand which, as much as she wished she could also do what Spock clearly wished he could do to the bastard, she couldn't let him do this. She couldn't let him do something he'd regret nor could she let him go to prison for murder.

Especially for a worthless piece of trash like Stonn. Reaching out to her husband and First Officer, she placed a careful hand on his uniform-clad sleeve. "Spock, listen to me. As much as this disgusts me to say, this isn't a black and white thing because, he's-" And, God, didn't the words leave a foul taste in her mouth. "-a member of the Ambassadorial team. It's a gray area and probably will have to be handled as such."

"It is not gray to me and, as you said, this does need to be handled. As the current ranking member of the Enterprise, this task falls within my jurisdiction."
Jim shook her head, hating herself for what she was about to do. "Spock, you are not authorized to take matters into your own hands. I'm still the captain and you need to take a step back." She told him in a firm voice.

He didn't listen. He straightened back to his former stance. "Captain, while you are incapacitated, it is regulation that you are no longer in command."

Her face flushed hot with anger and humiliation. "I'm not incapacitated, Mister Spock. I haven't been relieved of duty, but I'm sure as hell about to have M'Benga and McCoy relieve you of duty."

Again, he defied her. "I believe that you are incorrect. If you will excuse me."

Jim pulled herself off the biobed once again as Spock started for the door. "Spock, you get your ass back here. I order you to remain in the medical bay. This is not within your purview, Commander!"

She watched as he left, a flash of blue as he stormed through the medbay doors and she felt absolutely impotent with not being able to get him to listen to reason. "Son of a bitch!" She slammed her hand on the comm.

"Kirk to security."

*"Lieutenant Hendorff here."*

Jim couldn't help the small amount of relief at the chief of security being on duty. "Lieutenant, Commander Spock is compromised and heading towards the Ambassadorial Aide, Stonn's quarters. He needs to be stopped and confined to his quarters until further notice."

*"Captain?"*

There was confusion in his voice and she knew the order sounded odd, but she didn't have time to address it. "Now, Lieutenant. Stun his ass if you have to but, do not let him get access to Stonn. Also, confine that bastard Stonn, too."

A pause. *"Yes, captain. Will do."*

Closing her eyes in relief, Jim continued, her voice slightly smaller. "Also, I need you to come to sickbay after."

*"Understood, sir. Hendorff out."*

The line clicked as he signed off and Jim breathed a sigh of relief as Bones came back in. His brow was wrinkled in worry and he held his handheld scanner tight, as if it was the only thing keeping him grounded. M'Benga quickly followed, his expression similar but, much calmer. "Jim-captain-" He corrected. She knew it was a simple gesture to remind her of her control and it was appreciated. "I just saw Spock leaving like his ass was on fire."

She felt tired-drained and wanted to do more than forget this whole day but, she still had a few more things to do. "Yeah. Spock's going after Stonn. He was the one responsible and I don't think he's stable right now. He's not in control of his emotions."

McCoy swore and M'Benga's jaw clenched and she knew he clearly agreed. "I will attend to this, captain." His deep voice was soothing to her nerves and she was suddenly so glad that Bones had been able to get him on her staff. He was invaluable. While Bones was a medical genius and empathetic with his patients, he tended to be irritable with those who weren't responsible and got
injured by their own lack of common sense. He tended to be a bit emotional and M'Benga gave off a
more calm demeanor and was gifted when dealing with telepaths and those who were more
sensitive to the thoughts and emotions of those around them from his time as a student on Vulcan-
that-was so Bones relegated their care to him unless he specifically needed to treat them due to
complications. It wasn't a failing on her friend's part. Rather it was a strength and showed and
cared too much. M'Benga was one of the best in what he did and could have gotten command of
his own sickbay, but he came here and she was so glad of it.

Jim sagged on the biobed like a marionette with its strings cut. She felt shaky and sick from
everything that had happened over the last few hours. Bones lay his hand on her back, rubbing
soothing, warm circles that helped to warm her up from the perpetual chill that always invaded his
domain.

"Are you ok, kid?"

Jim wasn't fully sure that she was, but she did know that she wasn't fully ok. "No. No, I'm not."

"Oh, darlin'."

xXx

"I must be calm. I am in control. I am in control."

The words were uttered in a mantra that did nothing to soothe him. The sedative administered by
Dr. M'Benga was just as ineffective. The images of Jim being pinned by Stonn, the marks he left
on her delicate, fragile human body, and her trembling in his arms played under his eyelids
repeatedly no matter how much he tried to shove them away and control his reactions to them. He
needed to process what happened logically, but where his mate was concerned, it was an
impossible feat.

He felt shame that when he had first came upon her under his childhood rival he had thought she
was a willing participant and was being an unfaithful mate. In the years they had been together he
had never had occasion to think she would ever do something like that, but Stonn was a master
manipulator and he feared that he would be able to get away with the atrocious crime he had
committed against his wife.

His nails bit into the palms of his hand, leaving dark, green crescents in their wake as he clenched
his fists. The pain helped a little to let him focus, but it was too little to gain complete control. He
sat across from the small fire pot and the flame danced, almost like it was mocking him with its
freedom of movement when he couldn't even move without feeling sick at the memories that
played behind his eyelids. Perhaps Stonn was correct in that he was inferior in the fact that he was
half-human and, therefore, less able to control his emotions. He had always struggled, even as a
child and had never seen another lose their own control.

A chime sounded distantly and he heard the pneumatic hiss of the door, but he didn't turn. He
couldn't.

"Spock."

A swish of air caused his hair to flutter as his father sat cross-legged next to him.

"What has happened?"

His father's inquiry just made the images swirl faster and the accompanying emotions hit harder.
There was so much anger at Stonn that it consumed him like a fire does to dry kindling. There was
gilt. So much guilt. He should have trusted his instincts in regards to Stonn. His foolish arrogance that something like this would never happen on the Enterprise and his belief that Jim would be safe under the watchful eye of the crew had caused this. He had failed his mate and failed in his duty to protect her both as his bondmate and as his captain.

"I cannot, sa-mekh. Not at this moment."

A very un-Vulcan sigh caused him to finally face his father. On closer inspection, he could see the lines of stress that made him look far older than his years. He could feel the concern and worry through their faint parental bond and he held onto it like a lifeline. Spock swallowed and fought back everything he felt to be able to speak. "Speak your mind, sa-fu."

"Jim was-she was hurt grievously by Stonn. He tried-" His mouth snapped shut as his eyes began to burn as he tried to not express the pain he felt. "-he tried to rape my t'hy'la."

"Explain."

Spock breathed a frustrated sigh and closed his eyes as if in physical pain. "I sought out Jim when I completed my duties and came upon them on the observation deck with him on top of her." He shook and Sarek shifted closer to his son. "And?"

"He-" Spock swallowed around the lump in his throat. "He was holding her down and I felt Jim's distress through our bond once I lowered my shields when I saw her."

Sarek tilted his head, his eyebrows furrowing. "There is more, is there not?"

"Yes, sa-mekh." He turned to face Sarek and a furious blush caused his face to heat. "I wanted to cause harm to Stonn. I still do."

"Emotions run deep within our race. They are stronger than a human's and that is why we must control them with logic." Sarek's eyes became distant and he turned away, his focus on the flickering flame that Spock had been attempting to use as a central point to correct his primal reaction towards the one who would dare harm his t'hy'la.

"We cannot allow ourselves to become slaves to our primitive behaviors. We have advanced beyond that, but you are not to be faulted for this. I would have been the same had this happened to your mother."

They both turned to face each other, knees touching and Sarek eyed him shrewdly. "I sense there is more; something you are not telling me and it is adding to your distress." He tilted his head and Spock felt naked under his father's scrutiny.

"Yes."

"What else is it that disturbs you?"

Spock squirmed as guilt filled him at what his first immediate reaction had been when he had entered the observation deck. It was shameful. "I had believed that Jim was unfaithful; that what was happening was consensual."

Sarek's face hardened and his eyes turned icy. It was a reaction that Spock had never seen directed at him. "And now?"

"I know Jim would never-" He couldn't face his father. He had never had cause to believe his t'hy'la would commit such an act and yet he had shamefully came to the conclusion the minute he'd
seen his childhood bully on top of her in such an intimate position. It may have been only a minute before his erroneous assumption, but even a minute was far too long. She would never be unfaithful. She was hurt! She was so afraid and I was so very wrong."

Spock, once again, faced his father and what he saw caused bile to rise up in his throat at the disgust shown on his normally calm features. "I seek your assistance. I ask that you guide me during this trying time. She attempted to assist me and I hurt her just as much as Stonn did when we joined our minds. I cannot risk causing her any more harm!"

Sarek took a deep breath and the effort involved clearly cost him. There was more than what met the eye at his father's obvious struggle to contain his own emotions. Sarek raised his hand, his fingers gently placed on his son's meld points. "Nahp, hif-bi tu throks."

Nodding curtly, he fully lowered his shields and Sarek sat straighter at the chaotic onslaught.

"Ha, sa-mekh."

It was like a cool wave covered the fire in his blood. The more experienced touch calmed the torrent of feeling that he had. The oasis at the center of his mind where he and Jim were perfectly blended was in the midst of a powerful storm. The trees surrounding the normally calm waters were swaying under the devastating force of the wind and the water churned and spun. Underneath the water, the fish that were the personification of his memories and thoughts were in a snuck, leaping and swimming furiously mirroring his inner turmoil.

"Imagine a cool oasis, the surface of the water still and cool your fire in the waters that your bondmate gifts you with. Allow her love and care to fill you and supply your own for that is the point of t'hy'la. Focus on the strength of your bond with her and bring your attention on what should be. Your live should take precedence over revenge. It should be secondary to the welfare of your mate."

His father's voice filled him and the waters stilled. Under his guidance her was able to press what was not supposed to be the focus of the moment. The feelings were still there, but muted. The memories and everything associated with them were not removed. They were simply pressed down in his mind to where he could see them, view them, and he could process everything that had previously overwhelmed him.

"Address these thoughts at a later time, but with logic and empathy to your mate's current distress."

Spock's breathing slowed much like the swaying of the trees surrounding his oasis. His thoughts once more became ordered, but were still close to the surface.

"Understandable. It is logical to have the need to and wish to avenge thy mate, but your priority is to her. Honor her, comfort her, and protect her. That is the order of things."

Sarek's calming influence gently detached from him as he ended the meld and Spock slowly opened his eyes. "I thank thee for thy guidance."

Placing a hand on his shoulder, Sarek radiated sympathy and understanding. "We must address this, but it will need to be handled delicately. It is something Stonn does not deserve however, the laws are absolute and must be adhered to." A gentle squeeze and he pulled away. "Apologies are illogical, but I still feel the need to offer one anyway. I am sorry this horror has befallen your mate and that the path to justice will be rocky."

Throat tight, Spock could only nod.
Translation:

 Nahp, hif-bi tu throks. - Your thoughts, give them to me."

 Ha, sa-meh. - Yes, father.
Chapter Seven

Jim frowned at the wall, alone and waiting on tenterhooks. She could finally feel the emotions of her bondmate, calm and composed and organized. There was still an undercurrent of sadness and anger, but it was controlled and it no longer hurt her. She may be scared of Sarek in the sense that she worried that he saw her as an inferior bondmate to her son, but she had a great deal of respect for the man and appreciated all he did for Spock. His wisdom was invaluable. She'd been told by Joseph Hendorff that Sarek had been in to see Spock and it had reassured her that the older vulcan had been able to help him.

Bones had been forced to attend to an ensign that had needed an appendectomy so she was resting and spending the time alone thinking over her options. She didn't have many. Jim shuddered at the thought of just how close she'd come to Stonn going too far. If Spock hadn't come when he had...

The corners of her lips turned down and she scowled at the wall. There was a reason she hated politics. People always got caught in the crossfire and this time it was her. She put her face in her hands and struggled to contain her emotions. She was so ashamed that she hadn't fought harder; that she had let this happen. Logically, she knew it wasn't her fault, but the thought still sat in her mind like an insidious poison that was hard to dispel.

The pneumatic hiss of her door pulled her from her dark thoughts and Sarek, Spock, and Lieutenant Hendorff came into her room. All of them had grim expressions lining their faces and Jim was thankful that it wasn't pity or sympathy. That was something that she'd always hated when things went bad for her.

She could feel Spock's surprise at her appearance and she knew why. Instead of the patient gown, Jim was wearing her uniform. Granted it wasn't the dress version, but it provided her with a sense of security; a form of armor against the perception of being a victim. Spock came to stand next to her, offering his fingers in a Vulcan kiss and Jim gave him a small smile as she returned the gesture. He remained at her side, a silent sentinel of support.

It was Hendorff who spoke first. "Captain, I've been briefed on what happened and, as your security chief, I recommend filing a full report and pressing charges against Ambassadorial Aide Stonn."

Sarek wasn't watching her security chief. His focus was on her and did she see a hint of empathy
and concern? The tired lines around his eyes caused Jim her own minute of concern for him. He was pale, but he was clearly worried about her. "There are...complications in doing just that, lieutenant." Sighing, he looked between the three. "Due to being on the Enterprise, it is considered Federation soil and, as a result he is typically protected by diplomatic immunity for crimes committed unless they are murder or result in the death of someone."

"This was an attack on a Starfleet captain! It's a bit different than speeding in an hovercar." Her security chief growled.

Jim agreed however, relations between the Vulcans and other Federation members were fraught with tension. Vulcans, in general, have always been a proud race and very private. The fact that they were thrust into the spotlight after the loss of their planet has been a serious cause of frustration for them. Add to that, the fact that they were dependent on help from others as they recovered was a sore spot for them.

Sarek's lips thinned at Hendorff's outburst. "While I agree with your statement I did use the word 'typically'. This does not mean that his crime cannot be prosecuted nor is it impossible. It does mean that it will be more challenging and at your captain's discretion."

Tilting his head questioningly, Spock reminded Jim of a cat. The random thought during such a serious conversation almost made Jim wonder if she was going crazy. "What exactly do you mean, sa-mekh?"

"I mean that, in order for Stonn to be prosecuted, there are certain-" The older Vulcan's lips twisted as if he'd tasted something rather foul. "-requirements to ensure justice is served in an official capacity."

Jim couldn't help but stare at the wall just above Sarek's shoulder. She just knew that what he was going to say wasn't going to be pleasant. As if it wasn't bad enough that she had been attacked, clearly it was going to be something she wouldn't like.

"Due to the complexities of this being an unusual situation, it would be public record in part because of your notoriety within the Starfleet community as well as the fact that this happened on the flagship. There is also the fact that Stonn is a member of the diplomatic corps which is a position that is supposed to signify dignity and respect which clearly did not happen in this instance."

Absolute terror at the thought of everybody knowing what had happened clawed its up into her throat. It would be quite the scandal and fodder for gossip and public judgement across the quadrant. Women, in many cultures, were rarely believed when they leveled charges against an attacker. Adding to the problem, who would believe that a Vulcan, of all species, would attempt something like rape. It was an emotional, aggressive act of dominating a person and Vulcans had always portrayed themselves as not having emotions. Jim knew, with a sinking sensation, that it would be a hard thing to prove even with the evidence she had.

Already, the evidence, in Jim's mind, could be attributed to other, more unsavory things. She'd seen it once with Gaila. Bruises and marks being attributed to rough sex gone wrong and it being the woman's fault. 'Oh, she was drunk.' or 'Oh, she was wearing this or that.' So many excuses to protect the attacker. Thankfully, like with Stonn, the attack on Gaila had been stopped with a broken jaw by Jim when she'd walked into the computer lab where she was being attacked, but all that had happened was the cadet responsible had been drummed out of the service. It was a little more than mere slap on the wrist.

Jim's jaw worked and the burning sensation behind her eyes only served to cause her irritation.
There were times when she envied a vulcan's ability to suppress their emotions and this was one of them. With the tone of her father-in-law's words, she knew there was more and waited patiently.

"Then there are the cultural difficulties." Sarek nodded to indicate Spock. "My family has experienced these problems. I am ashamed to admit that, even in this advanced day and age, many Vulcans still hold on to their xenophobic beliefs that humans are emotional beings not worthy of respect or trust and some of the more influential elders on the council are of that opinion. It is an old fashioned behavior learned from their parents and their parents before them that is something that needs to be stamped out especially during a time when our people rely on the support of many of the species that they do not agree with due to their cultural and behavioral differences." Sighing, Sarek continued his speech. "The problem is that many of my people tend to not believe other races. This attitude is changing, but it is a slow process and has been for many centuries."

Hendorff was practically frothing at the mouth in anger and Jim was surprised he didn't try and strangle the older Vulcan. It was a true testament to his training. "Evidence doesn't lie, sir." He spat. "My captain was attacked by an animal. Even a blind man can see what happened!"

"That may be, however, the accused can challenge and Stonn is from a prominent clan that is among the most xenophobic, but are still respected despite their antiquated and distasteful views."

Solemn brown eyes found devastated blue. "There is another way to add to the physical evidence to ensure prosecution, but it would be a rather personal invasion of privacy. It would prove, without a doubt, as to what happened and would not be able to be disputed even by the most obstinate person."

"What do you mean?"

Sarek hesitated to answer. He slowly folded his arms, hiding his hands in the sleeves of his robe. Jim wondered if that was where Spock got his habit of hiding his hands. It almost seemed like a comfort measure. "A mind meld between you and several elders including his clan matriarch to verify your accusation is true."

"No. Not a chance in hell!"

Spock tensed at her side and gripped her shoulder, his hold tightening. His eyes flashed in anger in his father's direction. "Surely you cannot be serious."

"I apologize, but I speak the truth. I do believe Jamison and wish to ensure Stonn pays for his crime, but the only way to guarantee it happens would be for her to submit to a mind meld."

The thought of having her mind probed by strangers made her feel sick to her stomach. The memory of what Stonn tried to do to her was so intertwined with previous traumas and violations that she feared too much of her painful past would be revealed. She couldn't bear the thought of having multiple other people see what had been done to her in full blown technicolor. Even Spock didn't know everything about her past.

"Don't even ask this of me, dammit! I'm serious."

"But, Jim, he must be prosecuted."
Her head snapped up, blue eyes that were normally a brilliant sapphire turned icy. "No, Spock. This isn't up for discussion. I can't do this. I can't have my private life broadcast, not only on subspace for everyone to see, but also into the minds of the most influential leaders of the primary founding race of the United Federation of Planets. I can't be seen as-" Jim's chest heaved as she fought the panic that was threatening to make itself known. "I can't be seen as weak or a possible liar if this goes wrong."

Spock made to protest again, but Sarek interrupted and Jim shot the older man a grateful look. "We must respect her decision in this matter, Spock. It is her decision and hers alone."

Soothing calm flowed into her mind and her breathing slowed somewhat as she regained her equilibrium. She leaned towards her husband, accepting his comfort, but there was an undercurrent of confusion. "But why, Jim?"

"I just can't, ok?"

Her security chief remained silent, watching the debate. Sarek sighed and Jim figured it was a learned behavior from his time among humans. "Humans, and even some Vulcans, would struggle to do what we are asking of Jim. It would be a trying and painful experience to re-live this attack and this could have devastating consequences for, not only the captain, but for relations between our peoples if it is ruled either way. This would be due to Jamison being such a public figure. It could be made very public. Other species could view us as dangerous if he is found guilty or, if he is found innocent, Captain Kirk could be viewed as a liar or unfaithful to my son and untrustworthy which would be damaging to her career."

It hurt her to even think of the possibility that, if she went forward, that Stonn could be seen as the victim rather than the perpetrator of the crime. Jim's hand sought Spock's and he held her while she squeezed hard enough to hurt him, but he didn't pull away.

"Ambassador, as the ranking security chief and in charge of the investigation, I will testify to the validity of the captain's claim. There is enough evidence even without her testimony." Hendorff's eyes darted to Jim and she knew he was stubborn enough to do it. "I think this is a crime that needs to be prosecuted and can even if the captain is unwilling to testify."

"I would also be willing to testify on Jamison's behalf, lieutenant-commander, but I will only do so at her behest. If she does not wish it then I will not do so." Sarek's features darkened and it was then that Jim saw such anger even with no outward expression. "No matter what Jamison decides, I will still do everything within my power to ensure Stonn no longer has the ability to enjoy such protections of diplomatic immunity from this moment forward. While I may not be able to state in public as to the reasons why he will lose his position to protect Jamison's privacy, this will cause his future prospects to dry up and respect will be lost within the Vulcan community. He would be fortunate to even gain future employment at the waste management facility. Our family clan is still influential and it will be known that my reasons are my own." A small, secretive smile was directed towards her. "It is also within the power of our clan matriarch to recommend matches and I am confident that Lady T'Pau may have an bondmate in mind that will most effectively put him in his place."

"Thank you, Sarek."

With that, the elder Vulcan left and Jim slumped, relief at her business remaining private causing her to feel like one of those balloons her mother would buy her at the local fair that Jim would always send going into the sky when she'd let out the air.

"Commander, I request a word with the captain in private."
Spock silently asked Jim if she wanted him to remain, but she released him with a nod. She knew he didn't want to leave her and she appreciated his support. After he reluctantly left with a parting ozh'esta, Hendorff locked the doors and set himself into a determined pose. "Permission to speak freely?"

She gave a terse nod and waited as he shifted to a more relaxed stance.

"Do you trust me?"

The question was so out of the blue that it shocked her into an automatic response. "Of course. Why wouldn't I? You wouldn't be my CSO otherwise."

"Then why aren't you letting me do my job which includes protecting you and ensuring if someone commits a crime that they are prosecuted to the full extent of the law, captain?"

Sighing, the blonde ran a hand through her hair. She was wrung out after today and wanted nothing more than to dispense with the responsibilities of being captain and just be Jim. Life wasn't as simple as that. "Joseph, this isn't like other cases. Leave it be. I can't have this going public. I can't have the risk of the public and potential future leaders I may have to deal with knowing this about me." Jim faced him head on. "And what if people don't believe me? This could have severe consequences that affect so many things and I cannot have this getting out."

The bald man, who'd saved her life, and she his, so many times stepped forward, a sympathetic expression lining his face. "That's a common fear. If it makes a difference in your choice, I want you to know that I believe you."

Smiling sadly, she reached out and gave his shoulder a pat. "Thank you."

A solemn silence filled the room as both of them were lost in their thoughts. When he decided to speak again, it was quiet. "You do know this wasn't your fault, right?"

"Yeah." She choked.

The mattress dipped as he went to sit next to her. "If this had happened to another crew member would you want them to remain silent? Would you want them to not press charges? Would you allow them to believe it was their fault and that they should have fought harder? Would you let them believe that it was their penance to pay for not fighting? And, finally, would you allow this monster to continue to go free?"

With each question that Hendorff asked, Jim's gut twisted and she could feel the dinner she had had so many hours ago trying to make its way up. "Of course not! It's not their fault!"

"Then why do you allow this with yourself. It is the same."

Jim's shoulders slumped in defeat. "It's different. I'm the captain."

"Then it's more important that this crime is reported. You are still a person no matter what your rank is. This cannot be left alone. I won't have an animal like that roaming the ship." He argued.

Jim nodded in agreement. "Just keep his ass locked up until we dock and get him the hell off my ship as soon as possible."

"Aye, captain." Hendorff's reply was quiet and Jim hated that she could hear the disappointment in it.
Bones released her with the stipulation that she be off-duty until Stonn left the ship and that was fine by her.

Stepping into the quarters she shared with Spock provided a welcome respite where the mantle of the responsibility of being the ship's captain could be mostly discarded in private. At least temporarily. While she was never truly off duty, she was still able to relax enough to let herself feel without the eyes of her crew on her.

"Jim?"

The sound was muffled and the blonde had to wait a moment until her bondmate came into view as he exited from behind the privacy screen that hid their bed from the main area. As he came closer clothed in the soft brown robes he frequently wore when he was off duty, smelling of the incense that he loved so much, Jim finally let the walls she'd put up fall and her face crumpled. The tears she'd held back while in sickbay burst forth and Spock, her love and her other half, caught her as her knees collapsed from under her.

Jim's hands fist his robes so tight that she wondered if the fibers would be permanently embedded into her skin. He held her as she shook in his arms and the front of his robes became soaked with her tears. Spock murmured soothing nonsense into her hair, rubbing her back and pressing kisses to her head and it helped her so much. She felt reassured, cherished...and believed. How could she have ever thought that he didn't trust her?

But she still felt like a failure and that it was her fault. God. Why hadn't she fought back harder? She could have stopped it. She should have been able to.

The stray thought must have come through from their skin to skin contact because she felt Spock stiffen and hold her closer. "Kroykah! Do not think such things." He pulled away and stooped low to catch her eyes, melted chocolate meeting watery blue. "You are not at fault. If anything it is I who is. I should have been there, ashayem."

Jim shook her head. "Spock, you can't always be there. You have a duty to the ship and were needed elsewhere."

"Do you think that comforts me? My duty is to you! Stonn is the perpetrator of this crime and should pay for it. You fought admirably. You well know how strong a Vulcan is, let alone a full-blooded one that is determined and not in control of his emotions." Placing a gentle arm around her shoulders, he led her to their bed and lay her down with her head on his chest after he pulled the soft quilt Bones' grandmother had made over them. It always comforted her and reminded her of home. Georgia wasn't the home she'd been born into, but he was like a brother to her and that made it a home for her when she was on Earth.

"Are you certain you do not wish to go forward with pressing charges?"

"I can't. I just can't go through something like that." She pushed up onto her elbows and turned to see Spocks reaction. "Does that make me a coward?"

His jaw firmed and Jim had a moment of doubt, but it was quickly put to rest. "I admit I do not understand your decision, but, no, my Jim. It does not make you a coward." Pressing a loving kiss to her forehead, he guided her back to lie back down. "You are one of the bravest people I know."
Jim didn't say anything. She wasn't so sure about that, but didn't feel like arguing especially when she was just so tired and Spock was working his magic running his fingers through her hair and massaging her scalp. "Rest, t'hy'la."

Closing her eyes, she allowed him to soothe her into a restful sleep and felt safe. The monsters under her bed and in her mind that took the shapes of Frank, Kodos, and now Stonn, chased away by Spock as he watched over her.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

Whew! Sorry for the slow update. My youngest has been ill and in the hospital twice over the past month plus, this chapter wasn't the easiest to write even though I have the story outlined.
More hints of relationship fractures are gonna be in this chapter as well as we're getting close to the big moment of discovery. I do need to build on her other friendships which I will soon be doing because they will play an important role as time goes on.
Now, the briefing at the end is long, but I see the idea of such minimal briefings like those in the TV series as unrealistic. After all, how can you really plan for big things without everyone putting in their two cents.
As always, thank you so much for your amazing reviews and all the kudoses give me hope that this story is enjoyed.
If anyone has any ideas then please let me know! They only make my story better because sometimes I can have a one track mind that is too focused on the end goal and I tend to miss out on the small things. No, I won't take offense at constructive criticism. It definitely helps!
Thank you so much!
DarkWaters

Chapter Eight

The next several days things between Jim and Spock were tense in a way that she had not experienced since they had first begun to serve together. It was uncomfortable and a combination of guilt on Spock's part and depression on Jim's. She had struggled through two nightmares and was tense with the knowledge that Stonn was still on board her ship.

She tried to push the trauma to the back of her mind and knew it wasn't healthy, but she had little choice. Spock had taken to being overprotective on a level that was, at the same time, both stressful and comforting. Sarek had also taken a supportive stance which was welcome. There was still something going on with him that he had yet to divulge to the pair.

She didn't know why she was starting to be more emotional than what she usually was, but she attributed it to the stress she was under from having to pretend all was well and maintaining a professional demeanor at all times when she had to be on duty. Stonn had been quietly placed in seclusion and restricted from leaving his quarters, but the exact reason had not been disclosed to the general public or her senior staff. Her crew knew enough to trust that there had to be a good reason behind the unusual practice and it was not questioned.

Jim couldn't help but notice Sarek was looking far older than his years. The lines on his face seemed deeper and he seemed to be flushed a worrying shade of green high up on his cheeks. He seemed to be tired and it was like every movement took an extreme of effort. She was getting close to recommending a visit to Bones.

Jim followed her father-in-law's example in respecting each other's privacy while ensuring he knew
that they were there for him. He'd taken to frequent meditation and isolating himself from the pair more than he had in the past, but always made time for them in the evenings. During the quiet moments she could see empathy and concern directed at her in his eyes which only made her see that he did care for her. Spock had been right.

The bonded couple made their way to Sarek's quarters, nervous at the invitation that had been extended to them. When Sarek answered the door, Jim could feel the shock and concern Spock was experiencing at the sight of his father. The older vulcan looked awful and had clearly deteriorated over the past twelve hours. His face was flushed and his hands trembling so bad that when he made them a pot of tea Jim wanted to steady him, but she maintained her distance and only brought the cups and saucers to the small coffee table. She had a strong suspicion as to what the problem was.

Unless she was wrong, she was sure what was going on. The blonde did a quick mental calculation and her heart broke for him at what he was essentially being forced to do because of something so ridiculous as biology. It was not spoken of; taboo to ever mention it even to family other than the bare necessities and facts.

Tonight, though, it looked like they were going to get answers in regards to Sarek's health. It was the last night before they were due to arrive at the Starbase to drop Stonn and Sarek off when they were finally told the reason behind Sarek's unknown condition.

They all sat down, Sarek across from them with his fingers stepped under his chin and he took a cleansing breath. He shook beneath his robes and his frame was tense in a way she had never seen before. It was going to be an announcement that was going to cause complicated emotions within both men.

"Sa-fu, I am to take a mate in a matter of days." He said tiredly.

She didn't know whether to congratulate him or feel sympathy. It was a well known fact that he was still mourning the loss of Amanda and probably always would. She'd seen images of the pair, forever immortalized showing their love for each other and remembered. There had been so much love written in their very eyes and she wondered how Spock had ever been unsure of that fact growing up. Jim never felt she measured up to the woman who had been the center of her husband's world despite what Spock always told her.

"I congratulate you in your upcoming nuptials."

Spock was stiff with shock and his own tension. Perhaps it had been some form of unconscious denial on his part that this would never happen. Sarek was only 94. He was in the prime of his life for his age considering he was a full-blooded vulcan. It would have happened sooner or later and Jim was surprised it had taken this long. It had been almost a decade since Amanda's death. Maybe it had been the shock of losing his mate in such a traumatic way that had halted Sarek's body from what was a natural part of a mature vulcan's cycle.

Placing a gentle hand on his arm, Jim let him know that she understood the turmoil of he was going through. She only hoped that he could feel it.

"I-" Sarek paused. "Considering recent events, I had believed it appropriate to wait to disclose this information to allow a short time for you to process and what has happened."

"Thank you, Sarek." Jim told him quietly. She appreciated the gesture. Truly, she did. "What's her name?"

Sarek's face softened and there was warmth in his voice. "Perrin McCormick. She is an engineer
contracted by Starfleet to assist with establishing the colony."

She could see the affection he had for Perrin.

"We had a rather heated discussion on the location of a desalination plant which would provide drinking water from the southern ocean." There was admiration for the woman. "She was rather...vocal in her opinions. I believe she told our own lead architect to "shove his ignorant and uneducated opinion up his ass. It had caused quite the stir."

Jim struggled to keep her laugh in check, but couldn't fight the smile that blossomed on her face. "I'll bet."

Her bondmate's brow furrowed in confusion and she worried about how he felt about this latest development in his family dynamic. "She is human?"

He nodded tersely in acknowledgement. "As you yourself have chosen. To only choose Vulcan mates would invite inbreeding and genetic instability due to the extreme reduction in our numbers and I have found humans to make superb mates. Their ability to love is unparalleled and I love her in return. She is..." Pausing, Sarek looked away, his eyes distant, but affection shone through despite the clear stress his body was undergoing. "-someone I treasure. To me she is lasha; a precious stone found in a desert of despair and loneliness. She is healing the hurt that is a part of my very soul."

Jim had never spent a great deal of time in her father-in-law's company before. She hadn't known he was such a poet and she could see why Amanda had loved him so much. He was brave and had been before. To love an human mate so long ago when prejudice was prevalent and go against the beliefs of his people had been scandalous. She finally saw just where Spock had learned to be such a rebel.

Sarek met his son's eyes and fixed him with an intense stare, clearly desperate to get his statement across. "She will never replace your mother and diminish what I felt for her. I love her, but I will also always love Amanda."

She could feel the tension drain from Spock at his father's declaration. He wasn't choosing his new wife to only survive his Time, but choosing her out of love and that was all they ever wanted for him.

Turning his hand, Spock extended his pointer and middle fingers and grasped Jim's own and she squeezed back. "I am pleased you have found someone, sa-mekh. I welcome your mate into our clan."

"I-" Sighing, Sarek expressed regret in his posture and faced the pair head on. "I apologize for not informing you of this development sooner. There never seemed to be a...right time."

"I understand." Spock told him quietly, remembering how difficult it had been for him to accept and find peace after his mother's death.

"I also regret that it may be some time before you will be able to meet her as your duties will take precedence and take both of you a fair distance from the colony."

"Kaiidth. What is, is."

Jim hated that it was true, but there was little she could do about it. It was a rare thing that Spock was able to spend time with his father and one of the reasons that Jim had had false preconceptions about how Sarek viewed her. "I'm sorry."
"Perrin does wish for an human marriage ceremony and for you both to be present. We will delay it until you are able to attend." He countered.

A warmth settled in her chest at his inclusion of them and at the gesture of respect for Jim's and his soon-to-be-wife's human heritage. "I think we'd both like that very much."

Sarek seemed to wilt right in front of them and she knew that he had exhausted himself. While pon farr caused a rise in testosterone and aggression, it also had the negative side-effect of weakening them. As the hormones built in their systems they would begin to build their strength and become more aggressive. Exerting the level of control needed to maintain stable behaviors stressed their body to it's limits. He stood and both Spock and Jim joined him.

"If you will forgive me, I feel the need to meditate and rest. I will join you when it is time for me to depart."

"Of course."

As they left, Jim led the way back to their quarters, not wanting to be in the presence of others. They'd both been thrown for a loop with the information that Sarek had imparted. Normally Vulcans were big gossips despite pretending otherwise. The fact that an heir of one of the most prominent clans in Vulcan history, the descendent of Surak, and T'Pau's son was bonding with another human should have been a well-known event. Jim supposed it may now be becoming a more common thing for mixed-race marriages and was 'old news'; no longer such a scandal and gossip worthy.

Once they got back to their quarters, it hit Jim with the morbid reminder that, like Sarek, Spock would outlive her. Someday, Spock would be forced to have to choose a new mate after her death. She wondered how he would handle it and if he would be happy. She hoped he would be able to fall in love and move on. The future version of her bondmate never seemed to have been able to fully move on and Jim didn't want Spock to suffer like that.

Looking around their quarters, it was filled with little things that reminded her of him. His Ka'athyra, the small fire pot that helped him to focus during meditation, the ancient tapestries on the walls, a small collection of holopictures of the two of them, and many other items. Even the smell of the incense he used that always seemed to be there reminded her of him and gave her a sense of home. Would she be as strong as Sarek if she lost Spock during her lifetime?

In the privacy that was a rare thing, Jim turned to face Spock, placing her hand on his cheek. He leaned into her touch, pressing closer to her and wrapping his arms around her waist. "Hey, are you ok?"

"I am pleased my father has found someone and is no longer alone." He closed his eyes and lowered his head, placing it in the junction between her shoulder and neck.

"Are you sure? It's a big thing."

"In your presence, I will always will be."

Jim turned just enough to press a kiss to the silky black hair and was surprised when Spock took a deep breath, running his nose along the arch of her neck. "You smell...different."

That was weird. "Bad?"

He huffed and continued to take deep breaths along her neck, following with his lips. Jim shivered in his arms. Her neck had always been sensitive.
"No. Sweeter. It is-" He kissed at the spot behind her ear and moved his hand to stroke the nape of her neck. ":very pleasant."

She rolled her eyes and smiled, letting him continue his exploration. Sometimes she thought of Spock like a big cat. He pulled back and pressed his lips to hers, his tongue seeking entry and Jim let him in, moaning as he explored her mouth and clever fingers found the buttons of her shirt, slowly undoing them one by one as he guided her to their bed.

He kissed her with a desperation that made her breathless and she let her shirt fall to the floor, her bra, shoes, and pants soon followed, leaving her naked to him. He helped her lie back on their bed and took off his own clothes, quickly settling between her legs.

"Taluhk nash-veh k'dular. I cherish thee with my very soul and I could never live without you, my Jim."

A lump formed in her throat and she had to swallow around it. "I love you so much."

Sparks danced across her skin with every part he touched and she could feel his hardness rubbing against her, but not entering. Not yet. He moved down her body, licking and kissing everywhere and, for some reason, he seemed to be trying to breathe her in. It was unusual, but Jim didn't say anything, focusing on letting him have what he needed.

He placed his mouth on her nipple, gently biting and suckling and she ran her fingers through his hair, moaning and arching her hips up. He suddenly lifted his head and gripped her hands to place them above her head, stroking her palms with Vulcan kisses and his pupils were blown with arousal, a thin ring of brown surrounding them.

"Please." He pleaded and thrust against her. "Your scent. It is exquisite."

Nodding, she held still and a pleased growl vibrated in his chest. She spread her legs wider and he filled her with one powerful thrust that caused her to gasp in surprise.

Spock held himself still inside of her as he continued his sensual exploration of her. Palms slowly stroked the back of her thighs and guided her to wrap around him. She tilted her hips up to get him deeper and to encourage him to move, but he only pushed in harder, his pelvis flush against her.

"Spock?"

Teeth grazed her shoulder and he soothed the sting with a flick of his tongue. "Jim, I do not know what I would do if I was to lose you like my father did my mother."

Her chest ached at the raw pain in his voice and she tilted her head to face him. "You will never lose me if I have anything to say about it. I love you so much."

Everything seemed to click into place, like a puzzle finally being completed and he shuddered above her. He leaned to support himself on one hand and placed the other on her face, lining his fingers up with her psi-points, the bond between them surged and exploded with joy at her promise.

She held onto his shoulders and cried out in pleasure as he started to finally thrust inside of her, her orgasm taking her by surprise. Jim distantly felt him continue to move within her and she clenched around him, holding on and keeping him close.

"I love you. I love you." She chanted, breathless and he gave one more powerful thrust and stilled before spilling inside of her. He wrapped his arms behind her back and held her close, hiding his face from her.
"Oh, Spock."

He pushed himself up above her and Jim could see the raw fear and love etched on his face. "Ashayem, I-

"Shh. I'm not going anywhere." She promised.

Spock gently pulled out and covered them with the blanket, keeping her in his arms and Jim hugged him back, her hand resting on his side and her head on his chest, his heartbeat under her palm soothing her into sleep.

xXx

When Sarek left the ship, there was little fanfare. Both men seemed to put back on emotionless masks that were impressive enough to fool even the most observant of people. They hadn't been able to say a private good-bye before he'd left. Sarek had started to deteriorate rapidly and his aggressive nature was coming out full force.

They'd been forced to remove the breakable items from his quarters and send a communique to the colony to ensure Perrin was on her way. Both Jim and Spock had been reassured by the healer accompanying her that they would arrive in time. It was a sad state of affairs that the ceremonial lands that had been in Spock's family clan had been lost because of Nero. The tradition and culture behind the ancient practice of where a bonding would take place would forever be changed. While, logically, she knew the end result would be the same, it still had a feeling of wrongness to it because not all of their family would be able to be there for them. Perrin was due to arrive the next day, but they didn't have a choice and had to leave. It left her with a sick feeling of worry despite the fact that it should also be a celebration of the joining of two people.

Her security chief handled the hand-over of Stonn ensuring that she didn't have to see the bastard. While they hadn't been able to disclose his crimes to the station commander, it had been heavily implied that he was not to wander the station freely. Commander Thon had agreed to handle the sensitive nature of the request by her chief.

It was another three weeks before they got an assignment that was more than simple star mapping. The entire crew minus those in stellar cartography had slowly been getting stir crazy. No one ever tells you when you serve on a starship that it isn't always exploring new worlds, first contacts, or exciting and terrifying firefightes.

While things had mostly calmed between Spock and her, it was still a little strained at times. He would sometimes give her looks when he thought she wasn't looking that she struggled to interpret. She tried to put it out of her mind as nothing more than paranoia, but it never fully left her. Even Bones had commented on it in passing, but she'd just shrugged it off with the excuse of it being residual tension from when Stonn had been aboard the Enterprise.

Their next assignment was going to be a challenge. It was to be an humanitarian mission to assist Gamma Hydron IV. Their weather satellites had malfunctioned and they were suffering severe flooding as a result. The urgency of their mission was strongly emphasized and it was imperative that the Enterprise get to them as soon as possible. The USS Asclepius was several days behind them and the Enterprise was the closest ship that could handle the devastation befalling the colony and had the technology to repair the faulty equipment.

It was going to be a challenge. They were not a large enough ship with enough officers to fully effect rescue and recovery, but it would have to do. It was a desperate mission and time was of the essence.
Jim called a staff meeting to brief her senior staff on their responsibilities and gain input on what they could do. The people who served under her were the best at anything asked of them and she had the confidence they would rise to the challenge.

Looking around the room, she called the meeting to order. Basic information had been distributed and they needed a game plan. Bones' face was tense, his lips a thin white line as he was clearly planning what he would need to best help while Scotty was focusing on the schematics of the satellites.

Fortunately, most of the colony knew standard so there shouldn't be much of a communication barrier. The main issue was that the planet was tilted in their rotation to where they were in the midst of their rainy season. With the satellites malfunctioning, the control over the amount of rainfall was too much for them to handle. There had been mudslides, river overflow, and destruction of the crops that had been ready to harvest. Refugee camps had been established on higher ground, but there were still more than a hundred colonists trapped in the valley. Thankfully, it was a small colony of only a thousand.

Tapping in the commands a beautiful blue and green planet appeared as a hologram in front of her with ten small satellites circling in various orbits. There was a large area obscured by clouds on the Southern Hemisphere and a red dot above it showing the location of the colony. Looking closer at the small silver satellites orbiting above the planet, it was obvious that four were in an unstable pattern. They were in a decaying orbit and Jim worried about getting there in time before they burned up in the atmosphere.

"We've received a distress call from Gamma Hydron IV. Their Mayor, Ms. Tabitha Hayes, has explained that the location of their colony is experiencing severe flooding due to the failure of three of their weather satellites." She pointed each one out. "Numbers one, three, and four are suffering power failure for some unknown reason, but the age of the satellites is likely to be a factor in their failure. They're twenty Terran years old. We are to assist in effecting repairs as best as possible. We're here for multiple purposes. There is a lot of damage. Homes and hospitals have been destroyed, people are still trapped and a lot hurt, crops are flooded and there are limited replicators struggling to keep up with demand to ensure everyone is fed and have clean drinking water. Don't think this will be a simple mission. It is far from it and we will be the first ones there so we need to do everything in our power to get the situation stabilized. At our current speed, we will be there in less than thirty-six hours and we need to be prepared for when we do."

Nodding to her XO, she handed the meeting over to him. Spock stood gracefully and enlarged the affected areas, pointing out the more severe sections of the colony. "Images that have been forwarded to us from the Admiralty have given us a small glimpse of the destruction that has befallen the colony. As you can see, multiple landslides have occurred here--" He pointed out the western section and then the southern. "--and here. The northern part had the hospital and schools which was where the citizens had originally been told to seek shelter as it was not located in the flood plains of the valley however, it has experienced flooding, but not de-stabilization of the ground. Approximately 90% of the population has been successfully been evacuated, but there are limited supplies. I will compile a more detailed report to distribute the information for your review."

Nodding at Jim, he stepped back and say back down. She turned the meeting over to her CMO.

Bones' expression was as grim as she'd ever seen. It was rare that they were sent on a rescue mission of this scale. "Now, I've been looking at the numbers of injured people and casualties that we have and it's bad; one of the worst I've seen in the fact that we aren't fully equipped to handle something on this scale so we are going to do the best that we can. We'll be handling everything
from hypothermia to broken bones to internal bleeding. There are still people trapped and with the hospital being flooded we are going to be needing to replicate as much as possible in terms of medical supplies. I will be asking every crew member to donate blood and plasma over the next twenty-four hours. I will also need every crew member trained in first aid to assist with triage and treatment. The more severe cases will be treated on board the Enterprise and we will need to set up one of the cargo bays to create a temporary hospital to get as many cases as possible in a safe environment while the less injured can be treated on the surface.

There was so much to do and too little time. "Mr. Scott?"

"Oh, aye, cap'n." Once again, the hologram showing Gamma Hydra IV illuminated the room with the small, silver colored satellites hovering over the planet in key points so there was direct lines of sight to guarantee communication between them. As the planet rotated, it was obvious which ones were not functioning. The alignments were off on half while one of those three was in a much lower deteriorating orbit.

"As ye can see, three out of six are not working. Two have shown to have no power while the third is sporadically transmitting. I'd like to take an engineering team to retrieve them with the Galileo II shuttle, but we can only pull in two so it'd have to be two trips. We'd focus on the ones without power first since they're going to run the highest risk of crashing."

Typing in an order on his PADD, the hologram changed to a larger view of the satellite with the internal hardware on display. It looked like something out of Earth's early twenty-first century. There were wires, circuit boards, and it looked like a mess. "Now, when the colony established itself twenty-five years ago, weather management tech was new so it was always breaking." He shot the image a baleful glance. "I'm surprised it's lasted this long. I'd bet my best scotch that it's nothing more than a power cell on two but the third-" Sighing, he shook his head and that sent a small amount of concern through her. "-the third I'm not so sure about. It's an antique and since we don't have stuff like this anymore we'll likely be rebuilding the inside from scratch. I'm not so sure how long it could take. I've sent off a request for schematics from the science branch of Starfleet and, as much as I hate to say it, I'll need help from Sciences to work with my team. Engines are my specialty, weather not so much." Turning back to Jim, his frown deepened. "I'll also set up a team to get shelters going and convert the cargo bay for the doc as well as get those replicators working at better than full capacity."

Jim grimaced at the implication. "Within specs?"

Laying an hand on his chest in mock offense, the Scotsman smiled mischievously. "I'm offended! I always within Starfleet specs. I may push the limits-" Jim snorted and he ignored it. "-but I always keep it there."

"Uhura, I'll need you to get a central communication station going to coordinate departments and teams."

"Aye, sir."

This was the part that worried her. There hadn't been any word of it happening, but disasters sometimes brought out the worst in people. She didn't normally need her security chief in the briefing before a rescue mission, but this one was more extreme and could possibly be more dangerous than usual. Human nature was rarely predictable. "Lieutenant Hendorff, in situations like this there is usually panic among survivors. I want it to be monitored and handled as you see fit."

He grunted in affirmation
"Sulu, Chekov, I want you to help me on the surface to organize the locating and rescue of survivors." As they both nodded, she could already see the ideas running behind her navigator's eyes and Sulu itching to do research. Spock, on the other hand, was clearly not pleased with her last assignment designation. It was a familiar argument between them about the captain remaining on the ship.

Spock opened his mouth and Jim needed to cut him off and quick. "Now, I want everyone to remember that we are working with the colonists to help not simply taking over. They're proud of everything they've accomplished and asking for our assistance does not mean they are incapable. It means that they recognize they can't do it alone. The relief ship USS Asclepius, will not be arriving for another three days after we get there." She gave the group a small smile. "I'd like it if all they have to do is mopping floors when they get there so let's get this done. Dismissed."

Watching her people leave talking amongst themselves, she could feel a presence behind her and she sighed, knowing just who it was. "Spock, I know what you're going to say so don't."

"Captain, regulations-"

Jim spun on her heel, glaring at her husband. Sometimes, it was hard to put aside their personal relationship while others it wasn't. This wasn't one of them. "This isn't up for discussion. My being there will boost morale among the colonists and I have a very useful skill set in regards to search and rescue. I will not defend my choices with my XO nor will I do so with my husband. I'm sorry, Spock, but it's not up for discussion."

She could see the muscle twitching in his jaw as he bit back his response and frustration bled through their bond, but he respected her enough to let the matter rest for now. She doubted it would remain that way, but he knew her well enough to realize that to argue now would accomplish nothing. Jim was stubborn and had always felt the need to prove herself.

"Yes, captain."
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lateness at getting this up. My youngest has been having issues of random upset screaming as if she's in pain. She went in for an EEG to check for new seizures, no luck in the fact that she (of course) didn't have an "episode" while we were there. So good news-no seizures Bad news-if the screaming was a seizure we could potentially treat so now we're looking at alternate reasons. Think colic with a ten year old's body. Poor kid is non-verbal so she can't tell us what's wrong. We're working on other ideas and hope for an answer soon.
Anyway, here's a new chapter. I know PTSD as I have experienced it before (in McCoy's type) and I'm hoping I got the description right. Next chapter will have the mission and finally the discovery...

Chapter Nine

They were eighteen hours into their thirty-six and Jim was deeply worried that they wouldn't be ready in time. She was filthy, covered in sweat and grease from working with engineering to get the shelters prepped and packed away so that they'd be able to be assembled quickly. Scotty's focus was with finding a way to get those failing satellites on board as fast and efficient as possible while working with Spock and sciences to get a game plan in place for repairs. Multiple scenarios were practiced to improve efficiency and simulations were a constant to have every possibility put in the table. The science division of Starfleet had been able to find basic schematics which had only minimally helped. They were flying in blind.

Uhura was beginning to look frazzled if the fact that her hair wasn't in the neat ponytail that she usually sported was loose and stray hairs were fizzing along the edges was any indication. To have to come up with a central command hub and ensure everyone was kept in the loop with, not only their own teams, but that of the colonists was a task she didn't envy her comm officer for. Jim had caught her more than once muttering in Tellerite, klingonese, and vuhlkansu to herself as she typed on a PADD furiously. She was the best for the job and, if anyone could do the impossible, it was her.

Sulu, Chekov, and Hendorff had teamed up with practice runs in handling distraught citizens to ensure that they could do their search and rescue efforts as successfully as possible. They'd been going over safety protocols and running through necessary equipment lists including the need for heavy equipment for debris removal.

Jim hadn't been able to do much more than a few sim runs with them, but that was next on her list as soon as she got an update from the crew member who had the most difficult task ahead of him. Bones. There were going to be times when he wouldn't succeed in saving every person and she knew that he'd take every single death personally despite it not being his fault. He wasn't on an hospital ship and didn't have access to more than three other doctors on board and twelve nurses. Even more than ten years after the devastating losses that Starfleet had suffered from that bastard Nero there was still a shortage of medical professionals.

Out of everyone, Bones had one of the most challenging assignments ahead of him and his ability
to do his job was dependent on everyone else doing theirs. If the shelters weren't up then he'd have nowhere to put patients, if his temporary "hospital" in the cargo bay wasn't finished then he couldn't treat the more severe cases, if the recovery teams didn't get people rescued in time then they'd die and he'd be helpless to do anything about it, and if Uhura couldn't perfect communications then he couldn't ask for help or be prepared.

Everyone had a job to do and they had to be perfectly in sync for it to work. She'd been in contact with Mayor Hayes and the situation on the planet was deteriorating by the minute and they were still another eighteen hours away. While the fact that they were far away was hurting Jim, it gave them time to prepare. Memories of Tarsus IV threatened to surface and Jim had to ruthlessly stamp them down. She constantly had to remind herself that this was different. The colony had sought help in a reasonable amount of time. They'd been maintaining as much order as was possible in the chaos that they were in the middle of. They weren't governed by some psychopath with eugenics agendas on his mind.

Making her way to sickbay, two sack lunches in hand with two coffees, she knew he probably hadn't eaten since the briefing. He probably hadn't slept either. Jim needed him in top form if this mission was to have a chance at going well. Success wasn't an appropriate word in her mind. Even with them there and with them doing their best there was no way they'd be able to save every single person and the knowledge of it sat like a stone in her belly.

When she got into the main area, it was a controlled mess. Nurses and orderlies were running everywhere, there was a line stretching out the doors and into the corridor with members of her crew waiting patiently to donate blood, plasma, and platelets, and, in the center of it, her CMO directing everything like a particularly frightening drill sergeant.

"Dammit, Keller, I told you the antivirals needed to be loaded separately from the antibiotics and listed by species. I can't give an human tricyclisporia which is meant for someone from Tellar!" His focus suddenly changed from the terrified ensign to zero in on Jim, suspicion causing the older man's eyes to narrow and he started for her. His arm snaked out, smoothly snatching up a medical tricorder without missing a step.

"Dude! I'm not sick or hurt! I swear!"

He harrumphed and ignored her to run the device over her body. "With that much dirt on you, I can't exactly see your skin to see if you're telling the truth."

When it beeped, he almost looked disappointed and she rolled her eyes. "Told you."

"What are you doing here, then? Can't you see I'm busy?" Waving an hand at the insanity that was his, normally, calm and peaceful medbay, Jim could see his body practically shaking with exhaustion. M'Benga had outed him to her.

She held up the bags of food and two coffees. "I come bearing sustenance."

He looked at the offending items and practically growled. "I ain't got time to sit. I've got too much to do."

When he was tired his southern accent came out and it was in full force. "And you have, and hired, a competent staff that can handle it while you take a break."

"Kid-"

Jim drew herself up to her full height. "It's captain right now, Dr. McCoy, and wasn't it you who
told me that a caregiver can't care for a patient if they don't care for themselves? Besides, it's a working lunch. I need an update on how it's going down here."

Looking sufficiently cowed, her friend and CMO rubbed the back of his neck, likely working out the muscles that had bunched up with the amount of stress he was under. "You're right as much as I hate to admit it."

She smirked. "Aren't I always?"

Rolling his eyes with fondness, he gestured to his office and she followed. "Don't push it."

Getting a closer look at Bones, she could see his eyes were red-rimmed and lined with dark circles underneath that rivaled a raccoon's. In addition to all of the organization, prep work, and setting up of the cargo bay/hospital, he'd also been having to complete his duties of CMO. Jim's lips thinned and turned white in disapproval at his hypocrisy. He was the penultimate nag when it came to others, but always seemed to forget himself. He wasn't going to have the luxury of rest once they got to Gamma Hydron IV so he needed to take advantage while he was on the ship to be at as 100% as was possible considering the dire circumstances that awaited them.

The second the privacy filter came up, Bones practically collapsed onto the small couch. His head tilted back and his neck arched and she wouldn't be surprised if he passed out right then. The young captain wanted nothing more than to simply cover her best friend with a blanket, lower the lights, and let him sleep, but, first things first, he needed to eat.

"Bones."

A groan.

Jim sat next to him and nudged him with her knee and he jerked awake and Jim gave him an empathetic smile. Poor guy was pushing himself too hard and it was beginning to take its toll.

"You've gotta eat."

He accepted the bag without any fuss and it just served to emphasize how tired he was. He never had been one to accept help; just one to always give it.

They munched in silence, enjoying the small moment of peace and calm and, if he was disturbed by the reversal of their typical roles, he didn't say anything.

"You need a shower."

Well, that was rude. Jim gave Bones a baleful look. "So do you. You've got that musky thing going on. Trust me, it's not attractive or sexy."

"Hmm. Maybe not, but do you know how dangerous that stuff can be if it starts to irritate your skin. You could have an allergic reaction-"

"Unlikely since I've had it stuck to me all morning."

"Skin infection."

She fake paused. "Maybe, but I have the best doctor in the fleet who'd save my ass."

"Clogged pores." He continued.

"I knew you thought I was hot and my skin was flawless!"
The glare he shot her way was pretty funny and she waggled her eyebrows. "You do know I'm a married woman."

"You're like my little sister!"

Jim gave him her best shit-eating grin that had never failed irritating Bones in the past. "I knew you cared!"

His expression sobered and he clasped her on the shoulder, pulling her close. "Always."

"Thank you, Bones." Bumping her friend with her shoulder, she felt grateful for everything she had.

Sandwiches gone, Bones promptly gathered his many PADDs and started reading through his prep work. Jim had always been impressed at his ability to handle crises and it was no different this time. The efficient manner in which he went through his report despite his fatigue was amazing.

It wasn't until he got to the part of the report where it listed the doctor that he'd be working with when they arrived at Gamma Hydron IV that Jim froze. There was a rushing sound deafening her in her ears and her fingertips turned white as she gripped her thighs.

A sick sort of dread clawed its way up her throat and her body became rigid with fear. The eyes looking up at her from Bones' PADD were the same malevolent brown of Stonn's. His face was looking up at her and she couldn't believe it! How? How could he be there? He was supposed to be on his way to the Vulcan colony.

"Jim! Jim!"

Oh, God! What if he was coming back to finish what he started. What if she couldn't get away this time? The sour taste of adrenalin started to flood her mouth and her heart beat faster than a hummingbird's wings.

"Jim!"

Her friend's voice seemed so far away.

"Jim, dammit!"

A sharp bite to her neck and the world came into focus again, Jim's breath leaving her in a sudden whoosh. She blinked rapidly against tears she hadn't known had fallen and the face on the screen morphed from a menacing image of Stonn to that of an older Vulcan male with the name S'mnh T'Goh Seren MD, PhD underneath. His eyes weren't the cold, cruel brown that her attacker's had been. They were warm and almost looked lit up with curiosity and excitement.

Cold sweat ran down her back from her neck and she shivered, her heart rapidly slowing to a more normal rhythm. She slowly lifted her head, rubbing her face with an unnatural tiredness. Bones was looking down at her with worry, a depleted hypospray in a tight-knuckled grip in his right hand.

"Dammit, Jim." His voice lacked its usual bite and his movements were slow and exaggerated as he slowly sat down next to her. There was an all-too-knowing look directed at her and Jim cursed herself for hiring a ship full of geniuses. Sometimes it was a pain in the ass.

"Sorry, Bones. Must have zoned off."

The eyebrow he raised at her words showed how little he believed her lie. He slowly turned the
PADD over to where the writing and pictures weren't visible and leaned back. "I was gonna talk to you about it later, but now is as good of a time as any. I saw you missed your last session with Rebecca."

She shrugged, her shirt sticking unpleasantly to her back. "What of it? In case you haven't noticed, I've been a bit busy." She snapped.

McCoy's jaw firmed as he fixed her with his best "stop bullshitting me" glare. "Being busy is a piss-poor excuse. You're ignoring the issue, hoping it'll simply go away. Bottling it up and not properly processing what happened isn't going to help, dammit."

"I know, Bones, and I'll go later. Right now, this mission takes priority." She argued.

"There's time enough for this." He paused, considering his words carefully as if to prevent her from fleeing his office. "I saw your reaction to Seren's picture."

Jim's defenses flew up faster than a ship flying at warp eight. "What of it? I was just tired and zoned out."

Sighing, the older man placed a warm hand on her shoulder. "Jim, it was a PTSD reaction. More accurately, it was a flashback or a conscious nightmare if you will. It's nothing to be ashamed of."

She had to fight herself from ripping out of his comforting hold. She didn't want him to see her as this. He'd seen enough of it to last a lifetime—her lifetime. "I think you're reading too much into it."

Jim said carefully.

He only shook his head sadly. "I don't think I am."

Giving in to the impulse, she jerked her shoulder away from his hold and moved away, closing herself off from him. "Fine." She spat. "What do you want me to say? That every Vulcan I see I will associate with that monster? That I'll run scared every time I see one?"

McCoy glared. "No. I want you to acknowledge that you are a person and not the captain for a damn minute. Not only that, I want you to remember that you have also undergone a trauma and need help. Mental health isn't the stigma it once was. You're not crazy. It's a normal response and understandable given the circumstances of your past and, even if you didn't have that past, it'd still be a trauma even on its own."

"I'm fine, Bones."

"In a pig's eye." He countered.

Jim rolled her eyes and tried to smile. "What does that even mean?"

"It means you're lying." He moved closer and Jim scooted away, but the small of her back hit the arm of his couch. Close up, he looked far more tired than he had earlier and far more serious. "You think you're the only one who's ever had to ask for help—the only one who's ever had to go to Rebecca for treatment?"

The blonde's head jerked back in shock. Bones had always been a steady rock in her life. She'd never seen him have a moment like what she had just had—never seen him pause, be scared, or show a moment of being unsure. "What?"

He tapped his head and smiled. "You're not the only one with a few loose marbles rolling around up in their noggin." He reached out, his pale hand covering her filthy sleeve. "I had...issues after
Khan." He swallowed hard and looked away. "I kept seeing you. In that damn body bag. Over and over. In my sleep and constantly behind my eyes as I blinked even when I was awake. It really fucked me up, Jim." He turned his entire body to face her and met her gaze evenly. "You remember when you got hurt and needed your left leg reset?"

She nodded slowly, unsure of where he was taking this.

"It was the first time you'd needed any kind of treatment where you'd be unconscious." He gave a squeeze but didn't release her. "Well, when they put you under, you looked exactly the same on that damn table as you did in when Scotty brought you in to me in that damn bag. Not a single mark on your body except your leg and it was like my nightmare had come into the real physical world instead of in my head. I couldn't control it and that scared me." His hold became firmer. "All I heard was the flatline of my tricorder confirming your death, but I wasn't even scanning you. All I saw was pale skin colored from death, but you were a healthy pink in reality. All I smelled was the burning ship around me from the battle, but nothing was happening since you'd been hurt when you'd fallen on your fool ass doing some stupid dance ritual that was required as a greeting custom by some species I can't even remember to this day."

"Oh, Bones." She turned her arm and slid down until she could hold his hand just as tight to give him some kind of stability to continue. It was the same and it resonated in her. "I'm so sorry."

Bones shook his head and she could see his hazel eyes turn watery. "I froze. M'Benga had to do the surgery and I booked myself in to see Rebecca that day. I realized that I couldn't ever let that happen again. Just like you, I have a responsibility to the health and safety of crew as well as myself."

"Okay. Okay, Bones. I won't miss another appointment."

"Better not, kid." He warned gruffly. "What if Spock goes with you to your next session?"

"He wouldn't do that."

"Why wouldn't he? He'd be supporting his wife." He frowned in confusion. Sometimes it was hard explaining what she had with Spock. He simply wasn't fully human so it was different.

Biting her lip, she struggled on how best to make her best friend and doctor understand. "Vulcans are-they're-they treat stuff like this, the emotional stuff, differently."

The brunette ignored her. "I'd still recommend a joint session." When Jim opened her mouth to protest, he held up a hand to stop her. "He went through a trauma to even though it's different from yours. There is such a thing as caregiver's guilt. He will feel responsible for what happened even though it's in no way his fault. I've already seen him exhibiting signs of it."

"He said meditation is sufficient."

McCoy scowled. "Translation-He won't do it. If he loves you then he will."

Jim nodded her head. She didn't want to expose Spock to everything and she worried that it'd make things worse between them or hurt him in some way, but she sure as fuck wasn't going to tell Bones. "Okay. I'll ask."

He wasn't having it. "Don't bullshit me, kid."

Jim huffed an annoyed breath. "I don't have time for this right now."
"These sessions are important and you know it as a captain." Like Jim had transformed from friend to captain earlier, Bones had from friend to doctor. "One person's hesitation could cost lives and/or the success of a mission. If you had an officer serving under you go through the same trauma and showed hesitation and wasn't going to their recommended therapy, what would you say?"

She smiled, causing her friend to reappear as her walls fully came back down. "I'd say the same shit you are."

His head jerked in a pleased response. "Damn straight."

"When did you get so wise?"

"Old age."

"You're not that old!" She protested despite the fact that she regularly teased him about it.

"I am!"

"You're only six years older than me." Jim calmly pointed out which only caused him to snort in denial of that little fact.

"See all these gray hairs?" Bones pointed out.

Jim smirked. "Aw! I thought you said I was the one to give you all of those."

"Semantics." He deadpanned.

She lay her head on his shoulder and he wrapped an arm around her, heedless of the oil and dirt staining his science blues. "I love you, Bones."

His jaw cracked with a yawn and she knew he'd be asleep soon. "I love you, too."

"I'll go see Rebecca as soon as this mission is over and I'll bring Spock with me. I promise."

His breathing evened out and Jim used her free hand to pull the blanket that always hung out on the back of the couch to pull around them both. She set the alarm on the computer to wake them in four hours. She meant what she said with her promise. After this mission.
Ok. I am awful dragging it out even further. Well, here is another chapter and the love between Spock and Jim is so painfully there that it's gonna hurt all the more when things go south which will be soon. Very. Very. Soon.

As an update on my kiddo, she's still not doing well. She's going to be being admitted again on Wednesday into the hospital to try and figure out just what is happening to her to cause her so much pain. It's a heartbreaking mystery. This will be hospital admission 4 in the past 6 weeks. Even our insurance company is upset telling us that her chart notes from the doctors made them cry.

We're hoping for a speedy diagnosis and I will keep you all updated as time goes on. Writing is my therapy and it helps to distract me from RL when I need a break.

Anyway, enough drama, I hope this chapter is up to snuff. It was a challenge because I've got friends who do this sort of rescue, but I am in no way an expert so I hope I got it right.

DarkWaters

Chapter Ten

The Asclepius was late, delayed by ionic storms that had knocked out their warp drive so they'd been having to make do with what they had. So many people had died and so many more were suffering in the horrors of the planet's determination to return to what it once was before the colonists' attempts to tame the wild. Mother Nature was one vindictive, cruel bitch.

As it stood, they were fighting a battle that they were barely winning. Scotty and his team's efforts were being thwarted at every turn. It was an almost impossible task to repair something that was so old and not within their areas of expertise. The two scientists who'd been primarily responsible for the care and maintenance of the weather satellites had been killed a mere twenty-four hours before the Enterprise had arrived and the one tech that had had knowledge had died on M'Benga's table when his house had collapsed on him. They hadn't been fast enough.

Magnetite ore in the mountains that surrounded them made communications spotty at best, impossible at worst and their data at the severity of the destruction had been woefully inadequate. It was far worse than they had been led to believe.

Then there was the fact that the number of colonists had been wrong in the worst way. There were more than two-hundred more than they'd been led to believe. Her ship was straining at the seams and power was being strained to the point where replicators were only able to be used when there was no choice. The crew and everyone on board, passengers and patients alike, we're having to survive on rations and survival packets which was barely enough to maintain a safe calorie count. Officers and enlisted had triple bunked and Bones was worried about the overcrowding being a major health-risk which was an understandable fear.

Jesus. It was so bad that'd even Spock, her overprotective husband and first officer hadn't been able to protest her being on the surface. Every hand was needed and not one person complained about
the hard work and long hours being put in to try and make a difference to fight this uphill battle. She had to give the colonists credit. They never complained or gave up once. They were made of stronger stuff. Jim supposed they must be considering the daunting task they had undertaken by choosing to try and tame a wild planet by themselves. They were humble, too, though. They'd accepted their help with grace, not allowing their pride to sabotage their mutual goal of saving as many as possible and Jim respected that.

With the delay of help, things had gone to shit quickly and seeing so much death and destruction was demoralizing. The first time she'd seen a child's small broken body she'd thrown up the entire contents of her stomach. Thankfully, the mayor hadn't said anything, just patting her on the back with an understanding look in her very tired eyes. The mantra of too late-too late-too late was a constant and she had been hard pressed to push it to the back of her mind, but needs must. As her husband would say-Kaiidth. What is, is. There was nothing that they could have done didn't that just hurt all the more.

"Levough, is that wench stable?"

Jim secured her safety harness around her body, clipping the safety line to her front. For a second, it caught on her all-weather gear, but she quickly corrected it until she heard the metallic click over the roaring river underneath her.

"It's secure, captain."

The young security ensign gave the line a quick tug and Jim could barely see him through the curtain of rain. Despite the gear they wore, they were both soaked to the bone. Her gaze drifted to the poor soul on the ledge beneath her. There was a small leg twitch that gave her hope that they'd get there in time.

Her head snapped back up to one of the colonists, Nurse Cho who was tying down the medical kit to the backboard with the attached safety net and who'd serve as her guide with the secondary line while Jim abseiled down. Out of the three of them she was the most experienced in rescue and recovery and Sulu was heading up another about a half a klick away. Hendorff and most of his people were also dealing with efforts in larger scale rescues while Jim did the ones that didn't require as many people.

The woman's spots on the sides of her face stood out starkly against skin pale with exhaustion and heartbreak, but there was a set determination in the line of her mouth. The way they were having to think was in the short-term with the main goal a distant hope. Their thoughts were 'This one. This one. If we save just this one then it'll be worth it.' It always transferred again and again and again to the next poor soul they came across.

The person on the ledge looked to be a teenager that they'd discovered by pure luck. Their tricorders functioned at a limited distance and it had been the vivid orange of the rope still attached to the stake that had caught their attention as it flapped in the wind. He'd foolishly tried to go down himself, likely to attempt a rescue and the rope had frayed and snapped, causing him to plummet. He'd been lucky that he'd landed where he had. Considering he was the only one there it was a good possibility that whoever he'd been trying to save had been lost because of the ground becoming unstable and washing away. With no support, there'd been no one to help him to safety.

"Cho, let's get this show on the road."

The nurse helped her clip the equipment while Jim coiled the back-up rope, tightening her helmet, and then put on her grip gloves. Thank god modern materials were light and more durable than in past centuries.
Leaning back to start her journey downwards, she slowly pushed off and bounced back to return with her feet hitting the cliff-face wall. Half-way down, she pressed another automated anchor into the rock and looped her safety line around and through it before continuing.

Her feet hit the hard ledge lightly and she set to work, scanning her charge to see the severity of his injuries. Vivid red hair was barely detectable with the mud caking his head. His readings showed he was, surprisingly, not in the severe stages of hypothermia, his durable clothing clearly saving him. His left leg was at a sickening angle that made her worry if it was going to even be able to be saved. She couldn't feel a pulse in the ankle. While she couldn't detect a spinal fracture, there was no point in discounting the chance. A long gash marred the boy's face from his forehead to his chin and he barely even made a movement other than a low moan as she set to work stabilizing him to get him onto the stretcher. Having Bones as a roommate at the academy had given her a definite edge in being competent in first-aid with more severe traumas.

"Hey, kid."

No response other than a small groan. His lack of response sent alarm bells ringing through her mind, but it could simply be because of the cold affecting him rather than a more severe problem such as a brain bleed or debilitating concussion.

Whatever the case, she knew that if their positions were reversed she'd want someone talking to her. "You're hurt pretty bad, but you're gonna be fine."

Once he was strapped tight with his leg as stabilized as was safely possibly and covered with the silver rescue blanket, she clamped the net to the lines and gave a tug signaling she was ready to get him lifted up the cliff. She was grateful he wasn't with it because she couldn't risk him flailing and making the transfer unstable. The wench took the bulk of the weight while she used the guide rope looped around her third stake to ensure as smooth of a journey up as possible considering the extreme weather.

She hoped Scotty got the satellites up soon. This couldn't continue indefinitely. As it was, their shuttles were being pushed to the max with constant use. Transporters were down with the ore problems. He was estimating he'd finally have it done by the end of the day. The only bad part was that night-rescues were too dangerous at night and so were limited which caused an itch beneath her skin that refused to die. She'd learned to temper herself over the years with risk-taking unless there was no choice. How could she help someone if she was incapacitated and had to take up valuable resources by having to be rescued?

The most agonizing duties that had to be carried out was the marking of the locations of bodies. Recovery of them was put to the wayside as the focus was on the living, but it hurt the most to put markers on certain locations. Several times Jim would catch the less experienced crew vomiting, sobbing, or staring blankly ahead when they came across one and she couldn't fault them for it.

As the bright yellow board with it's precious cargo made it's way up, Jim sighed in relief when it was pulled out of sight. She frowned at the sight of three pairs of hands and her unanswered question as she felt the stress from her bondmate blaring in her mind loud and clear. Sending reassurance that she was fine through their bond, she focused on her own slow ascension upwards, continuously minimizing the slack with the cam to ensure she wouldn't lose too much ground if she lost her hold.

Finding stable hand and footholds was a challenge because of the slippery rock, but she was close. Blinking the cold rain out of her eyes only made it more difficult. She was a mere foot away from the edge when the worst thing imaginable happened.
A horrible cracking sound from above caused her to instinctively look up from her latest handhold and it was a good thing she did because the mechanical wench came down. She had only a second to move out of the way to stop it from crashing on her. It was a good two hundred pounds of metal and it suddenly pulled on her line, ripping her last anchor out of the rock face.

There was a horrifying moment of free fall and Spock's terror consumed her. When she came to a painful, jerking stop at the next anchor, she knew she'd cracked a few ribs. Jim gasped in agony as the wench that was still dangling below her from the lines still attached pulled her harness and she could taste the iron tang of blood in her mouth from where she'd bitten her tongue.

"Oh, fuck! Christ!" She coughed and the swinging motion from the heavy piece of equipment caused her to bang against the rock several times. She hung for a minute, dumb from shock. What pulled her out of it was a sudden desperate determination exploding in her mind. Slamming a hand on her shoulder comm, she had to shout to be heard above the howling wind. "Don't you fucking do it, commander! That's a goddamn order!" She coughed and cringed at the shooting pains along her right side. Impotent rage replaced it with a searing red, but he followed her order.

Reaching to the pocket on her upper thigh, she unclicked the attached knife and started to saw through the rope connecting her to the dangling wench. Once it finally came free, Jim watched morbidly as it crashed into the ravine and was swallowed up by the rushing water. She barely repressed the shiver that she had been so close to following it down that path had she not been so securely attached to the rock face.

"Captain, are you alright?" The static made it hard to hear him properly, but Spock's worry was evident in the tone of his voice.

"Yeah. Yeah, I'm fine, Spock. Just a stroll in the park for me." She grunted as she pulled herself straight. She hated to admit it, but she was scared.

"Hardly." He replied and the blonde allowed herself a small smile at his sass.

"What-" She looked up and her lips thinned in determination and disappointment. She'd fallen five feet and now had only herself to rely on to get back up. Well, she'd dealt with worse. "What the hell happened?" She grunted and used her grip to adjust her hold, her ribs screaming in protest.

"It appears the ground is beginning to become unstable due to the flooding." Spock told her.

Damn it to hell.

"Why wasn't this-urgh-spotted earlier?" She made it a foot higher.

"Unknown."

Jim glared at the rock as she made it another foot up and she tied off another anchor. Jim's fingers were aching by the time she made it to where she'd originally been before the wench had given way. She'd had to take a slightly zig-zagging pattern because of the ability to find stable holds, but the end goal was in sight.

Spock's face was hanging over the edge, tinged green with cold. He reached towards her. "Take my hand!"

Jim shook her head. Her left foot was too insecure. The answering glare at her refusal only caused her to grit her teeth in annoyance. Spock wasn't an experienced rock climber so he could just kiss her perky ass.
It was when she'd gripped the next handhold that fate decided to show its ugly face once more. Rock crumbled under her fingertips and Jim's life flashed before her eyes. Every horror, every happy minute, every heartbreak, and every joyous moment of content peace played behind her eyes as if it was a film. Her feet slipped and her left hand was the only thing holding her in place. She scrabbled unsuccessfully at the crumbling stone.

"Jim! My hand!"

Blinking away the water, she looked up and Spock's eyes were wide with fear as he reached desperately towards her. She reached back and the tips of their fingers brushed uselessly, too far away for them to get a hold of one another.

He scooted further out and tried again. Jim's left arm strained with the effort to hold her entire weight and she dug in her toes, almost crying with relief when her right caught on a root. She wasn't sure if it'd hold, but it was better than nothing. It did, however, give her enough leverage to go higher, but, again, all that happened was their hands were too slick with water for them to get a good grip.

When Spock slipped further out, Jim had a moment of panic. She knew how unstable the edge was considering that the ground further inland had caused the wench to give way. "Spock, you're going to fall! I'll pull you over! You've got no leverage!"

Spock ignored her and held out his hand once more. Jaw clenched, she pushed hard with her foot, the branch snapping under the pressure, and threw herself up with absolute faith that Spock would catch her. He did, his fingers tight around her wrist and hers were the same, her shoulder wrenching and dislocating with the sudden jerk which suddenly rendered her hold on him useless as her fingers stopped working with the damage to her shoulder. It looked like he'd overextended himself and was now so far over that he wouldn't be able to pull her up without tipping over himself.

It was her no-win scenario.

Her face turned up towards her husband's, her bondmate, her very soulmate, and she saw the moment he knew what she was thinking. His grip tightened and his eyes flashed in anger.

"Spock-"

"Do not even consider it." He snarled.

Jim choked back a sob. She couldn't let him die. "Let go of my hand!"

Love. So much love poured through, but the extreme fear he was feeling soured it. A flash of another woman made its way through their skin to skin contact. Brown eyes, so much like Spock's, filled with terror as she fell from a cliff to her own death. His mother. *Nonononono! Not again! Never again! JimJimJimjim! My t'hy'la! I will not lose her! I WILL NOT LOSE HER!* He practically roared the words into her mind. "Never! I will never let go!"

Jim knew she was killing him inside. "If you don't let go, you'll die, too!"

"Then we will both die!"

Fucking stubborn bastard. Jim's own blue eyes felt hot as a different form of water filled them. The skin of her wrist slipped slightly in his fingers and white hot pain shot through her shoulder causing her to cry out. His other hand darted out and his hold doubled making his position more precarious.

Jim made the mistake of looking down at the raging waters below and a sharp jerk inside her mind
forced her to look away. His arms shook with the effort of holding her weight, but she started to
move upwards as he pulled with all of his might.

When he twisted his body to scoot back, it gave Jim the opportunity to swing her other arm up and
grab hold. Nine inches, six inches, four inches, three inches, and with an almighty pull, Jim was
flung up and forward. She slammed into Ensign Levough who'd likely been anchoring Spock in his
rescue of her and they hit the ground hard causing her to roll and when she spun around to face the
cliff, her heart plummeted into her stomach.

The image she'd seen of Spock's mother was a perfect mirror of what was happening right in front
of her. It was like the world was moving in slow motion The cliff edge crumbled and her amazing,
beautiful, brave, stubborn Spock disappeared over the edge.

Jim's scream was an animalistic howl and she scrambled to get to the edge, her useless right arm
dangling. All of her pain was forgotten and she didn't give a damn that the edge was clearly
unstable. He had to be ok. He had to.

Cho and Levough grabbed her hips, stopping her from fully going over. She looked over, dread and
hope warring inside of her. The bond was silent and she couldn't think. When she looked down, she
collapsed in relief, but was still so scared. Spock had fallen on the same ledge that the young man
she'd just rescued had been on.

She couldn't see just how bad be was hurt, but it had to be bad for him to not be moving. He looked
like a broken doll tossed away by an angry toddler. "Spock! Can you hear me? Spock!" Her
screams did nothing to rouse him.

Cho grabbed her kit and pulled out her tricorder, clearly knowing Jim wasn't able to function. "He's
alive, Captain Kirk, but he's hurt bad. His vital signs are weak."

Hope bloomed bright in her mind and she spun to Levough. "Ensign, we can't wait for a traditional
rescue. Give me your comm."

The young man stumbled and his hands were shaking, but he finally was able to unclip his long-
distance comm and hand it to her. Jim clutched it in her good hand. "Kirk to central! Emergency!"

*"Uhura here. Captain, state your emergency."*

Thank god it was Uhura. "I have two patients. One is a stage three risk and-" She choked back a
sob. ", and the other is on a small ledge on the cliff where we were completing the original rescue.
His vital signs are fluctuating and is considered stage four in need of immediate and urgent rescue."
Her voice and hand was shaking in a mix of her rapidly fading adrenalin, fear, and cold. "I know
it's a risk, but we need a shuttle out here, now!"

*"Understood, Captain. Galileo II is on its way. Expected arrival is two minutes to your location ."*

She held the comm up to her mouth, her grip tight enough that she thought she could hear the
plastic creak. "Uhura-"

*"Yes, Captain?"

A sob escaped and Jim pressed the wrist holding the comm against her mouth to try and stem the
crying-no-the scream she wanted to let loose. The silence of her bond with Spock was like an
echoing chasm that burned as she desperately tried to reach him. "It's-it's Spock."
There was only static and she imagined the utter horror that Uhura must be experiencing at hearing her best friend and fellow crew member was a potential casualty. *"Un-understood, captain."* A pause. *"Jim?"*

"Yeah?" Her voice shook with emotion and if Uhura noticed then she didn't say anything.

*"He's going to be fine. I promise."*

She couldn't reply. Uhura didn't know. She hadn't seen what Jim had seen.

Jim's body leaned over the ledge as close as she could and she felt absolutely useless. She'd never failed to be able to save him herself before. She cradled her arm close to her body and Levough placed an arm around her waist in support while Cho had to focus on the young man they'd just saved.

It was mere minutes before the wind change heralded the arrival of Galileo II. Jim's eyes were fixed on the shuttle as it carefully navigated the dangerous conditions and hovered next to the ledge where Spock was. Jim begged to every god she had ever heard of from every planet they'd ever visited and even ones they hadn't that he'd be ok. She watched as the evac team pulled him inside and quickly moved to land near them where two med team officers and two security came running out and took hold of the backboard holding their original rescue.

Cho came up to her and Jim could see her mouth moving, but no words made it to her ears. It was like a roaring ocean had blocked out all sound. She vaguely felt arms guiding her to the shuttle and the warm air that blasted onto her face upon entering burned. She wondered how Spock had tolerated the cold for as long as he had and then she laughed. What a ridiculous thought when there were more important things happening. What if Spock was going to die and it was all her fault.

Jim jumped when Lieutenant S'Less' face swam into view in front of her. "Captain, can you hear me?"

Jim blinked, but nodded slowly. She realized a blanket had been put around her shoulders at some point, but she didn't know when that had happened. She also absently noticed her helmet had been removed.

"Right now you're in shock. Where are you hurting?"

Jim didn't give a damn. She felt fine.

"Jim, you might not be feeling any pain, but you are hurt. We're going to the Enterprise because-" The young Katerian's expression showed empathy for what Jim was going through and his warm hand took her cold, uninjured one. "-the Commander is in critical condition. We'll know more when we get there."

Jim's head slowly spun to Spock where he lay far too still on a gurney across from her. His skin was pale and ebony hair was clinging to his head with water and vivid green blood that was seeping from an unseen cut hidden under a bandage. An oxygen mask fogged sporadically with his breathing and it gave her a small measure of hope despite how awful he looked. Monitors attached beeped sluggishly which Jim knew wasn't a good sign. A Vulcan's heart beat at double a human's. His left arm was splinted and so was his left leg up to the hip. An IV had been placed as fluids were being forced into him. He was wrapped from neck to toe with only his injured limbs exposed in a silver blanket to help warm him. He was being carefully monitored and scanned repeatedly by the remaining medic, an occasional hypo administered through his IV port. It made her feel so much guilt and so sick that he'd hurt himself for her. It made her so angry at him for risking
himself and possibly dying for her despite the fact that she shouldn't feel this way.

He looked so...fragile like a sparrow with a broken wing that may never fly again and that thought terrified her.

"Bones?"

S'Less shook her head. "He's on the surface and M'Benga is better versed on Commander Spock's health." A gentle squeeze. "I'm sure he's going to be fine."

Jim sure as hell hoped so.
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the slow update. Charlotte was, again, in the hospital trying to figure out what was wrong. The good news is nothing physical was detected. The bad news, she calmed after three days. I know that sounds weird to say it that way, but it makes me suspicious because when she's away from school for a period of time she calms. I'm sticking a recorder in her wheelchair to see if anything is going on. It scares me to think that she may be being hurt, but she can't tell me and it's weird that it suddenly came on after Christmas. I'm hoping I'm wrong. Since she's non-verbal she can't tell me what's happening and I can't just pop in to see her at school so this is my only idea to collect data. If nothing is happening then at least I might be able to figure out a trigger as to why she's exhibiting this behavior. It's heartbreaking to not know what is causing her this stress.

Chapter Eleven

Jim shrugged off the well-meaning nurse in the overcrowded medical bay. Since she wasn't unconscious or on a gurney, it wasn't too difficult of a task. There were so many others that needed care. The Nurse Practitioner, Alyssa Ogawa had reluctantly realigned her shoulder and gave her an annoying sling, but forced her to accept a dose of pain meds. She accepted them, but only because she knew she was going to be hurting later with everything. Bones would be having a fit if he knew. She was safe from his wrath at the moment only because he was in surgery.

Jim only wished she could devote all of her attention on Spock, but circumstances being what they were, her focus was having to be split. While she was no longer able to help physically, that didn't mean she was out of the game completely. She was currently looking at the programming and internal parts of the damaged satellite that we're giving Scotty and his team a run for their money. They'd been finished in a matter of hours and she was trying to figure out a way to get it put back into orbit without damaging the delicate piece of equipment again. A tractor beam would be more efficient, but it would tear it apart in seconds.

So far, the only option left was using a grappling wire with a team spacewalking to carefully release it and open the solar panels. It wasn't ideal, but it'd work. She awkwardly typed in her authorization with her left hand and received acknowledgement seconds later.

Jim allowed herself a moment of weakness as she looked down at her unconscious husband on the biobed. The bond was painfully silent between them. Jim wasn't an experienced telepath and so it had always been a challenge for her to 'sense' Spock if the bond was blocked for privacy, but this was different. When Spock was unconscious in sleep she'd always get 'tidbits' of how he was feeling or what he was experiencing in those moments. This type of unconsciousness was a torture in and of itself. She could see him and knew he was there and alive, but it was like there was a 'hole' for a lack of a better word. Frowning, Jim scooted closer to him. No. A 'blankness' was a better descriptor.

He could have been hurt so much worse. As it was, Spock had suffered a tibia fracture, broken wrist, and three broken ribs along with concussion. The most dangerous injury had been a small
tear to the pericardial sac surrounding his heart which had caused blood to get in and compress it. It had been drained and repaired quickly. His heart had literally very nearly been broken.

He hadn't needed any major surgery so they were off to the side of the sickbay where the less injured were crowded into. 'Lucky' had been the word M'Benga had used. It was a word that was just so wrong.

Jim's eyes burned with fatigue and worry. She had steadfastly refused to leave Spock's side unless she had no choice. Thankfully, that had only been twice. Reaching under the blanket, Jim's fingers wrapped around Spock's wrist and she smiled as she felt the gentle thrumming of his pulse. The warmth of his skin and the physical proof through touch that he was alive calmed her far more than the mechanical beeping of machines and the mere words of the medical staff.

"Captain?"

Jim jumped at the interruption and pulled her hand back guiltily. Looking up, she saw a very tired Uhura making her way towards them. She had to dodge and weave, but she eventually arrived at their side and wrapping her arms around her. Uhura was careful as she held Jim and she could smell the conflicting scents of smoke and rain in her friend's hair and skin.

When they pulled apart, she could see the young woman scrutinizing her and clearly not liking what she saw. The sentiment was echoed in her own opinion of Uhura's self-care. She looked half-dead on her feet.

"Jim, have you even been treated?"

She shrugged her good shoulder and, while Uhura's lips thinned in disapproval, she dropped it.

"How's he doing?" The comms officer asked.

Jim gave a small smile and sat back down, gesturing for Uhura to share her seat. Pressed close together, the two women watched over Spock. "Geoff says he'll be up and out-logic-ing me in no time."

An almost audible eyeroll from her left. "That's not even a word."

Jim's lips quirked. "You sure?"

"Very. Linguistics expert here."

Hip nudging her, her mood lightened slightly. "See? I knew there was a reason I hired you. At least you know you have job security now."

"I can't even express how relieved I am, captain." She deadpanned.

Jim's smile dimmed, the earlier jovial mood fading in the face of her husband laying hurt on the biobed. Uhura took a hold of her good hand, correctly interpreting her body language and facial expression. "Told you he was going to be fine."

The weight of the galaxy pressed in on her and Jim wondered just how the people of Gamma Hydra IV remained so strong in the face of so much destruction and loss of life. The mayor herself had lost her own wife and kept strong for the sake of her people, placing her own pain and grief on a back burner. "It was close. Way too close, Ny."

"I know. I-I could hear it in your voice, Jim." Her voice broke and she squeezed her hand in
support, hard enough to hurt. Both women couldn't tear their eyes away from Spock. The two of
them loved him so much. Granted it was in vastly different ways, but they both loved him
nonetheless.

Rubbing her eyes tiredly, Jim realized she'd been up for more than 36 hours and it was beginning
to take its toll on her. She sagged against her friend. "Why don't you get some rest?" Uhura quietly
suggested.

The idea of closing her eyes, while appealing on some level was something that scared her on
another. She shook her head violently. "I can't feel him when he's like this. What if he dies while
I'm fucking asleep?" She asked, vulnerability shining through. "If I'm awake then I know he's alive
and here and I can see it with my own eyes."

"Oh, Jim." She whispered. "I promise I'll watch over the both of you." She waited patiently until
bright blue eyes met calm brown. "I won't let anything happen and if I see anything I'll be sure to
wake you. Go to sleep."

"But you need to sleep, too." She protested and the brunette scoffed.

"I'm fine." She murmured. The other woman pulled her close and the warmth and knowledge that
she was there reassured Jim immensely.

Against her will, her eyes closed and she trusted Uhura.

xXx

It felt like minutes when Jim opened her eyes to an explosion of relief, worry, love, and so much
more. Uhura's hand was poised right above her as if to wake her and Jim smiled in thanks.
Swinging her legs over the bed, she carefully sat up, wincing at the stiffness of her shoulder and
neck.

Nyota yawned and stretched, her own eyes bloodshot before leaving with a gentle pat to Spock's
shoulder in a gesture of sisterly support.

"Spock, you bastard!" Jim's emotions broke and tears coursed down her cheeks as her own relief
mirrored his. She scrubbed at her eyes in irritation at showing him just how scared she'd been.

Her t'hy'la's lips twitched in amusement. "That is not the greeting I was expecting, adun'a."

She wanted to hug him, to crawl into bed with him and press herself against him to reinforce the
knowledge that he was awake and healing, but fear that she'd hurt him held her back. She settled
for holding her first and forefinger out in a Vulcan kiss, but he shook his head and raised his arm,
gingerly scooting to the edge of his cot to make room for her.

Jim seized the opportunity and crawled in next to him, resting her forehead against the crook of his
neck, just breathing him in. Sobs wracked her body and every ache made itself known, but she
didn't give a damn. He was going to be ok. A large, inhumanly warm hand rubbed reassuring
circles up and down her back to soothe her. He accepted the storm of her emotions and let her cry
herself out.

God, she was an ugly crier. At the stray surface thought, Spock's chest rumbled in amusement. "I
do not find that to be true, my Jim. If anything I am honored that you would allow me to see you
like this and offer you comfort."

"If you ever pull another stunt like that I will bring you back just to kick your skinny butt." She
told him, her face still hidden.

"I do not doubt you."

Jim was able to feel a small minute of peace before she could sense Spock's own negative emotions through their contact. "Never ask me to do something like that again, Jim."

Sighing, she sat up and he followed. "I'm sorry. I can't promise that, Spock. You know I can't."

How she wished she could, but the reality was she was in a high profile, high-risk job. There may very well come a day when she would die on a mission. What horrified her more was that she may even have to order Spock to his own death or leave him to die. It would kill her inside and she knew it, but it had been one of the main questions and stipulations the admiralty had had no choice, but to enforce to allow them to continue to serve together. The both had been forced to acknowledge and agree to it as awful as it was. She didn't think she'd ever recover from something like that.

"What I can promise, though, is that I will do my best to try and never put you in that position again." She added.

Spock's eyes were fierce and he nodded curtly. "Then that is all I can ask."

Fingers gently trailed over her body and she knew he was cataloging every hurt she had, wishing he could fix them himself or maybe that he could have prevented them. Catching his wrist, she made sure he paid attention to her and not something he could try to control. "There was nothing more you could have done. I'm fine."

"Fine has variable definitions."

The familiar rebuke caused her to laugh, but it turned into a cringe as fire raced up her side and through her shoulder. "Then I will simply say that I am in adequate condition, adun."

Slanted brows drew down at her self-assessment. "I beg to differ."

"What fresh hell is this? I beg to differ myself!"

Jim's grin widened. She hadn't even heard Bones approach them, but she knew his voice. "Dammit, Jim!"

She mouthed along with his trademark words and Spock raised a brow at her sass.

Jim wondered how long she could avoid turning around, but she didn't want to provoke him too much. Scooting off the bed with a farewell kiss in the form of the ozh'esta. Bones pointed, his fury evident in the way he was practically shaking. "Exam one, captain." He bit out. He rotated his head to Spock. "M'Benga's on his way, Commander." He added as a side-note.

Once they were behind closed doors, so-to-speak, Bones sagged and gestured at the biobed. "When both the captain and first officer are hurt I'm supposed to be informed as CMO, Jim."

Bones's hair was sticking up on one side and there were pillow lines on his cheek. He must have literally just woken up, saw the casualty report, and hauled his angry, southern ass down to sickbay. She couldn't smell any coffee so it would probably be a wise move to comply without too much protest. "I'm also hurt that my best friend didn't even tell me what had happened."

"I know, but you were in the middle of surgery."
The glare she received made her grateful she was already in sickbay because she could almost feel the burn of the lasers shooting from his eyes.

"How did that kid we got do?" Jim asked as she slowly climbed onto the bed and lay down.

"He lived." He carefully collected the necessary equipment and laid it out next to her. When his mouth twisted and jaw clenched, Jim knew what he was going to say. She'd been pretty sure it was going to happen when she'd first seen him, but she'd had hope it wouldn't happen. "He lost the leg, though."

She'd suspected as much. Jim lowered her head and closed her eyes in pain. So much destruction and loss. This mission was one of the toughest she'd ever been on.

"Come to find out, he'd been trying to rescue his sister. We've got him on a suicide watch. He-" Bones swallowed hard and he gripped they hypo he was loading tighter. "He didn't react well and said a few concerning things. His dad's with him."

Too late too late too late.

She held still as he administered the shot and breathed a sigh of relief as the aches and pains faded. The doctor was quiet as he worked on her, placing nerve regenerators, osteostims on her ribs, and running a full work-up on her. She could see the weight of how this mission was pressing in on him by the fact that he wasn't commenting on any of her injuries. Normally, he'd be reaming her out.

He'd gotten through most of her treatment and was reading the screen next to her with her results when he straightened abruptly, fully alert and all traces of his earlier sadness and fatigue gone.

"Huh. That's weird."

That didn't sound good.

He typed in a few commands onto the side of the biobed and rescanned her. He frowned and reread the screen. When she made to sit up, he carefully pushed her back down. "What?"

"Just a minute, kid." He entered another command and the more detailed scanner folded out from the side of the bed to hover over her lower abdomen.

Jim scowled, but wasn't able to do much with being covered in medical paraphernalia and being trapped under the hood. "What!?!"

Bones' face lit up and a slow smile stretched a mile wide. "Well, I'll be damned." He finally looked away from the screen and faced her, his eyes softening. "You're not going to believe this."

"I'm all ears." She growled, frustrated.

"Well, you're definitely that. In fact there's a set of pointy ears that have decided to take up residence and set up shop inside of you."

"That's not very damn funny."

He knew that it was a sore spot for her not being able to have kids with Spock. His expression didn't change much except he did that annoying eyebrow rise that Jim could never copy no matter how much she'd tried. "I'm not joking, Jim. You've got a part-Vulcan bun in the oven."
She didn't dare hope. "That's not possible."

Chuckling, he turned the monitor to face her and she tilted her head trying to figure out what she was looking at. She could see the outline of her uterus and some kind of-well...didn't really look like anything. It was some weird blob-like thing stuck to the side.

"That, Jimmy-girl, is a mini-hobgoblin-to-be." He gestured with a wide sweep of his arm like a magician and Jim's heart sped up at what he was saying.

"No way."

Bones chuckled at her response as she hungrily took in the image of the baby she and Spock had never thought was a possibility. Out of the corner of her eye she saw him prepping a series of hypos and blood draw containers, but she didn't care.

Jim reached out to run her fingers over the screen in wonder. This was such an unexpected miracle that she was willing to do anything even if that meant being a pincushion for him or her.

"Now, you do know that this will be a bit of a risky pregnancy due to the mixed heritage and will require careful monitoring which also means taking it very easy. That means no more away missions for you if you choose to continue the pregnancy, no more crawling around engineering, and a whole slew of other things. You'll also probably be grounded as the mini-you gets bigger." He warned.

The brunette hesitated as he loaded a third cartridge. "There's-uh-you might have to give up your captaincy of the Enterprise. It's not a generational vessel and standard procedure is that any crew member that's pregnant can't serve on a ship like this."

"I don't care. I'll do anything." She breathed and Jim didn't even flinch at the sting of the shot.

As he took her blood and ran it through the analyzer, she continued to stare at the sight of their baby. Her emotions must have leaked through their bond because she felt Spock's curiosity and concern.

"Well, so far, everything looks stable. The placenta seems to be attaching well and I was able to detect electrical activity in the embryo's heart. Funny thing is that it's located where a human's would be which may be a common thing due to it being more human than Vulcan, but it has copper based blood." Shaking his head, Bones started to give her a series of shots, explaining the reasons behind each one. He chuckled as he gave her the last shot. "That sly little Vulcan got one past."

"That he did." She laughed.

"This is exactly what I needed after yesterday. Something positive in the middle of this tragedy. I saw so much death and destruction that, to see the beginning of life, it is something wonderful." He looked down at her fondly. "Congratulations, kid."

Jim's eyes burned with tears and the smile she wore as she focused on the tiny blob on the screen that was going to be her and Spock's baby was so big that it hurt. She well remembered how heartbroken Spock had been when he had been told he was infertile and would likely never have children. Somehow, it had happened and they had been given a miracle.

Bones removed everything and retracted the medical hood so Jim could sit up. She was stiff and tender, but otherwise fine. He carefully replaced the sling despite her scowl.
"It'll still be a few days before you're fully healed. Modern medicine can only do so much, kid."
The analyzer beeped, drawing the older man's attention away.

"Bones?"

"Hm?"

Rubbing her tears of happiness away, she shifted towards the doctor. "Can I tell Spock?"

Affection leaked through and Bones smiled, nodding at her. "Of course, kid. Wouldn't have it any
other way."

xXx

The doctor had been taking an inordinately long time with Jim in the private exam room, giving
Spock pause and creating a small amount of concern that could not be fully suppressed. Perhaps
she had been injured more severely than he had believed. While he did not feel a large amount of
pain through their shared bond on her side that did not completely eliminate the possibility that she
was not experiencing it. Jim was being given adequate pain relief in the form of chemical
assistance provided by the staff, but she was well versed in hiding injuries; so skilled that she had
managed to fool both Spock and the Dr. McCoy on a frequent basis.

When the pair finally entered the main bay and closed the privacy curtain around Spock's cot, his
worry ramped up a notch, but there was no outward sign of them about to give him negative news.
In fact, with the matching smiles on their faces, it appeared that it was something positive.

McCoy was practically bouncing on his toes in excitement while Jim's blue eyes were a more vivid
shade indicating a high level of happiness that could not easily be hidden. He did not appreciate
being the last to know when there was news concerning his bondmate especially in medical
matters.

Sitting down next to him, she slowly took his hand and he flushed at the intimacy of the act. She
rarely did something so brazen and in public.

"Spock, I have something to tell you."

Utter joy was bubbling through their bond creating the unusual sensation like bubbles popping and
tickling pleasantly in his mind. "Jim?" It was rare for her to experience this high of a level of
emotion.

"I'm pregnant!" She blurted and Spock experienced shock at her declaration then his heart sank in
hurt.

"That is not possible." He had known that Jim desired a child just as much he had, but he had never
believed she would do such a thing. It simply wasn't possible with his biology and so there had to
be another explanation. He did not like where his thoughts were straying to try and figure out how
this happened.

Her smile did not dim in the slightest and that only served to cause a sharp burst of anger to lance
through him. There was no possibility that he could have fathered a child with her.

"I am. Bones confirmed it."

"With who's child?" He practically growled. Why would she do this? They had discussed using a
donor, but then a more insidious thought crept into his mind that he did not want to entertain. He
refused to until he could confirm it.

"What?" An expression of surprise crossed her bruised face while the doctor's own became a bright red as he narrowed his eyes at him. For her to become with child in such a way as to mate with another was anathema to him.

"Jim, we both know that I am infertile." He said with a calm he did not feel. He pulled his hand out of her hold and sat up, his body protesting the movement. Jim moved to stop him from rising, but a glare from him caused her to arrest her efforts, her hands hovering uselessly in mid-air.

"Well, apparently not." She said defensively.

Spock refused to be swayed by her words. "I repeat, who's child?"

"Spock, it's our baby." Jim said as she hunched in on herself, her surprise turning to hurt.

McCoy no longer remained silent and stood next to the blonde, his voice dripping with anger as he pointed at him. "Now look here, you green-blooded bastard, Jim is having your baby and-"

Spock turned cool eyes on the southern doctor. "You are certain the embryo is part Vulcan?"

Straightening his uniform in harsh tugs, the doctor looked ready to punch him. "Damn right I am. Jim's blood test showed she was slightly anemic in regards to her copper levels which suggest that the embryo's blood is copper-based and is pulling it from her."

It was Vulcan! "Then a simple DNA test can confirm whether or not I sired the child."

Jim sucked in a sharp breath and McCoy was shaking in fury. "It's a risky pregnancy and a procedure like that could cause Jim to miscarry or cause her to hemorrhage. It'd be safer for both her and the baby to wait until it's born."

He needed more facts to confirm his suspicions. "When was the child conceived?"

Shifting his stance, McCoy stood between Spock and his bondmate as a type of protective barrier and crossed his arms. "She's in the early stages of her pregnancy, but I'd estimate around the time that we were on Xera or shortly thereafter."

Spock pursed his lips in an effort to maintain calm, his expression shuttering as the walls slammed between them violent enough to cause Jim to since and hold her head in pain. "Maybe there was something we ate or drank to help us on Xera?" She asked, her voice strained with the effort to sound normal.

His jaw clenched and hot anger boiled his very blood. He resented being in the position of suspecting his mate-his t'hy'la had slept with another and was attempting to pass off a child that was not his as Spock's. "Food or drink cannot stimulate me into the ability to sire a child nor can it create something impossible as I do not have the ability to produce sperm nor has any ever been detected in any fertility tests as you well know due to my heritage."

Jim looked close to tears, but Spock would not bow down to her display of human emotion. "What are you saying?"

"When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth and that is that you created this child with a fertile Vulcan if it shows signs no signs of being completely human and is partially Vulcan. The only two fertile Vulcans you came into contact with during the timeframe the doctor described are my father and Stonn and I personally witnessed
yourself and Stonn in an intimate and incriminating position. To continue to claim this child is mine is the height of farce. I do not believe this child is mine." Spock's hands curled into loose fists at his side as he delivered his conclusion to the information he had received from both Jim and Dr. McCoy.

"But it is yours." She protested weakly.

"I will retest my fertility and then test again using samples of the foodstuffs and drinks the Xerathi people gifted to us upon our departure. If the results are in your favor then I beg forgiveness, Jim. If not, then it will prove, without a doubt, I am not the father of your child."

Sagging in defeat in the face of his logical argument, Jim nodded. "Ok. I'll-uh-I'll wait to hear the results."

McCoy looked disgusted and wrapped a protective arm around the captain's shoulders, mindful of her, still healing, injuries. "I never thought I'd see the day. I can't believe you!"

Shooting a baleful glance at the pair, Spock agreed. "I never thought I would see this day either, Doctor."

xXx

Spock had to wait a full week before he was able to test his hypothesis. The USS Asclepius required assistance during the hand-off and the commander still required time to heal from his injuries. During that time, he maintained a distance between himself and Jim as well as keeping their bond blocked with powerful shields that had no chance of being broken.

Carefully placing the slide under the microscope, he looked into the eyepiece and saw nothing. No hint of active sperm or even any present in his first sample that he had carefully collected the previous day. Removing the glass, he noted the results on his PADD and placed a more recent sample collected under the influence of the Xerathian wine. As he expected, nothing.

He continued his testing over the course of another week to ensure accurate results under controlled conditions and every time it showed no possibility of him being able to father Jim's child. He became more angry as time went on and felt such utter betrayal that his mate would be unfaithful.

During their "separation" Jim started to show more obvious symptoms of pregnancy. He frequently heard her vomiting in their bathroom. The sweet scent of her pregnancy hormones that he smelled made him feel nauseous himself with the knowledge that this could not possibly be his offspring.

He limited his time in her presence and took beta shift when possible and, when it was not, he spent the majority of his time in the science labs rather than on the bridge when he would have to see and smell her betrayal.

As time wore on she began to wilt much like a flower no longer being tended to and not receiving adequate nutrition and sunlight to thrive. Spock—he did not care. Her clear attempted deception took that emotion from him.

He compiled everything into an accurate report easy enough for even a layman to understand to present to her, but he had one final thing to do to confirm his findings. Considering the doctor's adamant stance that the child was part Vulcan then it lent credence to the hypothesis that had been forming in his mind.

While his father had been in the throws of his "Time", he had been bonded to another and would
have been drawn to her, refusing all others and not have sought Jim out as a replacement mate to cool the fires. That only left one other Vulcan she had come into contact to during the timeframe that had been given to him by Dr. McCoy. Stonn. The man who had made his childhood and early teenage years hell. He was the only Vulcan left.

To play on the love he had had for her and lie to him declaring that what she and Stonn did as assault because she had been caught in the act of cheating on him was abominable. To also create a child from that union either because of adultery on her part, especially with Stonn, was something that cut deep. Perhaps she had done it in a misguided effort to give him a child of mixed heritage to created a sense of solidarity between him and the child?

Or perhaps she was truly selfish enough to simply do so because of her desire to have a child. To try pass it off as his was the lowest of the low. Perhaps that was why she had been intimate with him so quickly after. It had been an effort to try and fool him into believing the possibility of it being his child even though she was well aware it was not possible.

It explained why she had refused to meld with the elders of his people in order to be able to press charges against the other Vulcan. It had been consensual for one of two reasons. Either she had been unfaithful or she had been unfaithful to have a child through a selfish desire to be able to become a mother. The truth of her deception would have come out. Whatever her reasons, it was still adultery and the worst kind of betrayal to a bondmate. He had been such a fool.

There was one final thing he had to do. He stood from his crouched position over the microscope and walked stiffly to his quarters, clutching the PADD in his hand in a tight fist. Crew members passing him gave him a wide berth as they saw him coming.

Tensions aboard the ship had been high and the atmosphere thick enough that even a knife would have struggled to cut through it since Jim had told him of her pregnancy. Several times Nyota had attempted to speak with him only to leave with no answers. Everyone knew that something had happened between Spock and the captain, but no one had been bold enough to ask nor had either Spock or Jim enlightened them as to the reason.

It was Alpha shift and he was assigned to Beta so he was afforded the privacy he needed. The scent of Jim and her pregnancy permeated their shared quarters and the commander's nostrils flared in irritation. He could no longer remain living here.

"Computer. Increase air filtration to maximum."

Once the air cleared of all smells he was able to sit at his computer terminal in the small alcove where Jim and he did their paperwork. He depressed the comm button more forcefully than needed. "Commander Spock to bridge."

"Bridge here."

Uhura's musical voice filtered through the speakers.

"I request a communication channel to the Vulcan colony. Comm number zero seven eight one."

"Understood, commander."

It was only a few minutes before the face he had despised since childhood appeared. While Surak had taught his disciples that to hold onto anger against a person was illogical, he could not remove the feelings associated with the man who had continuously bullied him.

The other man's eyes widened in surprise at seeing who was on the other end of the comm, but he
quickly schooled his features into a placid expression not betraying anything that he may be feeling. *"Spock."*

Out of sight, Spock's fists clenched. "Stonn"

The other Vulcan's eyes darted all over Spock's face and whatever he saw seemed to interest him. *"To what do I owe this unexpected...pleasure, half-breed."*

His carefully constructed facade of calm started to tremble at the thought of him and his bondmate copulating. "Jamison is pregnant."

*'And this concerns me how?"*

The fact that he was denying it only made him more furious. "I caught you with my mate."

Tilting his head, he quickly shifted in his seat and straightened his robe with a small frown. It quickly morphed into a slight smirk as the puzzle pieces slid together and Stonn understood just what he was implying.

"Congratulations are in order it seems." Spock grit out.

The smirk only grew wider at his words. *"Fascinating. I had suspected your human was as much of a whore as your mother."* A slow smile crept onto his face and Spock wanted to sink his fist into it. *"Clearly you weren't enough to satisfy Jamison and she needed a full-blooded Vulcan and not some half-breed experiment that was a failure."*

He couldn't hear anymore. It was too much. Slamming his fist on the button to disconnect he could barely hear the delicate machinery crack over the roar in his ears. The screen turned black, but the image of Stonn's satisfied expression was forever burned into his mind. It was true then. She had betrayed him in the worst way.
Chapter 12

Jim's eyes glaze over as she read Spock's detailed analysis and evidence against her. Hell, he'd even written it as if it was a formal report and they way everything was laid out in cold, factual words was devastating. She had to agree it was a convincing argument and it made sense from a purely 'logical' standpoint, but Jim knew it was wrong. She remembered every moment of the past several weeks and she had never, and would never be, unfaithful.

Spock had even presented it to Bones who had vehemently argued that, no matter what it said, it was not right. Spock refused to be swayed in his opinion and had promptly moved out of their shared quarters. He was currently staying in the guest quarters since there were no available singles left.

Another week passed and, in that time, the ship filled with gossip and speculation in regards to the changed relationship status between the captain and first officer. It was understandable. The reactions ranged from simple curiosity to outright suspicion placed on either Jim or Spock as to the responsible party for the failure of their relationship.

Chekov, Sulu, and Scotty seemed to be neutral which was a relief to her. She needed full professionalism from her crew and most everyone else still performed admirably so she wasn't concerned. There was no disrespect or outright insubordination. Jim was thankful for that.

Spock, on the other hand, still did his duties, but with such a coldness to his interactions to her it caused a pain in her heart and in her mind that burned as if she'd touched frozen nitrogen. Nyota's attitude matched that of Spock. Jim knew that if there was one person he would confide in then it would be her. They were close in a way that Jim and he had never been. It was startlingly similar to her and Bones' friendship.

Since the blocking of their bond, Jim had become stressed and depressed. Her ability to perform her duties had diminished slightly and simple tasks required a lot more effort. She frequently wondered just why Spock wouldn't talk with her more than curt messages and when he was on duty. She was giving him space and hoping that he would realize she wasn't lying. She would never lie to him. Omit things, but never outright lie.

Not only that, she waited and hoped for him to meld with her to see the truth of her claim that she was not guilty of infidelity and that the child she carried was truly his. He never offered it.

Rubbing her fingers against her temple to soothe the ache she felt, Jim saved the file Spock had sent to her and pulled up the fuel consumption report Scotty had sent. As usual, it was fine. A few modification requests caused her eyebrows to raise in surprise and amusement, but it was nothing too extreme so she approved it, trusting in his ability to never hurt his 'silver lady'.

"Captain." That one word, said with barely discernible insubordination, made Jim feel as if she
truly was guilty of what Spock was accusing. She spun her chair to face Uhura.

"Yes, lieutenant?"

"There's a communication coming in for you from Admiral Komack."

Since they'd been put on 'downtime' since Gamma Hydra, the crew had been slowly becoming antsy to get back into the swing of things and continue the original mission of exploration to meet new races and explore. "Pipe it through to my ready room."

There was a slight tightening of her jaw, but she nodded curtly and Jim made her way to the room. Normally, she would have Spock at her side, but he'd been spending more and more time in the labs, only appearing on the bridge when he had no choice.

At her desk, the silver Starfleet logo spun indicating that the comm was on hold. She pressed the button to connect and the Admiral appeared on her monitor. When he saw her, he frowned. They'd come to know each other well over they years. He'd been a close friend of Christopher Pike's and his affection and respect towards Jim had frequently saved her ass when it came to 'questionable decisions' she'd made.

*"You look like hell, Jim."*

She straightened in her seat, pulling down her uniform. She refused to show the strain she'd been under despite the more friendly relationship she had with Komack. He still had a job to do and was her superior officer with a set of responsibilities that included him relieving her of command if he believed it to be necessary.

"I'm fine, sir."

He didn't believe her, but he let it slide. For now. *"If you say so."* Dark features that stood out in comparison to the white walls of his office made him seem all the more impressive. *"We've got a new first contact situation with a species that we've seen evidence from a distance that they've just achieved warp capability."*

It'd been a long time since the crew had come across a first contact.

Komack continued. *"They've also been sending messages of friendship and attempting contact."*

Jim's eyes lit up in excitement. "So, we get to say hi."

He matched her expression. There was nothing more amazing than getting to know a new race and welcoming them to the wonders the galaxy had to offer. *"Exactly."* He depressed a few buttons of his own and a file came up on her screen. *"I'm sending coordinates and the new orders now."*

He grew serious and leaned forward. *"Is there something going on I need to be aware of?"

Jim looked away, her focus automatically going to the small framed picture on her desk of her and Spock on their wedding day. It had been a simple affair on Earth that the Admiral had officiated. She stood in front of her husband, a simple white dress with her hair pulled up and small jewels dotted throughout while Spock was across from her in his formal robes. There was a softness to his features as he gazed at his bride, fingers outstretched with her meeting them.

"No, sir. Not as of yet."

Returning her attention to her superior officer, she tried to push away the pain of the black hole in
her mind where Spock should be.

*"If you're sure?"*

It was only a matter of time before she'd have to leave her ship, but she hoped that Spock would be at her side. "I'll keep you updated, Admiral."

He gave a short nod and signed out. Once the screen blacked Jim leaned forward, elbows on the table and put her head in her hands.

xXx

There was nothing he could compare this feeling of betrayal to. In his life, he had experienced adversity, bullying, speciest behavior, indifference, and a multitude of other negative things, but never betrayal. He was someone who rarely let people in. There had only been three people who had found themselves a place on his heart. Nyota, his mother, and Jamison.

All in different ways, but still they had become a part of him.

Nyota curled her legs under herself opposite him in the living area of his temporary quarters. Compared to his previous 'home' they were sterile, but functional. Considering Dr. McCoy had been assigned to Spock's old room, he did not have many options. Lt. Cmdr. Scott had refused them, wanting to be closer to the engine room.

"I still can't believe it." She took a small sip of the wine she held. "I mean, I'd have never thought she'd do something like that and with someone like that."

Neither had he. "Indeed."

Nyota leaned forward. "And she's keeping it?"

"Yes." He'd gone over all of this before.

"I mean, there would have been a chance for forgiveness had she not gotten pregnant or if she'd not have kept it, but seeing as she is.." She trailed off and it made Spock wonder just what Jim's thought processes were in her determination to continue the pregnancy. Would he have been able to forgive her if she terminated? Would he have been able to if it had never happened? He guessed he would never know and ruminating on those thoughts were illogical.

"Indeed."

Spock's thoughts swam, without his permission, to his t'hy'la's pregnancy. He remembered about a year after they had bonded and it had been Jim that had brought up the idea of children. He'd never done so, assuming she would never want any, but he should have known better. She always had, and always would, continue to surprise him.

They'd just signed the papers for their second five year mission -

*Two Years Previously*

"Spock?"

Finishing zipping up the protective garment for his dress uniform, the commander left the bedroom at his new bondmate's questioning voice. The timing of their joining had been fortuitous as it had
coincided with the mandatory year's shore leave between missions. It had given them the gift of being able to know each other in multiple ways other than just when under the stresses and constraints of starship duty.

When he'd finally made his way into the living area of their apartment, he could tell that whatever it was she wanted to discuss was serious. The way she was sitting, the serious set to her shoulders, and the slight frown marring her features were all behavioral characteristics he associated with such an emotion. "Yes, Jim?"

She shifted and pat the seat next to her in a non-verbal request for him to join her. When he did, the blonde twisted in her seat to face him and bit her lip, clearly considering how to phrase something. Spock felt a moment of alarm at her quiet. Perhaps she was having second thoughts about their bonding.

"I was thinking-no-wondering if you ever wanted kids."

The Vulcan raised his eyebrows in surprise and Jim incorrectly interpreted his reaction as a negative one.

"I mean maybe after this tour is over not now." She added hastily. "With me?"

The thought of her growing round with his child, of guaranteeing and wanting to build a future with him more than their bond was something he wouldn't mind. She would truly give up the stars for him?

"I had always assumed you would never consent to leave the Enterprise."

She looked devastated. "I understand. I totally get it. I know how hard it was for you to grow up part-"

"It is not that, Jim." He placed his hand on her arm to forestall her from backtracking. He did not ever want her to think that he did not want a being created out of love that was a part of them. "I am unable to have children."

"Oh, Spock." Empathy radiated from the contact on her bare skin and she looked so innocent in her pajama shirt which had been Spock's academy t-shirt that she'd taken to wearing. "I'm so sorry."

Turning her hand, she opened her palm and he took it, accepting the comfort she offered.

"I am honored by your wish to give me children, t'hy'la."

Her hand, so delicate and small in his larger hand, squeezed his and she leaned to the side to put her head on his shoulder. She'd recently cut her hair into a short pixie-style and Spock pressed his lips to her crown. He missed the longer, wavy curls, but she was beautiful no matter how she looked.

She huffed a small laugh. "I know you hate it. I can can at least give you that, adun."

Spock's lips quirked into a small smile. No matter what he ever wanted, she always did everything within her power to give it to him. "I love thee no matter how you style your features."

He felt her shrug against him. "I am sorry, you know. About not being able to have kids. I think a tiny Spock with your pointed ears would have been cute."

The scent of cherry blossoms filled his nose and Spock breathed her in. She was truly ta'an, a gift
that he had been lucky to have gotten. "I think a small being with eyes as blue and kind as yours would be something I would treasure as well."

Impish mischief danced through their bond. "We could have named him Spock Jr."

Spock refrained from the human behavior of rolling his eyes at her humor.

"Maybe Spocketta." She added. "Spockina? Spockelle?"

He did roll his eyes then and Jim chuckled, knowing what he did despite not seeing the action. She quickly silenced, becoming serious. "Kaiidth, my love. You are all I will ever need or want."

*Present*

Blinking away the memory, Spock gripped his mug of, now cold, tea hard enough for the ceramic to creak.

"I mean, I just don't get why she'd cheat and keep the baby from it knowing it'd hurt you so much. It's like a slap in the face since you can't have them."

Spock suddenly looked up. He had been lost in his thoughts and hadn't heard part of the conversation. Clearly the stresses of blocking such a powerful bond between him and Jamison was taxing him far more than he'd realized.

"How are you holding up?" Nyota eyed him, worry radiating over him through their close contact. His efforts to shield himself from his bondmate left him vulnerable to the surrounding population. He appreciated her care more than she could ever realize.

"I am not doing well." He grudgingly admitted. Since his discovery of her infidelity, his anger at Jim had began to poison him, seeping into his heart like a black tar consuming him and creating a bitterness that he had never experienced before.

Nyota bit her lip as she thought of a way to help him and, by her silence, she was coming up blank. There was nothing anyone could do.

"What are your plans?" His friend asked hesitantly.

Spock took a sip of the tea he held, forgetting that it was an unpleasant temperature and grimaced. His focus was gone. This could not continue. He needed to sever the connection between them. In his mind she was like a gangrenous limb that he could no longer tolerate, her deception had cut so deep that there was no coming back from it.

"I need a divorce."

"Oh, Spock."

He swallowed hard, the very idea of what he was about to say was something that he knew he had to do. His love for the one person that had tossed him away for her own selfish pleasures and desires was gone. "I also need to break our bond."

"Can you even do that?" Nyota gasped in horror.

Spock agreed with her reaction, but he could not remain tethered to someone that he was rapidly growing to resent. To see the physical proof of what she had done and the struggle he was experiencing to block her away to no longer feel her regret and separate himself from her was too
much. "Yes. I do not want her to be a part of me any longer. I...I can no longer love someone who
would do such a thing as what she has done."

"Do you-" Nyota seemed to struggle for adequate words which was something she had never done
before. "-do you hate her?"

Spock had to think, but he didn't for long. "No."

Brown eyes widened in surprise. "You don't hate her?"

"I am..." Once, he had abhorred expressing his emotions, but he had not too long ago accepted
them as a part of himself. "I am angry at her and feel nothing for her. She is not someone I can ever
love again."
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

Here it is. The big, awful, devastating breaking of the bond.
*trigger warnings*
It is violent and awful so if anyone feels uncomfortable then please avoid this chapter and interpret the bond breaking as just really really bad.
When I wrote the first chapter, we saw how injured Jim was by the bond being broken and that's why it's so violent here. Anger from Spock is the reason why it's so awful and uncontrolled. The reason why I wrote him like this is because we saw how little control he had over his more negative emotions like anger I the first movie when Amanda died and then in Into Darkness when Jim died.
Again, this has major trigger warnings

Chapter Thirteen

"I can no longer remain bonded to you."

The words hit Jim like a knife to the chest. Of all of the possibilities for their parting, she never thought it would be this.

Spock stood across from her, hands behind his back and immaculate as ever still clad in his uniform, but there was an underlying hardness to those beautiful brown eyes that she had never seen directed at her. It chilled her to the core. In comparison, Jim looked barely together in her oversized academy sweats and t-shirt she wore when off duty and in private. Dark circles were under her eyes like bruises and she was pale enough that she looked like she hadn't seen the sun for years. She put down the report she was compiling to be sent out to the senior staff for their next mission and stood from her desk.

"What?"

"I wish to perform p'pil'lay to sever our bond." He told her and Jim gaped as her world started to burn around her.

"But-but you said our bond was unbreakable. That because we were t'hy'la that it was forever." Jim pleaded with him, but he wasn't having it.

"I was mistaken and spoke in error. Clearly, we are not t'hy'la as a true t'hy'la would never betray their mate with infidelity or in any matter." He moved closer and Jim shrunk back towards the wall. "You promised to be t'zaled; to be loyal to the end."

"No. You weren't mistaken, Spock. You lied." Her throat was tight with the pain that was starting to throb behind her eyes and in her heart. She couldn't believe it.

"I was mistaken and spoke in error. Clearly, we are not t'hy'la as a true t'hy'la would never betray their mate with infidelity or in any matter." He moved closer and Jim shrunk back towards the wall. "You promised to be t'zaled; to be loyal to the end."

"No. You weren't mistaken, Spock. You lied." Her throat was tight with the pain that was starting to throb behind her eyes and in her heart. She couldn't believe it.

"Just as you lied to me about your infidelity and ability to maintain a monogamous relationship. You are still lying to me even now in regards to this pregnancy." He told her and, though his voice sounded calm, Jim knew that dripping with venom. "This child will be known as kre-nath! A bastard child and be shunned by my people just as you will be." He indicated her with a hand.
Jim cringed away from the harsh words, placing a protective hand over where their child was growing. “I am not lying, Spock. You would have felt it in our bond if I’d have cheated and you would feel if I was being dishonest.”

“...I have seen that you have a singular skill at manipulating people and circumstances to your benefit. I believe that you used this ability to manipulate our bond just as you used your behaviors to appeal to my human side. Deny it all you want but the truth of the matter is that it is well documented that I cannot sire children so it is impossible that this kre-nath, this bastard child is mine and that I saw you with Stonn. Cease speaking this falsehood.”

The pregnant blonde's breath left her in ragged pants as he continued his verbal assault. Her fingers curled into claws as if she could rip up the degrading speech he was giving her, but she couldn't as much as she wished. "Stop calling our baby that! Do you honestly think I would throw away everything that we are to each other and everything that we could be for a quick fuck?"

Spock was unaffected by her profanity and simply straightened his posture. "I do not presume to know the machinations of your mind or actions. Perhaps it was your desire for a child that I could not provide that led you to this deception or perhaps you simply never truly loved me."

How could he ever think those things? Jim's legs wobbled under her and she had to clutch the wall behind her for support. Out of everything in her life that had happened to her this hurt more than anything; more than all of her past hurts combined. "How dare you!" Jim snarled. "This is your child, you bastard! Do you not at least want anything to do with him or her?"

For the first time since he'd come to their-no-her quarters, Spock's eyes flashed with suppressed anger rather than a coldness that she'd been seeing. "I do not want to know anything of the child you carry. Not it's birth, not it's gender, not it's name, nothing as it is little more than proof of your infidelity." He glared at her, his eyes looking her up and down like she was a science experiment gone wrong. "Clearly the rumors of your promiscuity were accurate. It was a error on my part to believe otherwise and a mistake to bond with you."

Jim's faith in him shattered into a million shards, each cut killing her just a little more. "What? Now? We haven't even talked about this!"

Spock's lips thinned in irritation and Jim's eyes darted around violently, desperately searching for an escape.

"Why wait? Things will not have changed."

Jim licked her lips, the lump in her throat choking her and she knew-she just knew that she could never deny Spock anything even if it meant it hurt her. She sighed in defeat and her face crumpled. She thought of the tiny life inside of her that was growing and was grateful that she would at least have him or her as a reminder of happier times; someone she could treasure and love forever since this wasn't going to be. Perhaps it was self-preservation from the poison Spock was inflicting on their bond, maybe it was because she loved him and wanted to give him what he asked for. She
didn't truly know herself.

"You're right. They won't have changed." Jim closed her eyes, that spot in her mind throbbing as if it was somehow sentient, knowing it was about to be obliterated. She leaned forward and pressed her cheek and the side of her face to his cool fingertips. Jim opened her eyes, the image of Spock blurred with unshed tears. "If this is what you want?"

"It is."

She sagged in defeat. “Just-just break the bond.” She told him tiredly. Funny. She’d always thought there was no such thing as a no-win scenario, but Spock was clearly giving her one in the most painful way. He’d tried to teach her once with the Kobayashi Maru those many years ago, but had failed. This time he wasn’t failing.

Spock adjusted his fingers on her meld points and she could feel him reach in. Normally, when they had melded, she'd be able to sense more of Spock and it was gentle-always so gentle like she was precious and treasured and he was her protector, but all she could feel from him now was every negative emotion directed at her like photon torpedoes. This one was dark, malevolent, vicious, and there was so much anger. It burned her like a hot brand, searing her mind from the inside and Jim's mouth opened in a silent scream of agony. She couldn't. She couldn't. She couldn't.

She tried to shove him out, but he was just too strong and determined to tear them apart. There had been no way for her to prepare for something like this. She almost hedged for death as a respite from this burning, cutting, tearing agony, but it was her child that kept her going despite the pain. She had to survive no matter what.

He waded through her thoughts and very self, tearing through them as if they were tissue paper, rapidly reaching the area of her mind where their bond was located. What once was a glowing, pulsing, beautiful thing now looked dim and diseased; ill in a way like a neglected plant that was starved of the sunlight, water, and nutrients that it needed to survive. How she wanted to protect it and keep it alive, but Spock wanted to kill it.

Perhaps it was for the best. If there was this level of distrust between them that he would not listen then it would have only been a matter of time before it failed. She thought back to the memories imparted to her by the elder version of this Spock before he had died. They may have been the same person by DNA, but they were so very different. Both were Spock, but the traumas they had both endured shaped them in very different ways that no one could have predicted much like her own circumstances with herself and James T. Kirk. Maybe it just wasn't meant to be and her life wasn't to be with him, but only with their child.

With his mental hands, Spock grabbed at the bond linking them, savagely tearing at it with violent intentions and Jim screamed. The pain was awful. She'd instinctually knew it would hurt. She'd been told by the clan matriarch that breaking bonds was a troublingly difficult process, but this was beyond whatever she imagined. It cut and burned and tore at her very soul.

He ripped again like a wild animal, completely uncontrolled and Jim could feel her body shaking, but it was like she was in two places at once and her physical self was distant while her focus was on what was happening in her mind. He continued to shred their, once glowing, beautiful link/bond. Oh, God, it hurt! Every part of her was raw, inside and out.

Jim used all of her mental strength to pull herself away from him and the violence he was inflicting on her mind, desperate for relief and a respite from it. Spock quickly retreated from her mind and Jim slid down the wall, falling onto the hard floor on her hands and knees. He stood over her, his eyes blank like a portcullis had come down and Jim looked up at him with red eyes damaged from
her tears, her heart and mind broken just like their bond.

"Get out. Get the hell out of here, you bastard!" Jim's voice was hoarse from her screams and her whole body weak.

"The divorce paperwork from our human part of our marriage will be sent in the morning. As well as the paperwork in regards to your...child. Expect it and sign it to dissolve the last connection I have with you."

There was a terrible...blankness inside of her, like a piece of her soul has been ripped away leaving a jagged bleeding wound that she has no idea how to heal.

Focusing on the ground, Jim thinks back to what Spock had taught her about blocking, but it was impossible. It was too big of a wound. "Just leave, you son of a bitch!"

She refused to look up at the man she'd once loved with everything she had had, but she heard as his footsteps retreated and the door shut.

Retching, Jim tasted the sour flavor in her moth as she vomited on the floor. The rancid scent only continuing to make her lose what little she had been able to eat earlier in the day. Somehow, she'd always known this day would come, but she'd hoped it had just been her insecurity.

Sudden stabbing pain slammed into her mind and Jim's hands curled into claws, the fibers of the carpet practically embedding itself into her fingertips. Darkness crept into the edges of her vision and she surrendered, her last thoughts of her child as she prayed to whatever Gods there were that she would survive for for that innocent being.

xXx

Leonard McCoy was damn observant and frequently saw things many others would miss. While Jim was the consummate professional and rarely allowed her personal life to affect her command decisions there was a stiffness to the way she acted and responded to others. When she was on duty she put up a false front that all was well, but he could see the strain she was experiencing with the enforced distance and fully blocked bond between her and her husband. It was not known to the crew, but even they could see something was very wrong. He knew Jim inside and out, as both her best friend and her doctor and he was very worried.

As it was, her hybrid pregnancy was going to be a challenge. Add in the strain of Spock's recent cold, antagonistic behavior towards her and it was going to be hell for her. Oh, he was in no way insubordinate, but he was cold and emotionless when he was in her presence; the epitome of a perfect Vulcan.

Since Spock had been blocking the bond for such a long period of time, Jim had started eating less, experiencing minor headaches, and her sleep had been disruptive. He may not be an expert on Vulcan mental voodoo, but he knew it wasn't good for a bonded couple to do that. Mental closeness was vital for health. Vulcan/Human pairings were rare so he wasn't sure of how it would affect a psi-null being that had limited abilities to protect oneself from the stresses involved. He could only guess what it was doing to Jim with what he couldn't see.

Since Jim and he had gotten that stupid report from Spock, he'd done all he could to try and convince him that what Jim was saying was the truth. Jim was loyal to a fault with those she loved. Once you gained her trust and respect, it was almost impossible to lose it.

McCoy had re-run Spock's tests and gained the same results, but he didn't give a damn. He knew in
his heart that Jim would never betray the man she loved just as she was not a liar. She may imply and deflect, but never lie to those she cared about. He only hoped that Spock would see the truth and put aside logic and think with his heart.

Jim was keeping the conflict between her and Spock quiet for both of their sakes, personal and professional, but he had moved out to separate quarters. As far as Bones was aware, the only people who knew the details of the separation were Jim, Spock, himself, and Nyota.

It was common knowledge that the Enterprise had been assigned a new mission and that she was due to disclose the information from the admiralty in the morning for them to be prepared the day after. Maybe this could be a good thing to distract her from her current situation. He knew, though, that this one would be one of her last because of her advancing pregnancy. The Enterprise was not a generational vessel and ill-equipped for a person, male or female of any species, to continue a pregnancy safely.

What he wasn't sure of was how she would be once she was no longer in space. She'd been born in space and Bones had always thought she'd spend her life and die in space. But people can change. Over the years he'd seen her grow and change into the woman she was now and he was damn proud of her.

Dropping by the mess, he grabbed dinner for both himself and Jim before making his way to her quarters. Since she'd been eating less, he figured that a good, non-intrusive way to encourage her to eat a whole meal was if he joined her. It was also a way to spend some time with his friend to support her during this trying time. She'd been isolating herself as well and that was unhealthy and could lead to worsening depression.

He balanced the take-out boxes in one arm and pressed her door chime. There was no answer just. He also didn't get an answer with the subsequent six times he rang for her. An unease that he couldn't easily dismiss settled over him when he physically knocked and still got no response. He was hoping she was sleeping since she needed it, but he had a bad feeling.

The brunette quickly typed in the access code she'd given him and when the doors slid open, he was in a nightmare. Across the room, he could see Jim, clad in her academy sweats and shirt, on the ground. The side of her face and head was in a pile of her vomit in the throws of a full-blown grand-mal seizure.

"Oh, God, Jim!" He didn't remember dropping the boxes and the spaghetti he'd gotten for them splattering all over the floor. He didn't remember how he got across the room. He didn't remember him falling to his knees on the hard floor next to his friend, but he would remember the sight of Jim seizing and beginning to choke on her vomit for the rest of his life. The image would forever be burned into his mind.

He fought her flailing limbs to turn her onto her side and move her away from her vomit. Her teeth were clenched shut so he was helpless to clear her mouth and throat. Her breathing was ragged and he could see the rapid pulse in the vein on her neck. Ripping his comm out of his pocket with one hand, he flipped it open.

"McCoy to transporter room. Someone respond!"

"Transporter room three responding."

"Lock onto my signal and beam Captain Kirk and myself directly to sickbay. Site to site transport and signal sickbay we have a medical emergency!"
"Understood, Doctor."

His grip on his comm was tight enough to turn his fingertips tight, but his touch on Jim's shoulder while she jerked and twitched violently in his hold was gentle. "Dammit, Jim."
Stabilizing Jim took longer than he would have liked. It was one of the longest twenty minutes he'd ever experienced. While seizures weren't typically life-threatening, they were dangerous especially once they hit past the five-minute mark. Afterward, Jim had been confused, exhausted, and in pain from the muscle spasms and the toll it had taken on her brain.

Rubbing his hands over his face, he felt more tired than he had in a long time. Her electroencephalogram had shown some abnormal results in brainwave activity which was concerning to him. Some areas were misfiring while others were not as active, the spikes and waves all over the place. He was forced to consider one of two diagnoses. One being that the constant block Spock had placed was affecting her which may be causing problems with him and the other possibility was that the hybrid pregnancy was causing unanticipated and unexpected symptoms. Both were worrying.

McCoy shifted in the chair he had set up next to Jim's bed and read over the results from her recent studies and tests that he had done during Jim's stay. He refused to let her wake up alone when she was hurt and always had done his best to be there ever since they'd met on that shuttle. Wild dogs couldn't tear him away while Spock had yet to respond to his messages about the captain's admission.

A pained groan from the biobed in front caused his head to snap up and he quickly stood, the doctor's eyes darting from Jim to the overhead readings and back again. The young blonde was as pale as the sheets covering her body, the dark circles under her eyes providing a stark contrast.

"Bones?"

He ran gentle fingers through the blonde waves of her hair and breathed a sigh of relief. While it might be considered unprofessional, he didn't give a good god damn. He needed the contact to reassure himself just as he knew she would. "Hey, kid. How're you feeling?"

Her eyelids fluttered open and quickly closed as she grimaced. "Hurts."

"Not surprising." He grunted in a reply and prepped a hypo, depressing it into her IV. The lines of distress smoothed and she finally opened her eyes fully. "You gave us quite the scare, kid."
"Must be bad if you're being nice, Bones."

"It was." The CMO admitted. He despised seeing her like this.

"What happened?"

When she tried to sit up with wobbly arms, he firmly pushed her back down and pressed the button to raise the head of her bed. "You had a grand mal seizure."

"What?" Jim asked, confused.

"You had a seizure." He repeated as he started to run a basic neuro eval, checking pupil function (slower response and minor nystagmus, but normal considering the drugs in her system), reflexes in her arms, feet, and limbs (again, slow, but normal), and her basic cognitive functions (normal, but slower to respond). When she exhibited a more alert state, she was carefully assisted into a sitting position. Everything seemed to be in a state of shock. "I walked into one of my worst nightmares, kid. You were on the ground shaking harder than a pansy in a summer storm."

His friend-no-she was his patient, right now, frowned in confusion. Worried, blue eyes found his and he could see her fear especially when her hands covered the slight swell of her belly hidden by the gown she wore. "The baby?"

Placing his hand on her shoulder, he gave her a gentle smile. "The baby is fine from what I can tell, but your blood pressure is higher than I'd like and you're still exhibiting signs of abnormal neurological activity which means you're still at risk for more epileptic activity. I'm more worried about you."

Jim still didn't look convinced so he pulled up the images from her scans on his PADD. The tender expression that crossed her face as she looked at the proof that her child-to-be was safe caused him to smile. "See? Your mini-me is doin' fine." He rotated the image to where she could see multiple angles. "There's the heart which is located in your baby's chest rather than where the liver would be like in Spock's. I think it's because he or she is a quarter Vulcan, but your labs showed that the baby's blood is copper-based. The placenta is safely attached and there's no hint of distress." He pointed out the various parts of anatomy and, with each description that everything was stable, her shoulders relaxed further.

"Thank you."

As he turned to put away the PADD, he caught her pressing her fingers on her temples in a clear indication of pain. When he spun back around, that moment of telling discomfort was gone as if it had never existed. McCoy's lips thinned at the actions of his stubborn patient trying to hide things from him. "Jim, you scared the bejeezus out of me and the team here. You've still got some concerning symptoms that I'm struggling to treat."

The edges of her mouth turned down. "Any risk to the baby?" She asked.

"Minimal for now. Your blood pressure is high which could eventually stress your kidneys and your brainwave signatures are still off." He sighed and moved closer to sit down next to her. "What I couldn't figure out was what happened. I didn't see any signs of you accidentally eating anything dangerous, no infection, nor were there toxins in you bloodstream. I also couldn't see any physical injury either. You've got me stumped. Do you know what could have happened?"

Jim's eyes grew distant as she looked away from him and she blinked rapidly. Hot tears ran down her cheeks and a sick sensation started to build in his stomach. "You know something, Jim. What
“What?!” She took a shuddering breath in an effort to speak calmly and the doctor could see the strain that the effort to do so was costing her. “-he broke our bond.”

A sharp jolt of fury hit him. He may not be an expert in Vulcan telepathy, but even he knew that was damn dangerous in her fragile state. Even in optimum conditions it was rarely done. "What?"

His growl was low and dangerous.

Wincing, the pale faced, pregnant blonde faced him. "He's divorcing me, Bones."

A stream of colorful expletives, as well as graphic descriptions of just what Spock could do to himself, exploded out of his mouth. A weak smile crossed her face. "I'm pretty sure that's anatomically impossible."

"Oh, I'm a doctor. I'd make it possible." He bit out. "Just what the hell was he thinking? Last I heard, it took a trained healer to do that."

Shrugging, Jim ran her fingers through the tangled locks of her hair. "Apparently not. I didn't even know it was possible to break bonds like ours." She told him in a small voice barely above a whisper.

His heart broke at seeing her emotional pain just as much as when he saw the physical. "It's pretty much unheard of and extremely rare from what I was told, but it is possible."

"I'm gonna stick that PADD of his so-called research results so far up his ass he's gonna be spitting out plastic for a month!"

"Bones." She admonished tiredly.

"I'm gonna kill that bastard! Hippocratic oath be damned!" He growled and moved to step away to do just that when Jim's hand shot out and she grabbed his arm with a hold stronger than he believed possible. Her expression pleaded with him to remain.

McCoy's heart twisted in his side and he deflated like a popped balloon, moving closer to her. "C'mere, kid." Jim's face crumpled like tissue paper as she launched herself at him, desperately clawing at his back as he tried his best to soothe her with gentle touches and whispered words of comfort.

"It felt like he was ripping out a part of my soul." Her voice was muffled and his arms tightened to hold her closer. That goddamn heartless bastard.

"Shh. I know." He murmured. Jim shook in his arms and he felt his chest grow wet with her tears as she cried. She smelled of the soap they used in sickbay and McCoy pressed his cheek into her hair. "I'm so sorry." He was glad he'd had the foresight to put Jim in the private room that housed the more ill patients rather than a cubicle. She was able to have this moment without prying eyes seeing their captain break down. The doctor's mind was already whirling with tests he'd need to perform and the dangers associated with the action Spock had taken. He worried that she'd have to be sidelined and relieved from duty.

He was furious, but he couldn't express it for fear of hurting Jim further. It would have to be discussed at some point though. There was no choice.
It seemed like an age, but she eventually pulled away, her eyes red from her crying spell and her countenance defeated. "It hurt so bad."

"I'll bet it did." He agreed. "Jim-"

The pneumatic hiss of the door interrupted and Jim turned away, her cheeks flaming in shame at her moment of weakness. As soon as the nurse entering had taken one step in McCoy jerked his head for her to leave. S-Chee beat a hasty retreat and the pregnant blonde relaxed at the privacy afforded her. "Thank you."

He leaned back and brushed a lock of blonde hair from her sweaty face. "Look, this can't be let go. What he did was telepathic assault. It's one thing to do something like this under the guidance of a trained healer, but this was uncontrolled. I may be an old country doctor, but I know that this isn't right."

Biting her lip, the captain shook her head. "I gave him permission to break it. He wanted it."

McCoy's jaw worked as he struggled to control his frustration with her self-sacrificing behavior and anger at the fucker who did this to her. Who knows just what damage he'd done to her pulling that stunt. "Jim, this wasn't a bond breaking. I've seen bonds break in the most traumatic of ways when Vulcan was destroyed and this is not what happened to any of them. This was revenge, pure and simple, and you're trying to justify it like an abused partner in a relationship. He needs to be arrested and brought up on charges!"

Her eyes flashed and her cheeks flushed for a very different reason than crying. "I am not that! I'm not weak and I don't want him knowing about this!"

The doctor's eyebrows shot up in surprise at her ridiculous conclusion. Fists gripping the edge of the bed, she made to get up as if to prove it and he had to grab her upper arms to stop her. It was a bad move and she shoved at his chest. Hard. Hard enough to make him stumble back. "Is that what you truly think? That you're weak and that other people who are recipients of abuse are weak? There's nothing further from the truth. You are one of the strongest people I know!"

"Don't tell him!" She snarled and he put his hands up in supplication. When she calmed, he was able to move close once more. Running her fingers through her hair, she twisted her body and lay back on the reclined bed. "God, Bones, what did I do?"

He twitched the blanket into place covering her and prepared a sedative out of her line of sight. "You did what you always do. What you had to do. Turn the death of something into a fighting chance to live."

He connected the syringe to the line connected to her arm and depressed the plunger. As her eyelids began to flutter, Jim turned her head, her eyes fixing on him, serious and solemn. "Why did we never get together?"

Sometimes, he wondered the same thing. "You eat andorian crisps in bed and that shit gets crumbs everywhere." Her friend told her, his voice rough, and she huffed a laugh as her eyes finally drifted shut. "Get some sleep, kid. I have a Vulcan to strangle."

xXx

"What the fuck is wrong with you?!!?"

Spock's eyebrows drew up in surprise at the sheer volume of the doctor's statement in the hallway entrance to his quarters. In the time it took to get to Spock and Jim's shared room, McCoy had only
grown more angry at him. His momma had alway said he got hot faster than a tin roof in summer and he was definitely hot right now.

The commander shifted back to allow him entry and McCoy could see multiple packing crates, half filled with his belongings. The walls had darkened outlines where his Vulcan artifacts had once hung, but all of the pictures that had the pair of them were left untouched. "Clarify your statement, Doctor?"

The calm manner in which he addressed him only served to infuriate him more. He hated that he'd made a promise to Jim to not disclose the level of hurt she was in. It was a strong temptation to bring it up to shame him. Even the most cold-hearted of beings would be ashamed at what they had done. Even an abuser would apologize. "You broke the bond! Jim's in my sickbay right now because of it."

Spock looked unaffected at the information and simply raised a brow. "It is common for a bond breaking to cause some discomfort. I did nothing except rectify a mistake."

His hands curled into fists. "You!" The doctor struggled to control his breathing and it came out in ragged huffs. "You son of a bitch! With what you did, you put Jim's life at risk and that of the baby-"

His head jerked up sharply and, for the first time since he'd arrived, McCoy saw some emotion in those eyes of his. "You mean HER child, not mine!"

"That's bullshit and you know it!"

Taking a deep breath, Spock's expression shuttered and he shifted his stance. "Cease your histrionics, Doctor. You are biased on your opinion and facts do not lie."

He pointed his finger at the man who'd hurt his friend. "What you did to her is assault on a superior officer and you know it!"

"The captain consented to the p'pil'lay."

His lip curled in disgust at the clear lack of guilt. "I doubt she consented to that. There's no way she fully understood the risks and dangers involved." At Spock's continued lack of response, the brunette closed his eyes in disappointment and had to work to calm himself somewhat. "Did you ever love her?" He asked.

He remained silent and his non-answer only increased his heartbreak at what had happened. "Go fuck yourself-sir."

"You are becoming insubordinate, lieutenant-commander McCoy, and need to control yourself or be relieved of duty."

Hazel eyes narrowed at the gall of Jim's, now ex, husband. "Like you controlled yourself?"

As Spock straightened his posture, he raised his chin at what McCoy was implying. "You are dismissed."

"Oh, we are far from finished. You'll be sorry when you discover just what you've done." He snapped and spun on his heel. He had someone more important to get back to.

"Unlikely."
Spock's parting word forced him to halt in his departure, but only a short pause before he started to leave for sickbay again. Jim needed him and he'd be damned if he'd spend more than a minute longer in his presence than what was necessary.

The doors shut with a finality that was almost poetic.
Chapter 15

It was like she wasn’t a part of her body; like it was some separate entity and it was so strange. In her life, she’d had a few times when she’d experienced similar thoughts and feelings. Usually, it was when she was dying or close to death, but she wasn’t this time. At least, Bones had assured her that “her damn fool ass wasn’t dying on his watch” and she trusted him.

She still had a constant low-grade headache. It was like she was...bruised inside her head and there was a gaping hole where Spock used to be. It was different from when he had simply been blocking her. It was like-like he was no longer there, but minuscule parts of him were still somehow there along the torn edges. When he’d blocked her he’d just been gone; hidden behind an impenetrable wall. This was painfully different.

Her life as she knew it was over. It was time for a new path and she couldn’t help, but be a bit scared. She just...didn’t know what it was going to be.

Cheeks puffing, Jim took a deep breath and pressed the connect button in Bones’ office. When Komack eventually answered, his face immediately warped into a mask of confusion and concern.

*"When I was told that I had an incoming transmission, I certainly wasn’t expecting it to be the Enterprise."* Frowning, the older admiral leaned forward. *"Is there something I need to know? Calling in the middle of the night isn’t particularly your style, Jim."* Brown eyes darted over her, noting the medical pajamas she was wearing. *"Nor is it your style to call not dressed in uniform or day clothes. What’s going on?"*

Jim pressed a few keys and the computer on the admiral’s end beeped as it received her information. She gave him a minute to open the file. “Sir, I’m so-”

Komack’s features turned dark and stormy as he registered exactly what she had sent to him. *"What the hell is this?"*

Clenching her jaw, she had to fight the urge to vomit. The Enterprise had been her home for more than seven years and the crew was her family. “My resignation.”

*"Would this sudden resignation have something to do with the commander’s change of address?"*

Jim blinked in surprise even though she shouldn’t be. He never missed a thing. “How did you-“

*"My niece. She didn’t tell me for gossip, Jim."* He reassured her. *"Nor did she tell me because she was spying for me. She actually told me because she wanted me to check in on you since she was worried and I can definitely see why."*

Shaking her head, the young captain sighed at the care and concern of both the admiral and Jim’s yeoman. Janice Rand had become a sort of confidante for non-Starfleet issues; almost like a little sister that Jim was soon to be sponsoring into the command program at Starfleet Academy to be moving from enlisted to officer.

*"The other reason I’m asking for clarification is for professional curiosity. It was already frowned upon for two officers in the senior bridge crew to be involved and, if a separation is the case, then it’s not something that can be taken lightly and will enforce the beliefs of many here in command*
that don’t agree with interpersonal relationships of those in direct command of each other. Jim, I was one of the few in command to fight for you and Spock to remain together on the Enterprise in your current roles and—*"

“Actually, that’s not the reason—” Jim stopped and changed tactics. “Not the whole reason, anyway. If it was merely a case of our divorce creating a difficult working relationship then we would have to get over it like two adults, sir. It’s a medical reason.”

*”Divorce?”* He shifted in his seat, the older man’s lips thinning in distaste. *”I didn’t think it went that far. That’s a pretty sudden change in status from the last time I spoke with you. What’s going on up there? I have yet to receive paperwork from your CMO in regards to a medical reason for your resignation.”*

Jim bit the inside of her cheek and placed her hand over her belly under the table, out of sight of her commanding officer and friend. “I’m pregnant.”

*”That’s hardly a reason for a full resignation.”* He argued. *”Many officers continue to serve during pregnancy and after.”* Frowning, he leaned forward and Jim could see the unease in his expression. *”I would say congratulations, but I have a feeling there’s more to the story.”*

“There is.” Hesitating in continuing her answer, she didn’t want to fully disclose everything, but Jim felt he had a right to know at least some of the circumstances in her decision. “The full reasons for the commander’s and my separation are private, but, suffice to say, Commander Spock is under the impression it is not his child.”

*”I’m gonna assume that’s not the case?”* Komack growled and Jim’s chest tightened at his unasked for support.

Blowing out a breath in frustration, she continued. “Commander Spock believes it is.”

*”Somehow, I doubt that he’s right. I know you and have seen you grow into your role as captain, wife, and bondmate.”* Komack’s mouth pressed into a thin, angry line as he gave her a serious look. *”Your resignation is refused, captain.”*

Jim sputtered in protest and he held up a hand to stop her.

*”Officers are allowed to retire if they become pregnant no matter how it came to be.”* She watched as he typed a few keys on his end and he slowly lifted his head to face her. *”However, I’m gonna hold on to this for now, but place you on restricted duty. I’m essentially grounding you.”* He added.

“But sir—“

Her screen lit up with a data packet and she opened it at his urging. Paperwork for a transfer was listed as well as something else that made her eyes widen. “Sir?”

Folding his hands on the desk, he gave her a small smile and Jim wasn’t really sure what to make of it. His offer was...unusual.

*”There’s a position that I think would fit. It’s one that just opened considering the fall semester is due to start in a month. Commander Sathera requested a new duty assignment to be closer to his husband on the USS Archimedes and it was approved. To be rather blunt, we need an instructor at the academy and, with your skills and history, I think you’d be a valuable asset. It is part-time, though.”*
Well, that’d solve the issue of finding a job and housing. She hated to admit it, but leaving Starfleet had been something that she hadn’t truly wanted to do. Being here had been what had saved her from a life of mediocrity and given her a family and sense of purpose. The smile that played on her lips showed her gratitude at him finding her a place just like his friend Chris Pike had done those many years ago. “Thank you, sir.”

*”There’s also another job for you.”* He smiled wider and Jim frowned in suspicion. *”I was waiting until the end of your mission to do this, but it looks like it’s the right time now. It was suggested by a few of the higher ups that you were due for a promotion for your service when this five year stint was over. I’d put it off on a back burner because I know you. You’d always been one for the stars and would have served until you couldn’t on that ship, but it looks like it’s gonna come a bit sooner than expected.”*

Jim’s frown deepened so far that she was sure it would be stuck there permanently, but Komack carried on heedless of her facial expression. *”Your new position would be vice-admiral of our tertiary fleet.”*

“Sir?” Surely she heard him wrong. Who in their right mind would promote her to that position? They were crazy enough as it was to allow her to teach young, eager cadets considering the hijinks she had gotten up to as a cadet. She swore Pike had gotten more gray hairs in the three years she had been there than in his entire life before meeting her with the stunts she’d pulled.

*”It’s not the primary fleet. You’re still not ready for that, but I think you’d do well. With your knowledge and experience, you can do a lot more good here than being out there.”* Her screen chimed with the formal papers. Jim wondered how long he’d had these orders to be able to simply send them within minutes of her telling him about her change of heart about the Enterprise.

*”There’ll be a formal ceremony when you return to Earth, but you’ll be Vice-Admiral Kirk with the rights and responsibilities it entails and be reporting to Admiral Cheroshin when you get here.”*

“Sir?”

He chuckled at the bewildered captain. *”It’s James now.”*

Her mouth opened and closed, but no sound escaped save for a small clicking.

*”The Excelsior will actually be passing by your location in about thirty-six hours by my estimate and you can hitch a ride. When she does Commander Spock can take over as Acting-Captain until a permanent decision is made in regards to the Enterprise hierarchy. The new orders will be in by morning your time. I’ll leave it to your discretion in regards of informing the crew.”*

“Are-are you sure about this?” Jim stuttered.

His brows drew up almost to his hairline. *”Are you questioning me?”*

“N-no, sir! I just don’t think-“

He ignored her protests, scowling, but there was a hint of humor in his eyes. *”Congratulations, Admiral Kirk. Komack out.”*

The screen went abruptly dark and Jim just stared at it blankly. Her life, in the past twenty-four hours had changed to a degree that she wasn’t sure what was up and what was down anymore.
“Jim?”

A gentle tap on her shoulder brought her out of her thoughts and she looked up to see Bones standing above her, concern written all over him. “Everything ok? You’re supposed to still be in bed.”

“Yeah.” Shaking her head, she stood, allowing him to guide her back to her biobed. Once she settled on the edge, Bones didn’t leave. She needed to tell him what had transpired moments ago. “Bones, I resigned from Starfleet.”

“Wha-“

“But Admiral Komack didn’t accept it.” Jim interrupted.

“He’d be a fool to.” He growled and she rolled her eyes, wincing at the sudden ache at the action. Bones zeroed in on it, but, thankfully didn’t say anything.

“He-uh actually got me an assignment as a professor at the Academy in San Francisco.”

“God help us all.” He laughed and Jim put her hand to her chest in mock hurt.

“Hey! Well, if that scares you then this will terrify you.” Smirking at her friend, she waited for him to stop his fiddling with the tricorder that he was itching to scan her with. “He promoted me to Vice-Admiral in charge of the tertiary fleet based in the Beta Quadrant.”

The piece of equipment slipped from his grasp, clattering to the floor and several pieces bounced against his boot as he froze in shock. Well...that wasn’t quite the reaction she’d been looking for. “Nice to know I have your support.”

He shook himself and apologized. “It’s not that, Jim. You deserve it more than anyone I know. I’m just surprised. It’s just a lot has happened in the past day, kid.”

She smiled crookedly and then the fact that she was leaving behind everything and everyone; her home and, more importantly, Bones hit her. God. What was she going to do? “The Excelsior picks me up in thirty-six hours.”

“You mean us. The Excelsior is picking up us.” He said gruffly.

She tilted her head in curiosity and, by the stubborn jut of his jaw, she knew he was serious. The doctor leaned forward, placing his hands on her biceps and gripping her gently as if she was fragile glass. “What?” She felt like she had said that word far too many times, but she couldn’t help it. She tried to shake him off, but he held tight. “No! You don’t have to do that! This is your career, your life, and you have friends here!”

Hazel eyes softened and his right hand reached up, his palm cupping her cheek. “But I won’t have my best friend.”

He became a blurry mess as her eyes welled up with tears. Guilt threatened to swallow her, but she selfishly did want him there with her. “Bones, don’t do this. I can’t be responsible for messing up your life and ruining your career.”

He just huffed irritably. “Don’t be an idiot. You won’t be. You know damn well I’d follow you anywhere, anytime.”

She pulled back and scrubbed at her eyes, not daring to believe what he was saying, but needing
confirmation. She couldn’t do this to him. It wasn’t his fault what had happened and he’d already done so much for her. “Bones-“

He moved to sit next to her and placed an arm around her. He was close enough that she could feel the warmth from him and Jim couldn’t help, but lean into it. “Tough shit. You can’t get rid of me.”

“I can’t do this to you.”

She felt him sigh into her hair and he pulled her closer. Jim tilted up to face him and he looked right back at her. He looked like he’d aged in the few hours that she’d last seen him; tired in a way that showed he was worried, but he was determined. “Jim, you know one of the only reasons I went out into the black was because of you.”

She’d always suspected, but he’d never confirmed it. He’d been slated for Starfleet Medical after the Narada, but he’d accepted her offer of the Enterprise before she’d even finished her sentence.

He continued. “I once thought of space as disease and danger wrapped up in darkness and silence. You helped me see the wonders of the universe. You showed me that there was good out here, so much beauty, and so many amazing things. You taught me that we could do so much good out here and learn so much. Together, we were able to explore strange new worlds, seek out new life and new civilizations and boldly go where no one had gone before.”

“Bones-“ Her throat tightened with emotion, but he just kept speaking, his fingers digging in and forcing her to stay to hear everything.

“I want to do one more adventure if you’ll let me and it sure as hell isn’t here on this ship without you. Without you here, the universe will be a dim place with no light to brighten it. I want to be by your side as you go on the exciting journey of becoming a mother and support you throughout every challenge, every triumph, and every moment no matter what.” Snorting, he finally released her and turned his body towards her, kicking up a leg with a smirk. “Besides, you can’t get rid of me that easily. I already talked with Admiral Foster at Starfleet Medical. They have a chief of general surgery position available which includes teaching those wet behind the ear medical track cadets.”

How did she get this lucky? Could she even let him do this for her? It was a big move for him and it could kill his chances for advancement. “But-“

He waggled a finger at her. “You keep your buts to yourself. I’m going and that’s final.”

Jim’s smile was bright. The fear of doing this alone, even with the security of a respected position, had been at the back of her thoughts like an approaching thundercloud on the horizon. “Bones, you sly bastard. You kept that close to your chest.”

“Can’t let you have all the fun. I was actually going to suggest Earth anyways because they have facilities that are better suited to handling your pregnancy among a few...other things in regards to your health I think I’ll need to discuss with you later.”

“Leonard-“

McCoy rolled his eyes and gave her a gentle shove. “You didn’t think I was gonna let you get away that easily, did you? You’re stuck with me.” He grew serious and grasped her hand. “You’re my best friend and I love you, kid. I’d never let you be alone.”

There was so much sincerity in his words that it made her chest swell with emotion. “Thank you.”
He released her and stood. “Now, enough of this mushy crap. I’ve gotta pack and then we are getting you to bed. You’ve got a tough morning ahead of you when you tell the crew about this.”

“Yeah. Yeah, I do.”
Chapter 16

Leonard McCoy was not, in general, not a vindictive or mean person, but Spock was rapidly becoming an exception to that rule. He admitted he was passionate in his beliefs, especially when it came to right and wrong. He had been angry and upset when he’d caught Jocelyn in bed with another man so he understood how Spock might feel about Jim being unfaithful. It didn’t mean it was true though. He knew Jim and knew she was an honorable and honest person. He also knew she had loved Spock more than he rightfully deserved.

When Leonard had caught Jocelyn and Clay having sex in his house and in the damn bed he shared with her, he’d walked away like a goddamn grown-up and had just divorced her. He’d let her take it all despite her being in the wrong. He’d never taken it out on her because that just wasn’t what you did. Even today, if she was hurt, he’d still care and help her if she needed it despite the pain she’d caused him and the hurt he still felt to this day.

Looking down at Jim laying next to him, Leonard wondered how any man in his right mind could and would throw someone like her away. He’d known the kid for going on eleven years since that fateful day on that recruitment shuttle and they’d been fast friends ever since.

Sure, the brat infuriated him at times especially when she pulled ridiculous stunts, but she was the most honest, kind, brave, and selfless person he knew. He wouldn’t trade her for the universe.

Spock was a fucking idiot. As a doctor and scientist in his own right, he knew that tests of any kind didn’t always show accurate results or the ones you wanted or expected. Spock should know better.

He stretched his stiff muscles and sat with his back against the headboard. The doctor hadn’t been able to sleep more than in short bursts since he had first caught Jim having that damn grand mal. Leonard knew he was going to have to rest at some point because he wasn’t superhuman, but he was wound up tighter than his grandfather’s old wristwatch.

Jim’s hand twitched abnormally in her sleep and McCoy’s jaw firmed at the sight. Most might simply think of it as a natural product of her sleeping, but he had darker suspicions in regards to the movement. Jim’s neural scans weren’t as stable as he’d like and, if she’d have remained on active duty, he’d have been forced to officially and forcefully relieve her. Thankfully, she’d agreed with his recommendations and had taken herself off the roster. Her last responsibility to the ship was the staff meeting and transfer of command in two hours.

Snuffling in her sleep, his best friend rolled over and her blanket slipped down to expose her back. God, he was so scared of what was happening to her and what would happen, but he’d be damned
if he wasn’t going to do his absolute best help and support her. He’d do everything in his power to keep her safe and healthy as well as ensure that her child that she clearly loved made it into the world.

He pulled his worries to the back of his mind as he rose from his side of the bed. The coffee from the small pot he’d brought to her place from his sounded like a good idea to get himself going again. It had just made sense for him to stay over since they both needed to pack and she needed the help due to the delicate pregnancy and her current health problems.

If he’d had his way, though, Jim’s ass wouldn’t have left his medbay. While his team was the best at protecting patient privacy, there was only so much they could do plus there was the fact that Jim tended to be stressed there which would compound things. They’d taken the middle ground and she’d reluctantly agreed to let him stay to keep an eye on her despite her wish for privacy.

Various boxes and small crates were lined up against the far wall, mostly packed and ready to be beamed over to the Excelsior when she arrived to collect them. Komack was as good as his word and the Enterprise had been sent the orders minutes after Jim had finished her talk with him. The reason for the rendezvous had yet to be disclosed which had pissed Spock off to no end. He hadn’t been able to control his smirk when Jim had shut the vulcan’s questions down PDQ with the simple statement that he’d find out when she was damn well ready to tell him at the morning briefing.

A small whimper of pain pulled him away from his thoughts and he frowned at the sight of Jim twisting in the bed and rubbing the heel of her hand on her forehead, even in sleep.

“Dammit.”

He grabbed his kit and moved to sit next to her. She’d been mostly fine for the past eight hours. She’d had fatigue, but it was understandable under the circumstances. His EEG monitoring PADD didn’t show any further seizures, but it did look unusual. His quick scan with his tricorder showed her pain markers were elevated. A migraine. The doctor in him was sure it was going to be a doozy if he didn’t head it off soon.

He clicked in a cartridge of medication and carefully injected it to not wake her. It’d be best to let her sleep until it kicked in to minimize sensory input and pain. He’d give her another thirty minutes before waking her. With every shot he was having to give her he worried about the baby, too. He had a responsibility to two lives now and there were side effects that could potentially do damage to both of them if he had to use them long term.

Sighing, Leonard opened his medical bag and pulled out the smaller, more subtle, neurological monitors that Jim would be able to hide in her hair while out in public. She’d had a few moments that had potentially registered as sub clinical seizures so he was keeping a weather eye on her. He needed better facilities and to be able to consult with other, more experienced, specialists. His specialty wasn’t neurology and he hated to admit it. He was looking forward to getting Jim to SFM in San Francisco.

“Bones?”

Jim shuffled up behind him and looked over his shoulder at the small circular tech. “I hate this.”

“I know.”

By the time he finished calibrating the devices, Jim was sipping a cup of pilfered coffee and giving him a wink at his eye roll. “Remember just two cups a day.”
Jim slurped loud in response.

“Infant.” He growled and Jim laughed, almost snorting her drink.

“Ah! But you love me.”

If only she knew how much.

He caught her wavering on her feet and the blonde shoved out her hand to stop him from going to her. “I’m fine. I just feel a little...floaty?”

“How’s the head?”

She hesitated and that put his ‘bullshit radar’ on alert. He could see the dark smudges above her cheekbones and how she squinted against even the low lighting of her quarters, but she smiled in spite of it.

“Great. Just great.”

He grunted disbelieving. “Nausea?”

This time she gave him a genuine smile and he relaxed slightly. “Actually, I’m doing good there.” The blonde went to her closet, grabbing her uniform and threw a thumb over her shoulder. “I’m just gonna hop in the shower.”

As she got ready, he ordered their breakfast from the mess to be brought to them. He was going to get her to eat something if it killed him.

Their food arrived just as she came out of the bathroom in a cloud of steam.

“Ooh! Bacon!” She’d just taken a bite when she stopped and eyed him suspiciously. “Wait. You never let me eat bacon. You always say it’s a heart attack on a plate.”

“Sit down at the table like a grownup.” When she did, he shoved a glass of orange juice at her. “You could stand to put on a few pounds and it won’t hurt you as long as it’s in moderation.”

“Trying to fatten me up?”

He breathed a sigh of relief when she scooped a spoonful of eggs in her mouth. “Something like that.”

He didn’t fail to notice the absence of a specific bar on her sleeve denoting her new rank of admiral. “Missing something there?” Leonard gestured with his own fork of grits while she shrugged.

“I just figure one thing at a time.” It was like a cloud suddenly covered the sun and her features darkened. “I think there’s enough changes happening that this one can wait until I’m off ship.”

“Okay, Jim. Okay.”

She actually managed most of her food before pushing her plate away and that was enough for him. He usually found patients, especially ones as stubborn as Jim, ate more when they weren’t doing so alone. It was a social and psychological thing.

“Now, time to make me pretty!”
Jim moved to the mirror in the bedroom and he followed with the small neuro tech. He hated doing this just as much as she hated him doing it to her. Appearances were a big thing to her and this was forcing her to have to hide a lot from her crew by him having to watch her this much.

Her smile was brittle and forced as he affixed them to her scalp and helped her pin her hair up. He used to help his sister Donna when they were kids so it wasn’t too hard to get everything into place. It was a bit challenging to make sure the blinking lights were fully hidden, but they eventually managed it.

Jim’s mouth twisted in distaste at her reflection as she turned her head from side to side. “I haven’t worn my hair up like this in a long time.” Her hands carefully touched at the loose updo. “I look like I’m going on a date or some shit.”

“I’m a doctor not a hairdresser.”

Blue eyes lit up in humor and Leonard couldn’t stop his own smile. “Maybe you should think about it as a side-job. You didn’t do too bad.”

“One more thing.” He held up a small, silver bracelet and the earlier good mood faded as Jim held out her arm with a resigned sigh. The bracelet kept a good record of her vitals and could be easily concealed under her sleeve. He had a bad feeling she was gonna have to get used to it for a while to come.

“Ready?”

Jim nodded, her expression sober. “Once more unto the breach.”

xXx

“As you all know, we’ve been given orders by Admiral Komack for a slight detour to meet with the U.S.S. Excelsior in twenty-eight hours which will put our first contact with Haveh on hold until after.”

Jim stood tall, the epitome of a decorated Starfleet captain and Leonard was proud as hell of her. If it wasn’t for his medical training, he would have thought that she was perfectly healthy and fine, but the subtle signs were there. Next to her, Spock was sitting rigidly and his eyes were tracking her every movement.

While Jim appeared calm and controlled, he could see her vitals on his PADD showed a very different story. Her heart rate and blood pressure was borderline dangerous. Spock was practically screaming tension with his behavior and it concerned McCoy. If Jim would have remained on the ship, the strained command dynamic between them two would have been a serious risk to the workings of the ship. It was better for all involved to remove her from the mix.

He watched the rest of the senior staff and, while most of them appeared patiently curious, he saw Nyota was almost as tense as the commander. She wasn’t appearing hostile, but there was definitely an undertone of dislike directed at the blonde.

“Keptin, is there a reason we are meeting with the Excelsior?” Chekov asked.

And that was when Jim’s facade crumbled slightly. He could see the absolute heartbreak and devastation in those blue eyes of hers like a storm cloud suddenly swirling over a calm ocean. “Actually, yes.”

Spock’s attention focused like a laser beam and Jim cleared her throat, clearly uncomfortable. “At
1200 the day after tomorrow, I will be transferring command of the Enterprise to Mr. Spock and will be leaving on the Excelsior. As an additional note, I will be on light duty.”

He noticed she neglected to say why.

As predicted, protests erupted from everyone except Spock and Uhura. What did surprise him was that the Vulcan seemed, for lack of a better word, shocked. Why he would was a mystery to him. Spock had to have known she was going to be leaving, and doing it soon because of the pregnancy.

While the crew broke out in protests, he saw a disturbing change take over Jim. She froze, her expression going absolutely blank and her stare was vacant like the lights were on in a house but nobody was home. It only lasted for about ten seconds and was over before he could get up to go to her.

Jim blinked a few times and just continued like it had never happened. The crew were still trying to understand and Jim was forced to explain in a little more detail. “The reason for my abrupt departure is personal to both the commander and myself as well as for medical reasons which I will not discuss in a professional setting. Commander Spock will be listed as Acting Captain until Command makes a formal decision as to what will happen in regards to who will command the Enterprise long term.”

The doctor tuned out most of what Jim was saying and surreptitiously glanced at his PADD, scrolling back the data to see if what he suspected was true. His heart sank at what he saw. Dual frontal lobe seizure lasting eight seconds which was characterized symptomatically as an absence seizure. Dammit, Jim. She just couldn’t do things the easy way.

He could feel someone was watching him and he turned in his seat to see Nyota had been looking over his shoulder. “Is there something you need, lieutenant?” He asked her, his voice cold.

Uhura jerked back as if she’d been shocked with a live wire. He’d never, in all the years they’d worked together and, even at the academy, never spoken to her like that. “No, Dr. McCoy.”

He was glad he’d thought to put the privacy filter on which would make the screen unreadable unless you viewed it at a certain angle. When he was satisfied with her distance, he returned his focus to scrutinize her data more closely and save it for her record. She was stable enough to finish this, but this was going to be her last official duty until the hand-off. Until they both had official approval and a secondary opinion from a neurologist, Jim was not going to be able to remain on active duty. Discrimination against disabilities such as epilepsy, unless it affected cognitive function, was no longer tolerated in any institution and he’d be damned if it happened to his friend.

Spock, apparently, didn’t miss her lapse either. The Vulcan was frowning, but had shifted from his negative attitude towards his commanding officer to one of contemplation. His fingers steepled and pressed against his lips with a slight frown playing on his features. What the doctor wouldn’t give to know what was going on in that heartless bastard’s mind. Did he realize what he’d done? Was he sorry? Would he even care if he knew?

Quite honestly, McCoy didn’t give a shit nor would he ever forgive him. While Jim had been sleeping, he’d sent off a message to one of the Vulcan healers. He’d worked with them in the past when Spock had been experiencing psychic backlash from his broken familial bonds and when he’d had questions about Jim bonding with him. The old crone had been minimal in her answers then and downright rude and secretive now when she’d finally deigned to answer. The only response had been a grand total of twenty-seven words saying “Broken bonds do not cause the symptoms you are describing. You are incorrect in your diagnosis and I recommend discovering the true cause behind your captain’s condition.”
“Where will ya go, lass?” Scotty asked and McCoy was honestly curious as to how she was going to answer.

Jim bit the inside of her cheek and he could see the internal debate waging. “I will be returning to Earth.” She chuckled and it made him sick to see her minimize the scope of her forced decision. “Feel free to drop by anytime for a visit.”

It was obvious that Sulu, Scotty, Hendorff, and Chekov knew there was more to the story than what she was telling by their postures, but they were clearly respectful of her privacy. Jim was gonna have a hell of a time hiding from them once this meeting was over and he didn’t know how it was going to go. The crew was loyal to a fault to both the captain and commander. Implications of betrayal and deceit on either side might not be taken well or even understood.

“There will also be another significant change in Enterprise staffing.” Nodding to Leonard, Jim’s smile was sad. He knew she felt guilt at his leaving and blamed herself about his leaving his esteemed position as CMO of the fleet’s flagship. He’d told her that he didn’t care and would be at her side no matter the reason. “Dr. McCoy will also be leaving with me and accepting a post on Earth.” Her smile brightened and McCoy arched an eyebrow at the sudden change. “-where he will be promoted to the rank of Commander and Head of General Surgery at Starfleet Medical. Not only that, but he’ll get the joy of scaring cadets at the Academy.”

That was...unexpected. Jim must’ve gotten that communique while he’d been packing. Hazel eyes trailed to Spock who looked even more shocked at the news if his furrowing brow was any indication. McCoy snorted and Jim gave him a knowing smile. As if McCoy was going to stay onboard when his friend needed him more than the ship.

“Dr. M’Benga will be taking over as CMO and will be given a full ceremony as he rightfully deserves once the Excelsior arrives.”

Jim finished the briefing shortly after and the bulk of the senior officers left talking amongst themselves. As he trailed out after them, he noticed one particular person wasn’t following. Spock was stood in front of Jim, hands behind his back and he stopped, but Jim waved him off with a grim expression. He hated to admit it, but Jim still had official business with the bastard.

xXx

Anxiety tried to claw it’s way up her throat as she was left alone with her first officer. The last time had been, for lack of a better word, traumatizing. The breaking of their bond still hurt and a part of her mind throbbed with every beat of her heart.

“Is there something you need, Commander?” Jim would not be afraid. She wouldn’t. She refused to be. She’d faced worse enemies than him.

“I was not expecting your leaving so soon.”

“Plans change as you well know, Spock. Sometimes it’s quicker than you expect.” She bit out.

Those brown eyes that she had come to love; that had always made her think of the sweetest chocolate, darkened and she was proud of her holding back her flinch. She would not be weak in public. In private, it was another matter entirely.

“Indeed.” He told her in an icy tone.

Jim held in a grimace when it felt as if a cold anger was battering against the part of her heart where Spock had once been. It burned like liquid nitrogen and hurt just as much.
She waved between the two of them. “This? This, right here, is exactly why it’s frowned on for officers to get involved. It’s disruptive.” Her eyes burned and Jim almost let her tears of hurt come to fruition. “I do want to say I appreciate you remaining professional in spite of our personal problems.”

Her former commander raised a brow and straightened into a perfect parade rest. “I am Vulcan. I will not allow my personal life affect my duties and responsibilities as an officer of Starfleet.”

Jim tilted her head and tried to see the man she married. It was like he’d disappeared and this stranger was in his place—in his body. It was hidden far inside and she wondered if it would ever come back. Six weeks ago things had been so perfect. Three weeks ago, she’d held him in sickbay, stroking his hair and terrified he’d die. Days after that and she’d been so happy when she’d found out that she was carrying his child.

And then, it had all been destroyed in the blink of an eye and she’d lost everything, but the precious life inside of her.

“Unlike you, Captain.” He countered. “You were even unable to focus at one point on the briefing and lost your concentration allowing your emotions to control you.”

She blinked in surprise and confusion. That hadn’t happened. Had it? She didn’t remember. She didn’t appreciate his insulation of her having difficulties.

“That’s borderline subordination, Commander, and I will remind you to remember your place here.” She warned.

There it was. A flash of emotion behind his eyes. Anger. Seemed like Spock didn’t like being reminded he was her subordinate despite his power over her in their private life.

“Permission to speak freely, Captain?”

Jim twitched, unsure of whether to allow him this. However, considering the current issues between them, it was necessary...within reason. “Granted, but with one stipulation, Commander.”

“And that is?”

She’d be damned if he was going to threaten or intimidate her on her turf while it was hers. She would not allow herself to show just how much he’d hurt her. The young captain had to go through the bridge in front of her crew to get to the turbo lift and she still had to be in command until handover even if it was restricted duty. “The condition being that you will not be petty and result to insults against my person or that of my unborn child.”

His jaw firmed, it she got a curt nod in acknowledgement. “The paperwork dissolving our formal union will be forwarded to your personal account will be sent via my attorney. You should receive it before you leave as well as the forms regarding the unborn child you carry. I request there be no due process on your part and that it be returned within a short period. There will be no further communication between us bar official Starfleet business. Lieutenant Uhura and my legal representative will ensure this.”

With a bitter smile, Jim agreed.

She would not rise to his bait. The high road will be rocky, but hadn’t her life always been so?

“Congratulations, Acting-Captain Spock. Treat this ship and her crew well. Lead with strength and humility, and they’ll always bring you home.” Jim nodded curtly, raised her hand, and separated
her fingers in the ta’al. “Live long and prosper.”
Chapter Seventeen

Jim had finally finished packing three hours after the end of her shift. Being on the bridge after her announcement had been an awkward affair to say the least. Between Uhura's cold, but curious stares, Spock's own cool attitude towards her, and the rest of the crew bar Bones continuously shooting puzzled looks at her, Jim had struggled to continue the boring task of the final paperwork she had to complete before handoff tomorrow.

Finally returning to the respite of her quarters had been very welcome even without Bones' presence. She knew he was busy with his own duties to ensure M'Benga was being made ready for his new role as CMO. As to whether Spock would keep it that way rather than appointing another officer, that was no longer their responsibility. She'd sent her official suggestions and that was that.

Jim looked over her room and it somehow seemed...smaller now that everything was tucked away in crates. She'd been here in one place longer than she'd ever stayed anywhere in her life. Even growing up with her mother, they'd always hopped all over the quadrant with her duties as an engineer. She felt a twinge of guilt that she hadn't yet contacted her to tell her of everything that had gone on these past few weeks. She'd probably be surprised as hell once she suddenly appeared in San Francisco.

Jim's eyes drifted to one of the crates against her wall and her heart clenched when she saw a photo album. She'd always had a love of old-fashioned things. She walked across the room and picked it up, recognizing it as the wedding album scrapbook her mom had put together as a gift to both her and Spock. Jim was a masochist in the worst way and she had chosen to pack it under Bones' sympathetic gaze anyway. Tucking the book back into the waiting box, Jim covered it with a few of her shirts to put it out of sight.

She felt like she was at a loose end, dithering about in her room with nothing further to do. The blonde looked down at her left hand where the wedding ring Spock had so lovingly placed on her finger still remained. Spinning the ring on her finger, she ran the fingers of her right hand over the smooth metal. It was a bright silver with lines of black showing the platinum hadn't been a pure blend. She'd loved it. To her, it had represented everything; the joining of two people like the two metals to create something beautiful and it had been made from spare parts of her ship so she'd never be truly away from the Enterprise. Now, it felt like a millstone weighing her down and Jim pulled it off, knowing if she left it there she would drown.

Placing the small piece of metal on the end table next to her, she wasn’t sure what she’d do with it. During her second year at the Academy, her and Bones had gone camping near the Chattahoochee River in Georgia. They’d gotten so damn drunk. He’d thrown his old ring into the river and,
afterwards, he’d seemed lighter. It had been like that ring had kept him tied to the painful past and throwing it away had been the cathartic release that had finally allowed him to heal. Jim wondered how she was going to heal or if she ever would.

Beeping at her door interrupted her morose thoughts. “Enter.” Jim quickly scrubbed at her eyes with the heels of her hands and took a deep breath, hoping to hide her various hurts.

She was surprised when she saw Sulu, Scotty, and Chekov pile in, confused expressions on all of their faces. Everyone was there bar Uhura and Spock. She was wary of what they wanted. “Gentlemen.” The blonde hedged carefully.

Sulu’s eyes drifted around her living area, finally settling on the crates holding her personal effects. “So, it’s really true.”

Jim noticed Scotty looking at her left hand and she quickly covered it with her right, but the action didn’t go unnoticed by Chekov who frowned at the action.

“What’s true?” She desperately hoped that this wasn’t going to make her leaving be a worse pit of hell than it was going to be.

“That you’re leaving.” Sulu answered as if she was being deliberately obtuse on purpose. Jim was surprised that Uhura had kept her mouth shut. The woman was notoriously vocal about ship drama and gossip.

She nodded and, if anything, the trio looked more confused.

Scotty’s arms crossed and his expression showed hurt. “Why, Cap’n?”

Jim lifted her arm to indicate that they sit. It somehow felt wrong to have this discussion with them all standing. She only prayed that they wouldn’t hate her after. Once they settled, Sulu and Chekov on her left and Scotty in the armchair, she turned in her seat to face them. “You’re going to hear about it sooner or later, but Spock and I are getting a divorce.”

“What?”

Jim felt more tired than anything and wanted nothing more than to just go to sleep. “It’s complicated.”

“I do not understand. I thought you loved ze Kommander?” Chekov piped up.

“I do! I...did.” She shook her head, very unsure of her constantly fluctuating emotions in regards to her former bondmate. “I don’t know anymore.”

Sulu leaned forward in his seat. “What happened?”

Biting the inside of her cheek, the pregnant blonde debated answering, but decided her crew deserved to know at least her side of the story. “I’m pregnant and Spock is under the impression that I was unfaithful with Stonn. He thinks that the baby is not his.”

Shocked and angry exclamations erupted and she had to put up a hand to try and quiet them. Spock was right fucking next door in Bones’ old quarters since he’d moved out and into Jim’s room.

“I knew he was a slimy bastard and something had gone on when Hendorff called me in to set up the extra security features on tha’ monster’s quarters.” Scotty shifted uncomfortably and turned away from Jim, averting his eyes. “I looked into tha’ security cameras and saw some of what
happened.”

Jim straightened, blinking in surprise. “What do you mean?”

Running a hand through his thinning red hair, the Scotsman looked so unbelievably guilty that Jim wondered just what he had seen. “I didn’t mean to pry. I saw up to the observation deck and the aftermath.” Scott growled and it was so out of character that he would do such a thing. “I can make an educated guess as to what he did, but I’d wager it was worse.”

“No. He didn’t get that far, Scotty.” She shuddered at the memory. “He came close to raping me, but he didn’t. Spock got there in time.”

“Oh, Jim.” Sulu reaches over and took a hold of Jim’s arm. She lay her own hand over his and gave a tight nod of gratitude.

“Ve could show him zat nothing happened.”

Jim smiled at Chekov’s naïveté. “Spock will believe what he wants to believe. I’m not going to keep beating my head against that brick wall of stubbornness.”

One minute Jim was sat with her three crewmen and the next, her face was inches from Sulu’s with him kneeling in front of her. Scotty was ashen-faced behind him and holding his communicator. She could feel her left wrist was being held gently with two fingers pressed against her pulse point and she slowly turned to see Chekov wearing a grim expression.

“Hey, you back with us?” Sulu asked and Jim frowned.

“What the hell was that?” He asked and she had to think, her mind slowly coming back to her.

“Uh-nothing.”

“Didn’a’ look like nothing.” Scotty scowled and snapped his comm shut. “The doctor’s on his way.”

Pulling herself back and away, Jim tried to blank her features. “I told you that I was leaving for medical reasons as well as personal.” Chekov, bless him, looked like he was about to stubbornly demand an explanation and Jim hated that she was going to give in. “I’ll be fine.” She reassured them. “It was a-I think it’s just a temporary side effect of the bond being broken.”

“What? I thought zat vas impossible.”

She shrugged one shouldered. “So did I, but it most definitely is.”

Thankfully, she was saved from having to expand on her answer by the arrival of one very pissed, very scared, and very wonderful southern doctor/best friend. He arched a brow at the trio of men surrounding Jim, but she shook her head to show they were not harming her emotionally or otherwise. That seemed to be good enough for him and he shooed Chekov away from her side.

While Bones was running a handheld over her, Jim turned back to her visitors. “Look, what I said in the meeting was important in the fact that the reasons for my leaving are private. I’m asking you to respect that and to respect his privacy. You know very well what can happen if you allow personal feelings influence you when you’re serving. I cannot have that happen.” A cool hiss and sting against her neck caused her to grunt in discomfort, but she tried to ignore it for the time being. “All of you are destined for great things. I refuse to allow you to risk your careers for something as stupid as this.”
Sulu’s eyes flashed angrily. “Does he know about these supposed temporary side effects?”

“No.” Jim snapped. “And it’s going to remain that way. Is that understood? I told you these things in confidence. If you want to ask him his side of things I won’t stop you, but I will be very disappointed in all of you if you allow your personal beliefs and judgments to affect your careers and your duties in regards to this ship. People’s lives will depend on you.” She told them in her best ‘Captain’ voice. The trio snapped to attention despite the slightly mutinous mutters under their breaths.

“Yes, ma’am.” They chorused and Jim finally relaxed.

Bones turned in his seat and packed away the kit he’d brought with him. “I’m going to have to ask ya’ll to leave. It’s been a long day and Jim needs to rest because tomorrow’s going to be longer.”

With hugs and promises to visit, Jim watched, absolutely devastated at losing some of the most important people in her life. Sure, they might see each other once in a while, but it will never be the same again.

xXx

Spock certainly hadn’t wasted any time. In fact, he’d been early in his estimate of when she was going to receive the endless pages of paperwork for the dissolution of marriage, denial of paternity, termination of any potential parental right, and so on. Each form was separate and united so if one was struck down then the other acted as a trigger document to take it’s place, but combined they were iron-clad.

She had to give him credit, he wasn’t asking for anything of Jim’s personal property from before their marriage and he was splitting their joint assets 50/50, giving her the option to buy out Spock’s portions on things that couldn’t be as easily parted. She just signed it. She wanted nothing that they had bought together, opting to have estate attorneys handle the sale of their old apartment. She’d already sent of a missive to the company she’d used in the past to clean and prepare the house she’d inherited from Christopher Pike, a painted-lady Victorian in post-card alley on Steiner Street. It had been years since she’d last been in it, healing after her death in the warp core. She guessed it was poetic to be, once again, healing in that home.

With each signature on the multitude of forms, Jim felt like she was signing away a small part of her very soul. Pauing in her work, she sat back from her position on the floor of the observation lounge and stretched her legs in front of her. In front of her, she had the whole galaxy of stars streaking by outside the viewing window. It provided her with a sense of peace in this most chaotic time. This was probably going to be her last time here. It had been one of her favorite parts of the ship in addition to Engineering and the Bridge.

Jim had finally escaped Bones’ motherhenning only because he’d been snoring like a lumberjack when she’d snuck out bright and early. He’d stayed up late talking with a neurologist on Earth and the time difference had messed him up.

“Captain?”

Startled from her work, Jim looked up from her position on the floor to see Nyota Uhura standing nearby. “Lieutenant.”

Uhura worked her jaw, her brow furrowing in anger and heartbreak. “I just don’t understand why.”

Jim shoved back the hurt at the cold accusation in her tone. “Things are not always as they appear
“I mean, you had it all! You had a devoted bondmate who loved you more than life itself and you threw it all away.” She threw up her hands. “I would have given anything to have been able to be the center of Spock’s world.”

Jim grit her teeth, her eyes burning hot as she looked away and down to the papers she was signing. “You have no clue what it is you’re talking about.”

“I loved him so much that I let him go because I saw just how much he loved you and you hurt him.”

Jim’s chest grew tight with every word uttered by the other woman. “He’s all yours. You know what they say, lieutenant. Be careful what you wish for. You may just get it.”

Jim stood and started to move past her when she felt a brush against her sleeve. Stopping her forward momentum, Jim kept her back to Uhura.

“You’re making the right move.” Uhura told her quietly. “You know? Letting him go and not fighting him. He deserves that much all things considered.”

Jim’s head jerked slightly to let her know she’d heard, but she didn’t give any other indication of her feelings. She just left, the PADD showing confirmation of the sent papers separating her and Spock forever as husband and wife as she clutched it in a white-knuckled grip.
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

For some reason I felt the need to write this next chapter before the one in “Unknown Bond”. I’m trying to alternate, but the muse hit me with this chapter more urgently. I totally will start working on “Unknown Bond” next since I have some fun ideas! Lol! Wow! Thank you for the amazing responses in the last chapter in regards to Jim’s relationship with Bones! It definitely corresponds with what I was thinking! Oh, btw, there’s no way that Jim is suddenly gonna jump into a new relationship. I promise! It won’t be until way at the end (if at all).

Hopefully, you like this next one and the way I’m writing Winona Kirk. I like sassy!

DarkWaters

Chapter Eighteen

Spinning the small circle of platinum that had once adorned his former bondmate’s finger in his hands, Captain Spock wondered just where she had left to and what her future would hold now she was no longer in command. Their parting words had been brief and on nothing more than the formal changing of command from one officer to another.

He supposed he should be grateful for her behavior just as he should for the quick return of the legal documentation of the dissolution of their marriage and the paperwork regarding the evidence of her infidelity.

It left him feeling strangely hollow.

This silent acceptance and non-argumentative relenting was so out of character that it, in his logical mind, only confirmed her guilt. His hand suddenly closed around the ring, the metal cutting into his palm. Spock refused to allow such thoughts to compromise and distract him from his duties, his future, and his life. Kaiidth. What is, is and it is done.

He did, however, allow a moment of bitterness directed at the deceased, older, alternate version of himself for his encouragement and insistence that he should have remained on the Enterprise and foster a relationship between himself and Jamison. It had brought nothing but heartache and destruction.

His newly assigned quarters were bare; very different from when he had shared them from Jim, but they still held her scent and presence like she was a ghost destined to haunt him.

“Computer. Increase ventilation to maximum and send a request to the quartermaster to have the captain’s quarters sterilized and cleaned in preparation for my occupation.”

The computer chimed at his request. *”Message sent.”*

The sound of the fans doing as ordered made him sigh in relief when the strength of the smell started to dissipate and he moved to the recycler, tossing the last item connected to his ex-wife inside, disposing of it forever.
Bitter satisfaction left a foul taste in his mouth.

xXx

“We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, remembered gate
When the last of Earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.”

“T.S. Elliot?”

Jim jumped, dropping the small book she’d been reading and lifted her head to where Bones was standing right next to her. He was in his civvies, holding a small duffle and his ever-present medical case was swinging on his hip. In contrast, she was in her dress uniform minus the jacket. It was tighter than the last time she’d worn it and her skirt she’d had to leave partially unzipped, but it still looked proper.

“What?”

Rolling his eyes, he bent to pick up her paperback of poetry and handed it back to her. “What you’re reading. It’s T.S. Elliot?”

Jim gave a small smile and nodded, quickly closing the book. “Yeah. It’s kind of poetic all things considered.”

“Mm.” He agreed noncommittally. “I guess you could think that.”

“You know? That my journey is cyclical, starting and ending on Earth and now I’m rediscovering it as a new adventure.” She shoved the book into her own small duffle. The ache in her chest forced her to grit her teeth.

“Maybe.” He said noncommittally.

Frowning, the young blonde leaned back in her seat. “Anyway, I thought you didn’t read poetry. How do you know Elliot’s work?”

McCoy snorted. “Just because I don’t read it doesn’t mean I don’t know any of it. I did go to school, you know.”

She couldn’t stop the fond eye roll.

Bones dumped his bags next to the small couch in their temporary quarters and sat next to her. His deep sigh caused her to look up, curious and concerned. “What’s wrong, Bones?”

“Nothing, kid.” Wrapping an arm around her shoulders, the older man pulled her close. “What’s with the hair?”
Jim’s fingers reached up to touch the short strands of her new haircut, a ‘pixie-cut’ the ship’s barber had called it. “Figured it was time for a change.”

“How. I thought you hated short hair.”

Jim thought back to the last time she had tried a new style. “I liked it. Spock hated it.”

“New life, new look?” He asked.

Jim breathed deep, and tilted her head to nod. “Yeah. Something like that.”

“C’mere, kid. How’s the head?”

Jim allowed the touches he pulled her closer, twisting to where she rested against his shoulder and kicked up her legs to rest them on the arm of the couch. “It’s actually doing pretty good.”

“You know we arrive at Earth Space Station One in an hour, right?” He reminded her.

Jim hummed and closed her eyes, savoring the peace and respite from the world. Since Bones’ collaboration with the neurologist on Earth, they’d started her on a new round of meds and her headaches had diminished enough to only be a dull ache. The warnings of the new treatments for her baby had stuck in her mind and caused her to worry, but she could only handle one thing at a time.

Lately, the late night conversations with Spock’s elder counterpart from when he had been alive had been running in her thoughts. Half-remembered memories from their one and only meld had caused her pause when she thought of her own Spock and everything that had happened between them. Both the good and bad.

“Did you know that the Spock of the other universe and his Kirk were together?”

McCoy tensed under her head, but didn’t move.

“It wasn’t until they were older and got over their juvenile hang-ups. His Spock had even tried to go through kohlinar to try and purge his emotions because he couldn’t deal. Same with that Kirk. It took him a long time to learn about commitment.”

“Jim-“ He warned, but she couldn’t stop.

“Maybe it was because they got to know each other better and spent more time as friends. Like them, we came onto the Enterprise as children, but we didn’t really had a chance to grow up.” She picked at a stray thread hanging off one of her buttons. “I was only his friend for a few years before we got together. The other Kirk and Spock were friends for decades.”

Bones’ hand found hers and held her tight. “You think he’ll change his mind and come back like that other Spock did?” He squeezed her hand and Jim held it back. “Do you even want that after what he did?”

The truth was Jim wasn’t sure and she hated that she wasn’t. In her life, she’d always known exactly what to do and what she wanted without question and this was so different. She did know, however, that she wanted what was best for her child and a father figure who didn’t want it wasn’t something she ever believed a child should experience. She knew it well from her own childhood with her step-father, Frank, before her mom had divorced his ass. “No. Maybe we’re just too different from them for it to work like their relationship.”
McCoy grunted in acknowledgement under her and leaned his cheek into her hair. “You shouldn’t compare yourself to them, kid. Hell, that Kirk was a man and had a very different upbringing just like that Spock had a different life. He wasn’t you.”

Jim nodded under his cheek and tucked her toes into the cushion. She was on the cusp of a new life and it was one that wasn’t what she ever thought would happen. The darkness of the room provided a welcome shroud to let her show some of what she felt on her face. “True, but sometimes I can't help it. I think-“ Pausing, Jim struggled with how to phrase what she meant. “-I think maybe I need to find myself and define who I really am and, to do that. Maybe it's better that I'm not with him. Maybe this will be better for me. I never got a chance to really do something on my own and carve my own path and this may be the path for me.”

Bones let go of her hand and pulled away causing her to sit up and face him. Kind, hazel eyes looked at her and Jim smiled. “I think that’s a very good thing for you to do.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“I think...” Bones frowned for a minute and she was almost nervous at what he was going to say. “I think that you’re going to be amazing at anything you do. For so long you've tied your identity and who you were to Spock that you weren’t Jamison Kirk anymore; at least not the one I knew from when we first met. It’s not that I didn’t think you were any less, but I don’t believe any woman should ever need a man to define who she is. I damn well know that you don’t need that hobgoblin.” Warmth suffused her chest and the lump in her throat caused her to choke up at his support. “I’m proud of you, kid, and I’m honored to be a part of your life.”

Jim patted his arm and stood, rubbing away the sudden tears that threatened to fall. She held out her arm and pulled her best friend up. “Well, Commander McCoy, let’s get this show on the road. We’ve got a dog and pony show awaiting us in San Francisco to get to so we can get those new bars on our sleeves.”

Bones’ snort made her laugh. “Yes, ma’am, Admiral Kirk.”

xXx

The sight of her mother in the front row of her promotion ceremony had almost caused her to trip and fall in front of the small gathering of admirals and other Starfleet officers in the room. Thankfully, she’d only had a small misstep on her way to Admiral Komack.

It had only been a small affair, an unusual occurrence for such a high honor, but Jim wasn’t too bothered. She’d never particularly liked large crowds and she still wasn’t feeling a hundred per cent. She hoped these issues that had been plaguing her since her bond breaking with Spock would stop soon. They should. Spock had been pretty clear when he’d explained...well, she guessed ‘told her’ that it’d be temporary right before he’d broken the bond. God. It had felt like he’d torn her mind, soul, and heart into pieces.

Funny. Glancing around the room at her peers; no longer her superiors, she’d always thought she’d end up an admiral in the distant future when she had white hair and was stuck lumbering around with a cane. She’d also always believed Spock would have been by her side; stoic and strong, supporting her always. Shaking off her heartbreak, Jim forced a smile on her face as she shook, yet another, faceless official’s hand and accepted the congratulations with as much grace as was possible.
Well, she guessed being the youngest Admiral in Starfleet was the next best thing. At least she’d still look hot.

A small, tasteful cake had been cut and she’d been ridiculously excited to get the corner piece. Small victories. The conference room was decorated with United Federation of Planets flags, Starfleet emblems and small banners, along with smaller fabric pieces showcasing each of the planets aligned with the Federation. Servers with glasses of champagne and non-alcoholic beverages maneuvered through the crowd and Jim felt a sense of peace and a small amount of pride and excitement at her future however it had come about.

“Jim!”

Turning, her smile turned genuine now that the shock of seeing her had worn off. Winona Kirk, beautiful and elegant despite her own advancing years, made her way across the room to her daughter and only child. She was wearing her old dress uniform, her commander’s insignia rank showing on her sleeves. She may have retired with honors five years ago, but military tradition was she’d always be a commander with all the rights and respect directed her way.

“Mom?” The older Kirk pulled her into a hug and Jim leaned into the contact, relaxing and grateful she was here. The newly minted admiral pulled back to look her mom over, her curiosity outweighing her happiness for the time bring. “What are you doing here?”

Winona rolled her eyes and crossed her arms, her own champagne flute held tightly. “Seriously? What kind of mother would I be if I missed my baby’s promotion ceremony?”

“How’d you even know?”

Growing serious, she gave her a sad smile and relaxed her posture, nodding at Bones who was currently being accosted by a young yeoman who was being rather enthusiastic about becoming his assistant. The young man was wanting to enroll in the academy to be an officer rather than enlisted person. Jim knew people and she could tell that the young man would go far. “Leonard told me.” She said and it was so loaded with the unsaid things that he’d had to have told her more than that.

“Yeah.” Jim says, smile slipping momentarily. She took a closer look at her mom and indicated the uniform she was sporting. “Hey, you’re wearing it.”

Spinning around in a small circle, she grinned and shrugged. “Still fits even after all these years.” Silver streaks lined her hair and laugh lines surrounded her own blue eyes, but she looked comfortable despite her location in a room filled with Starfleet personnel. There had been a time shortly after her husband’s death that she had despised everything to do with the ‘fleet, but she’d eventually changed her mind when she remembered just how much it had meant to both her and George Kirk that he’d been willing to sacrifice himself for both of them and Starfleet.

“You look good.”

“You know it!” Straightening her gray jacket, the older blonde eyes darted over her daughter, carefully assessing her. “And you don’t look too bad yourself, but you do look like a Klingon who discovered his last barrel of bloodwine has gone off.”

Jim snorted. “You’d give Bones a run for his money if you keep doing metaphors like that.”

Jim sighed, feeling lonely despite the presence of so many people. At least she felt a lot better with Bones’ new med regimen. “I just always thought-“
“What?”

She shook her head. “It’s stupid.”

Winona, ever skilled at knowing what her daughter was thinking, jumped in. “You always thought you’d be commanding a starship until you died? Or that if you got roped into the dreaded ranks of the admiralty behind a desk that it’d happen with Spock and your crew here cheering you on?”

“Both? I guess?” She reluctantly admitted.

Her mom shrugged and rolled her eyes at her. “Who the fuck cares? The important people are here.”

And this was one of the reasons she loved her mom. A lot of people thought Jim got her sass and attitude from her dad, George Kirk, but they were so wrong. George Kirk had always been the calm one who tempered his wife, complementing her perfectly. Winona Kirk was a strong willed and force to be reckoned with. The older Kirk had quite a few citations in her file for being a smart ass.

“A bunch of stuffy old admirals?” Jim joked back.

“Hey! I am neither stuffy nor am I an admiral. I’m a hard-working, hot, young former Starfleet engineer that now loves to-“

Jim snorted and tried to hide her laugh.

“I am!” She protested. “Just ask Admiral Thomas over there.” Turning, she caught the mentioned man’s attention and gestured with her glass. “He thinks so.” She winked at him and Jim groaned and hid her face at the thought of her mom corrupting the poor man. Admiral Thomas turned beet red and moved to hide behind a group of people at the speed of light.

“Mom! Don’t harass the admirals. They stand no chance against you.”

“You mean against a Kirk’s charm.” She quipped.

Moving to the back of the room, Jim took advantage of a passing server and grabbed a flute of juice while her mom followed.

“Can’t believe they made you a teacher. You used to drive them nuts when you were growing up.”

“Well, now I get to drive the students nuts. It’s like coming full circle.”

Growing serious, her expression turned to one of hurt and a spike of guilt stabbed at the younger woman since she knew where this talk was going.

“Why didn’t you call me?”

Jim sipped her drink, unsure of the reason why she didn’t. There were too many to count.

“Is it because you thought that I would think you gave up with him?” She asked “Or that you were supposed to have some sort of great love like mine was shown as?”

Honestly, Jim wasn’t sure.

Laying her hand on Jim’s arm, the young blonde locked her jaw, fighting against the sudden, overwhelming grief of the loss that came back to her with a vengeance.
“Honey, those things aren’t always true.” She squeezed her arm and Jim took a shuddering breath in an attempt to calm herself.

“Don’t get me wrong, I loved your father more than life itself and we were that great love, but who’s to say that five, ten, maybe twenty years down the road that it’d still be the same? Relationships change; sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Sometimes they don’t and sometimes they break off completely. It’s a part of life and I don’t care about that. What I do care about is my little girl-“

“Mom! I’m a grown woman!”

“Sorry. My little admiral and my soon-to-be grandchild. That’s what’s important to me.”

Jim was damned lucky to have so many people supporting her. She’d never thought she’d be this blessed especially considering what she’d been accused of. Smiling weakly, Jim wilted, her ever present headache starting to make her head throb a little and Winona nodded. “You look done in, sweetheart. C’mon. Let’s grab Leonard and blow this popsicle stand.”

Jim’s eyes darted around the room at the party in her honor was still going strong. “I can’t. It’s-“

She ignored her daughter’s protests. “C’mon. It’s the right of the guest of honor to sneak out when they want to. Besides, what are they gonna do? Keelhaul you? Trust me, as an engineer it’s a pain in the ass and takes too much time and effort. It’s easier to just scramble you in a transporter.”

Jim rolled her eyes at her dark humor, but felt lighter than she had in days.

Bones sidled up next to them, his own gaze eyeing Jim up and down in that annoying, professional way. “Best idea I’ve heard all day. This monkey suit is strangling me. I swear the neck of this thing has shrunk.” Holding his arms out to them, he smiled and his accent got stronger. “Ladies?”

Winona placed her hand to her chest where her heart was while Jim scowled good-natured at the title. “Southern gentlemen to the core and a man after my own heart.”

Bones suddenly flushed worse than admiral Thomas at the blatant, harmless flirting when she put her arm through his and Jim followed suit, chuckling and allowing him to guide them out through the side door.
Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Hi all!
Well, here’s another chapter of angst for everyone! Some joy, but things are coming to a head in regards to the delivery of baby Lily and we’re finally getting to where the teaser of chapter 1 is!
The next chapter will skip ahead further into the pregnancy and things will start moving quicker. I’ll soon be introducing more characters and soon Spock will discover just what he’s done! I’m looking forward to everyone seeing just how he reacts!
Yes, I’m totally destroying everything for Jim, but I promise things will get better for her as time goes on.
Here’s to another chapter of drama!
Also, I am working on some fun stuff for “Unknown Bond” which is a total contrast to this story and it’ll be so darned cute!
Sorry for the delay. I have been procrastinating because I got into some shows on Netflix! Lol!

Chapter 19

Leonard McCoy carried the platter of tomatoes, onions, and lettuce over to the kitchen table and placed it down next to the condiments. His mind was turning over the obstetrician report for the third time in as many days and he felt absolute boiling rage at Spock for his actions that had likely contributed to this latest complication in the health of his two patients. While his suspicions and beliefs as to the root cause of Jim’s sudden health problems had been dismissed and ignored by the healers he knew he had to be right. In all of his time practicing medicine, his gut instincts had never been wrong before.

The secondary effects were mounting up in number and now a whole new set of ugly complications had reared it’s head, affecting another person important to Jim.

Then again, he also blamed himself. While this diagnosis was not as dangerous as it could have been, it still would destroy his best friend. Scans had shown it, but it hadn’t been able to confirmed until Jim had been further along her pregnancy. Her medical team hadn’t wanted to cause the mother-to-be unnecessary stress until the evidence was no longer undeniable and new treatment plans were in place.

There had always been a chance, but he’d become complacent in his hopes that Jim would beat the odds just as she always had. It had been a risk versus benefit decision. Treating Jim would make the chance of miscarriage lower than not treating. The medications to stabilize Jim had done their job, but the side effects had done what he had feared. They had caused the baby a birth defect.

Over the past three months, Jim had slowly started to heal from the trauma of what had happened on the Enterprise. She’d started to become more confident and outgoing again. It had also been a little over a month since she had had a seizure so that had added to her more positive outlook. The alert and aid dog he had suggested had been an enormous part of that, giving her more
independence and a sort of safety net when her mother and he couldn’t be there.

She’d started to have more moments of happiness than depression and he hated that he would have to tell her something that might damage that fragile peace that she had gained.

His eyes strayed over to where Jim and Winona were currently laughing and talking with Ben Sulu. Little Demora, now eight, had her head resting on Jim’s prominent bump while she ran her fingers through the little girl’s hair.

Blue eyes, still bright with laughter caught his.

“Bones, where are those burgers and ribs you promised?”

“I thought a true southern boy knew how to operate a grill.” Winona chimed in and left her seat to help him with the overloaded table.

“Can’t rush perfection.” He grumbled and the smile he was gifted made it worth it.

Lifting her head, Winona frowned at him. She’d become pretty adept at reading him.

“Do you need any help?” Jim called from the couch and he pointed at her when she tried to rise.

“Don’t you dare!”

She rolled her eyes in surrender and settled back onto the cushions while Ben chuckled good-natured at her scolding. The second she focused her attention back onto their guests, his face dropped.

“Leonard, why don’t I come and help with the food.” Winona told him, her voice low so Jim wouldn’t hear.

Giving a curt nod, the doctor made his way outside. The older woman followed moments later, a beer in each hand. She passed one over and McCoy was grateful to have something to do with his hands.

The yard Jim had wasn’t large by any means, but it was beautiful. Multiple flower beds added bright splashes of color now that spring had arrived to San Francisco and the warm, fresh air gave him pause. The years in space had given him the ability to appreciate both parts of his life. At heart, he’d always prefer his feet on the ground. Following Jim into the black had brought him back to life to where Earth was no longer a source of pain and bad memories.

“I have a feeling there’s something you’re not telling us. More importantly, I think there’s something you’re hiding from Jim.” She took a sip of her own and sat down on the patio chair, patting the one next to herself which he took with a sigh.

“You know you Kirk women are too damn smart and annoyingly perceptive for your own good.”

Winona snorted and continued to sip her drink, patiently waiting for him to go on.

“This is really something that needs to be told to Jim first.”

“It’s not good, is it?”

He shook his head at the non-question. Winona already knew the answer. “No. No, it’s not.”

Slender fingers stopped his own from where he’d been peeling the label off his bottle and McCoy
looked up into Winona’s sympathetic eyes, so much like his friend’s that it hurt. “Oh, Leonard, you must have been carrying this guilt and fear and worry for months. You are not Atlas holding the heavens upon your shoulders. We are all here to help. You’re not alone. Let us share this burden together.”

Shoulders slumping, he closed his eyes in pain. “Just...just be there for her tomorrow.”

“Hey.” The older woman shook his arm and he looked up. “We both will be. She needs support and you can’t do that if you’re doing everything by yourself. I’ve always said, plan for the worst, but hope for the best. Jim is also not a child that needs to be protected as such. She can weather the strongest of storms and still come out kicking.”

McCoy opened his mouth to reply when he was suddenly hit with a blast of cold water. Sputtering, the older man caught sight of the impish grin of Demora Sulu, Jim standing behind her doubled over in laughter. Both were holding phaser water pistols.

“Oh-oh my god, Bones!” She gasped in between bouts. “Your face!”

The mini-Sulu pointed at Jim, her face serious, but there was no remorse evident in those almond shaped eyes. “Miss Jim made me do it!”

“Traitor!”

“Why you little-“ He growled at the, now smirking blonde as Ben came out behind them with two more water phasers in his hands.

“Time to even the score, Doctor?” He tossed one to the doctor that he swiftly caught. “Girls against boys?”

A slow, evil smile spread across his face. “Why I think that’s a brilliant idea, Ben.”

Jim squeaked and the pair ran as McCoy took aim, missing spectacularly.

As they chased each other around the small yard, Winona watching over them and Sadie barking as the retriever tried to catch the streams of water from everyone’s phasers, Leonard’s thoughts of everything going bad when Jim would receive the bad news and his worries about her current health issues drifted to the background. They’d deal with whatever came tomorrow. Today? Today was a day that should be treasured and enjoyed. A small light in the darkness.

Jim felt numb, her heart absolutely broken again. The guilt consumed her and she felt like a failure of a mother despite her child still growing inside of her. Words like cardiac malformation, birth defect, atrial septal defect, corrective surgical intervention, medication therapies washed over her.

Her mom was squeezing her hand so hard that the bones ground together and it hurt, but she didn’t really feel it. Her focus was on the holographic images being shown to her and explained by the three doctors she trusted more than anything.

The aid dog that had been recommended by Bones and her neurologist perked up at sensing Jim’s distress, her ears lifting and Jim absently pet her. Sadie had been a godsend. Not only had she helped with the emotional ups and downs she’d been experiencing, but she was Jim’s additional protector. She gave the young Admiral the independence to be able to do her job and not have to have a constant babysitter.

Bones, Dr. Banwell, and Dr. Makot sat opposite her as she was given the terrifying news, empathy...
and sympathy warring on their features. At six months along in her pregnancy, she’d suspected something was wrong with how Bones and the doctors assigned to her care had started upping her visits. She just hadn’t expected the nightmare she’d been going through with her constant migraines and occasional seizures to affect the tiny life growing inside of her. She almost felt betrayed that they hadn’t warned her sooner.

Sure, the risks had been clearly stated, but Jim had hoped and had believed that she’d be fine. She’d discovered the baby was going to be a girl two months ago, but nothing like this had been talked about.

“Now, Miss Kirk, this isn’t as bad as you think. I know it sounds scary, but the hole in the baby’s heart and the abnormal valve can easily be repaired if necessary and managed with medication therapy. There’s a chance that the atrial septal heart defect can close on it’s own and the valve can be cared for with non-invasive care.” Dr. Makot zoomed in on the heart and pointed at the various chambers, valves, and arteries. “There’s a slight murmur and mitral valve regurgitation which will need to be monitored, but it appears stable. She’ll need to be monitored by a cardiologist.”

The blonde nodded dumbly, her mind blank and not really fully absorbing everything they were saying.

She watched as he focused the images of her child’s face and moving in and out going through the medical jargon. All she could see was the damage she had done by accepting the damn medications.

“Right. Okay.” She said, her voice hollow.

Dr. Banwell, her neurologist took over, her smile turning more reassuring. “Jim, the good news is there were no skeletal deformities, craniofacial damage, or neural tube defects. Her brain is developing normally so there won’t be anything else and, right now, all she needs to do is grow and you take care of yourself. You’ve not been putting on adequate weight and there’s a few other things I’m concerned about, but we can deal with that another time.”

Jim left the office in a daze, her mom on one side and Bones with Sadie on the other, silent sentinels keeping her from fully losing it and breaking down. Her hand rubbed her swollen belly where her baby was and she clenched her jaw to try and not show any outward sign of just how much this was affecting her.

It didn’t matter how much of an effort she was making, her best friend and mom knew her too well. She almost hated that they did. They started to steer her towards the direction of the house, but Jim halted in her steps which caused the pair to move a few steps ahead before they realized she wasn’t by them.

Bones turned first, a puzzled expression on his face. While he was wearing his medical uniform, he was her friend right now and not her doctor since they’d left the office. “Jim?”

“I’ve got a meeting with the admiralty and a class to tend to.”

Winona sighed and came close, her hands reaching out to hold her shoulders. “Honey, nobody is going to fault you for taking some time off.”

Her head snapped away from her mom’s face and Jim looked at the people walking over near the quad. It was winter and the overcast, gray skies matched her feelings exactly. Students dressed in the winter uniforms hurried to classes, lunch, and wherever they were supposed to be.
“I can’t, mom. I need something to think about right now.”

Her mom took her hand and nodded, understanding her need to distract herself for the moment.

Bones made a sound of disapproval, but jerked his head to know to leave her be for the moment. She knew she’d have to deal with this, just not...right now.

“Okay, sweetheart.”

The always present headache spiked enough to where Jim lifted her hand, pressing fingers to her temple.

“You ok, kid?”

Jim smiled at her friend’s concern and nodded as she stepped back, Winona’s hand slipping out of her’s. “Yeah. I’ll-uh-I’ll see you tonight.”

She walked away and made her way through the security gate with Sadie bouncing next to her, acknowledging the greetings of various cadets who respectfully saluted her. This she could do. This is what she needed right now; something that she could control and make a difference because she sure as hell couldn’t control everything.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Well, she’s finally here! Miss Lily has arrived!

I want to recommend a wonderful story I’m enjoying so much and I hope everyone will read it and love it just as much as I do!
The tag name of the writer is SupposedToBeWriting and the story is “The Prodigal (or, A Planet Called Petunia). It’s on AO3 and it is AMAZING!!! Please read it!

Anyway, hope this chapter is enjoyed and I love hearing from everyone and thank you so much for everyone who takes the time to give me kudos and review!

DarkWaters

Chapter Twenty

“Get your ass over here, Uncle Bones!”

McCoy rolled his eyes and shut down his computer screen to join his friend. Jim was resting in her biobed after a long and stressful labor and he intended to keep it that way for as long as possible. Her last month of her pregnancy had been especially hard on her and her obstetrician had made the decision to induce early for both the benefit of Jim and her baby.

Jim was holding baby Lily under her gown with a blanket covering both of them, reverently gently stroking her cheeks and pointed ears with her fingers. “Isn’t she amazing?”

He’d always been a sucker for babies and this one was no different. Little Lily was doing far better than what had been predicted and that had been a huge relief for all involved. McCoy leaned forward and pulled back the blanket slightly, pretending to consider Jim’s pronouncement. “I dunno.” He smiled and looked up. “I think she’s better than amazing, kid, just like her mom.”

The smile that lit up Jim’s face was absolutely blinding and, for one small moment, the hell that his friend had gone through since her bond breaking initiated by that green-blooded computer faded away. Jim looked pale, exhausted, and her hair was hanging in short, frizzy, sweaty strands around her face, but the glow of absolute happiness took it away.

He’s noticed a change in the few days that Lily had been born. Jim seemed to be at a sort of peace as if the child’s very existence calmed her. Lily seemed to crave the skin to skin contact, frequently fussing until she was placed on Jim’s chest and cuddled. Occasionally, he’d been forced to do the same when Jim was sleeping and so had Winona. Every time he held her, it was like a wave of happiness and absolute contentment wrapped around him in a soft, comfortable blanket.

Lily was like a balm, soothing all of Jim’s hurt.

McCoy had seen the neural scans of Lily and it seemed she had an empathic ability. Unlike Spock who was a touch telepath, Lily seemed to be more of a touch empath probably due to her limited Vulcan genetics.

Tiny whimpers reached his ears and jerked him away from his thoughts.
“I think she’s hungry.” Jim told him and shifted the baby in her arms. “Would you hand me a bottle?”

McCoy walked to the drawer on her left and pulled out a ready made bottle. He quickly snapped the seal, placing a nipple on it.

The blonde’s lips turned downwards and he could see a small sign of disappointment in her blue eyes.

Frowning, he handed Jim the bottle which little Lily took eagerly. “What’s wrong, kid?”

Jim sighed and held the infant closer. “I know it’s stupid, but I wish I could breast feed her.”

His heart ached at such a small thing that his friend wanted, but it wasn’t to be. The second Lily had been born, they had finally been able to adjust the blonde admiral’s meds to what was truly needed.

During the pregnancy, many options had had to be dismissed for the safety of Lily. After they were able to make the changes, Jim’s neural patterns had stabilized to an acceptable level; not perfect, but it was enough to where Dr. Banwell had felt more comfortable with it. They’d only gotten better when Jim held the tiny quarter Vulcan child. It was like Lily’s very presence was a supplement to their care, giving Jim some strength.

Everything Jim was stuck taking would transfer into her breast milk and risk the baby’s health. “I know.” Moving closer, he lay a large hand on her bare shoulder. “Breast may be considered best, but, in my opinion, fed is best.” Jim gave him a forced smile and he squeezed her in an attempt to comfort her. “Besides, I think that Lily and you are bonding well enough without it. She’s happy and healthy and and so are you. I can see a difference already.”

Jim hummed and smiled as she cooed at the infant. To most people, everything would seem perfectly normal, but, to McCoy’s trained eyes, he could see a slight squint to the way Jim was looking at her child. Small lines fanned out from the corners of her eyes making the blonde look older than her years. He decided to schedule an ophthalmology visit within the next two weeks. He didn’t want to intrude too much on Jim’s time with more medical worries. “I can ‘feel’ her, you know? She’s this presence like a bright, burning star when we touch. It’s kind of as if I’ve been cold like space and she’s warming me and bringing me back to life. I love her so much.”

She shifted her hold, pressing a kiss to the dark fuzzy down of Lily’s hair and lay her cheek on top. Jim took a slow, deep breath and closed her eyes in bliss. “She even smells perfect, Bones. It’s like a mix of clean, sunshine, and baby powder. I could breathe her in for forever.”

McCoy’s features softened and he took a seat next to her, grateful to get off his feet for the first time in hours. He just watched them and was enjoying the peace until the terminal next to him went off signaling test results had been sent to him. He hesitated, not wanting to leave this moment.

Jim lifted her head and fixed him with a serious look, her blue eyes tired and solemn. “I wanted to talk to you about something. I’ve already discussed it with my mom and she agreed. I’m hoping you’ll do the same.”

He moved to sit next to her on the bed. Somehow, this seemed like something that required a closeness that was physical and emotional. “Yeah?”

“I want to appoint you and my mom as Lily’s legal guardians in a joint custody agreement if something should happen to me and I can’t care for her.”
McCoy jolted in shock at Jim’s request. He knew she trusted him, but to honor him with giving him rights to her child? Sure, he’d expected Winona to be titled as a secondary guardian, but he certainly hadn’t anticipated him being included.

His reaction must have been interpreted as a ‘no’ because Jim’s face fell. “I totally understand if you don’t want-“

He quickly shook himself out of his thoughts. “No, kid. It’s not that I don’t want to. It’s just...unexpected.” Sighing, he relaxed his posture. “I thought you’d just want your mom to be her guardian alone.”

Jim finished Lily’s feed and placed her over her shoulder to burp her. The change in position allowed her to fully face him. He could see she was evaluating him with sharp blue eyes and he hoped he wasn’t found to be lacking.

He needn’t have worried because when her hand shot out and grabbed his in a tight grip, he could see everything written on her face. There was a sisterly love, a trust he felt unworthy of, and hope; hope for her own future and hope for her daughter’s that he would keep the both of them safe.

McCoy squeezed back and the blonde nodded, knowing that he would be there no matter what.

“I want you to be there with my mom just in case. I don’t want her to be alone. She’s strong, but she’s already lost too much and I want you two to support each other.” Jim’s jaw tightened and the extreme emotions threatened to overwhelm her, but she carefully kept them in check. “You’re my rock, my touchstone, and my best friend. I want her to be with you because you make me a better person and I don’t want her to fall. You’ll catch her just as you caught me.”

He had known Jim had these feelings for him, but he hadn’t realized just how deep they went. He swallowed against his own extreme feelings, his eyes watering with how much he felt. Dammit, Jim! How could she say something like that! “I’d be honored.”

Jim’s shoulders relaxed as if a huge weight had been lifted. Leaning forward, he hugged her and held her until Lily began to protest because the tiny little 1/4 Vulcan was being squished.

Just as things began to settle in a comfortable silence, his computer terminal beeped. When he went over and read the results, he debated telling Jim. On the one hand, it could further hurt her and bring up the past pains she was working so hard to heal from, but, on the other hand, he felt she needed to know and have this formally addressed.

Jim looked so peaceful as she kissed the top of her new daughter’s head. McCoy’s brows drew down in indecision and Jim spotted it, knowing Jim too well. “Bones? What is it?”

He blew out a frustrated breath and downloaded the data to a PADD for her to be able to see. Jim swapped Lily for it and he rocked her as she started to whimper at the loss of physical contact with her mother.

As she squinted hard and started to read, her expression turned dark and he felt awful for even doing the damn test. “Bones, What is this?”

His insides twisted in guilt. “I did a genetic paternal test.” McCoy tapped the results screen and the green ‘99.999999999999% Positive Result’ enlarged. He did this for two reasons. Jim’s vision and to show what it said in no uncertain terms. “It shows Spock is definitely the father.”

Jim’s eyes turned absolutely glacial while her cheeks turned a disturbing contrast of bright red, but
her tone was as impressively emotionless as a Vulcan. “Why would you do this? Did you run the test because you think I lied about who is genetically Lily’s father?”

McCoy backpedaled. “No, Jim!”

“Then why?” She asked quietly.

Those two simple words seemed to brand themselves onto his brain and he could fairly feel the hurt behind them. “I wanted you to have it because I worry about the future. You’re a high-profile ranking officer and constantly in the public eye here on Earth and in Starfleet and the Federation.” Jim’s lips turned down, accepting the sad truth of her situation. “I also don’t want Lily to ever question anything if she hears, is told, or certain beliefs of others and things discussed about you because I know they’re not true and this gives no doubt about it.” Jim’s mouth thinned at the emotions she forcefully held back and he sat next to her once more.

McCoy continued. “I want you to be able to show her the truth of the matter and it also answers all questions in her papers. Spock denied parentage as a reason for the bondbreaking and divorce, but he also had a small section of the possibility of him being the donor and still signing away legal rights. His lawyer probably included it to ensure all avenues were thoroughly addressed to fully separate everything that connected the three of you.” McCoy sighed and held the child tight to his chest, so tight that Lily grunted at the pressure. “I wanted to protect the both of you because he could try and protest his rights being severed because of these results. Your lawyer, Sam Cogley, suggested it. This way, it’s all set up and he cannot file due process against you citing failure to ensure her genetic heritage.”

“Better to ask forgiveness than permission?”

“Something like that.” Tiny fingers grasped his larger pointer finger while big, beautiful brown eyes looked up at him as he glanced at the precious bundle in his arms. “Do you think you’ll tell her some day?”

“If she asks and when she’s older.” Running her fingers through her short hair, Jim’s cheeks puffed as she blew out a calming breath. “It doesn’t matter, anyway. She’s mine for as long as is possible.” Bones and nothing knowing the she might be right in her assessment of her life and what the future may hold. “No genetics test nor will any part of who she is, what she’s made up of, or what she’ll do in her life will ever change that.”

xXx

As Spock pulled on his gold captain’s uniform shirt, his eyes, as they often did, strayed to the side of the bed where his former bondmate would frequently lay next to him. It had been one-hundred and fifty-four days since her abrupt departure from the Enterprise and his rapid promotion to captain, a role he had never anticipated or wanted, but needs must.

The amount of experienced officers enrolled in Starfleet was still low and Spock had been given little choice in the matter of him being promoted to captain of the Enterprise, Kirk’s recommendation going so far as to be more of a curse than a blessing.

He arranged the sheets into precise, neat folds around the mattress and straightened to look over his handiwork. It was perfectly regulation and far different from when Kirk had been there. Every small change stuck out sharply in his mind the hurt and anger from her betrayal never faded even with passage of time.

Since the captain’s departure, he had received multiple messages from the doctor to the point he
had been forced to order Nyota to block communications from him and obtain a restraining order. Every comm had gone unopened and pushed away into a locked, private file in case they were needed in a future case against them. He refused to be weak and engage McCoy in pointless discussions. He’d done the same to Kirk despite her silence.

The Vulcan captain tugged his uniform into place and made his way to the cafeteria, electing to partake of his morning nourishment among the crew. He had observed that the crew’s enthusiasm and professionalism increased by 0.425% when he was present. It had been something he had learned from Kirk during her tenure on the ship and it was only logical to continue with that tradition.

Crew members saluted as he passed them in the corridors and Spock nodded in acknowledgment of their adherence to protocol. Most regulations had been returned to order when he had taken over. It had not been a seamless transition when Kirk had left, but things had settled especially when it had become known that she had recommended him for captain. It was strange that she would have done such a thing, but he supposed it had been more for the benefit of the crew rather than himself. It was both a blessing and a curse.

He went to collect his tray and saw Commanders Sulu, Scott, and lieutenant Chekov sitting together and sharing a PADD between them.

“Oh, she’s a bonny wee lass.” The engineer stated with an affectionate smile.

Pausing, Spock listened, curious as to who they were speaking about.

His First Officer, Sulu, passed the tech over to Chekov. “Demora has decided she is now an aunt and it’s her responsibility to teach her everything she knows.” He chuckled shook his head. “Ben says that if it’s getting into trouble then she’s definitely the best one for the job.”

“Oh, aye. I think already Jim has that skill down pat. Tha doctor probably has his hands full.” The Scotsman laughed.

“I am surprised she does not heff blue eyes.”

“Ben asked the doctor and he was told that it’s a recessive gene that causes that. Both parents have to have it for that to happen.” Sulu answered.

Ah. It appeared that the child had been born. A minute frown appeared on Spock’s forehead and his hand tightened on the ladle which would allow him to spoon the targelian eggs onto his plate. The reminder that she had continued the pregnancy caused his control to slip. The metal began to bend under his grip and Spock had to force himself to release the utensil lest his lapse be noticed.

His eyes drifted surreptitiously to the image displayed on the screen of the Commander’s PADD and he saw the flash of a small pointed ear practically hidden beneath a pink blanket that was held by a smiling human child of Asian descent.

“How is she doing? Her last comm seemed...off. She looked pale.” Scott asked.

Sulu paused, a minute frown appearing on his face. “I-uh-“

Collecting the last of his meal, he walked across the room and, the second that the trio’s eyes spotted him, the screen on the commander’s PADD was shut down.

A chorus of ‘sir’ and ‘captain’ greeted him and Spock nodded, joining them. While he would never admit it, he missed the...camaraderie and social aspect that had accompanied his interactions with
the majority of the senior staff when Kirk had been in command. While they were respectful and professional on duty, they never sought him out or included him during off duty hours nor did they ever discuss anything not relating to work. It was quite similar to when he had first joined Starfleet. His only companion was Nyota.

Their relationship had remained as friends despite his hope that they might be able to rekindle what they had once had.

The silence was deafening and almost accusatory at the fact that Kirk had left the ship. It was not his doing or his fault that she had been unfaithful and had been forced to leave due to the pregnancy resulting from it. Spock knew that many of Kirk’s friends on the Enterprise kept in contact with her and the doctor, the pair using an unknown private account. Nyota had once mentioned it in passing. When Spock had reacted irritably she had not mentioned it again.

Chewing his eggs, Spock admitted to mild curiosity as to what the captain was doing and where she was. He would not, however, ask. He also would never begrudge the crew contact with her as long as it did not interfere with their working relationship and duties aboard the ship. It had not as of yet.

“Mister Scott, I have read your proposal into the possibility of isolinear chips replacing the former system as an upgrade.” Spock tried.

The engineer shifted in his seat and his expression changed from one of neutrality to hope. “Oh aye, sir?”

“The idea is not without merit. Perhaps it may be able to be implemented on a partial trial basis next year when we next visit the Utopia Planetia shipyards.”

His face fell quickly in disappointment and he picked at his own plate with a false smile. “That sounds like a plan, but I had been hoping for sooner. The USS Excelsior is doing a trial run now. They’re expected to have it fully installed and functional by the time she’s ready for her new captain which will be in about nine months.” He grimaced and began to clear his tray. “I’d been wanting to be a part of the team giving feedback and assisting with any bugs that may come up.”

The captain’s lips turned down. He had thought his offer would have been seen in a positive light. It was only logical to focus on the current mission at present. “I would have thought that the Enterprise took precedence.”

Scott straightened in his seat, his features suddenly blank. “Of course, Captain.” Standing, he picked up his tray. “If ye’ll excuse me, gentlemen, my silver lady waits for no man. I’d better get to engineering now if I’m tah make it on time.”

Not long after, both Sulu and Chekov stood. “I’d better head out myself. Pretty sure Gamma shift is ready to be relieved.”

Chekov said his goodbyes and soon Spock was left alone. It had been yet another thing that had been a disconcerting fact once Kirk had left. His only constant companion on his off-duty hours had been Nyota.
Alrighty then!
Well, now we’ve come full circle to the beginning and we get to meet a new person which is gonna be fun! 😊
I included the first chapter as a where we are in the timeline sort of thing. As we can see, Jim, like any other person, has some bouts of depression, but also is building herself up to try and move on.
We’re getting there with everything and I cannot wait until I write the chapter where Spock sees exactly what he has done! *rubs hands evilly*
The next chapter will, likely, have a section where we see Sybok’s POV. For those who haven’t watched the older movies, Sybok is Spock’s older brother who was disowned by Sarek and exiled for wanting to express emotions. He’s known as V’tosh Ka’tur which means “Vulcan without logic”. They’re shunned from Vulcan society and are seen as shameful.
Anyway, sorry for the late update and I hope it was worth the wait. I just bought a house and it’s been chaotic with the move, getting kids set up in new schools, and dealing with hidden problems missed by the home inspector.
Thank you for your patience and please let me know what you think...
DarkWaters

Chapter Twenty-One
"Jim, honey? Are you ok?"

Jamison Kirk startled at the sound of her mother's tentative voice and scrubbed her eyes furiously. She tried to rid herself of the evidence of her crying and her heartbreak at feeling so alone despite the many people in her home supporting her.

"Yeah, mom. I'm fine." She answered in a hollow voice. The words came automatically. She'd said them so many times to force herself in an effort to believe them. There was an aching emptiness in her mind but it wasn't just an emptiness. It seemed like more. It was almost like a raw, bleeding, festering wound but it felt empty and she had to ignore it. She needed to. Someone more important than herself; more important than anything in the universe needed her and she'd be damned if she let herself be so selfish as to deny her anything but her best but he should be here. If not for Jim then for the baby.

A small whimper dragged her from her morose thoughts and Jim looked down at the warm bundle in her arms. Her daughter, Lily T'Priah, Lily meaning innocence and purity, T'Priah for after the pre-reform Vulcan goddess of fertility, burrowed closer to her breast and a sensation of calm flowed through Jim, soothing the jagged edges in both her heart and mind, healing her in ways she couldn't explain. She'd chosen names both human and Vulcan for her. Jim had wanted to honor both aspects of her heritage and she hoped she'd done it right.

Her little girl helped to ease the daily agony from the broken bond Spock had left her with and it broke Jim's heart just a little more that this amazing little person loved her so much. There was no
judgement, just a pure love that flowed into Jim's mind. Jim had once thought she'd found that with her former husband and bondmate but that was not to be. She was now so blessed to have it with their daughter despite Spock not believing she was his.

God, she loved Lily so much. She was her everything. Jim gently stroked the soft, black hair, running her fingertips over the delicate pointed ears and she smiled at the tiny yawn from her. "Hey. Shh. Mommy's here."

Jim closed her eyes and tried to welcome the warmth from her daughter but an insistent sudden pounding in her head that had been a chronic thing for almost a year caused her to falter. She could feel a stabbing sensation behind her right eye and Winona moved closer, recognizing the signs of an oncoming migraine and she quickly closed the blinds to obscure the blue of the Pacific Ocean from her bedroom window to shroud the room in darkness. It was too reminiscent of a funeral when Lily's birth should be a celebration but the selfish part of Jim welcomed the dark to help with the pain.

"Do you need something for the pain?"

Jim tried to shake her head but the nausea started too quickly for her to deny the severity of this episode and she barely had time to shift her newborn daughter before she turned her head and vomited up her breakfast into the trash next to her bed.

Jim quickly handed over Lily to Winona the moment she felt Sadie, her seizure aid dog, lay her golden head on her lap and give a single bark to warn her.

"Damn it!"

Her mom sprang into action and gently placed her granddaughter into the bassinet attached to the bed. Jim saw the familiar visual halos signaling another seizure and felt the sting of the hypo to her neck right before everything went black.

Winona Kirk watched in horror at the sight of her daughter stiffening and staring straight ahead, her hands twitching slightly and she started counting in her head even though the medical monitoring bracelet was doing it for her and would alert her if she needed a second dose of meds and a trip to the hospital. This was a bad one. It had been over a month since she'd had an episode that had broken through the meds Leonard prescribed. She hated this. She hated not knowing what was causing this. She hated Spock for the way he'd left Jim and abandoned his daughter. She just hated everything.

It was a tortuous three minutes before Jim let out a shuddering breath and Winona let out one of her own in relief but it was short lived. Jim's eyes were vacant, almost glazed over by the careful mix of the Ativan/morphine medication and was struggling with the effects of a postictal phase following a severe seizure.

She carefully sat next to her little girl, careful to not touch her for fear of overwhelming her with sensory overload. Jim turned to face her, her expression showing confusion and Sadie whimpered and jumped onto the bed to lay across her lap to prevent Jim from wandering in her current state.

"Who are you?"

The words were slurred and she ached to do more but she was helpless. It was the worst feeling in the world. "It's me, sweetheart. It's mom."

Jim tilted her head in confusion and she reached out a hand to gently run her fingers over her cheek
as if to check she was really there but her normally vivid blue eyes were looking straight through her. "Mommy?"

She choked back a sob and cupped her hand over her daughter's. She hadn't been called that since Jamison was a small child. "Yeah, baby. I'm here."

She blinked slowly and frowned. "I'm so tired."

"Then you rest. I'll be here when you wake up." She helped her lie down and covered her with the homemade quilt that Leonard's mother had made her.

Lily started crying in distress and Winona carefully lifted the small bundle to comfort her. The baby's cries had just turned into small hiccups when Dr. McCoy burst into the room with his medkit. His eyes were wild but his hands steady and sure as he pulled out his instruments.

"I'm so sorry, Win. I was out in the yard and forgot my comm."

The older blonde waited anxiously but put out the illusion of calm as he placed a sensor on Jamison's forehead and took scans of her brain to determine if she needed to be transported to Starfleet Medical.

When McCoy's body relaxed, so did she. "She's stable but I think I might increase her Banzel dosage."

"Dammit, Jim." He murmured softly.

Running a hand through his hair, she noticed just how tired he was. She was so grateful that Jamison had him. Since that green-blooded bastard had broken their bond her daughter had suffered so much. Leonard had been a rock for her. He'd moved in and become a constant support for her but Jamison had hated feeling like such a burden on him despite him constantly telling her she wasn't.

McCoy sat on the bed next to her and pushed an errant blonde strand of hair off her forehead and she sighed in her sleep and leaned into the touch.

Winona's eyes burned with unshed tears. "Will she ever be ok?"

Shaking his head, Jim's former CMO clenched a fist but was nothing but gentle as he touched her daughter. "I just don't know. Vulcan bonds and how they affect the brain aren't my specialty even though neurology was one of my focuses in medicine. There just aren't enough healers available to see her and it might be a normal reaction for a human when a bond is broken. The human brain just isn't equipped for telepathy like a Vulcan's."

As Winona rocked her grandchild, she couldn't help but feel so much fear that she was losing her daughter. "Have you gotten a response from the embassy about this?"

The doctor scowled and replaced the tools in his medical kit. "Yeah. They told me that minor discomfort is normal after any bond breaking and that it couldn't be that. They said that I should dismiss this obsession and xenophobic belief of mine and focus on finding the true cause of Jim's illness or it may be that I'm an incompetent medical doctor. They also said to stop harassing them." The doctor looked down at his hands, his shoulders slumped and his eyes defeated. "I know that's what it is! It has to be! I've ruled out everything else."

Winona adjusted her grip on Lily to be able to reach her daughter. Mirroring McCoy's earlier actions, she ran her fingers through the sweaty strands. With how bad this latest seizure was, Jim
was deep asleep recovering. It was more of a comfort to her then to Jim. "She's dying, isn't she?"

Looking up into hazel eyes, she could see the torment, the agony, and guilt displayed as easily as she could see the pain her youngest child continuously pushed past to continue living for her own child despite the challenges she was struggling with.

"Yes." He told her simply.

She felt numb. She'd been expecting this, suspecting it but it still shocked her.

"How long?"

Sighing, the doctor looked far older than his years and he seemed to consider his words but Winona didn't want the truth to be sugar coated and he knew that. "Five years. Maybe less."

So soon? "How long until she's no longer her? How long before I truly lose my daughter?"

McCoy looked down and watched Jim breathing for a minute before answering. "Four. Maybe three."

The older woman turned away from McCoy, letting the news sink in. "Does she know?"

"No. Not yet but I think she suspects it."

A huff of laughter escaped her lips. "She wouldn't be a genius of she didn't know."

A large hand reached over and surrounded her shoulder, squeezing it in a show of support that did little to soften the blow.

"I want to implant a vagal nerve stimulator that should help with her epilepsy some. Sadie will be able to be trained to activate it using a magnet on her collar. It's an archaic method but effective."

Her chest tightened and she pressed a kiss to the soft, fuzzy hair of Lily.

"I won't give up on her, Winona. I promise."

"No-win scenario, huh? Seems like Jim's behavior and habits have worn off on you." She huffed a laugh and McCoy smiled back but it was weak.

"If there's anyone who could beat this, it'd be Jim."

She hummed in agreement. Pressing her lips into a moue of displeasure, she struggled to remain calm. "And any response from Spock?"

McCoy's hand tightened on the hypospray he was putting away to the point his knuckles turned white. "He put a block on all communications from me. His last comm was from his attorney sending a no-contact order and the one before that was the paperwork dissolving the human aspect of their marriage." His face flushed in anger. "He also sent the forms signing away any and all rights to the child that he is denying as his." He growled and shoved the equipment back into place with more force than necessary. "The reasons stated were that Jim was unfaithful and carrying a child that resulted from her 'supposed infidelity'. It also said that Jim's allegations of the child being biologically his are false and he refuses to do paternity testing despite the supposed low probability of it being his." He snorted in disbelief. "He actually used my own work against me by citing his physical from when he first came on board the Enterprise which showed that, at the time, he was
infertile."

Winona tilted her head signaling they should move their discussion to another room and McCoy hit the camera monitor to keep an eye on his best friend, the woman who was like a sister to him. Transferring Lily to the crib next to Jim's bed, they moved out of earshot and into the kitchen where McCoy poured himself a small measure of bourbon.

Winona frowned and took the bottle to pour herself a small glass to join him. "How is that possible then?"

"I don't know but I do know I tested her DNA and Lily is genetically descended from that green-blooded bastard. He's not the father because to be a father you have to give a damn and he sure as hell doesn't. I consider him to be nothing more than just a cold, heartless, robot of a sperm donor." He threw back his drink and growled in disgust. "Jim loved him and he threw her away like garbage. He threw them both away and I think, despite what the healers say, that he did this to her. I can't find any other reason why this would be happening to her! She'd never have cheated on him and she sure as hell would never have lied about it or about carrying his child."

Winona gripped the man's arm. "I know Leonard. I know." Sighing, she sat heavily on the couch and patted the seat next to her, happy when he joined her.

"I just don't know what to do. She's wasting away right in front of me. It's like my worst nightmare all over again. If this continues she's going to be dead in less than five years, six if she's lucky but the Jim we know might be completely gone by then." Blowing out a frustrated breath, Winona reached out and grasped his hand in a show of support.

"She's strong, Leonard. She'll claw herself up from the depths of hell if she has to because of that little girl in there."

xXx

Jim’s maternity leave had ended with little fanfare and a lot of preparation. Her seizures had started to return with a vengeance and it was frustrating. Her mom and Bones had become mother hens and, while she appreciated their love and care, it was sometimes annoying. It seemed like the few times that she had a bit of privacy to be alone and have independence were becoming fewer and fewer. As it was, she had grudgingly agreed to wear a med bracelet that recorded her vitals and location at all times that was sent to both Bones and Winona.

She had awful bouts of depression at times, but, with support from her friends and her small family, as well as keeping busy with her job, she was doing better.

The constant headache that plagued her forced Jim to accept a low-level of pain medication constantly. Thankfully, medical science was advanced enough that it was currently manageable without affecting her unduly. Her seizures were still an ever-present pain in the ass, but not too frequent.

Jim had noticed that, with each one she had, Bones and her mother gave her a look. It was the type that you would typically reserve for something small and sickly. When they saw her catching them doing it, they’d clear their expression quickly much like a student wiping an old fashioned chalkboard clean. Jim wasn’t an idiot. She knew what was happening and that was why she’d made preparations for the worst possible scenario. Sure, she had bad days, but she had good ones as well and she was damned well determined to take advantage of them.

Leaning down, the young admiral ruffled Sadie’s fur in a silent thanks for her aide dog’s diligence
in her duties at keeping her safe and independent. Jim blew out a frustrated breath and returned to her work. Currently she was setting up a lesson for her command track cadets she had lovingly titled “Shit Hitting The Fan 101”.

“Oh, my god! You are awful!”

A cup of coffee was sat down in front of her and Jim looked up to see Yeoman Rand juggling a stack of documents to her chest and leaning over her shoulder to view her work. “That’s just mean!” She looked a mix of horrified and amused.

Janice had elected to leave the Enterprise not too long after Jim had left and had become her right hand man, keeping her in line and organizing things so well that she was never caught off guard.

Her students had a lesson with Lt. Samir twenty minutes after hers and she was programming the doors to lock them into her sim and setting environmental to pump in harmless fog. Jim knew that Samir was a hell of a stickler for punctuality and if his students were late they got a mark in their records and were locked out of the classroom. The sheer level of terror that students felt for this man was exactly the reason why Jim had chosen this exercise on this particular day. Motivation was key.

Chuckling, Jim typed in the last of the coding. “I’m not that mean. Samir’s taking the day off, but I convinced him to not send the notice to my class.”

“That’s even worse!”

Amusement seem to win out on her yeoman’s face when a mischievous smile started to line her delicate features.

Jim shrugged and pointed at a few of recommendation on how to succeed. “I want to see who will show initiative and take command of the group. There’s only one way to solve it. It’s not hard, but they’ll have to think outside of the box and choose which one of their classmates to “risk” their lives in this unknown fog substance.” She added air quotes while Rand tilted her head in curiosity. “Not only that, I am curious to see who would volunteer.”

Janice stacked the PADDs on her desk and leaned down to try and see the solution. “They have to ‘cheat’?”

“In a fashion.” Jim typed in the last of her code with a proud flourish. “See, they can’t get out from inside. There’s going to be fog rolling in from the vents. What they have to do is send someone into the vents to get outside and let them out before they’re due in Samir’s class and before the room is filled. The cadet on the outside only has to press open on the door control panel and it’ll let them out.”

“Do you think they’ll succeed?”

Jim leaned back, straightening the glasses Bones had prescribed to look at her yeoman. Janice was due to start classes in the fall to become an officer rather than be enlisted. Jim couldn’t wait to be able to see bars on her sleeve. “Eventually. They’re the best.” She told Rand with pride.

The other woman shook her head with fond amusement and moved to the side of her desk. “You’re still evil.”

“Don’t I know it!” Jim leaned back and stretched, enjoying the satisfying pop of each vertebrae. It was when she went back to her work that she noticed her yeoman hadn’t left and was standing awkwardly next to her desk. There was a level of guilt hanging around the other woman like the
fog that frequented the grounds of their city that made Jim sit up and take notice.

“Is there something else, Miss Rand?”

Janice squirmed, but her discomfort quickly morphed into an expression of sympathy. “There was a transmission sent in earlier today. I accidentally opened it.”

Jim eyebrows drew down. Rand had never done anything by accident.

“It was sent via official channels and it was labeled as an official document sent through the channels to support that designation. It was not marked as something personal. The second I saw what it was, I closed it.” The young yeoman babbled and it made something in Jim’s stomach twist in dread.

“What was it?”

Her yeoman handed her the PADD at the top of her pile. “It’s a letter from Saval, Captain Spock’s attorney.”

Well, that was weird. It was a sharp stab to the gut when any reminder of their tumultuous divorce reared its ugly head. “Thank you, Janice.”

The young blonde understood the clear dismissal and left her office, shutting the door behind her.

The slim piece of plastic was almost frightening to her, but it made her angry as well. This Saval was one determined and over the top bastard. He was clearly devoted to his job and meticulous to a fault. Jim pressed her thumb to the screen and it activated. When she saw what the message said, she almost threw the PADD across the room.

It was an accusation of harassment. The DNA test that Bones had done on Lily had been automatically forwarded to Spock and seen as a hostile action towards him. His lawyer had been contacted by the captain stating that he would not read the missive as it was considered invasive that his medical information had been accessed despite the fact that it was an automated message from the system and that it would go unread as a result of it being inappropriate. There was a threat of filing charges against her and Dr. McCoy if they continued and a security block was now placed on his file.

So, it appeared the lawyer saw what was in the message because how else would he know that they had accessed Spock’s medical information. Finding out Lily’s biological “parentage” would have been automatic no matter what.

“Bastards.”

Jim tossed the offending PADD into a drawer in her desk and ground her teeth, forcing herself to take a calming breath. She had to put this behind her and she knew that, for some weird reason, that when she got upset she would inevitably have an episode. As it was, she could feel the knife stabbing into her skull.

Sadie lifted up her head and Jim reached down to ruffle her fur to let her know she was ok, but the golden retriever whined in protest. The young admiral rolled her eyes and followed the “demand” from her and pulled out a hypo to give herself a dose of her pain meds to try and calm the pain. She hated them. They made her feel off, but they helped. She had a job to do and she wouldn’t let Spock ruin it.

xXx
The end of the day was her favorite time to relax. Her students had performed perfectly. Cadet S’Parva had taken command of the situation. She expected great things from the catian and was excited to report her progress.

Jim loved to people watch at the park and sat on the bench, holding Lily on her lap where she could do the same. Those beautiful brown eyes of hers were always wide in wonderment and excitement as she saw new things. Soon it’d be too cold for them to be outside for a long period of time so she wanted to take advantage of it while she could. Lily wiggled and waved her tiny arms, burbling as she looked out at the view from her place on Jim’s lap and it made her smile at the innocent joy that she could feel through their parental bond.

“Do you see the trees, sweetie? The leaves are falling and and winter is coming.” Jim pointed out the beautiful autumn gold, red, and brown leaves falling off the tree, the wind helping with the transformation to turn it barren for the coming winter.

Her baby blew a raspberry in response and Jim laughed at the noise. At three months old, Lily was starting to become stronger and had started rolling. Lily’ arms reached up and grabbed at the purple hat she was wearing and, before Jim could stop her she pulled it off, giggling the whole time as she tossed it to the ground.

Before Sadie or Jim could pick it up, she came face to face with a Vulcan, holding the small hat out to her. “I think you dropped this.”

He was, for lack of a better word, handsome. Black hair cut in a very human fashion with a part on the left framed square features. While he had the common dark eyes that was usual for his species, they seemed different, almost curious and kind. He was definitely not a typical vulcan by any means. His mouth was turned up in a smile that was warm and inviting rather than the serene flat that Jim usually saw when she met with others of his species. If it wasn’t for the pointed ears poking out from his ebony hair and the slight green flush from the cold, she’d have thought he was human.

It was strange. Even his clothes weren’t a Vulcan style. He was wearing dark pants with a tasteful gray pea coat and navy scarf around his neck. He gestured with the baby hat again and Jim jerked back to reality and accepted it from his gloved hand.

“Uh...thank you.”

The stranger chuckled and Jim had to shake herself at seeing such atypical behavior.

“May I have a seat?”

“Sure.”

Jim replaced Lily’s hat and smiled at the grumpy expression she gave her when she had her head and ears covered once more.

“She is very cute. Vulcan?”

Lily turned towards the stranger and gave a gummy smile which he returned, his dark brown eyes twinkling in amusement. She reached out a chubby, mitten covered hand as the older Vulcan waved at her.

“Part. Her father is.”

He tilted his head slightly in understanding and, thankfully, didn’t ask for more information. “I
have not seen a Vulcan child in many years.”

“Even at the colony?”

The stranger’s jaw tightened and Jim immediately felt bad. It was clearly a bad subject to bring up. “I do not live there nor would I. I am somewhat of a rebel and they don’t really want someone like me around. Too...emotional. I just think they’ve got sticks shoved so far up their asses that they’re probably spitting out the splinters.”

Jim almost choked on her tongue.

Her companion started to laugh and his deep voice was almost joking as he took in her expression. “You know I’m right.”

Jim couldn’t help her own laugh and she started to relax. “I’m Jim by the way.” She gestured at her daughter in her arms. “And this is Lily, my daughter.”

Lily babbled as if she was trying to introduce herself and the older man listened like she was giving the most important speech in the galaxy. It was endearing to have someone pay attention to her rather than ignore her.

Once Lily was done, he returned his attention to Jim and held out a gloved hand towards her which Jim hesitantly took and shook. “Sybok. It’s nice to meet you, Jim.”
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

Normally, I try to do one chapter on each of my stories, but I’ve hit a bit of a block on “Unknown Bond”. I’d love to hear a few ideas and new points of views. I have been having a bit of a tough time lately so I haven’t been as active as I’d like. Hopefully, this chapter makes up for my not writing sooner! Let me know what you think! Thank you to everyone who gives kudos and comments! I love hearing from you and appreciate the support!

Darkwaters

Chapter Twenty-Two

Sybok wasn’t stupid by any means nor was he a fool. He knew the moment that the young blonde holding the infant had looked up as he’d offered her the purple baby hat that she was Jamison Kirk. Despite being banished and disinherited by his father for his refusal to follow the ways of Surak, he had also been very aware of his younger half-brother’s marriage to her.

He’d been surprised to see her in an admiral’s uniform and on Earth, shocked to see her holding a child that resembled a mix of her, his step-mother, father, and brother all rolled into one small being. Then there was the curious fact that she was alone; her bondmate nowhere to be found. He had been under the impression that Spock couldn’t have children due to his mixed heritage. Clearly that assumption was false.

What was concerning, however, was the fact that Spock had obviously abandoned his mate. Her wedding ring was missing. There had been pictures in the news of her and Spock’s Terran-style wedding and she had been given one. He’d also seen other holos of her with the ring on. Vulcan marriage ceremonies were private affairs due to how they came to be, but a human celebration of marriage was oftentimes public.

A true Vulcan would never do such a thing as abandon his mate and offspring. It was anathema to their instincts and culture. It was unconscionable and extremely abnormal, cruel, and unheard of.

Something was very wrong here.

Currently, Jim was sipping a coffee with gusto like it was the only thing keeping her alive while the small part-vulcan child was sleeping in her stroller. Sybok analyzed what he was seeing and what he observed. What was in front of him was disturbing on too many levels to count.

Jim was pale, the dark purple under her eyes resembled bruises rather than bags caused by fatigue. The way she hunched her shoulders and the lines on her face showed a level of pain that he couldn’t even imagine. Then there was the dog that she had with her. Jim had only stated she was a service dog, but hadn’t elaborated further.

There was happiness in her cerulean eyes when she looked at her child and held her, a tender love that clearly helped her manage whatever was ailing her, but there seemed to be a constant sadness, hidden as much as she could, but always present.
Sybok’s instincts as a young vulcan male were in overdrive. He wished to help her, protect her, and heal her hurt, but he didn’t know how. She inspired a need in him to do whatever was necessary that he’d never experienced before. Whatever had been done to her she had not deserved and Sybok had a sneaking suspicion that it had been his brother’s fault.

Sipping his tea, the one reminder of home that he rarely indulged in, he looked closer at the infant. Fuzzy, ebony hair stuck up at curly angles that reminded him of a Terran chick’s downy feathers. Her hands were so small and delicate, one of them clutching at the blanket covering her. Her pointed ears were no longer hidden under the purple hat now that they were inside where it was warm. She was beautiful. There was an innocent joy that she exuded that seemed to affect him. She was a powerful empath, likely due to her own mixed heritage. He could tell she was very gifted.

“I can’t believe you own The Coffee House. I come here every morning before I head to the academy. You have the best lattes and espresso this side of San Fran.” Jim smiled and Sybok almost preened at the praise.

He tilted his head in thanks, quickly deciding to come in early in the mornings. “I am gratified you think so.”


Sybok chuckled and gestured around his coffee shop. “I enjoy the fact that there is a great deal of acceptance for all species here. It is a great comfort to be able to be accepted no matter who I am.”

Blue eyes softened at his answer and he felt a warmth spread through his chest at her empathy for him. “That’s a really great answer.”

The truth was he had wanted to be closer to his brother, but had been rejected when he had tried to see him. It had been upsetting, but not unexpected. Spock had always tried to be the perfect vulcan and, despite his feud with their father, he had still felt shame at the fact that his brother was v’tohka’tur-‘a vulcan without logic’ because he allowed, and expressed, emotions.

He wanted to ask Jim what happened. He wanted to, but he knew he couldn’t. He would need to build her trust and speaking of such a topic so soon when they barely knew each other was uncouth.

Stirring her vulcan mocha, the blonde chewed the inside of her cheek. “So, uh-“ She shifted in her seat and looked unsure.

“Yes?”

“You’re all alone? No family?” She asked.

That...was surprising. She didn’t know? He had known Spock had rejected him, but to not even mention his existence? “My mother was a priestess on Vulcan and did not survive. I-I have a brother that survived and my father has chosen to live in the colony. We do not speak.”

Jim’s hand reached out in sympathy, but she quickly pulled it back before touching. “I’m so sorry.”

“And you?” He reciprocated carefully.

“My mom is here with me and my best friend.” She turned to face her daughter with a smile of absolute adoration. “And, of course, Lily.”

He carefully gauged he behavior and decided the risk was worth taking. He leaned forward. “And
“your bondmate?”

Jim immediately straightened as if she had been electrocuted, agony practically radiating from her and it battered against his shields. Something was very very wrong. Even a normal human would not project emotion to this degree.

“We—that is to say—erm—” Jim turned away briefly and he could feel the struggle of her trying to hide her pain. Lily shifted in her stroller, whimpering and was likely feeling her mother’s distress. When she turned back, her body language was still tense, but the emotions he could sense from her had calmed somewhat. “I’m pretty sure you know that I was captain of the Enterprise.”

He nodded slowly.

“And that the Commander—well, now he’s the captain, but we were married and bonded.”

“Jim, you don’t have to speak of it if it causes you pain—”

“It’s ok.” She said sadly. “We divorced and broke our bond last year.”

While she was with child? The picture being painted in front of him was becoming more and more disturbing by the minute. Did the breaking of the bond do the damage and pain she was experiencing?

Clenching his hands into fists, he struggled to maintain his composure. He, for the first time by choice, mentally recited the teachings of Surak for emotional suppression. “I apologize, Jim.”

She may have flapped her hand at him and smiled as if it was nothing, but he could easily read the sorrow and pain that her blue eyes showed. “It happens. People divorce all the time.”

People might. Vulcans did not.

“Perhaps. It does not make it any less painful.”

“Kaiidth. What is, is.” She quoted and Sybok smiled.

“True, but what are your plans, now?”

Sybok watched as Jim finished her coffee and signaled for another. Shrugging, the young admiral fiddled with the spoon in her cup. “Truthfully?”

He nodded.

“I want to watch Lily grow into the amazing person I know that she will be. I want to show her the stars one day and all the wonders that are out there.” She brushed the back of her first two fingers on the baby’s cheek in a parental Vulcan kiss and the gentle smile she bestowed upon the child was so loving.

He’d seen an expression like that before. His father’s second wife, Amanda, had done the same thing to both Spock and him when they were young. He cherished the memory.

Smiling, Jim looked up. “And you? What do you want to do?”

Her eyes were truly mesmerizing. He couldn’t look away. “I do not know, yet.”

Her laugh was even more so.
“Where have you been? You were supposed to have been home hours ago! You turned off your bio-monitor.”

Jim turned to face an apoplectic Bones. His face was ruddy and his brown eyes darted all over her to assess her condition. “I’m fine.”

That sent him into an even more dangerous rage. She could see a vein throbbing on his temple. “Oh, oh, you’re fine. Dammit, Jim, that was dangerous!”

She ground her teeth and slammed down the diaper back and messenger bag she always carried hard enough that some of the contents spilled out. This constant lack of privacy was just so much. Too much at times. “Bones, I turned off the locator not the readings being fed to you and SFM. I just-“ Her headache started to make a comeback and Sadie whimpered at her side, pressing a cold, wet nose to her hand. There was pressure; agonizing pressure as if something was being shoved back at her, but it was too much. Jim pressed her fingertips to her temple as if she could shove it away, but, god! It hurt so bad.

The next minute, Jim had a scanner in her face and Lily was screaming. “What-what?” She shook her head and shoved the offending device away from her and McCoy growled in frustration.

“Lily. She needs me!” The blonde turned and started to go to the baby only to be thwarted by strong hands that gripped her biceps and Sadie shoving at her legs.

“Right now, you are my main concern.” He snapped and Jim’s knees hit the couch and she sat heavily. She was so tired and her head was pounding. She could feel the fear emanating from her child through their parental bond. “Bones, I’m hurting Lily. Please-“ She let her head fall forward and gripped the sides while her elbows rested on her knees.

He didn’t say anything and stabbed a hypo into her neck. The relief was immediate and she sagged into the soft cushions. It was only a moment before her uniform top was opened slightly and Lily was placed on top of her, her tiny hands touching the bare skin above her breasts.

Both of their thoughts stilled and Lily sniffled as she snuggled into the warmth of her mother.

“Dammit, Jim. This is what I was talking about. What if this had happened when you were out?” God, she hated those shots. They made her so tired. “I met someone.”

Just the touch of her daughter seemed to heal the hurt in her mind, soothing something that was frayed and burned.

Bones sighed heavily and sat next to her, running his fingers through her short hair. He looked so tired. He was still wearing his white medical uniform and his kit was on the seat next to him. Sadie rested her head on Jim’s knee and she petted her protector. “Good girl.” She licked at her hand and she smiled at the gesture of comfort. “I just wanted a moment of normalcy, Bones. That’s all.”

“I know, kid. I’m sorry that I got upset, but I need to keep both you and the munchkin safe.” He pulled her close and she could smell the familiar scent of antiseptic and, even though she hated the smell, she relaxed on his shoulder when he placed his arm around her. “So, you met someone?”

“Yeah. It was nice.”

“Who was he?”
Jim smiled sleepily. “Believe it or not he was a Vulcan.”

Bones tensed under her and she could practically feel his suspicion. “Really.”

“Don’t be like that. He was actually pretty cool. He’s an outcast like me. He was nice. Owns The Coffee House.”

Lily snuffled and started to shift under her hands to push herself up, her tiny hands going to Jim’s face. Her little part-vulcan smiled at her with her bottom two teeth showing and her beautiful brown eyes reflecting back Jim’s happiness at meeting someone new.

“I don’t trust him.”

Jim ignored him and cooed at Lily. “You don’t trust anyone, Bones.”

“Damn straight.”

She finally faced him. “I like him.”

He shook his head and pulled her closer. “You and Vulcans, Jim. Sometimes I think you’re a magnet for trouble.”
Chapter 23

Chapter Notes

Getting to where the full picture of just what happened is being discovered and Jim is soon to finally be able to get the help she needs.
Sorry for the long delay. As usual, things are keeping me pretty busy. Hope this makes up for it.
On a side note, I did delete “Kiss the Prince”. I got a few reviews that made me feel that maybe it is best to pull it off. A scene upset some readers. The reason I had done the controversial scene was that it had one like it in the Farscape episode and I felt that it should also be included, but, apparently, some didn’t agree so I probably won’t continue the story.

Chapter Twenty-Three

“So, Sybok, is it?”

Jim’s head snapped up at her mother’s overly saccharin tone and she could practically smell the trouble from across the room. One of the perks of her time from when she was a captain/diplomat and now admiral/diplomat.

Currently, her mom was twirling a spanner around her finger in a not-so-subtle threat and her smile looked more like a shark’s rather than the usual, kind one she wore. While Jim knew that Sybok was physically stronger than her mom, Jim also knew her mom was a crafty woman who wouldn’t bat an eye at fighting dirty or using her engineering skills to take him out.

From Sybok’s expression, he wisely saw the same thing Jim knew about the diminutive blonde woman standing far too close to him. “You’ve been seeing my daughter for about three months now and this is the first time I’ve met you.”

Jim couldn’t help the eye roll and she crossed her arms, leaning against the doorframe out of sight. Technically, they hadn’t even had one date. Jim hadn’t felt ready for it for a while and the metaphorical clock on her health decline was ticking. Was there even a point in starting a relationship when she was probably going to die?

Plus there was Lily to consider. Did Jim truly have the right to bring another person into their lives only for it to potentially end badly and it could hurt Lily?

Bones hadn’t liked him on principle at first, but he’d slowly thawed a bit when he’d seen that Sybok wasn’t a terrible person. As it was, they still weren’t dating. She’d made that pretty clear. She hadn’t wanted to drag someone else into her mess and he’d been so kind and understanding, but, lately, she’d been feeling more for him. It helped that he was pretty easy on the eyes.

She’d just felt at ease with him in the short time she’d spent with him. He made her laugh and forget, for a short while, the reason why she was here on Earth and the hurt that plagued her. While she loved Bones, lately he was her caregiver first before he was her friend and her mom was the same. It was suffocating at times and the only time she felt fully relaxed was when she was either out with Lily or Sybok.
As it was, her time alone with her daughter had been getting less and less due to the risks involved with her unknown illness just as her privacy was slowly being invaded constantly. Rand, on silent orders from Bones, had “started finding excuses” to be with her during every moment she was working on campus except when she was in classified tactical meetings with the rest of the Admirals. Then there was also the fact that both Bones and her mother were “conveniently” always available to walk her home from work.

She didn’t know if she loved Sybok, but she liked him a great deal and, when they went out, Jim felt...happy. Lily adored him and her daughter seemed to have a sixth sense about people. Lily always greeted him with a huge smile and outstretched arms. She’d even started to make efforts to say his name. Jim wondered if it was enough to go further, though. Was it?

“Mrs. Kirk, I have been meeting with your daughter in a platonic manner, but you are implying something more insidious.”

Jim snorted a laugh and the small twitch from Sybok showed the sound hadn’t gone unnoticed.

“And just what way am I implying?” Winona asked in a warning tone.

“That I seek a relationship that is more than friendship alone.”

“And?” She prompted.

“That you believe I am attempting to take advantage of Jim and entice her into an inappropriate and unwelcome courtship. You think that I will hurt her.”

Vulcans and their bluntness.

Winona’s eyes hardened and glittered like diamonds. “I sincerely fucking hope not because if I find out that you’ve hurt my daughter, I’m an engineer. I know how to dispose of a body and her friend is a doctor who knows how to turn you into one.” She growled so low that Jim had to strain to hear the threat and she sighed loud enough to where both Winona and Sybok saw her standing in the doorway.

“It’s a picnic, mom. No need for the Spanish Inquisition.” Jim made her way to the pair and grabbed her bag, calling for Sadie with a click of her teeth.

Winona switched her face faster than Jim could blink from one of frightening hostility to an even more overly polite and cheerful expression that was almost more terrifying. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” She lied.

“Mom.” She warned and the older woman shrugged and turned back to face Sybok. “Have fun, you two!” She told them overly sweetly.

“Bye, mom.” She leaned in and pecked her on the cheek before making her way down the long set of stairs. Sybok paused and looked back with an audible gulp before speeding up to ensure he was next to her. Jim turned back with a frown, but only saw her mother waving.

“What did she do?” Jim asked.

Sybok was unusually pale and held his first two fingers, pointing them to his eyes and then pointing it towards Jim in a sharp jabbing motion. She couldn’t stop the laugh that followed them all the way to the park.

xXx
“She doesn’t really mean you any harm.”

“I sincerely doubt that.” Sybok protested emphatically. “She is a rather formidable woman,” He insisted. “and very...intimidating.”

Spring was just beginning and Sybok was grateful for the beginning of the respite from the extreme cold. While it was certainly warmer in San Francisco than in other parts of Earth, it was still uncomfortable at times.

Jim’s smile and the mirth that lit up her blue eyes made the encounter with Mrs. Kirk worth it.

“That’s one way of putting it.”

For the past twelve point three weeks, he had been content to simply spend time with Jamison in a purely platonic way, but his affection for the woman had only grown, sneaking up on him faster than a LeMataya during a hunt. Had his brother had this same phenomenon happen to him? He’d tried to shove it away, but it continued to build until it consumed him.

Jim’s fragility had worsened a slight amount which concerned him, but, without more information from her, there was little he could do to help. It was frustrating. Jim had opened up about some things, but had remained extremely tight lipped about many others.

He knew Jim was ill, but not any details other than the basics for safety. He knew that her illness had come about during the time her and Spock had separated, but not the reason for it. She had been vague and omitted so well that it would put a Vulcan to shame. He had his suspicions, but not enough to suggest it and risk upsetting Jim, the doctor, and her family.

And, finally, he knew Lily was genetically Spock’s offspring, but he did not know why Spock had abandoned his child or how she had come to exist.

He had tried to speak of his familial connection to her former bondmate, but a mix of cowardice and lack of opportunity had made it nigh impossible to broach the difficult topic. He didn’t want to lose her even if she was to only remain as his friend. Jim had an aura about her that drew in people and he wasn’t the only one immune to her charms. Her students and fellow officers frequently would find excuses to simply be in her company and her mother and close friend, Dr. McCoy, were always by her side. Lily adored her mother and the reverse was true. They had a close bond that was the strongest Sybok had ever seen. It was a perfect blending of a human bond and a Vulcan parental joining. They existed for each other.

Sybok stopped walking under the cherry blossom tree that had begun to bloom and faced the woman who was rapidly becoming the center of his world. The light blue tunic she wore emphasized and accented her eyes and she appeared relaxed and at ease. Pale pink petals fell onto her short, blonde hair and the picture in front of him was perfect. She was so beautiful.

“Jim, your mother was right in one thing in regards to her interpretation of my intent.” He moved closer. He could smell the cherry blossoms mixed with the sweet honey of her soap and he wanted to breathe her in forever.

Jim’s eye flickered over his face as she sucked in a sharp breath and her lips curved up in a small smile. “And just what was that?”

She stepped closer to where they breathed the same air. He could see each freckle on her face, the various blues of her irises, and every perfect imperfection that made her all the more beautiful. “That I feel more for you than simple friendship.” He whispered. “That I am hoping for more
between us." Stepping closer, he could even hear her heart beat faster. "And that I think I love you."

Jim’s answering smile showed him the response he had hoped for and he could feel her happiness settle around him. "May I kiss you?"

She rolled her eyes fondly and he leaned forward, carding his hand through the short, blonde strands of her hair to cradle her delicate skull and pull her to him. He pressed his lips to hers, but the second he touched her, he knew something was very wrong.

Searing agony ripped through his mind at his touch and Jim stiffened in his hold. Sadie began barking frantically and images assaulted him, stabbing into his mind too fast for him to fully "see" and understand what they were. It was like he was looking through Jim’s eyes. There was Spock looking at her with apathy and anger; his brother’s hand pressing hard against her face and shredding the telepathic bond linking them, he saw Stonn holding her down, heartbeat tearing her apart, sadness at being alone, a loneliness that made her feel worthless, a sense of helplessness multiple times, but there was also joy at seeing the image of her child for the first time. He could “feel” her sense of accomplishment in her work on Earth, her happiness when she was with McCoy, peace when she held her daughter, and calm when she was with him.

Oh, god, did it hurt! There was more, but he couldn’t focus. He couldn’t process it. It was too much! The pain tore through his powerful shields as if they were mere tissue paper. His carefully controlled mind couldn’t cope. Sybok gasped and ripped himself away, clawing at his head to try and stop the pain, his chest felt as if it was being squeezed in the most impossible way. He was being suffocated, stabbed, ripped into nothing.

Distantly, he saw Jim fall to the ground and he followed suit, helpless to do anything. The alarm on her wristband screamed and she shook and jerked hard in a full blown grand mal seizure, her mouth foaming and her eyes rolled back. Sadie rubbed her collar against Jim’s chest frantically. Sybok knew of the Vagal nerve stimulator that the dog was attempting to activate and that she was trying to stop the seizure, but it wasn’t working.

Sybok crawled to Jim and Sadie on all fours, trying to push through his own pain. He knew Sadie’s vest had her rescue meds in a small pouch. Jim has told him about it. His hands shook and it took several tries to get the pack open and to hold the hypospray against her neck. She was shaking so hard! He depressed the button with the preset dose and touched the emergency button on her medical bracelet, careful to not touch her skin again.

Sybok was terrified, both for himself and for Jim. His head felt like it was going to explode. Blackness began to creep into the edges of his vision and he felt himself fall to the ground. The last thing he saw before everything became dark was Jim’s neck arched as she began to choke.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Hi! Sorry for abandoning this story for so long. Been too busy lately and, hopefully, things will start calming soon.

I have a story (it’s part of a series) that I highly recommend. It’s funny and adorable! Please read it if you haven’t and all of the stories in the series are fricken awesome!!! It’s called “Objective Data” by the author walkandtalk. Anyway, we finally are getting super close to things really starting!

DarkWaters

Sybok looked through clear window of Jim’s private room from the hallway and his heart squeezed in his side at the sight. Jamison was pale as snow under the blue blanket as she slept and recovered. If it wasn’t for the monitors above her head and the wall next to her showing her vitals, he would almost believe she was dead. Next to her was Winona who was sitting in a visitor’s chair and clasping the younger blonde’s hand so tight, it was as if she thought she could bring her out of her sleep like pulling her up from a cliff.

His keen hearing picked up the sound of shoes on his left and he knew by the particular gait of the steps who it was.

“You wanna tell me just what the hell happened, Sybok?”

Turning away from the devastating sight of the woman he had began to love, he saw McCoy standing next to him. The man was rigid with fear and worry, his fists were clenched at his sides and his lips pressed into a thin, white line. The white medical uniform was a stark contrast to the ruddy red coloring his face, but he was clearly fighting to control his turbulent emotions.

Sybok did not blame him. His own feelings were in turmoil at all he had learned from his unintentional foray into Jim’s mind.

“Only it’s pretty damn suspicious that the second your green-blooded hands touch my friend, she gets hurt and, somehow, you get affected.” Crossing his arms, Dr. McCoy’s eyes narrowed and were practically shooting poisonous dagger at him. “Only, the last time she was this sick, it had to do with another Vulcan who put his hands on her.” McCoy’s voice was mild, almost conversational, but there was an underlying fury that and accusation that put Sybok’s teeth on edge.

“I might not be able to prove it or even get those bastards at the Embassy to do so, you son of a bitch, but I know it was something to do with your people’s secretive voodoo mumbo jumbo that did this to her.”

Sybok paused, thinking hard over what exactly he should say. He was still processing everything he had “seen” and experienced, but he had a fair idea. “You are not...incorrect.”

The doctor jerked back, shock written all over his facets Sybok’s reluctant admission. “Excuse me? So you’re admitting it?”
Exhaling, he closed his eyes in pain. “Yes. However, you are not in possession of all of the facts. The damage done to her mind was not caused by me. She needs to be seen by a healer or someone highly skilled in the telepathic arts, and she needs it immediately.”

He snorted and rolled his eyes. “Good luck with that. I’ve tried and they say it’s not that. They say I’m biased because I’m a human and I’m making it up. Maybe if you talk to...”

Clenching his jaw, he struggled to contain his disgust at the ignorance and cruel indifference of his people. “They will not listen to me any more than they will to you even if the facts are thrown at their feet.” Pausing, Sybok did not even want to consider the idea he had been contemplating, but he had little choice and little hope. “I do, however, have another solution.”

“And what, pray tell, is your ‘solution’?” He snapped dripping with sarcasm.

Sybok did not want to give false hope nor did he believe the doctor and Jim would like what he was thinking. “I do not believe either Jim or yourself will be amenable to it. It will not be welcomed.”

“I don’t give a good goddamn what it is as long as it saves her.”

Looking away, Sybok’s fists opened and closed sporadically. He almost doubted himself, but he forged forward. “There is one other person-“

“It had better not be Spock, damn it!” McCoy almost shouted.

“...who can possibly help and, no, it will not be him.” He continued. “I do not want him to be near her considering what happened-what he is responsible for. Not only that, he would not be able to help even if he wanted to. It would be dangerous and far more traumatic to her if he came near her. He is untrained and clearly uncontrolled. It is clear by how Jim reacted to even an innocent touch by another, by myself, that she needs help from one who has more experience and training. Had I known, I would never have initiated contact.” He said anguished at the fact that he had inadvertently harmed her.

McCoy lost it. His snarled and charged him, slamming him up to the wall, his fisted gripping his shirt and his face inches from him. The sudden attack took him off guard and he didn’t have time to react. “You mean to tell me you reached your goddamned fingers into her brain.” He growled low and viscous.

“Never!” He shouted, disgusted with the idea of doing such a thing without her full consent. Despite the clothing muffling the doctor’s emotions, Sybok could feel the fury from the other man. He had yet to fully rebuild his shields after his touch with Jim and McCoy’s attack shocked him so much he could not react to defend himself. “I would never do such a thing. It is simply that her mind has been so damaged that it reacted violently to any touch. It was severe enough that it broke through.” McCoy loosened his hold, but remained close. “I have a theory, but little more.”

“What’s your supposed ‘theory’?”

“I believe that her mind reached out in desperation to another to try and heal itself. It wanted-no, it needed a link to overwrite the damaged one that is still present, but it couldn’t because it was confused and it was also unexpected on my part so my own mind rebelled at the intrusion.” He explained.

McCoy stepped back slowly, but still suspicious.

“Then why doesn’t she react that way to Lily? She isn’t trained in the mental arts?”
“There is a difference.” He pleaded. “Lily accepted her immediately as a parent, the bond is different as is the location, and Jim’s mind knows this. Jim’s mind sought mine in a different way, a romantic one and it tried to do so in that way, but there was a complication. I must have another confirm what I suspect. I will not risk a repeat of what happened to Jim.” He turned once more to Jim. She was so fragile. “I care...too much for her.” He whispered in a quiet admission.

McCoy stepped back, tilting his head, understanding causing his eyes to widen. “You love her, don’t you?”

Sybok moved away and his eyes were drawn to Jim who was beginning to stir slightly. Winona’s stoic expression cracked slightly at the whimper of pain from Jim. His emotions were confused and he could not entirely blame them on his own mental trauma. There was fury at the abuse she had suffered, empathetic pain mirroring her own that he could sense from her despite their distance and lack of further touch, and the love he felt for this amazing and strong woman was incalculable.

“Yes. Yes, I do.”

“There’s something else you’re not telling me, isn’t there?”

Guilt began to take over. While he had not lied, it was a form of one through omission. “There is.”

“What?”

“I am Spock’s half brother.”

“What? Why didn’t you tell us? Hell, why didn’t you tell her?” McCoy looked close to punching him. “Did you know before you decided to insinuate yourself into her life?” He hissed quietly.

Sybok turned away from Jim at the accusation lining the doctor’s tone. “No, I did not. At least, not immediately. I was afraid. I was afraid she would turn away from me simply because of my relation to the man who had hurt her, of which I have no choice just as others have no choice of being born into the family they are tied to. I was afraid that his actions would tar me with the same brush as him and I wanted to know her. I am not him. I have not known him or my father for many years.” He admitted. “Decades in fact. Sarek disowned me when I was a very young man barely out of school.”

“Jim’s not stupid. She wouldn’t do that.”

“Are you so sure?” He countered.

McCoy’s mouth twisted as he thought over his question. “Well...no, but now she might. She might think you manipulated her.”

“I know this and I am willing to accept the consequences of my deception.” He would. He only hoped she might forgive him. He would be willing to spend a lifetime atoning for his actions if given the chance. “I can tell her and explain.”

The doctor exhaled sharply and ran a hand through his hair in a frustrated motion. It stuck up into the air making him look wild just as the unshaven state of his face did the same. “No. It’s not a good time. Another time. Any other time.” The doctor’s eyes drifted towards his patient and his friend, a delicate balance he had to maintain at all times. “Just-just let her heal. This could set her back, but I have to know, is it possible that your relation to that animal could have exacerbated her illness when you touched her.”

“Negative. My familial bond with my former clan was severed the moment I was disowned. I am my own man and I have no permanent bonds. My mind is...silent.” He said quietly, ashamed at the
Tilting his head, McCoy turned back and regarded him with a touch of sympathy. “I didn’t know a Vulcan could survive like that. Now, I don’t know much about Vulcan telepathy, but I thought bonds were vital.”

He could hear Jim’s moan of pain and he cursed his superior Vulcan hearing. “They are. It is painful, but not impossible to live as such.”

“How do you survive—you know—your Time if you don’t have a bond?”

Though this was a taboo subject and one never discussed with outworlders unless they were directly involved, the doctor deserved to know. “A Vulcan adept who has undergone Kohlinahr assists. Not in the way that is typical for many. It is degrading, but it is a necessary evil. Many of my people have to do this now as males outnumber females. We do not mate with them. They help calm the fires through meditation and mental assistance. It is not ideal and was not generally accepted—I was forced to use this solution in previous years. Kaidith needs must.”

He almost placed his hand on Sybok’s shoulder, but pulled back at the last moment, for which the Vulcan was grateful. It was a shameful and painful way to have to survive his people’s curse. “Good god. I’m sorry.”

“It is of no consequence.” He implied. His own predicament and challenges were unimportant. The health and welfare of both Jim and her daughter was vital. “Will she be alright?”

“As fine as she can be considering. She’ll be able to go home in a day or so once she stabilizes.”

Stealing one last glance at the blonde, his throat tightened. “Please, take care of her, doctor.”

“I always do.” McCoy

Placing his hand on the glass separating them, he knew he would succeed. He would not fail her. “I will save her.” He swore. “I vow this with my life. I will NOT let her die.”

“I know.”

Sybok nodded in gratitude. “I will reach out to my sources and I will—I promise that I will get Jim the help she needs. She will not suffer any longer if I have anything to say about it. If I have to, I will drag the person I seek to help repair the damage done to her.” He growled and McCoy’s eyes widened at the vehemence of his declaration.

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Sybok knew what a properly broken marriage bond looked like and what he had accidentally seen in Jim’s mind was not it. His own mother had broken her bond with Sarek with no ill effects and then she had performed the procedure on others when she had received adequate training after she had achieved Kohlinar. The difference with her bond breaking procedure? It had been done with the aid of a healer and neither party had been severely compromised. His mother had taught him at a young age using her own bond, both broken and when it was whole, as an example of how things were. Since his exile from vulcan, his knowledge was limited. He was also not a healer by any means, but he could analyze and extrapolate theories.

Jim was still joined to Spock, but not...completely. A normal bond between mates was a network of
thousands of small connections twined together to form a strong rope. Almost all of those had been burned and torn away. What was left of her bond sought to heal itself either through another or through its efforts to reunite with him when she experienced strong emotions. What made it worse was Spock, instinctively and unknowingly, was forcing her to remain linked. Her mind could not escape him just as matter could not escape a devastating black hole.

It was as if Jim was bleeding out, but from her mind. The comparison of Lingchi was strikingly apt. The loose translation of “death by a thousand cuts”, a slow and horrific death as a form of torture was too similar to what Jim was experiencing.

It finally made sense as to how she had been broadcasting so loudly, why she had been having debilitating health issues, and why the presence of her child had helped to slow some of the deterioration. Lily was helping to soothe the torn, frayed, and fragmented bond through pure and innocent love which was acting as if it was a life preserver to a person drowning. Soon it would not be enough. Jim would sink and drown. It was only the fact that their parental link was impressively strong and the pure love between them that stabilized Jim, but it would not ever be enough to heal the damage completely and soon it would reach a critical stage to where even Lily’s love could not save her mother. If Jim had been alone, she would have been dead or far more damaged psychically at this stage.

Running his fingers through his hair repeatedly in frustration did little to soothe him and only left his hair in chaotic disarray. The psychic damage to himself from the small amount of skin to skin contact he had initiated with Jim had been enough to incapacitate him and it had taken him more than twenty-four hours in a healing trance to repair the majority of it. As it was, he was still experiencing a headache and felt...off-balanced. He could not imagine what was happening to Jim who did not have this ability.

She had been in so much pain that it had overwhelmed him at his touch. It was a constant agony that she had been forced to bear.

Sitting in the traditional meditation pose of his people, Sybok thought over what could be causing the random bursts of extreme symptoms. The continuous health issues were obvious. The psychic damage done by his “brother” had been extensive. The random bursts? That was more complicated.

He closed his eyes and breathed in the comforting scent of the smoky incense he used sparingly. It was one of the few things that he had left from his former home world.

A bond was a healthy joining of two minds that usually worked in a back and forth support system. When one mate was distressed, the other provided automatic comfort and the reverse was true. It was important for both parties health. When she was experiencing heightened emotions, her mind was still, unknowingly, seeking out her bondmate and it was hitting a brick wall while traveling on a crumbling, burning bridge. To hit a telepathic wall was dangerous. Add in the damage to the link connecting them? Permanent damage at best, fatal at worst.

It was also just as likely that his brother had blocked his own end to protect himself without the full picture of the damage he had done to his former mate. At least, that is what he hoped. The alternative, that Spock knew what was happening to his former bonded and choosing to allow it to happen was unthinkable.

Jim had been terribly wronged. He suspected that the doctor had brought up the possibility of such an occurrence to a healer and had been summarily dismissed likely due to ignorance and speciest behavior on their part. He, himself, had had such negative interactions when dealing with his people due to the label he’d been assigned as V’Tosh Katur.
Simmering anger boiled almost uncontrolled at the way Jim had been treated, not only by her former bondmate, but by the healers as well. Their title alone suggested their primary goal was to heal and their indifference was hurting another. Sybok had, in the past reached out to them for his own challenges, but had been met with reluctant assistance when he had experienced his own Pon Farr. Their only reasoning had been that he could not be left to die due to his pure-blood status, but he was still seen as an outcast and unwelcome. Only minimal care had been given. Their compassion was limited to say the least.

He took a deep cleansing breath to slow the volatile emotions he felt, plucking them from the forefront of his mind to allow himself a clear head. What he was about to do, he would need to present the illusion of non-emotion. Sybok carefully pulled himself from his deep meditation. Many assumed he did not meditate due to his choice of exhibiting and allowing himself to experience emotion, but he did. He had no choice, but to exercise some control. It was dangerous to not do so. He knew his limits. It was a delicate balance he had to maintain at all times.

Sybok simply did not have the training, knowledge, or skills to help her. He was limited due to his youth and lifestyle choice. If the embassy and healers would not help, he had only one option left. It was not something he had ever thought he would do.

He stood, wincing at the discomfort from being in one position for far too long and made his way to his computer terminal. Sarek may despise him for choosing to allow himself to exhibit emotion, but he knew that what Spock had done was far more shameful. While Sybok’s choice had only affected him, Spock’s affected two others.

It was mere minutes before his comm was accepted, but it had seemed like years. An unfamiliar, angular face with severe lines appeared on the other end. While he did not recognize them, by the almost imperceptible look of disgust and disdain, he clearly knew who he was.

*"Sybok, what is the purpose of your call?"*

Sybok straightened unconsciously. It was a result of years of dealing with Vulcans such as this one. He may not like them, but he did need his help. “I need to speak with S’Haile Sarek.”

When he remained silent waiting for more information, Sybok continued.

“It is regarding his youngest son.”

The older man blinked once betraying himself by showing shock, but his expression was wiped clean before Sybok could truly process what he saw. *"He has only one son."

His fists clenched under the table at the reminder of his disinherited status, but he retained a detached expression as much as he could under the circumstances. “You know he has two sons even if he chooses to pretend one does not exist. To deny fact is illogical.”

*"What is the message?"*

Sybok despised having to go through others to get tasks done. He’d always been a man who preferred to do things himself. To have to rely on others was not something he was used to. There was nothing for it and he had to ask this unknown person to pass on the message and trust him to do so. Kaiidth. “He needs to come to earth.”

*"Why would he do such a thing? He has no business on Earth."

“It is a family matter and private. You should understand such things. Is not the phrase “within the family all is silent”? Even if I am banished and no longer considered family, Spock is and it is vital
that Sarek come to earth.”

The Vulcan on the screen nodded, hopefully conceding to Sybok’s argument. *"Very well. I shall pass on the message."*

“That is all I ask.”

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