Pick Your Poison

by scarscarchurro

Summary

The Universe is a vast expanse of un-conquered territory. Of potential allies, potential planets, and new kingdoms. Places for the Empire to set up shop in their goal to conquer.

It could be glorious, but the Empire made one fatal flaw in their goal of domination... They left Christopher Pike in charge of a ship full of their problems.

Join James Kirk, Leonard McCoy, Spock, and crew on their journey to make the Empire regret ever having them in the Fleet. Also on their journey to become somewhat good people.

Notes

Warnings: Your Mirror Verse typical Violence, Alcoholism, Minor Stabbings, manipulative behaviors, Very awkward conversations with one's mother, mentions of
sexual encounters (character is Disgusted with said sexual encounters), Tarsus IV mentioned, Character death mentioned, Deadnames, unintentional missgendering, and swearing.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Jim was born among the stars and planets. Among carnage and death.

Born into a world where his father’s sacrifice read more like failure. Jim was born in the Universe and he was shoved into a farmhouse in Riverside, Iowa.

Riverside was a small town of shuttles blinking in the night below a star covered sky, stretches of flat planes, and corn fields.

Riverside was a place of pain.

A place to rot and fester in.

An eyesore on the face of the Empire.

Honestly, the only thing it had going for it was a Starfleet shipyard and a few bars to have a good time in.

It wasn’t a place to raise children.

It wasn’t a place Winona had wanted to raise her children, or so she told Jim, but she lived with the conditions.

Lived with the knowledge that it was the perfect place to shade her youngest from the world beyond.

Jim hadn’t minded the sheltered life as a young and happy child.

That was because he hadn’t known better.

He hadn’t yet faced the tortures of the Empire.

He hadn’t.

Not until Tarsus IV.

Tarsus IV had been seen as revolutionary to the Empire. An eye opening experience to a fourteen-year-old Jim.

It had also been a totally shit experience.

A traumatising experience.

If Jim were to ever be honest about the events on Tarsus? He’d say how in awe he had been about the lengths young, hungry children would go to just to live.

In awe of the lengths he had gone to just to fight for the youngest of children.

Children who deserved a better life in a better world. A world where Kodos didn’t have to publicly execute the masses.

Not that the Empire cared what Kodos had done.

Kodos had been a revolutionary in the Empire’s eyes.
A revolutionary that Jim had personally put a bullet into.

More reasons for the Empire to send his ass back to Riverside.

To break him when he finally wanted more out of life.

Cesar knows Jim wanted so much more than Riverside.

Jim tolerated Riverside for the stars, the booze, and the fights that were just added fun.

Going to bars was Jim’s favorite pastime. Bars always had the best fights.

Fights meant opportunities to do more, and it depended on how Jim looked at it, really.

Most people in Riverside were content with their time being filled with fighting. They saw it as less to complain about when the majority of their time was spent getting stabbed or doing the stabbing. Less wishing for more. Less wanting to rise above.

Less noticing that the Empire really didn't fucking care about Riverside. A town they filled with loose ends and pains in their sides.

Jim never did let Riverside blind him from wanting more. Never let Riverside douse his spirits. Never let Riverside keep him from wishing for more opportunities.

One opportunity to get taken care of was to join the Fleet. If you joined Starfleet you were guaranteed to be taken care of. Join the Empire’s quest for control and domination.

It was a life Jim didn’t want. He saw what the Fleet did.

The control. The Death. The praise they gave Governor Kodos.

No. Jim didn’t want that.

Jim wanted to be with the stars, out in the black, but his life now at the ripe age of twenty-one was trying to drunkenly find the next bar to drown himself in.

The next fight to prove himself worthy of getting out of the shit hole.

He found his next opportunity in one of the nicer bars packed with Starfleet Cadets having one final fling until the Empire shipped them off to an Academy and then off into the void of space.

Jim wasn't even looking for a way out that night. He walked into the bar already between the buffers of tipsy and pleasantly numb. Walked up to order himself a drink, maybe find his next free meal, and a place to sleep.

A pretty face was his only asset in the Empire. The only reason he wasn't dead yet was because of his skills in bed.

It disgusted him and the thought of it made him want to vomit.

“Usual?” asked the bartender, with the usual hint of displeasure for seeing Jim again.

“Did last night mean nothing to you?” asked Jim, with the usual cocky grin.

The bartender grabbed a tumbler and poured in a small amount of amber liquid. “Never means anything, James,” said the bartender.
“And yet you remember my name,” said Jim, taking the glass as soon as it is set down, and then downing it in one go.

They always remembered his name, just like they always remembered his mouth, and his hazel eyes.

The bartender said nothing and moved onto a new customer; a dark skinned female in a cadet uniform. She ordered a lot of drinks and leaned heavily over the bar stools, in wait for them to be prepared.

Jim slipped over to her once she was done ordering and mumbled, “That’s a lot of drinks.”

She didn't respond to him, but she did spare him a narrowed glance.

Jim hadn't let that stop him. “Okay Cadet, what’s your focus?”

“Xenolinguistics.” The woman let out a breath and turned with her hand on her hips. She said, “Someone like you wouldn't know what that is.”

Jim leaned into her space and grit his teeth in a forced grin. “You study alien language and syntax,” said Jim.

The woman froze and looked at him. “What is a guy like you doing out here?”

“You'd be surprised, Riverside is a place to break people like me,” said Jim with a small squint of his eyes.

Riverside had tried to break him many times and a trip to Tarsus IV had made him refuse to be broken.

Had kept him wanting more out of life. Had undone all his mother's fretting and over-protection.

Tarsus IV had done so many things to Jim.

“Unfortunate,” said the woman.

Jim shrugged and said, “Not so unfortunate to meet a pretty woman like you.”

She let out a forced laugh. “I don't do barn animals.”

Jim let out a deep laugh. “Unfortunate.”

“This local bothering you, Uhura?” asked another cadet. He was larger–beefy, Jim would describe.

The woman, Uhura, turned her head to look at the other cadet, then she looked back at Jim. Eyed him up and down, before she grinned. “Nothing I can't handle,” she said.

“Most people buy me dinner before they handle me,” said Jim with a bite of his lower lip. “And most of the time I do the handling.” He smirked at her.

Uhura barely grinned, but the twitch of her lips was there.

Cadet Beefcake shoved Jim against the countertop. “Keep your hands-”

Jim had heard it. He growled, brought his arms up, and shoved the beefy cadet hard. “Keep your hands to yourself or you won't have them anymore.”
Cadet Beefy stumbled back, but didn't lose his footing. He squared up. Jim wanted to give him a nickname other than 'Beefy'. Maybe beefcake, or Cupcake. If he was one for masculinity like everyone else under the Empire’s rule, then Cupcake would fit.

Jim jerked his shoulders, felt his back pop as he straightened up, and walked towards Cupcake. “There are easier ways to settle these things,” growled Jim with a smirk. “If you want to fight, Cupcake, let's fight.”

Cupcake scowled and rushed forward.

Jim grinned wide, ducked the oncoming attack, dodged, and kicked Cupcake's back.

Cupcake fell into the counter face first and Jim dug his heel down before rushing and hopping up on a table.

Cupcake almost looked on like he was going to give up or get his friends to help.

“Come on, fight like a girl!” Jim shouted at Cupcake.

Uhura seemed to grin at that and Jim snapped his finger at her.

It was this split second of distraction that allowed Cupcake to floor Jim and punch him in the face.

Jim retaliated by drawing a knife and stabbed it into Cupcake’s side to get back on his feet.

Some other cadet grabbed Jim by his shoulders and stabbed a small knife into the left one. Jim howled and flipped this Cadet over. “Need others to fight for you?” growled Jim.

Cupcake stood with a grip on Jim’s knife handle. Well, it wasn't Jim’s. He had stolen it earlier in the day. “Wish you had friends?”

That didn't matter now, because Jim slammed himself against Cupcake and twisted the knife. “I don't need friends to kick your ass,” said Jim with a smile.

Someone ripped Jim off of Cupcake and slammed him face-down onto a table. The knife in his shoulder digged in deeper.

Jim jerked and squirmed and went for a kick between the man’s legs. He succeeded in kicking them off and stood up straight in time to dodge Cupcake’s advances.

Jim finally pushed Cupcake down into the table and straddled him to keep him down. He took the knife in Cupcake’s side and held it against his throat when the high whistle pierced the air.

Cadets stiffened as boots crunched against broken glass. “Get down, son,” said a cold voice.

Jim stabbed the knife into the table, slid off of the cadet, and into a standing position.

“You too, cadet. Everyone in here has just earned themselves time in the booth,” said the voice.

Jim turned his head to the owner. Jim hadn't seen that man in a very long time. His mother’s favorite passtime when she wasn't exploring the stars. Christopher Pike. All blue eyes and greyed hair.

Seeing him made Jim scowl.

Jim had been different back then. Pigtailed, wide eyed, full of childish delight, and smiles. Hadn't
yet felt the crushing weight of the Empire Winona had wanted to shield him from.

Winona was always supportive, even when Starfleet and Riverside drained her.

Even when Christopher Pike sapped away her joy.

“Now get out!” shouted Pike to his cadets.

The cadets moved with unimaginable speed out the doors of the bar.

Jim pulled a chair out, turned it so the back was facing the table, climbed onto it, and crossed his arms over the back of the chair. “Pike,” said Jim, dull, but warm.

Pike threw some napkins at Jim. “You got a little something.” The older man motioned at his own face and arm.

Jim eyed the napkins, then looked at his shoulder that still had the small knife lodged in it. “I was lightly stabbed,” said Jim with his eyes up at Pike.

Pike shook his head and sank down into the chair opposite Jim. “You ever want to do more with your life, son?”

Jim didn't like when Pike called him that, but it was better than other names. “Funny you should ask, I was just thinking of starting a book club. We'd read the classics, maybe one of Cesar’s favorites.” Jim leaned over the back of the chair and grinned.

Pike scowled and leaned back in his chair. “You ever get tired of being the only genius repeat offender in this hell hole?”

Jim narrowed his eyes. “You ever get tired of having that stick shoved up your ass?” He didn't give Pike time to answer as he laughed. “Oh wait, no, you like that shit. I forgot.”

Pike’s scowl deepend. “You finished?”

Jim bit his lower lip. “I’m sure I'll think of one more eventually,” said Jim with very little shrugging.

“I'm drafting you for Starfleet and the Empire,” said Pike.

If Jim had a drink he'd have spit it out all over Pike. “Excuse me?”

“You're joining Starfleet,” demanded Pike.

Jim blinked again, and stood up slowly. In a swift movement that jarred the knife he slammed his hands down on the table, and then let out a hard laugh that made his body creak. “They finally got tired of supporting my ass here so they are sending me to Starfleet and Space?” Jim laughed again and fell back into the chair–then onto the floor because he forgot the chair was facing forward. He didn't know how long he was on the floor, clutching his stomach.

Pike was patient with it, Jim gave him that much. After he was done laughing he kicked his foot up onto the table. “One more thing to do, Pikey.” Jim waggled the foot in the air. “I got some fine jewellery on my ankle here.”

Jim didn't have to look up. He imagined Pike’s eye twitching, imagined him glaring at Jim, imagined Pike wanting to sever Jim’s leg from his body.
“You got arrested again?” asked Pike.

Jim took a deep breath and smiled at the ceiling. “Stole a hoverbike and set fire to the police station.”

“Why?”

Jim pulled his leg down and sat up. He grinned at Pike. “I've got a real problem with authority.”

Leonard Horatio McCoy had been a smiley, bright-eyed child. Most children were bright-eyed and bushy-tailed when they came into the world.

Most children in the Empire lost that joy the moment they knew how to talk and walk.

Most children were not born to David and Donna McCoy.

David and Donna whom turned to God in secret for the answers they did not have.

Leonard had thought nothing of it when he was a kid in Georgia. He'd listen to his parents worship under their breath. Would have David tower over him and whisper about how Leonard could tell no one.

A young Leonard with delicate braids, horrid organization, and wide blue eyes... Hadn't understood Christianity, but he had cursed out God’s name on many occasions as a growing child.

Mostly in the comfort of his own home. Where no one but his mother could reprimand him for such words.

Donna had reprimanded him often for his poor choice of words.

David McCoy was a much different parent, he was a doctor after all, and snuck home puberty blockers for a young Leonard.

David had believed in giving his children time. Time to sort out their feelings. Time to figure things out.

Time in general.

Later came testosterone shots and then a testosterone implant after the Empire managed to sap away all of his childhood brightness and joy.

Leaving him numbed and searching.

Searching for a feeling to fill himself with by the time he was eighteen.

In searching he found Jocelyn. They were in love, or something that felt like love. Something that filled Leonard’s life with something that wasn't family secrets of God.

Leonard still felt incomplete. He kept searching for things to fill his days with, while still maintaining a relationship with Jocelyn.

He married Jocelyn after high school, even though it was clear to both of them that Leonard was
unhappy, but things were great for a short period of time.

It was their honeymoon phase.

A honeymoon phase that could only last so long.

A phase that lasted up until Leonard found alcohol and medical school in the same year.

Leonard knew he wanted to be a doctor like David McCoy. A healer. It was a profession that filled him with joy.

Though Medical school was torturous and mechanical.

It taught him how to make poisons. Taught him about the practices of the Empire.

Taught him anatomy and the best places to attack on the human body.

Taught him about Terra’s past. About the experiments that had modified the medical field.

Two years in at the age of twenty it taught him about the experiments they were running on Tarsus IV. Exposing an entire population of imperial citizens to one fungus.

Testing their governor.

Refusing to help them.

Refusing to heal the young starving kids.

It made his eyes weary and his heart ache.

He had been especially weary and achy when lectures brought Leonard to meet one Philip Boyce an Imperial Doctor who worked for Starfleet and had many long-winded words of discouragement for the medical students who were just a little too soft on the outside.

Philip Boyce’s lectures taught Leonard that there is no place for soft people in the medical field. No room for soft people in the Empire.

Boyce showed slideshows of Tarsus IV. Of the aftermath of the fungus the Empire had introduced.

Of the state of the returning citizens.

Leonard felt sick. Is this what Doctors did?

That had once again left Leonard numbed.

Hardened Leonard’s outsides, strained his already failing marriage, and alerted the Empire to his very existence.

Not that he'd been avoiding being noticed by the Empire. It was more he'd tried to not out work his colleagues, but even when he was drunk he was still a better doctor than his colleagues.

After medical school David McCoy had fallen ill and the Empire wanted Leonard to torture the dying man.

With a heavy heart Leonard had done it.

Then gone out and drank until he was numbed once more.
When Leonard returned home he was arrested because Jocelyn had accused him of trying to kill her.

The fact he’d clearly just walked in the door and smelled like a damn brewery didn’t tip off the imperial hounds that perhaps she was lying.

Leonard was still thrown in a cell where he really did envision bringing an end to his wife.

He actually cackled when she sent in divorce papers. She was taking everything but his bones. He couldn’t give a shit. That numbing emptiness swept itself back into his heart and settled against his lungs. It still stung. That this was his life.

The days blurred together in his cell. They blurred and stretched to impossible lengths until the day came that Christopher Pike visited him.

“I’m an acquaintance of Philip Boyce,” was Pike’s greeting.

Leonard just scowled at him with narrowed eyes. What would Starfleet want with him?

“How’d you like to get out of here?” asked Pike after, probably, realizing Leonard was not going to talk. “Because I'm drafting you for Starfleet.”

Leonard burst out into hollow laughter. If there was anything he hated more than his ex-wife it would be space. Out there in the black? It was just screaming ‘DEATH’.

Pike stared level with Leonard’s form.

Leonard would think he looked very unimpressed, and like he was envisioning stabbing Leonard through the heart. “Oh, yer serious, what a tragedy,” said Leonard after his fit of laughter. “Space and I don't quite get along.”

“I'll give you as much booze as you can stomach,” said Pike.

Leonard’s messy bed head tilted down and to the side. He could go for a drink of expensive bourbon, and if the Empire was paying? He'd get the best shit he could wrap his fingers around.

“When do I get out?” He thought of his ex-wife for a moment. “And does this arrangement extend to future crimes?”

Pike stared down at Leonard. “I'm sure I can pull some more strings.”

Leonard grinned slowly.

That's probably how his alcohol riddled brain ended up trying to lock himself in a shuttle bathroom.

“I AIN'T COMIN’ OUT!” He screamed at the lieutenant who was fighting tooth and nail to get into the small restroom.

“Sir, if you do not come out of there you're going to need a doctor,” hissed the Lieutenant.

Leonard scowled as he unlocked the door. It whooshed open on the slight female. He leaned his scruffy face into hers and growled, “I don't need a doctor, I am a doctor.” He was too sober for this shit.

The Lieutenant narrowed her eyes and grabbed him by his jacket. “I don't care,” said the woman and she dragged him to a seat next to a beat up looking man who still had a damn knife in his
Leonard scowled, that shit was going to get infected, and so he sat down next to him. “I might throw up on you,” said Leonard, leaning into the younger-looking guy’s space. “Though you look like shit so the vomit might be an improvement.”

The guy threw his head back against the shuttle seat and cracked a smile that made the rusty cakes of blood against his nose crackle and fall. “Minor stabbing,” said the pale man. He turned his head to Leonard.

Leonard motioned at himself. “Alcoholism.”

The guy even laughed; a full blown sound that settled in Leonard’s chest as some form of light. “Can I have some of that alcoholism?” asked the guy.

Leonard swallowed thickly and pulled his flask out. A flask that glittered in the light and was very clearly a very glitter encrusted rainbow. “We are gonna be great enemies,” said Leonard as he raised up the full flask.

Hazel eyes focused on the flask. “You drink first,” said the man.

Leonard rolled his eyes, uncapped his flask, and took a large swig. “Wouldn't poison good alcohol,” said Leonard as he handed it over to the other.

The stranger took it swiftly and took a big sniff before taking a gulp. The younger even shuddered. “Fuck, that's good,” he groaned. “I'm Jim by the way.” Jim handed the flask back with a sly grin.

Leonard inhaled slowly. “Leonard McCoy.”

Jim scowled. “That's a terrible name.”

Leonard scowled back. “I picked it myself. What kind of name is Jim?”

Jim grinned wide. “I picked it myself,” he purred.

A long pause settled between them as they put on their buckles.

“You not like space?” asked Jim, a form of small talk.

Leonard looked at him, scowled, took another gulp from his flask, and then turned back forward.

“Not a fan of small talk?” asked Jim.

“Space is full of death and disease, a crack in the hull could have our blood boiling in no time,” hissed Leonard, he scowled at the knife still in Jim’s shoulder. “Has no one looked at that?”

Jim stared at his shoulder, back to Leonard, shoulder, Leonard, and then blinked. “It's fine,” said Jim.

Leonard scowled. “It's fine?” asked Leonard with narrowed eyes. He gripped the handle of the knife, and dug it in deeper.

Leonard would hand it to Jim for barely clenching and grinding his teeth.

“Doesn't hurt,” hissed Jim.
“Let me look at this.” Leonard would give another point to Jim for barely moving as Leonard pulled the knife out swiftly.

Jim did clench his body though and dug his nails into Leonard’s jacket.

Leonard rolled his eyes and pushed the fabric of Jim’s layers away from his shoulder. The skin was red and trickles of fresh blood spilled from the open wound. Leonard came to the realization he didn’t really have anything to patch Jim up with. He bit his lower lip and eyed his flask. How sanitary would it be to dump his spit covered flask all over Jim’s wound? “Yer skin is a little red here.” Leonard poked at the flesh. “And yer bleeding again.”

Jim’s fingers dug in harder. “Why do you think I left the knife in?” asked Jim with a husky voice.

“Need a needle?” asked a dark skinned woman across from them. She held out a sewing needle, and Leonard eyed it. “It’s not poisoned,” said the woman with narrowed eyes. “Farm boy is pretty funny and runs a good show.”

Leonard continued to stare at her. So she found something to gain in being on Jim’s good side?

“All right,” said Leonard as he took the needle from her.

“Should you be doing this?” asked Jim, digging his nails hard into Leonard’s arm.

“Even shit faced I was a better surgeon than a majority of my colleagues,” said Leonard while he patted himself with his free hand.

“You have any thread on you?” He looked to the woman.

She shook her head. “No.”

“Excuse me, this is a shuttle, not an operating room,” scoffed one of the cadets.

Leonard turned his head slowly and scowled. “This might be a morgue in a moment if you don’t hush yer mouth.”

“Pikeyyyyy,” chimed Jim’s annoying voice.

There was a moment of silence in the shuttle before Christopher Pike came around from wherever he was. “What in Caesar’s name…”

Jim lifted his free hand and waved. “Got any stitching thread on this thing?”

Pike squinted his eyes. Leonard could almost see the malice and hate in that level gaze.

“I’m fixin’ to sew him up.” Leonard raised his hand that had the needle in it. “Also some rubbing alcohol would be swell.”

Leonard grinned with Jim at the image of Pike caving.

“Should have kept you both in jail,” grumbled Pike as he, Leonard hoped, went to fetch what they needed.

“Yer a peach, Pike!” shouted Leonard with the biggest grin.

Leonard then turned to Jim. “Jail?”
Jim grinned back. “More like house arrest. I had some fine jewelry on my ankle a few hours ago.”

Leonard pressed his lips together. “I said we’d make the best enemies, right?”

Jim raised one brow and grinned. “Sawbones, we are going to be the best of enemies,” purred Jim.

There was a long pause.

“Sawbones?”

“You have a terrible name and I like Sawbones,” said Jim with a lot of mouth movement.

Leonard narrowed his eyes and Pike came by with some rubbing alcohol and thread. “Yer a peach,” said Leonard. Then he ripped Jim’s shirt and poured the bottle of alcohol on the wound.

Jim screamed.

“I’m gonna make this hurt,” growled Leonard.

—

The Planet Vulcan had been Spock’s home for a majority of his fairly young existence. It had been his home since before he wanted to be Spock.

Vulcan was a hot and dry place. Vegetation flourished in oases in the form of root vegetables and the occasional dome-topped fungus.

Vulcans did not survive on vegetation alone. Like their ancestors, they still enjoyed the hunt. Still enjoyed the primal blood that ran through their veins. Still thrusted themselves head first when the urge was there.

Most Vulcans found it taboo to fully give into emotion and reckless abandon.

Most Vulcans embraced the logic of Surak.

Either way, most Vulcans held a place in Vulcan Society.

Had a place under the Empire.

Most Vulcans.

Spock was not most Vulcans.

In fact, Spock wasn’t even fully Vulcan.

That made the majority of the planet unaccepting of him in their society.

Even though they were under the Terran Empire. A society run by a human male who was not very impressive. Not that Spock ever said that out loud. Ever.

While Vulcans were unaccepting of Spock’s parentage, there was little backlash to his existence, and the existence of his mother, on Vulcan.

It was, logically, due to the fact that his father was the Ambassador. A right hand man to the Emperor of Terra.
Sarek was a terrifying man and Amanda was no pushover.

Spock had inherited both of their brash qualities. An affinity for poisons, logic, he was a natural when it came to wielding weapons like the lirpa, and he was a natural when it came to being terrifying.

More Vulcan than human, but Amanda and Sarek noticed fairly early that their son did have human weakness.

Fondness. Over emotional. A need to protect. Feelings that ran very deep. Vulcans naturally had strong feelings, but they were unlike human emotions.

Stubbornness. Pride. A drive to want. Logically Spock knew what he wanted from an early age and he knew what he didn’t want.

These feelings more closely related to those ancient ancestors made Spock difficult.

Difficult enough that Sarek, and the rest of Vulcan, tried desperately to keep some form of control through meditations, Vulcan teachings, and Vulcan schooling.

Typically these emotions would be overwhelming for most Vulcan teachers—they were even extremely overwhelming for Spock—especially when some unlucky Vulcan would make a snide comment about Spock’s parentage.

Say something about his mother.

About his father.

It was just too much and Spock did what any logical person would do in the Empire.

He made a ruthless show of his battles.

Then he’d go home to his mother. Busted up green.

She looked proud. Standing in the doorway with her hands on her hips and a half smile on her lips.

One day she looked less than proud as he’d come home with his long bun cropped jaggedly off of his head.

A split lip and a truly roughed up appearance.

He’d gotten in a fight with his cousin, Stonn, after a nasty comment about the human children on the planet Tarsus IV.

Everyone under the Empire knew about what they were doing on Tarsus IV.

Not everyone enjoyed it.

In fact, Spock’s heart ached for those on Tarsus IV, and he didn’t know how to stop the pain in his side.

Spock had lashed out at Stonn to deal with the pain he felt.

Stonn had made it worse by saying Spock was feeling empathetic for pathetic life forms that probably wouldn’t last.
“Mother,” greeted Spock as he walked in past her.

Spock did not miss the length of hair.

Amanda had a frown set on her face, her forehead wrinkled with… possible worry, but she ruffled his hair. Kneeled in front of him and place her hands on his face. “What happened, T’Palla?”

Spock bit into his lower lip. He did not want to be T’Palla. He worsened his wound, and pushed his mother’s hand away. “The children on Tarsus IV,” mumbled Spock, “will they live?”

Amanda’s face stretched with sorrow. “Children are resilient, T’Palla. Perhaps in time we will find out.”

“Of course, Mother,” said Spock. “Is father home?”

They did this for years.

Until it was Spock who looked down at her.

It was another day. A different fight with Stonn. For very different reasons than before.

His mother was there at the door when he got home.

Greeted him like usual. Called him T’Palla.

He tried not to scowl or stiffen at the use of the name.

He tried to control the swell of primal anger toward himself for being unable to tell his mother the most important things.

“What is wrong, sweetie?” asked his mother.

Spock had not been successful in keeping his emotions toward the name hidden.

“My name is Spock,” snapped Spock, and he snapped his mouth shut as a growl rumbled from his chest. “I do not wish to be T’Palla, I do not wish to be your daughter, and I don’t think I ever have wanted those things!”

His mother sent him a glare and he thought this was it. This was going to be the moment his mother hated him for the rest of her life.

“You don’t snap at me like that ever again, Spock, and if you are a male. You’re male.”

Spock stiffened. That had… been smoother than he anticipated.

“Not all men have a penis.”

A feeling of mortification rose up Spock’s stomach.

“and not all women have a –”

He wanted out of this conversation. NOW. “Is father home?”

Amanda stood back and stared at her son. “He is in his office.”

Spock nodded, he walked up the stairs, dusted his gloved hand against the pedestals in his family hall. There used to be vases perched on each one, but many years of Spock living in the home had
shattered each and every one.

At the very end of the first hall stood his father’s office. He curled his fingers against the pedestal before his father’s office. There was a faint outline like a vase had been sitting there not long before Spock came home, and with that thought he knocked on the door.

There was a small vocal reply from within, and Spock opened the door.

“Sa-mekh,” said Spock as he entered.

Sarek was flipping through a PADD, logically doing paperwork, and when Spock approached the desk he set the PADD down. “Sa-fu,” said Sarek, with a raised head.

“I have told Mother,” said Spock while his fingers twitched and his eyes flickered across Sarek’s desk.

The office was always organized, and Spock found there were many vases in it. Many Vulcan artifacts. Many breakables that would have long been destroyed if they had been on display around the house.

Sarek sat perfectly still in his red velvetine chair. “The Empire might follow old Rome, but they do see the logic in gender identity, Sa-fu,” said Sarek. “That is not what you wished to tell me.”

Spock shifted his shoulders and took in a deep breath. “I do not wish to go to the Vulcan Science Academy,” said Spock. “I wish to fight for the Empire, and continue my scientific studies at Starfleet Academy.”

Sarek didn’t move, didn’t fidget, and didn’t change his expression. “If that is what you wish, you will make an adequate Starfleet Officer,” Sarek rose from his desk chair, “and an exemplary warrior for the Empire.”

“I also wish to challenge you again,” said Spock.

Sarek released a breath and motioned for Spock to follow. “You will lose again, Sa-fu.”

Spock did lose.

Eventually he told his mother he was joining Starfleet, and Amanda took it pretty well.

Pretty well for Amanda. She started making poisons in her kitchen late into the night and chatted to Spock about the importances of safety on Terra. She vialled the poisons and shoved them in his bag.

For safety as he traveled from Vulcan to Terra.

Spock had sighed. He was nineteen and a Vulcan. He didn’t require his mother’s poisons to win a fight.

The night he was preparing to board a ship heading for Terra, he stared at the vials his mother had shoved in there. They would be useful if someone tried to move up, or if someone tried to sabotage his experiments, or if he wanted to move up and sabotage someone else’s experiments… He’d keep them.

For safety.

Spock quickly rose to obtain the title of Lieutenant-Commander under one Christopher Pike and
decided to become an instructor until Pike went out into the black.

A few weeks prior Pike had been struggling to find exceptional Terran residents to add to Starfleet. Spock had done research for Pike and sent off a list of exceptional recruits.

“I’m on my way back,” said Pike on video call.

The microphone picked up on distant agonizing screams. Shouts of profanities and “Hold still damnit!”

Spock stared at the screen as he simultaneously scratched at the growing stubble on his widened jaw and went over the data for the program. The perfect no-win scenario.

He had nearly forgotten Pike was going to contact him about the cadets.

“Ah yes, you wanted me to meet with the new cadets,” said Spock as he input a branch of code. “Do you approve of the last two choices?” Spock pulled up the cadet list and scrolled down to the two names he had added before Pike left.

James Tiberius Kirk’s mugshot flipped Spock off from the PADD, while below his lewd mugshot was the mugshot of one scruffy, tired, and angry looking Doctor Leonard Horatio McCoy. “I took into account their skills and importance to the Empire.”

Pike scowled on the screen. “I wish I kept them in jail,” hissed Pike.

“Unfortunate,” said Spock, barely looking up from the PADD that still showed off both men’s mugshots.

James had a much longer rap sheet than Leonard, and oddly Spock found them both fascinating. Many more mugshots flickered on the screen when he clicked on James’ first photo. Much of them were the same. He would be flipping off the people taking the picture, or sticking out his tongue, or even smirking. Some had stubble, there was one of a younger James, and this was the only documentation of the young James’ time on Tarsus IV. The only documentation of a long-haired, scraggly boy.

Spock found satisfaction that the children’s rebellion had killed Kodos before Starfleet could even get there, and a fourteen-year-old James Kirk had been the one to pull the trigger.

Doctor Leonard McCoy showed to be a great investment as well, with his medical expertise, and steady hands. The alcoholism and acrophobia would be a problem, but Spock was sure that would get settled eventually. The doctor was also exceptionally handsome with those bright blue eyes and tanned skin. He wasn’t lewd in his mug shot. Just tired and angry.

“It will be fascinating to see how they fare in the years,” said Spock as he finally looked up from capturing the images in his brain of the mugshots and the two individuals. “Wouldn’t you agree?”

Pike still scowled. “James wants to try doing everything in three years,” said Pike. “I think this won't end pretty, and if I’m right…” Pike leaned in and growled. “Then I’m putting you in the booth.”

Spock did not feel threatened, he just turned back to his PADD, and said, “I understand, Captain.”

“Pike out,” said Pike as he hung up the call.

Spock turned on his jammer and scowled down at the ended call. “Monster,” grumbled Spock as he
stood up from his criss cross position on his bed. He went through his drawers and pulled out a few of his meditation candles. He needed some time for himself before the cadets arrived.
Jim groaned as he baked in the San Francisco heat, bag slung across his back, he had to trek the miles from the orientation building to his dorm, and honestly he was wondering if being at Starfleet Academy was really worth the amount of vomit squished between his toes.

Worth the throbbing in his shoulder from the rough treatment from Sawbones.

Was the Empire worth all of this shit?

Fuck, Jim didn’t even like the Terran Empire. He was just a failure child, and a pain that they wanted to get rid of.

Why else would they send him to Starfleet?

Whatever, he had to get his vomit soaked clothes off, the day was already so very shitty, and he hadn’t liked being covered in vomit while he sat through grueling hours of Starfleet’s cadet orientation.

Honestly? There was a high possibility he’d kill his roommate by the end of the day. Not that the PADD in his grasp told him if he had a roommate, or who that roommate was going to be.

That didn’t matter. Jim already decided as the vomit cooked on his clothes that he was going to kill his roommate.

He found the dorm room and punched in the code he was given to open the door.

The dorms were small tiny little cubies of a metal gated divider, two thin beds with thin sheets, and a shared bathroom.

Jim stepped in and found his roommate wasn’t there.

He really hoped he wouldn’t have one, but if he did it wouldn’t be for long.

Jim threw off his bag, already claiming the bed pressed against the divider, and then he threw his vomit covered clothes on the floor in a trail to the bathroom.

A bathroom that was fully stocked with shampoos and various soaps. Hand it to the Empire to want to make Starfleet seem luxurious.

Jim wouldn’t use any of it.

In fact Jim threw it all in the trash with a sour expression plastered on his face. Then he walked back out into the main room.
Still no roommate.

He grabbed his own supplies from his bag, on his way back to the bathroom he kicked his vomit covered boots over, and then returned to the pleasant thought of scrubbing himself clean.

He locked the bathroom door and took a long hot shower that stung his shoulder injury.

The shower felt great and was very worth it.

He even shaved afterwards.

He decided he’d use the towels available, wrapped one around his hips, he used another to dry off his hair, and scrub away any remaining blood stains.

He entered the main room again and there was someone standing next to the open bed.

On the bed was an open container of hyposprays, many of the vials scattered about, and in no organized fashion.

The owner of those hyposprays? Was Sawbones.

Sawbones who dropped the hypo onto the bed once his eyes met Jim’s form.

The information that Sawbones would be his roommate made all thoughts of killing vanish, and heat spread up Jim’s neck.

His towel dipped low and he scrambled to cover his scarred chest and other parts of his body.

Sawbones simply stared with his hands hovering in the same position that they had been in as when he had been preparing the hypo to murder his roommate—to kill Jim.

Sawbones probably hadn’t been under the impression that Jim was going to be his roommate.

It was quiet for Cesar knows how long.

Sawbones furrowed his brow, broke contact, and stared at the clothing trail that Jim had left behind. “You know the vomit and blood covered clothing trail really should have tipped me off that I’d be sharing a room with you,” said Sawbones. “Of all people.”

Jim didn’t know if his face was hot from the shower or being naked in front of someone he wasn’t climbing into bed with. “Hey there, Sawbones,” said Jim as he waved his hand and scrambled over to his bag in an attempt to find some extra clothes or something to hide in.

Sawbones scowled and gave a hollow laugh. He said, “God, I might kill you.”

Jim stilled and furrowed his brow. Jim blinked. He’d never heard a single person curse God. Was Sawbones religious? Or had he simply grown up trying to hide it? “Are you religious, Bones?”

“God, stop callin’ me that kid,” hissed Sawbones as he scrambled with the scattered vials and hypos. “No, I ain’t religious, it’s just a goddamn word.”

Sawbones gave up on the hypokit and tossed it on the bed.

The vials scattered but didn’t break.

Hardness settled into Jim’s stomach.
Sawbones’ body stilled and he pushed off the bed. “I’m taking a damn shower,” said Sawbones as he followed the vomit clothing trail. He probably wished he could slam a door because he turned to the room and shouted, “Pick up yer damn clothes!”

The bathroom door whooshed shut.

The towel dropped from Jim’s body into a pool on the floor, instead of picking it up he sat on his bed, and stared at the hypokit spread across Sawbones’ mattress.

Jim wondered how this would work out and if he should just stick with the idea of murdering his roommate.

Then there was a whooshing noise and Sawbones peeked his head out of the bathroom. “Why is there a bunch of fucking shampoo and soap in the trash?”

Tightness spread across Jim’s chest and his breath hitched.

Sawbones’ face softened quickly and he frowned. “Nevermind. I understand,” said Sawbones as he leaned in the doorway. “May I use yours?” asked Sawbones.

Jim swallowed past the tightness and nodded.

Sawbones smiled at Jim. “Best enemies, right?” The door whooshed shut after Sawbones shoved himself off the door.

Jim hadn’t left his position on the bed, hadn’t gotten dressed, hadn’t bothered moving, and hadn’t bothered looking away from the bathroom door.

The water didn’t stop.

Sawbones continued with his shower.

Jim snapped out of it with a shake of his head, he put on his underwear, then dressed in his cadet reds.

He stared at the clothing trail, picked it up, trashed the clothes, all except his jacket which he’d patch up, and spot clean later.

He treated his boots the same way that he treated the clothes. Sawbones was just going to owe him a new pair of boots.

When he finished cleaning up his clothes he exited the dorm room with his PADD in hand.

There was no use in not taking this opportunity to find out where he’d be having his classes.

He locked the door after he left, there was also no use in someone murdering Bones, not that Jim was forming an attachment to his roommate.

Jim bit his lower lip hard and flipped through the PADD. Classes wouldn’t start for a week, because they had to go through an intense week of physical training, and then they’d be learning all the bull shit they had to learn to serve the Empire.

At least that’s what Jim had picked up from the Vulcan who had run the orientation.

Jim picked at the insides of his sleeves as he walked under the heated sun once more.
Starfleet campus was packed with cadets taking in their last few moments of freedom before PT started up. Some were dicking around, and others were probably doing the same thing Jim was doing.

Scoping out the campus.

Jim was making his way to the gymnasium when cluster of cadets stormed across the lawn to intercept him.

Cupcake was leading.

*Great*, thought Jim as he sighed. He didn’t want to deal with this.

Slowly Jim pulled to a crawling walk, he blinked, and a smile spread across his face. “Hi there, *Cupcake*, I’d love to stay and chat but—” Jim couldn’t even finish as Cupcake put a hand on his chest and pushed.

The cadets circled around him.

“We got the booth because of you,” hissed one of the cadets.

Jim was shoved into another person and his breath hitched.

“Imagine, getting the booth because of Kirk the Failure’s brat,” snarled another cadet.

Another shove, another person, and more words that filled Jim’s blurring mind.

Blood rushed in his ears and Jim caught the shiny pointed glint of the Empire’s badge pressed crisply against the red uniforms.

He was passed back to Cupcake.

The toxic breath hovered against Jim’s face with unheard words.

Jim clenched his fist and punched Cupcake hard in the face. He was on Cupcake in an instant throwing punches until there was a crunch and pain in Jim’s own fists.

Jim knew he’d broken his thumbs due to the poor fists he made, but he didn’t care about that.

Couldn’t care about that as he shoved another cadet off of him.

Jim ripped the badge off of Cupcake’s uniform and stabbed the sharp end in his eye.

Someone pulled him off of Cupcake.

Jim became aware he was screaming, wailing, and fighting against the person pulling him off.

He wasn’t able to fight the hold for long. Whoever had him was stronger than any human.

There was pain that bloomed across his nerves and he blacked out.

This was already so much better than Riverside.

___
Leonard scrubbed at his clean shaven face with the heel of his palm. He’d been meaning to get use to the surroundings of Starfleet Medical, but it seemed the universe had another plan.

Medical personnel brought him an assignment he hadn’t anticipated getting.

“Doctor McCoy, we’ve had an influx of stabbings, and I need you to take this patient,” demanded a nurse while shoving a PADD in his hands.

“Uhhhh, I’m not working yet,” commented Leonard, but he was already scrolling the PADD. His eyes widened down at the PADD and he could have sworn his heart sank.

The nurse said something that he didn’t hear because he was already heading toward the area they put the patient.

Leonard stormed into the room to be greeted with the image of Jim hunched over himself in the bed provided, a Vulcan loomed near the edge of the bed, and Pike not far from the Vulcan.

Leonard didn’t pay them much attention to any of the conversation going on as he even pushed Pike away and screamed, “Are you out of your corn fed mind?”

Jim looked up at that, and even straightened up slightly.

“Two broken thumbs, bruises, yer damn stitches got ripped open, four fractured ribs from—” Leonard inhaled sharply before he could say ‘God knows what’ “—Cesar knows what.”

“I’m ordering him to report to the boot—”

Leonard whipped his entire body around at Pike and thrust a stylus at him in warning. “Get out of this damn hospital room or someone else is going to be lightly stabbed in the damn eye,” growled Leonard.

Pike actually swallowed and there was a ghost of terror across his face as he backed out of the hospital room.

“Fascinating,” said the Vulcan.


The vulcan didn’t show an ounce of emotion. “Me?”

Jim’s broken ribs, bruises on his sternum, his stitches ripped open from a struggle, and this vulcan in Jim’s room.

It just all manifested in Leonard’s brain as speculation and speculation was all he needed.

Leonard shifted his body in a wide stance, narrowed his eyes, and snarled, “Get out.”

The man hesitated and pressed his lips together. “Of course, Doctor McCoy.”

The Vulcan left.

Leonard turned back to Jim.

They didn’t speak.

Leonard found the bone knitting tool and shoved Jim—not too kindly—down onto the bed.
Jim didn’t even make a noise as Leonard ripped his shirt off and began to fix his ribs.

“Jim, what the fuck did you do?” asked Leonard, why not? They had the time as the knitter worked on fixing Jim’s bones.

After a long silence Leonard thought Jim wasn’t going to speak at all during this long process of knitting him back together.

“This is incredibly painful.” Jim crossed his arms over his stomach and shifted only slightly. “I stabbed someone in the eye with their badge,” said Jim, but there was a wavering in his voice. Like he didn’t even know he could do that to someone. “Is he dead?”

That was a strange question, no one really cared if anyone died, and it didn’t seem like Jim had any problem with killing with the way he attacked the other patient.

“No,” said Leonard as he leaned heavily into the palm of his hand. “He isn’t dead, got to the regen in time.”

Leonard watched as Jim bit his lower lip.

There was silence once more. Comforting in a way as Leonard moved onto other parts of Jim’s body.

“Good,” said Jim as Leonard worked on his thumbs.

Leonard looked at Jim’s face and reached to brush a strand of hair out of the kid’s face. “You’re a strange guy, Jim.”

Jim flinched back. “I could say the same thing about you, Doctor.”

Leonard’s hand hovered there barely a centimeter away from Jim’s forehead. He pulled back his hand and stared down at the bone knitter.

“I can’t do anything about the bruises,” said Leonard after another long moment of silence. “I’ll patch your shoulder back up in a moment.”

Jim wiggled his thumbs and stared at them. “You don't have to.”

Leonard narrowed his eyes at Jim. “It’s my job, Jim.”

There was a long pause as Leonard patched Jim back up. “So who was tall and pointy?” asked Leonard after stitching Jim’s shoulder back up and putting a gauze pad on it.

“I don’t know,” said Jim as he looked at where Leonard was still pressing the adhesive down. “I take it you didn’t catch his name at the orientation either?”

Leonard hadn’t been paying that much attention during the orientation to Starfleet. He’d been drunk after all. “Didn’t catch it,” said Leonard as he placed a final few pieces of adhesive against the pad.

“Unfortunate,” said Jim as he crossed his hands over his stomach again, and bit his lower lip.

Leonard got up and looked down at Jim. “Yer all patched up.”

“Wanna get a drink?” asked Jim as he sat up.
Leonard cocked his hip and crosses his arms. “Do you really have to ask me?”

…

The bar they went to was away from Starfleet grounds, they weren't in their cadet reds, and there was no one else in the mass of bodies dressed like Starfleet.

It didn't take Leonard long to find out Jim was an absolutely clingy-sleepy drunk.

“I gotta go to the bathroom,” mumbled Jim into Leonard’s armpit, but he didn't move. Only curled himself harder around Leonard’s frame.

Leonard had the heart to pry Jim’s arms off. “I ain't cleaning piss off of me,” growled Leonard.

Jim pouted full on and whined while he slid off the bar stool. “Why do I gotta clean up vomit, but you can't handle piss?”

Leonard didn't respond, but he looked at him with one raised brow.

Jim hummed and slid off into the sea of bodies.

Leonard sighed and ordered another drink.

A few moments later there was a sharp cry in the air and everyone in the bar stilled.

“HE FUCKING STABBED ME!” shouted someone from the bathrooms.

Leonard bit his lower lip. That could be anyone stabbing someone in the bathroom.

Anyone could be getting taken advantage of in this place.

Anyone, but Leonard’s insides twisted.

He didn't remember standing up from the stool, didn't remember pushing past everyone, He could recall injecting a hypo, but didn't recall how he ended up with Jim clinging to him as they walked back to the dorms covered in blood and bruises from a bar fight.

Couldn't recall why he slipped into Jim’s too small bed and held the sobbing drunk closer.

 Couldn't understand why his chest swelled with the overwhelming sensation to protect the sobbing bundle who called all stabbings minor stabbings.

Couldn't understand the feelings that flooded his empty heart.

Chapter End Notes

Pride month is the month your fellow LGBTQ+ have +5 Charisma and -5 Stealth.

I don't know when the next chapter will be up, but uhhhhh HAPPY PRIDE MONTH!
High Hopes and Budding... Friendships

Chapter Notes

Warning: For Fights, some Blackmail, Spock is pretty devious, Jim has an eating disorder, and I've so greatly provided that little tag in the tags of this story.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was early morning when Spock walked into Pike’s office.

An office that on the surface was always kept in order, dust free, tidy, and bare of personal materials.

Spock wondered what secrets were hidden away in that desk.

“This better be good, Lieutenant-Commander,” hissed Pike. He looked disheveled and reeked of alcohol.

Spock wouldn’t have put it past the human to hit the bottle after the events of yesterday.

They had cadet Kirk for barely a day and he was already causing problems for the Fleet.

Spock straightened his spine and put his arms behind his back. “Why make them roommates?” asked Spock.

The information of the housing arrangement perplexed Spock. Not that there's anything wrong with Cadet Kirk and Cadet McCoy being roommates, both cadets showed well above average intelligence, creativity, strength, they would make excellent allies, and adequate warriors for the Empire.

Spock had just been speculating Pike’s own reasoning behind the choice.

Pike stayed at his desk, he eyed Spock wearily, then his demeanor changed, and he leaned over his desk to flip on the disruptor. “They killed three people—”

“–Three people in a bar.” Spock shifted his shoulders back and scowled at Pike. “Three people who attacked Cadet Kirk.”

Two beyond drunk individuals caused chaos and destruction at an establishment that was far beyond a seedy location. That was fascinating. Beyond Fascinating to Spock.

Pike slammed his hands down on the desk and snarled, “Three people who were very important to the Empire, Lieutenant-Commander.”

Spock did not falter. There had been that… The three men were fairly powerful and held influence. Spock simply tilted his head and stretched his neck forward. “Three powerful people who would have died any other day–Now cease ignoring my question,” hissed Spock. “Why make them roommates?”

Something swirled and sank into Spock’s stomach as Pike’s demeanor changed once more to one
of slouched scowls and heavy glares.

“I was hoping they’d kill each other by now,” said Pike, dully, but with a smirk on his face. “Instead they kill three people and injure another cadet.”

Spock took in a deep breath and shifted his shoulders.

“Follow me, Lieutenant-Commander,” said Pike flipping off the disruptor and walking out of his office.

Spock scrunched up his nose in disgust—an emotion he wasn’t against feeling—and followed behind Pike.

Disgust further rolled in his gut as they approached the windows that looked out onto the area where physical training was taking place.

Spock could make out the forms of Cadet Kirk and Cadet McCoy out the window on the field running far ahead or behind the other Cadets. They were close. Nearly hip to hip as they jogged.

Kirk clearly had his tongue sticking out at McCoy in jest. Something Spock had never seen on anyone’s face on the Terran Empire unless they were causing pain to another.

McCoy in turn had a small smile on his face and shoved at Kirk with his elbow before sprinting off.

Kirk clearly shouted with pointed eyebrows and a wide mouth. He sprinted after McCoy and shoved him back before grinning wide.

“Why recruit them?” hissed Pike.

Spock tore his eyes away from the display of the possible budding alliance of McCoy and Kirk. “It is logical,” said Spock.

Pike glared, his lips curled up, and his eyes void of humanity. The Monster Pike has always been and will always be. “McCoy I understand, I understand the logic in recruiting him,” growled Pike as he scooted in so much closer to Spock’s face. “But where is the logic in recruiting that brain rotted coward?”

Spock did not allow the shiver that ran up his spine to disrupt his stance, he didn’t allow the full body shudder move further than his toes, and he would not allow this monster to see any form of weakness.

“That ‘Brain Rotted coward’–as you are so fond of calling him–has succeeded at mutilating one of your top security picks, and even inebriated succeeded in causing a significant amount of destruction to one of the most popular establishments in this region.” Spock leaned further into Pike’s space and shoved his Captain back. “That was your doing. That was because of your arrangement,” whispered Spock. He clasped his gloved hands behind his back.

“The Empire doesn’t want to deal with him,” hissed Pike.

Spock nearly laughed. “The Empire isn’t dealing with him, Captain, and out in space?” Spock leaned into Pike’s ear. “Out in space, they still won’t be dealing with him, because that is going to be your problem, sir, and I would call that your punishment.”

Spock stepped back and stared down at Pike. “I would call it poetic,” purred Spock.
Pike paled and his jaw clenched.

“Considering your past with Kirks.” Spock put his arms to his side. “If you excuse me, sir, I have work to do, and so do you.” Spock pushed away from the wall and walked out of the building.

...

Spock’s heart hammered hard against his side, he couldn’t believe he actually did that. Had done that. To Christopher Pike of all people.

He’d have to be extra vigilant in the coming days, months, and years.

Spock was crossing the field with his hands clenched at his sides and his head down when someone shouted, “Lieutenant-Commander Spock!”

Spock whipped around to find a dark skinned woman with short cropped hair running toward him. Running toward him and away from Cadet Kirk and Cadet McCoy who she had been running with.

Interesting, “Cadet, I do believe you should not attempt to get out of physical training,” said Spock once the cadet stood in front of him.

She breathed a little hard and said, “Cadet Uhura, I am aware, sir, Cadets Kirk and McCoy wanted to keep things interesting and race, sir.”

“What would that have to do with you running up to me, Cadet Uhura?” asked Spock as he flickered his eyes up to McCoy and Kirk.

“They wish to race you, sir,” said Uhura as she popped her shoulders.

Spock blinked slowly and looked down at her, back to the two cadets, then to Uhura once more. He didn’t have to think long about the challenge. “All right,” said Spock.

___

Jim stabbed the food the mess hall had thrown out for dinner that night. It didn’t look edible—or at least his didn’t.

Just a grey-brown slab of something that smelled too toxic to eat.

Maybe it was toxic. Maybe they were just trying to kill him before he could get away.

Before he could go out into space. Before he could leave the Empire’s hold.

That’d sound like Christopher Pike’s game. The Empire’s game.

Murder him before he could be free—or as free as being out in space was.

Giving him a roommate like Bones also sounded like something Pike would do. Hell if they hadn’t become such fast frie–enemies. They weren’t friends. They were roommates. Drinking partners? Either way Jim was sure he’d be dead right now if Bones and him hadn’t come to an understanding.

Jim scowled and tore off a chunk of the rubbery substance. He flicked it across the mess with a dull expression.
Yeah, Bones and him weren’t friends.

Bones wasn’t even sitting with him. Hadn’t bothered with much interaction after Jim lost in a race with the Vulcan Lieutenant-Commander and nearly passed out.

*Spock*.

Just the thought of the Lieutenant-Commander’s name sent Jim’s stomach into a cramping fit—or maybe it was that pain that came and went. The sharpness of ice pick pain from organs he despised.

Maybe it was that. It’d go away in the coming day, Jim knew that, then Jim would be riddled with new pains from hell week, and murder attempts.

He was George Kirk’s son after all. The son of a failure who didn’t belong in the Fleet.

He flicked more food across the mess.

“Would you stop that.”

Jim was the slightest bit startled when Bones sat down across from him.

“Are they trying to kill you?” asked Bones as he shoved half of his own food into Jim’s space.

Bones’ food looked edible, and nutritious. There was protein that his body would need in the coming week, vegetables, and all that.

Jim eyed the tray of food and looked up at Bones’ face. Those blue eyes watching every move.

“Are you trying to kill me?”

Bones bit the inside of his cheek, Jim could see it, that little shift in his jaw, the movement of teeth, and then Bones smiled something stiff. “After last night?” asked Bones, his gaze dropped to the tray. “I’d be a fool to kill someone like you, Jim.”

Bones leaned ever so closer and bit his lower lip. “Just eat. I’ve already checked it.”

Jim ate like a starved man.

Like he’d never see food again.

Which wasn’t far off really.

After Tarsus IV Jim had a knack of eating far too quickly, while also hoarding what he hadn’t finished, and–he stared at the grey-brown slab of rubbery toxin.

He chewed on what was in his mouth and felt his stomach roll with the food being introduced to him. He hated wasting food, but he didn’t have to feel that way about food that was probably going to kill him to begin with.

Yet…

Jim wasn’t able to stare at the food for long as the bench bowed, and the inedible tray was pushed aside and replaced with a tray of soup.

A tray of soup carried by gloved hands.
Jim glanced up slowly already feeling his stomach roll more as he came into contact with a green undertone face with pointy ears.

“Ew,” said Jim while he shoveled more food in his mouth and averted his gaze from Lieutenant-Commander Spock.

“Cadets,” greeted Spock his gaze narrowed at Jim.

Jim narrowed his eyes in return. Fuck Spock. Fuck his well manicured eyebrows, and slightly rumpled hair.

Fuck the racing beat of Jim’s heart as he continued to glare into those brown eyes.

He snapped his head back down and began to poke at Bones’ tray.

“Lieutenant-Commander,” greeted Bones. Jim could hear the forced smile in the southerner’s drawl. “What brings you here?”

“Keeping an eye on Cadet Kirk,” muttered Spock, so unenthusiastic like all Vulcans. “For Captain, Pike.”

Of course Spock was Pike’s little hound dog. Errand boy?

Jim shrugged and found his eyes scanning Spock as he talked with Bones. Spock was handsome. Beautiful? Like space. Something so mysterious and pleasing to just stare at for hours on end.

Jim could see the positives in getting closer to Spock.

“Ain’t that right, Jim?”

Jim blinked and glanced over at Bones who was giving him that small quirked brow. That look making Jim’s stomach do a few more flips and flops. “What?”

“Checking to see if you were paying attention,” purred Bones with a sly grin.

Jim scowled and stuck out his tongue. “Well I wasn’t.”

“It was apparent, Cadet Kirk.”

Jim’s tongue darted back into his mouth and he fixed a glare in Spock’s direction. “You’re just doing Pike’s dirty work.”

Spock raised one judgmental eyebrow, rested his elbow on the table, and leaned into the palm of his hand. “It is illogical that he assumes you need someone to spy on you.”

“Well,” grumbled Bones, “Jim has me to watch him and I don’t appreciate the competition.”

Jim looked over to Bones and pouted. “I don’t need to be watched.”

Both of the individuals at the table seemed to let out some choked off noise.

“Alright, Jim.” Bones shifted on the bench and rose to his feet. “If you can behave for the rest of the day, I’ll see you later back at the dorm, and I won’t hear about you going to medical.”

Jim stuck his tongue out and scowled.
Bones didn’t acknowledge it and he left the table.

It made Jim’s heart sink.

He was alone with Spock of all people.

Jim looked over at the Vulcan and his scowl deepened.

It was tense silence, silence and Spock staring intently as he finished up his soup.

They didn’t talk, but Jim waited for Spock to finish his soup.

“So, why are you working for Pike?”

Spock pushed his tray aside and turned to face Jim. “I’m afraid, Cadet Kirk, I cannot discuss that, but I’m aware you are not fond of Captain Pike.”

Jim let out a chuckle. “I’m not fond of anyone.”

That eyebrow rose once again, Spock tilted his head, his eyes glancing around the mess, probably seeing if Bones was still among the cadets in the hall, and then those eyes focused on Jim once more. “I believe the human phrase will be... I scratch your back, you scratch mine.”

Which made Jim’s face twist with confusion. A furrow of his brow, a rise of his lip, a twisted scrunch of his nose, and a peek of teeth as he asked, “What?”

Spock blinked, his face never changed, he pulled Jim closer, a hot hand resting on Jim’s side, and he whispered, “I do not work for Captain Pike, I work for myself, and as I said. The human equivalent of ‘I scratch your back, you scratch mine.’ I watch you for him, I relay information to him, and I get somethings in return.”

Jim leaned in with furrowed brows. “Why are you telling me that?”

Spock’s lips twisted into a small smile. “Because, Cadet Kirk. I need you to play along.”

That hand slipped higher until it rested on Jim’s shoulder.

“I need you to start a fight,” whispered Spock even as his fingers dug just so slightly into Jim’s flesh.

“I can do that,” whispered Jim.

Jim rushed forward and slammed them both down onto the floor—he was pretty sure Spock was doing most of the work because there was no way Jim could actually push the dense vulcan.

They struggled involving others with missed punches and kicks.

By the end of the day a majority of the people in the mess had ended up in medical because of Jim and Spock’s combined efforts to put them there.

Chapter End Notes

Until Next time: A warning for next time; "Consensual Bathtub Surgeries"
Leonard was certain he’d made it blatantly obvious that he wasn’t going to address each and every one of Jim’s health issues. He wasn’t going to do it.

“I get this pain in my pelvis,” said Jim, reclined against his bed, fiddling with a knife in one hand as the other hand brushed just where the ovaries would sit on the female form. “About here, like it fucking hurts. Worse than being stabbed lightly.”

Leonard questioned what a stabbing would have to look like to be considered a problem. To be considered a major stabbing in Jim’s eyes.

The knife whizzed through the air and clanged onto the ground.

“Damn,” hissed Jim as he reached on the bed for another knife.

It became obvious to Leonard on day four of hell week that Jim just never truly shut up. He’d talk about what was causing him pain, or he’d sneak something into his diet that Leonard was certain he’d seen on the other’s long medical list that Winona Kirk had entrusted with Leonard… He didn’t understand it either.

Most would see this information as a means to get rid of Jim.

Leonard saw it as a reason to get his heart rate accelerated. The cadet could literally go into anaphylactic shock from eating one too many pieces of chocolate. Not to mention Jim seemed to be allergic to five of the eight most common food allergens.

“That’s not normal,” said Leonard as he reclined on his hard mattress with his xenobiology book propped on his knees.

Jim shrugged it off. “Lived with it, a doctor back in Riverside just gave me these pills,” said Jim as he shuffled through the bag he hadn’t bothered unpacking. He shook the half empty orange bottle. “I stocked up.” He pulled out many other bottles of the same looking pill.

Leonard’s eyes widened. “Did you steal those from medical?” asked Leonard.

Jim stared at the pills then up at Leonard. “Right… you’re a doctor.”

Leonard jolted up from the bed and stormed across the room snatching one of the bottles from Jim. Leonard read the label and scowled. “What the fuck is this?” He threw the bottle onto the bed.
“Why didn’t they just give you a hysterectomy?”

Jim scowled at that and shoved the pills back in his bag. “To quote a doctor back in Riverside ‘What if you marry a strong military man and it’ll be your job to give him healthy sons for the Empire.’” Jim punctuated the sentence with a stabbing motion at the area his uterus lied in. “What’s the use in keeping this thing? It doesn’t work.”

Leonard scowled. “What a piece of shit.” He returned to his bed.

“Right?” asked Jim with a smirk. “What medical man wouldn’t want to inflict pain?”

Leonard shook his head and glanced at the bathroom. There was an option to lessen Jim’s pain.

Jim returned to what he had been doing before the pain spike, throwing knives at Lieutenant-Commander Spock’s printed out face, scowling when the knife missed entirely, and got stuck in the wall.

“Still salty about losing in the race?” asked Leonard as he looked away from the bathroom door. Why did Leonard want to make Jim be in less pain?

Jim’s scowl deepened. He’d run out of knives and it was clear if he moved there would be a flare of pain.

Jim didn’t answer.

Leonard turned back to looking at the door, he set down his xenobiology textbook, slid up from bed, strolled over to the wall, and pulled out the knife that had stuck itself between the photo’s eyes.

“What are you doing?” asked Jim.

Leonard stared at the knife and tested its weight. “I could do it you know,” said Leonard. He looked at Jim.

Jim had his brow furrowed.

“I just need ice, a bathtub, a laser scalpel, and a regenerator,” said Leonard as he shoved the knife back into the photo.

Jim scowled and put his hand against his gut as he sat up. “All things Pike won’t get us,” grumbled Jim.

A smirk spread across Leonard’s face as he looked at the photo of the Lieutenant-Commander once more. Recalling the Vulcan’s sudden attachment to Jim’s hip. Whether it was to spy for Pike or for his own personal gain. “If you work your magic,” purred Leonard as he lidded his eyes to look at Jim. “Perhaps the Lieutenant-Commander will give us what we want.”


Jim went stiff and bit his lower lip. “Fine. I’ll see what I can do.”

…

Hours later Lieutenant-Commander Spock, messy hair, dark green circles under his eyes, and
scowling as he stood at the door with large bags of ice, a regenerator, a laser scalpel, and an anatomically correct heart shaped box of chocolates.

Which Jim snatched up the chocolates and tossed the lid off onto the floor.

Leonard tossed his arms up into the air. “Jim –”

“These are good fucking chocolates,” said Jim as he shoved three in his mouth. “By the way, Sawbones, Lieutenant-Commander Spock here has agreed to this in exchange for a date with you. Boyfriends fight harder and all that.” Jim fell back onto the thin bed and put the box on his stomach. He didn’t seem to be eating anymore of the expensive looking chocolate.

Leonard looked to Lieutenant-Commander Spock and blinked. “Excuse me?”

“In exchange for my silence and service, you owe me a date, Doctor McCoy,” said Spock as he walked further into the dorm and went to the bathroom. “Dump the ice into the bathtub correct?”

“And for my silence I get chocolate,” said Jim with a shit eating grin.

Leonard growled and glared at Jim. “Fine… I’ll go on a date with the hobgoblin.”

“Good,” said Jim and he shoved just one more chocolate in his mouth.

It was white chocolate, so Leonard’s heart didn’t beat as fast.

“Don’t eat anymore of that,” grumbled Leonard as he stormed into the bathroom.

Spock was emptying a bag of ice into the tub. “Is this adequate?”

Leonard sneered. “I don’t like you, and I’m doing this for the sake of the Empire,” said Leonard.

“It is logical. Cadet Kirk cannot be of much use if he is in constant pain because of the parts he was born with,” said Spock.

“Right,” said Leonard as he set up his supplies and stared at the door that lead into their dorm room. “Logical.”

He flicked his eyes back at Spock for a long while. The bow of his lips, the quirk of his eyebrow, a shade of stubble that Leonard knew wouldn’t be on his face the next time he saw the Vulcan… the point was Spock wasn’t bad looking.

That was a positive.

Plus if all Leonard had to do was go on a date with this guy so Pike wouldn’t find out about the bathtub surgery? It would be worth it.

“I will collect Cadet Kirk,” said Spock as he brushed by Leonard and exited the bathroom.

God, Leonard had to go on a date with that.

But also… God Leonard had a date with that.
Spock walked out of the bathroom.

A knife whizzed by his head, flecks of hair floated to the ground, and the knife stuck into the wall behind him.

He looked at the knife and blinked slowly.

“Missed,” said Kirk.

Spock turned his head to Kirk.

Kirk with the abandoned box of chocolate, head rested against the metal gate of the divider, and legs spread out.

Spock questioned this action, he glanced to one wall, and saw a photo of himself taken from the database plastered on the wall with knife marks in it. “Target practice?” He glanced back at Kirk.

Kirk bit his lower lip, sucked it into his mouth, and nearly smoothly shifted off the bed. “Something like that, but I guess when you start dating Leonard…” Kirk strolled over like he was just discovering the use of his limbs, he stood inches from Spock, but passed.

Spock felt a hand brush against his ass.

“I’ll have to watch my back,” purred Kirk before he entered the bathroom.

“You want me naked here right?” asked Kirk to Leonard.

Then the door whooshed shut and Spock felt his heart race against his side.

The bathroom door opened once more and Spock turned his head to come face to face with Leonard. “I need ya to do some Vulcan hoodoo for me,” said Leonard.

Spock stepped into the nearly all too small bathroom—small for three grown men of course.

Spock’s heart beat faster as his eyes fell on Kirk’s frame spread out in the ice bath.

Kirk was soft something PT couldn’t get rid of, he was soft around his stomach, his thighs, and just the barest softness still clung to his arms.

Kirk was shivering already. He was in his underwear and his fingers were already a shade of the barest violet.

“Knock him out,” said Leonard.

Spock blinked and looked to Leonard. “You are certain?”


“Reassuring!” shouted Kirk as he shuttered and curled his toes against the rim of the tub. His teeth chattered.

“Pipe down and pretend to be dead for me,” snapped Leonard.

Kirk’s mouth shut tight aside from the small shudders and chattering.

This did not seem like a good idea, Pike would find out, hysterectomies weren’t exactly painless
procedures, and Kirk would be in a lot of pain.

“Fuck, come on,” snapped Kirk. “Get it over with, Pointy.”

Then again. Why was he concerned for Kirk being in considerable pain?

Spock scowled at Kirk and delivered a nerve pinch.

“Thank–” Leonard cut himself off and pushed Spock out of the way. “He might wake up when I make the first cut,” said Leonard.

“Unfortunate,” said Spock as he crouched down out of the way.

Kirk did not rouse when the first cut was made and Leonard was able to remove the organ—which he threw in the ice between Jim’s legs—and heal the internal work with the regenerator.

Except it was clear that Leonard was not going to heal the outer flesh fully.

It became clear that Kirk would have a nasty scar there.

Spock wondered about the stories Kirk would tell to those who saw the scar. Would he tell them about how he got a hysterectomy in the bathtub?

Would he say that he sold it to the black market?

The possibilities were endless.

“Help me get him to bed,” grumbled Leonard.

They moved Jim back to bed to warm his limbs slowly. “I got it from here,” said Leonard as he doubled up the thin blankets. “When is that date?”

Chapter End Notes


Until next time!
It was the last day of the Fleet’s unbearable Hell Week before the weekend and Leonard had a Date.

A date with Spock of all people.

Leonard hadn’t been on a date in years. He was feeling the pang of anxiety plucking at his heart strings like it’s trying to tune a banjo and somehow the banjo is destined to be forever off key. “What do I even wear?”

“Well, you have one outfit.” Jim rolled gentle like onto his stomach, and Leonard was under the impression that Jim had skipped out on dinner in favor of being here to annoy Leonard. “Start there.”

Leonard scowled, he knew that wasn’t why Jim had skipped on dinner, and he strolled over to the bed with a frown. Jim needed to eat something. When was the last time his roommate ate? “You gonna go to the mess hall tonight?” asked Leonard.

Jim bolted upright and blinked fast at Leonard. “I’ll probably hit up a bar,” replied Jim, slowly he eyed Leonard, and sighed. “You need a different shirt.”

Leonard stared down at the clothes he arrived in, they weren’t exactly date material, but Leonard wasn’t doing this for a positive outcome. “What’s wrong with this?”

Jim’s face scrunched up and then with a wide mouth movement he asked, “You’re kidding right?”

Leonard blinked at Jim and tilted his head.

Jim bit his lower lip, stood from the bed, and dug through the bag near the end of his bed. “You look about my dad’s size.”

A bundle of fabric was thrown at Leonard’s chest, which he caught, and unraveled.

It was a button down that looked ancient. A deep dark navy with golden accents.

“I can’t wear this.” Leonard looked up at Jim and frowned.

Jim scowled and pushed at Leonard’s chest. “You’ll look great in it.”

Leonard sighed heavily and shuffled over to his bed where he plopped down heavily. “Maybe I shouldn’t go.”

Jim stood stagnant by his own bed, his lips quirked in the way that wasn’t playful, pulled back to show off peeks of teeth, and a stance that Leonard had seen when Jim threw his whole body into a
fight. “What can I do to convince you that you’ll enjoy this date?”

What could Jim do? What lengths would Jim go?

Leonard tossed onto his side away from Jim and sighed heavily.

Would he grab Leonard’s anxiety by the ankles? Tune his heart to the frequency of love? Would he come along and coach Leonard through the date?

A light bulb bursted behinds Leonard’s eyes and he quickly sat up. “Come with me on the date.”

Jim blinked hard, reared back his stance, and coughed. “What now?”

Leonard scrambled up from the bed and rushed over to Jim with the biggest split grin. “It’s perfect, you’re a regular old casanova, and you got me into this.”

Leonard could feel Jim’s sharp intake of breath, could see the terror on his face as Leonard gripped hard on his biceps, and could see the hard swallow that followed.

“What do you say, Jim?”


Leonard blinked as he watched Jim shuffle around the room, face downcasted, and averted from Leonard. He frowned, stepped back, and bit his lip while Jim thought about it.

It was a full minute before Jim lifted his head up to face Leonard. “One condition.”

Leonard’s hands felt sticky with sweat. What did Jim want out of this?

“You pay for whatever I order while I’m there.” Jim cocked his hip and crossed his arms.

Leonard released a slow breath. “Yeah. Sounds good.”

Jim grinned wide and put his hands on his hips. “I’ve got just the equipment too.” He rushed back over to the backpack and pulled out a set of spy equipment.

“I’m not going to ask.”

Jim’s brows waggled. “Got it off a thirteen year old.”

Leonard scowled. “I said I wasn’t going to ask.”

“I’m in place.” Jim tugged sharply at the tight collar of his button up and scanned the large room over the lip of the menu.

He could see Bones, slouched at a fancy table in his somewhat snug in the arms button down, and anxiously running a hand through his already messy hair.

“You look good,” said Bones as his gaze settled on Jim.

Jim couldn’t help but give a dry chuckle into the menu. “This shirt has mallard ducks printed on
It.” It was one of the only things he had that was kept in somewhat good condition. A dark blue-violet with marble swirled buttons. Not something fit for a place of this caliber.

Jim glanced toward the entrance which he could see clearly.

No. This was a place where the waiters and waitresses dressed in formal vests, handed out expensive wines, and left little mint chocolates on your check.

“But keep that opening for your date.” Jim didn’t have to look back at the table to know Bones had rolled his eyes.

He looked down at the menu and squinted. Was there anything here that wasn’t some expensive thing? “God, they have lobster.”

“Don’t,” hissed Bones. “Also watch your tongue.”

Jim chuckled again. He had cursed God hadn’t he? Imagine that. “You think I can afford a place where every other woman walks in wearing a fitted silk red slit--” Jim blinked hard as he stared at the front entrance.

She stood next to Spock; a dark skinned woman in a fitted red dress, fussing over the Vulcan’s normally messy hair, and brushing dust off of what looked like some Vulcan robes.

Cadet Uhura.

“What?” hissed Bones.

Uhura glanced out onto the room.

Jim rushed quickly to cover up his face with the menu. Something hard settled in his stomach.

“Your date is here. Relax, pull out his chair, and just repeat after me.”

“Okay,” whispered Bones.

Jim peeked over the menu and turned his head in the direction of Bones’ table.

Spock regally walked to the table where Bones twitchily pulled out the chair.

“Leonard,” greeted Spock with some vulcan hand greeting as he took the chair Bones offered.

Jim imagined being in Bones’ shoes. Imagined what he would say to a date who brought him to such a place. “Smile, go to your chair, lean over just a little, and fix your best flirting voice and say…”

“You look hot, Spock,” repeated Bones doing as Jim told him.

Spock blinked and took a moment to answer. “You're quite pleasing to look at yourself, Leonard,” said Spock.

A waiter strolled over to their table, but Jim was blocked by the appearance of silky red.

“You can order by yourself. A beautiful lady has just graced me with her presence.” Jim muted himself and looked up at Uhura.

Jim smirked a little. “Uhura.”
“This seat taken?” asked Uhura with a tilt of her head.

Jim scooted further into his little booth. “By all means. It’s yours.”

Uhura gave a sly grin and slid into the booth.

Jim could see the glint of an earpiece in her ear. “Here to help the Vulcan?”

Uhura rolled her eyes. “Human things go right over his head and he is paying for whatever I get.” She so lightly touched Jim’s hand. “One moment.” She pulled her hand back and touched the ear piece.

“Are you serious? Ordering alcohol for the alcoholic?”

Jim blinked and tuned into the conversation at the other table.

“One moment, order us something pretty,” said Bones as he rose from the table and rushed to the bathroom.

“Order us something pretty and not seafood.” Jim pulled himself up by his arms, hopped up onto the table, and then over the booth to go after Bones. “Oh also some wine would be amazing.”

Uhura gave a small laugh.

“SIR!” shouted one of the waitstaff.

Jim ignored it and climbed over another booth to get to the bathroom quicker.

Again Jim wasn’t the type of person to bring to fancy restaurants, but it wasn’t his goal to be prim and proper.

Jim slid into the men’s restroom just as Bones shouted into the mic and just as Bones was face first through a far too small window.

His legs kicked and his shoes tried to grip on the tile walls of the restroom. “Jim, I can’t do this. I’m going to jump out of the bathroom window.”

Jim rose one brow and cleared his throat. “Bones.”

Bones screamed and fell from the window onto his ass. “Jim!” He snapped his head around to stare at Jim.

Jim cocked his hip and tilted his head up. “By all means. Jump out a window. I just ran on a bunch of tables and climbed a bunch of booths to get here.” He probably ruined so many dinners.

“You did… what?” Bones narrowed his eyes and got off his ass. “I can’t take you anywhere can I?”

Jim shrugged his shoulders and strolled closer to Bones just to place both hands on the other’s biceps. “You can do this.” Jim gave a gentle squeeze. “If it makes you feel any better I’ll unmute myself, but you’re going to hear some flirting because Uhura is here.”

Bones’ face drooped. “What is Uhura doing here?”

Jim shrugged. “Just go out there and stick to water.”
Bones took in a deep breath and nodded. “Water.”

Jim smiled, patted Bones’ arms, released him and walked toward the door. “I on the other hand will be having wine.”

—

“Was that Cadet Kirk?” asked Spock as he straightened his spine and ordered food for himself and Leonard. He glanced over at Nyota and raised a brow.

“Perhaps. You don’t mind if I eat with him do you? Flirt a little? Go back to my place?” asked Uhura as she handed the menu back to her own waitress. “Oh and some Vulcan Port Wine if you would.”

Spock narrowed his eyes and stared at the empty seat in front of him. Something stirred in his gut, but he breathed through it. “Why would you bring him back to your place?”

“Because he is hot, Spock, and I want to tap that.” Nyota released a laugh. “We humans have this thing called a one night stand. Some people are great at no attachments with sex.”

Spock made a small noise. “We will see how this night fairs for both of us.”

“Welcome back, Jim,” said Nyota.

Spock inhaled sharply as Jim’s voice came in crystal clear through Nyota’s mic. “Wouldn’t want to keep a powerful woman like yourself waiting.”

Jim’s voice made Spock’s toes curl and his breath hitch. Spock would need to work to calm this flood of unknown emotion.

“How charming of you,” purred Nyota. “Spock, your boy is approaching.”

Spock bristled and narrowed his eyes over at her. His heart sank just a little at the sight of Nyota leaning into Jim. Touching gently at the buttons of what appeared to be a tachy duck shirt.

It looked phenomenal on Jim.

The table jerked and Spock returned his attention to Leonard who just arrived back at the table.

“You see him don’t you?”

Leonard also looked phenomenal. The dark blue of the shirt really made his eyes pop and the golden yellow accents brought out some color in his skin.

“He is hard to miss.” Spock swallowed dryly. “I… ordered iced tea.” He gripped the table cloth tightly into his lap. “I do hope that will suffice.

Leonard blinked slow and gave Spock a slow smile. “Thanks, Spock.”

Spock glanced toward Jim and Nyota, he could hear the two softly flirting through the equipment, and it did not make him feel good. He felt like it was a challenge. Like how Stonn had attempted to flirt with T’pring.
“Not to bad mouth Jim.” Leonard leaned his elbow on the table.

Spock muted his end of the mic and leaned in. “Do bad mouth the cadet.”

Leonard released this smooth laugh. “He won’t leave with her,” said Leonard. “Chances are when dinner comes around he will stop touching her all together.” A grin spread across his face. Split his lips from ear to ear. “I reckon he will hop over to the other side of the table.”

Spock turned back to his date to see Leonard’s gaze fixed on the two as well. “You are so certain?”

“That is between Jim and I, Mister Spock.” Leonard smirked and leaned into the palm of his hand. “So, your father is the Vulcan Ambassador?”

Spock raised one brow. “You have conducted research?”

Leonard shrugged his shoulders. “I had a little birdy hack into your Fleet file.”

Spock glanced back over at Kirk who was still closely talking with Nyota.

Jim smirked, eyes flickered up toward Spock, and a twitch of his fingers that Spock could only interpret as a wave.

“He is exceptional,” admitted Spock as he looked back to Leonard.

Leonard was giving a knowing look, one of full lips, and a peek of gapped teeth. He flicked at something, muting himself perhaps? Or possibly just fixing the tight buttons. “Darling, you don’t know how exceptional he can be.”

“True; however, fascinated I am by Kirk.” Spock leaned in further and rested his chin in the palms of his hands. “He is not the only exceptional one.”

Color rose to Leonard’s face and he bit his lower lip. “For someone who needs human help, you are doing one hell of a job flirting.”

Spock allowed the smallest of smiles. “Thank you, Leonard, perhaps if dinner goes well we can go for a walk? Discuss our intentions?”

“Perhaps.”

“GET SOME!” shouted Jim from across the relatively busy restaurant.

Leonard’s face turned red. He grumbled, “Damn it, Jim.” And rubbed at his face.

Spock smiled just the barest smile. “Your relationship with Cadet Kirk is quite interesting.”

Leonard gave a sharp hollow laugh. “He is the worst.”

Spock tilted his head and blinked. Words that should be said with malice were said with an undertone of fondness. “The worst,” whispered Spock. He had barely known the Cadets, but found he was willing to get to know more.

A comfortable silence fell, Spock did not feel as if putting in small talk would be of any use, they would talk later, they would discuss intentions, and what they wish from a relationship of any kind.

Of course that silence was not so silent with the soft crackle of Nyota and Kirk.
“You were the top of your class?” asked Nyota, sounding astonished, and surprised.

Kirk’s laughter filtered in. “When I actually did the work.”

“To adopt a phrase,” purred Nyota, “fascinating.”

Spock bristled and twitched his fingers.

“You had an opportunity to stay on Vulcan?” Leonard’s question had Spock back to attention.

Spock straightened his back, he didn’t know whether he was flattered that Leonard had taken the time to do some research, or if it was unsettling. “Yes. They offer extended science classes as well as continued training, but I found the Empire offered more, for lack of better term, freedom in Starfleet.”

Leonard nodded slowly and crossed his arms over his chest. “Huh.”

True to Leonard’s prediction Kirk vaulted over the table into the seat beyond Nyota. Beyond the reach of the lobster and Nyota’s flirtations.

“Good.” Spock blinked slow, yet kept a firm face as surprise flared in his brain. Had that slipped from his mouth? What was good about Nyota keeping her distance from Kirk?

Leonard smirked at Spock from over the lip of his iced tea, he lowered the glass, turned a smug look toward Spock, and finally fixed his eyes over at Kirk. “Fancy that.”

“Nothing personal,” purred Kirk’s now distinctly distant voice.

“We were having such fun,” said Nyota. “Enjoy your meal.”

“I will,” came Kirk’s soft reply.

Spock swallowed thickly. “You were correct in your prediction,” said Spock, swiftly he took a glug of water, and looked away from the other table.

Leonard kept his eyes trained on the table, as if Nyota would cause harm to Kirk, then turned his attention back toward Spock and the arrival of their food. “Looks good.”

Spock nodded and poked at his plate which was primarily vegetables. “Indeed.”

Leonard cleared his throat.

Spock shot his eyes upward and blinked. “Yes, Leonard?”

“Imagine that a vegetarian vulcan.” Leonard stabbed his knife into his steak and made precision cuts along the meat. Small cuts. Like a parent would do for a young child.

Spock didn’t point it out, but he cleared his throat. “Contrary to what the empire is taught most vulcans are vegetarian.” He stabbed his fork into a carrot. “Though I am primarily not vegetarian.” He shoved the carrot in his mouth while maintaining eye contact with Leonard and chewed slowly.

Leonard’s eyebrows rose. “I thought you evolved from cat like creatures?”

Spock rose one of his eyebrows and continued to chew his food before addressing Leonard’s statement. “Did humans not feed cats plant based food at one time?”
Leonard stabbed one of the tiny pieces of steak he had made, brought it to his lips, and slid it into his mouth. He took the time to chew it and swallow.

“What a burn.” Spock could hear Kirk’s laughter.

Leonard’s fingers twitched and he gritted his teeth. “Ain’t you on a date over there, Jim?”

“I’m invested,” hissed Kirk after a long moment of quiet. “Humor me.”

Leonard groaned, “You’re such a pain.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are Appreciated.

Until next time!
“Perhaps you should return to your date with Cadet Uhura, James.”

Jim snapped his head over to glare at the smirking Spock. That smug asshole.

Jim found he had nothing to say to Spock of all people. He looked back to Nyota and forced a grin.

He was in the presence of a powerful woman.

A powerful woman eating death food, but a powerful woman nonetheless.


Jim scowled, stabbed his fork into his steak, and cut out a big chunk. Excited to see it was bloody, and then he muted himself while he shoved the hunk of meat into his mouth.

“I was beginning to think you and Leonard were exclusive,” said Nyota over a bite of very buttery lobster.

Jim narrowed his eyes at the death food, but continued his meal. “Exclusively what?” asked Jim with a mouth full of under chewed meat.

Nyota pierced her lip and returned to her meal. “I see.”

“You see what?” asked Jim with a sip of wine to wash down the steak.

Nyota put her fork down and leaned forward. “You busy the rest of the night?”

Jim leaned back and pressed his lips together. “I’m not.”

She leaned back and gave a small grin. “Let’s go to my place after dinner, booze it up, party a little, and head back to yours?”

Jim gave a close lipped grin and stared off in the direction of Bones’ date. Bones and Spock would be out for the night, and Jim wasn’t feeling up to loitering around their dorm alone.

He looked back at Nyota with a small grin. “Sounds like a plan. You have a roommate?”


Jim straightened up his back. “Will they be joining our boozing and partying?”

Nyota took another bite of death food. “Of course.”
Jim waggled his brows.

Some time passed and Leonard’s date still seemed to be going pretty well. They’d gotten on the topic of the Empire, quizzing one and other on all the planets the Empire had conquered.

Jim glanced over when the voices stopped filtering into the mic.

Spock was still talking with minimal mannerisms. A quirk of a brow here, a small shuffle there, and tugging at the high collar of his dressings.

Like he wasn’t fond of wearing the formal dressings.

Leonard responded. Lots of bouncing, head nodding, and quick movements of his wrists and hands. He looked almost angry. Red in the face, veins popping along his neck, and temple.

The conversation was in hissed sharp whispers that Jim couldn’t pick up from the area.

“They are talking about Tarsus IV,” said Nyota.

Jim bristled and looked toward her. “Why?” Jim was under the impression Bones didn’t know about Jim’s time on Tarsus IV. Jim was also under the impression that the only evidence of his time there would be a mugshot. The rest was on a blocked out medical file. Jim had coded over himself to make sure no one could gain that knowledge.

Nyota held herself high, with grace, and a small tilt of her head. “You done eating?”

Jim looked down at his half eaten meal and his stomach tightened. “Yeah, I’m done.”

Bones would be happy he ate anything.

“I’ll go take care of this with Spock’s credit chip,” said Nyota as she got up from the booth.

“I’ll meet you up front.” Jim curled his fingers against the tabletop and unmuted himself. “Hey, Bones.”

There was the crackle of Bones finger against the mic. “... Yes?”

“I’m heading out with Uhura, going to her place, enjoy the rest of your date.” Jim hopped out of the booth.

Bones made eye contact with Jim.

Bones didn’t have to say a word. That rare soft Bones look crossed the gentle Doctor’s face and Jim wrinkled up his nose. “Don’t worry. I’ll see you later.”

Leonard found this date wasn’t going as bad as he thought it would. He was almost enjoying the small science talk with Spock. Until Tarsus IV reared its ugly head into the conversation.

His stomach turned and his brain had brought forward those poor kids from Boyce’s lectures years ago.
Leonard didn’t understand why he did it, but he muted the conversation from Jim.

Which didn’t seem like it’d matter much. “This isn’t a place to talk about my feelings,” hissed Leonard. "Especially when it comes to those imperial experiments.”

Something brightened on Spock’s face. “Perhaps we should—”

Then Jim’s voice filtered in clear as day. “I’m heading out with Uhura, going to her place, enjoy the rest of your date.”

Leonard felt his face blank and he snapped his head over to Jim. Instantly he met Jim’s eyes. That something turning in his stomach cramped and twisted. No. No. No. His face must’ve shown something whether it was rare genuine worry or something twisted.

Then Jim wrinkled up his nose and he gave a small smirk. “Don’t worry. I’ll see you later.”

Leonard had to remind himself that Jim was an adult and he didn’t need Leonard hovering over him like some mother.

His stomach cramped harder. Jim didn’t need another Winona.

Leonard nodded.

“Shall we leave?”

Leonard looked back toward Spock.

Spock had his legs crossed, regal, almost airy, and expecting.

Leonard released a sharp breath from his nose. “Yeah, Let’s take that walk.”

Spock rose from his seat and nodded. “Perhaps continue our talk someplace more private.”

Leonard nodded. They rose from the table and Spock took care of the bill.

Jim was still outside the restaurant after Spock had paid.

He dragged his yellowed teeth over his lower lip and smirked. “When I said I’d see you later,” purred Jim. “I didn't mean this soon.”

Nyota was on his arm, silent, but radiant.

Leonard gave a dry chuckle. “Yeah, well…”

“Cadet Kirk,” greeted Spock, monotone and even sounding.

Jim bristled and showed off his teeth. “Lieutenant-Commander.”

“We should walk back to campus together,” suggested Nyota. “Because I know you are heading that way.”

Which sounded like a bad idea. Jim still wanted to imbed a knife between Spock’s eyes. Still
practiced every night with a picture and the wall.

Jim continued to grin. “Sounds fun.”

Leonard took in a deep breath and looked to Spock. “That alright with you? Large groups are safer around here.”

Spock lifted a brow. “No group with cadet Kirk will be safe.”

Leonard rubbed the bridge of his nose. He swore this was like pouring gasoline on fire.

Spock shifted. “But it does sound… fun.”

Which in a way it had started out on good terms.

They walked a block before it down spiraled.

“So, Lieutenant Commander,” began Jim with long strides. He twisted his way beyond Leonard’s personal space and into Spock’s. “Pike give you this idea?”

“He recommended the restaurant,” said Spock giving Jim a simple look.

“He recommended it?” asked Jim with large movements and furrowed brows. “Did you tell him who your date was with?”

Spock paused. “I mentioned my date was a medical track cadet.”

Another block.

The sidewalks were pretty bare for a popular part of the city.

Leonard could hear rhythmic tap tap taps behind them. He couldn’t focus long enough to know if anyone was following them or if they were going the opposite direction.

Jim slid between Spock and Leonard. Tried to make himself a little taller by holding his head high. “Pike recommended the restaurant? He knows you went on a date with the only medical cadet you have ever talked to?”

Oh no, thought Leonard.

“What are you insinuating, Kirk?”

Leonard inhaled sharply and pushed forward. He swore this was like pouring gasoline on fire.

At least Nyota looked amused with a big grin on her face.

Leonard kept his gaze locked on the situation. Waiting.

Jim walked backwards now with a look that was uniquely him. “What do you think I'm insinuating?”

Another block. Gaining speed as if everyone was under the same impression. Understanding those
footfalls behind them were definitely following. As they picked up speed behind them.

Jim was twitchy and kept glancing backwards as he grilled Spock.

“Hey, so, Spock!” Nyota pulled Jim back and grinned. “Your intentions with Leonard?”

Leonard gave Spock a side glance. “We were gonna talk privately about that,” stated Leonard.

“I’m sure you were,” hissed Jim.

Leonard dug his elbow hard into Jim’s ribs.

“OW! Bones.” Jim rubbed the spot and gritted his teeth.

Leonard grinned to himself. “I tapped you.”

“You elbowed him,” stated Spock.

Leonard might have known Spock for a few days, but he could already imagine that little eyebrow quirk.

A glance over at Spock confirmed he in fact hat that eyebrow quirk. “I am not under the impression of how hard you elbowed him, but you elbowed him.”

“I have a name,” hissed Jim.

Spock narrowed his eyes at Jim. “I will come over there. I was stating that Leonard in fact elbowed you and did not ‘tap’ you.”

“Leonard isn’t going to be the only one tapping Jim tonight,” purred Nyota.

Three heads snapped in her direction and she laughed hard.

“You three.” Nyota shook her head.

Spock and Jim furrowed their brows in unison.

“Huh?” remarked Jim.

In the same breath Spock hissed, “What?”

“Nothing. Nothing.” Nyota held her head up high as she slipped the front of her dress up, enough to show off the knife strapped to her thigh.

Jim’s fingers itched at his pant pockets. Nails scraped the denim there. “You said three?” whispered Jim.

Tap tap tap. Even beats.

Nyota slipped closer to Jim’s side and wrapped her arm around his. “Yes.”

“How unfortunate,” whispered Spock. He slipped closer to Leonard and laid his palm out flat to
show off a folded up pocket knife. “That I do not understand humans.”

Leonard itched for one of his hypos. Why hadn’t he brought one?

Jim’s body pressed against his. His fingers brushed against Leonard’s and something cold tapped at his palm.

A hypo.

Thank God for James T. Kirk.

They took a sharp right around some buildings when the Campus was to the left.

If the followers had been Cadets they’d be making their way left toward campus. The footsteps didn’t stop following.

There were choices they could make.

There was the logical choice of causing harm to those following them. Murder them in cold blood.

They’d be some sorry saps who followed the wrong people.

It’d be another death in the Empire.

Jim’s nails returned to scraping on the denim of his jeans. Rhythmic like the taps.

Did Jim have a weapon? Was Jim a pacifist?

No. He obviously wasn’t with the amounts of fist fights and stabbings he had gotten himself into in a short week.

Kirks had way too many enemies.

“You gonna be okay with this?” asked Leonard out of nowhere. He surprised himself. He didn’t even know that had even bubbled up from his throat.

They walked further.

“What isn’t there to be okay with?” Jim stopped scraping his pockets and he slid a familiar knife out of his pocket.

“It’s just another day in the Empire,” muttered Jim. He spun around, a quick snap in his stance, and he stopped dead in his tracks. High, confident, and ready to throw himself into it.

Leonard knew what was coming. “Jim.”

The three followers froze in their tracks. They’d been caught and there was no use in denying that they’d been following.

Leonard turned around intending to grab a hold of Jim, but could recognize they were cadets of the fleet.
He'd seen their faces around.

One was more recognizable than the other three. Finnegan. He was older and had been at the Academy for some time. He was also some asshole Jim had gotten into it with earlier that week.

Jim threw his shoulders back and shouted, “COME ON!”

It was no question of who'd make the first move.

Jim did.

Threw his whole body into it and went straight for Finnegan.

“Quite forward,” muttered Spock taking the necessary lunges to assist Jim. By attacking one of the other guys.

Jim made contact with Finnegan’s face.

If Leonard was honest with himself he really didn’t feel like taking a trip to medical and Finnegan was nasty the last time he got a hold of Jim.

“He… he is.” Leonard scowled and rushed for the third guy.

That is when Nyota shoved herself in front of Leonard with a delicate twirl of her knife. “Help farm boy out would you?”

Which how dare. Jim didn’t need that much help.

“SON OF A BITCH!”

Leonard’s stomach twisted and he spun around to stare at Jim.

Jim had flinched away from Finnegan, held himself close, and sank to the ground.

A flash of blood dripping heavily from Jim’s bent head.

Leonard’s brain did something it had done before. Hyper focused at the sight of Jim in trouble.

Next thing he knows Nyota is handing him some potent alcohol she grabbed from a nearby store.

They are on Fleet grounds and Leonard is dabbing that alcohol onto Jim’s cheek with a piece of ripped fabric from… someone.

It might’ve been from Spock’s outfit as one of the Vulcan’s sleeves looked shorter than it had earlier that night.

Jim of course made such a fuss when the alcohol touched his cut. “You overreacted,” hissed Jim.

Leonard couldn’t admit that he had. “I gotta say I don’t remember a damn thing. I was just focused on you.” He held Jim’s face and sighed heavily.

Jim put his hand over Leonard’s and rolled his eyes. “Finnegan got away and Nyota and Spock
ripped the other guys in half.” He lowered the hand and tilted his head. “And Spock carried me to this building that is an alcoholic’s dream… or nightmare. I was kind of bleeding all over the place.”

“You were in danger,” hissed Spock.

Jim stuck his tongue out and sneered. “Do I look like a fairytale princess?”

Nyota placed a hand on Leonard’s shoulder. “We are about six blocks away from Medical if you want me to take him.”

Leonard chuckled, shook his head, and removed the cloth from Jim’s face. “It’s just a scratch. You go on and party hard.”

Jim grinned wide and bounced up onto his feet. “Absolutely fantastic.”

Nyota linked her arm with Jim’s and they headed off toward the dorms.

Leonard took a deep breath and looked to Spock. “You still want that talk?”

Spock blinked slowly, his eyes trailed after Jim, and he said, “Yes. We should head toward the Science buildings.” He snapped his head in the opposite direction of the dorms. “Follow me.”

Leonard did.

The walk to the science building was quiet, dragged out by the barely there sound of chirping crickets, and other Cadet’s scattered around the grounds.

They technically had a curfew, but no one really abided by it.

They just had to make sure to not get caught by the brass or Christopher Pike or some other professor.

The closer the science buildings became the more Leonard wasn’t sure how private this talk was going to be.

Spock slipped them in through a backdoor with ease and lead Leonard down the halls.

“How private is this building?”

Spock simply flickered his eyes at Leonard, pulled him into a science lab, and moved along the wall.

That hardness settled in his stomach again and his fingers twitched in anticipation of an attack. He locked the door behind them.

Spock opened a compartment at one of the lab stations and produced a disruptor which he flicked on. “Private,” said Spock, with a slight glint in his eyes. “I also believe first dates are not the opportune time to occupy places of rest.”

Leonard chuckled dryly. “Tell that to Jim.” Who practically screamed, ‘bring the date home on the first date and never talk to them again.’
The look that crossed Spock’s face was stern and focused. “Tell me your thoughts on Tarsus IV, Leonard.”

Leonard’s lip became upturned in a scowl. “After you, Hobgoblin.” Leonard placed his hands on his hips in defiance and smirked. “What are your thoughts?”

Spock hopped up onto a lab table and tugged at the high neckline of that stuffy outfit. He undid it in a smooth motion and shrugged it off to reveal a plain black t-shirt that fit snug around his torso. He tied the uneven sleeves around his hips and kicked his feet like a human child. “When I was sixteen the Tarsus IV experiment was run.” Despite his dress Spock still sat so regally, but with an edge in his growing cold eyes.

Leonard bit his lip, lowered his arms to his sides, and strolled closer to Spock. “This gonna be a long story?”

Spock blinked slow his pupils dilating like a cat wanting to escape. “I will… try to shorten it, but yes.”

Leonard nodded, undid the top few buttons of Jim’s shirt, and hopped up onto the counter next to Spock. Immediately he found a way to get his feet off the ground and twisted underneath him. “I got time.”

Spock lifted his feet up instantly looking more comfortable than he had in that stuffy restaurant. “As I said. I was sixteen.” He ran a hand through his hair and Leonard found he liked the way Spock’s hair stood on end afterwards.

“As you are a medical professional you understand the Tarsus IV experiments were.” Spock swallowed heavily and rubbed at the fabric of his outfit top. “A. Broadcasted throughout the Empire and B. Perhaps excruciating to watch.” Spock’s voice cracked and he ran his hand through his hair again. Fingers tightened into his scalp.

Leonard could never erase those pained faces from his mind. “Yeah.”

“To shorten my feelings,” remarked Spock, “I believe Kodos got what he deserved, I believe the Empire will not learn from their experiments, and I want… to make sure they don’t.” Spock shifted his head. “I believe the children had the right idea. To not accept the reality around them. To react, fight, and keep fighting.”

Leonard shifted his shoulders a little. “So you hate them?”

“Despise, Tarsus IV was an abomination,” snarled Spock.

Leonard smirked and leaned back just a little. “We are on the same page then.”

Spock bristled and shifted his spine. “You agree?”

Leonard wrinkled his nose and snarled, “I’m glad that kid shot Kodos.”

“Were… were terrans not informed of who had shot Kodos?” Spock immediately looked confused.

Leonard scowled. “We were told it was some little girl who was arrested right after the experiments ended.” It was probably best for the poor girl. A lot of people had been in Kodos’
Corner.

Thought Tarsus IV was the best thing the Empire had tested.

“...A lot of people would literally kill to know that girl’s name,” said Leonard after a small moment of pure silence.

Spock winced just a little and then brushed his fingers against Leonard’s arm.

A small spark of static jolted Leonard back. There was no doubt the Vulcan knew more about the subject but declined to share.

“It was just static electricity,” said Spock. “But yes... I have no doubts they would inflict harm on the leader of the children’s rebellion.”

Leonard nodded slowly. “Here is to hoping she is safe.”

“Hope,” whispered Spock. “I am surprised you know of the word, Leonard.”

Leonard scowled. “I hate you.”

Spock raised one brow. “Than you will decline another date?”

Leonard pressed his lips together and lifted his head high. “I wouldn’t say... Decline.”

Spock’s nose wrinkled slightly. “Not romantically of course... perhaps we see each other as, I do believe the word is, friends and see where time leads us?”

Which made Leonard’s heart sing. For the second time he had been in the fleet. “Sounds... Adequate.”

...

Leonard and Spock went their separate ways after their talk in the science building.

Leonard lined up another date which made him grin just a little ear to ear, and his heart pound in his chest.

He couldn’t wait to tell Jim.

Which made his bouncing steps falter and a frown pull at his face. Would Jim even care? The kid was a little weird when it came to things like that. It wasn’t even like Leonard was... a word his dad use to use when in anticipation for his next big project... Excited?

Leonard wrinkled his nose and continued the walk to his dorm.

He wasn’t exactly excited for the promise of a date, but tonight had gone semi-well.

Leonard wanted to admit so badly that he was ecstatic to begin something that would for sure be an extremely powerful alliance and partnership.

Jim would be okay with it right?
Leonard arrived at the dorm, traveled the halls to his and Jim’s door.

Leonard punched in the code and scanned his ID card.

The door whooshed open.

Leonard was hit with a wave of odd smelling smoke and body sweat. “Jim!” called Leonard as he stormed into the dorm to find Jim in nothing but his underwear. Angry looking hives drilled into his shoulders and upper back.

Leonard’s breath caught he barely noticed that an orion and Nyota were sound asleep in Jim’s bed. Blissful and unaware of how much god damn pain Jim had to be in right now.

“Hey, Bones,” greeted Jim. “We have pain medicine right? My back really hurts. Like. It’s unbearable.”

“THAT’S BECAUSE YOU HAVE GOD DAMN HIVES YOU ASSHOLE!” Leonard stormed over to his medical kit and put together a hypo.

“Oh no.” Jim was halfway to the door in an attempt to escape when Leonard lunged at him and stabbed the hypo into his neck.

Jim screamed.

God… What was Leonard going to do with this boy?

Chapter End Notes

*finger guns* not so fun fact between this update and the last I actually had a very bad allergic reaction.

Anywho! hope you enjoyed this chapter? comments and kudos are appreciated c:
It was Saturday.

A relaxing day that followed what Jim would call the best date in existence and the worst night of his life; however, tonight could top that.

It was another drunken adventure with Bones after all.

Which didn't make Jim’s stomach flip flop. It was probably just the celebration drinks.

Celebration drinks for getting through the agonizing physical training of hell week.

Made so even more agonizing because Jim had been impulsive enough to have his shitty reproductive organs removed. Not to mention they got fit with agonizers.

Then there had been the fight with Finnigen and one hell of an allergic reaction.

But, hey, this booze was worth every agonizing moment of it.

Even if this bar wasn’t some ritzy place. It was dingy and had probably seen better days in the past.

Everyone in the establishment were mostly fleet cadets having their fun until the real work began.

They were throwing up or tossing glances across the bar hoping to get lucky.

Jim wrinkled his nose and met a pair of blue eyes from across the bar.

People getting lucky might as well include Jim.

Tonight would be worth it. At least that’s what he told the cramping of his stomach as disgust rolled around and nausea threatened to make him vomit.

“I’m gonna go to the bathroom,” slurred Jim as he snuggled into Bones’ shoulder. Strictly *amalice* snuggle, it definitely wasn’t platonic in anyway, again this was *Bones*, and Jim was 100% certain their alliance would only last as long as their stay as roommates.

Bones lifted his drink to his lips. A whiskey sour, because Bones was always getting whiskey or bourbon. He narrowed his eyes at Jim and cocked a brow. “You going in alone?”

Jim waggled his brows and grinned wide. “Nah, this dark haired guy was giving me the eyes, and honestly, celebratory fun times.” Jim clapped his hands.

He wasn’t as drunk as he sounded really. Honestly he should be a lot drunker.
More drinks in.

He was too sober to do anything that was going to make him want to vomit and cry later in their dorm bathroom.

Bones’ eyebrows drew together, he scowled, and asked, “Safe word?”

Which made it sound weird. This wasn’t some BDSM relationship they had going; however, with the amount of times Jim got into shit he had no way out of?

‘Safe word’ was about the best replacement phrase for ‘What are you going to scream if you want me to barge in?’

“That is such a weird way to put it, Bones, but it’s Bones,” purred Jim with a smirk. “You know, your name.”

“Har har,” groused Bones with that scowl still present.

Jim rolled his eyes, he vaulted out of the bar stool, and pushed his way into the bathrooms.

Even the bathrooms of this place were falling apart. The stalls had seen better days as they fell of their hinges. There was clearly only one reason people even came in here.

The same reason Jim had come in there.

To meet people like Mr. Dark hair and blue eyes–that did not make Jim think of Bones.

He was too pale a little stockier and hair a little more in black territory than dark brown.

“So you’re cool with one time things right?” asked Mr. Blue eyes. He was a Fleet cadet that Jim was sure he’d see around.

Gary something. Maybe it was Greg? Or George? One of those.

Caesar. He hoped the guy’s name wasn’t George. Because that’d be fucking gross and weird.

Jim faught against a scowl, something his mother always had done with Christopher Pike, fight off the looks of disgust, and displeasure.

Jim smiled and put on his best nice voice. “Yeah, I’m cool with that.” He swiftly pushed the guy into one of the stalls and purred, “How do you want me?”

. . .

Bones was at the bar where Jim had left him. Except there was a tall glass of something green sitting next to him.

Bones was watching the drink like a hawk.

Jim strolled over and rubbed his mouth a little.

Bones still didn’t look up from the drink. “Got that for you,” grumbled Bones.

Jim sat down and drank it in three gulps.
It burned going down, made Jim shutter, and gag. Sweet hints of licorice coated his taste buds. It was topped with an almost floral or woody taste. Jim gagged again.

“Oh holy shit,” hissed Jim as he clutched his stomach as the swill settled there. He coughed and covered his mouth. “What was that?”

“A very tall glass of absinthe,” responded Bones with a small smirk. “Shoulda told ya to go slow.”

Jim made a face and leaned heavily on his not friend. “Can we go back to the dorm?”

Bones rubbed Jim’s shoulder firmly. “Yeah, we can go back.”

... 

The drinks had hit hard before they even got to the dorm room.

Truly it had hit before they even made it to the campus, but Jim had held himself together long enough to actually make it to the campus before he started to actually break down.

He had to hand it to Bones for finding them a secluded corner in the science building.

An unlocked lab with a disruptor that Bones had flipped on.

Jim didn’t give a shit about how Bones knew about this secluded science lab, he knew it probably involved a Lieutenant-Commander, and a date Jim had set up.

Bones’ arms were around him in an instant, guiding him to the floor, and whispering something soft.

It was only soft rumbled drawl to Jim’s mind as he curled up against Bones, pressed tight into the crook of the Doctor’s shoulder, and releasing shuddering sobs.

This was Bones’ fault for giving him that damn potent drink.

“Yeah, I know,” rumbled Bones as he softly stroked his fingers against the back of Jim’s neck. “Yer talkin’ out loud.”

How could Bones be so nice to someone so...so... disgusting . Jim dug his teeth into Bones’ clothed shoulder as another sob wracked his body.

Bones took the teeth digging like a champ. “You’re not disgusting , Jim,” drawled Bones with his nails digging into Jim.

Probably working through the pain Jim was inflicting.

Jim would barely complain. That oh so sweet skin dig kept him there.

Kept him tethered to the moment.

Kept him tethered to Bones.

“Yer probably just a sex repulsed asexual,” muttered Bones.

Jim had never heard of such a thing. Not even on Tarsus IV where he’d met a lot of kids who
identified one way or the other.

Jim pulled back, snot and tears dribbled down his face, his lower lip trembled, and he snapped, “But I’m not repulsed!” He paused and rubbed his face against Bones’ shirt.

Bones choked back a noise, Jim knew it was one of disgust at having his shirt used as a hanky, but Jim rubbed his face with it anyways.

It was ratty to begin with.

Jim ran his hands over his face and through his hair. Then they dragged back down his face, hands resting over his eyes, he peeked through his fingers, looked at Bones, and frowned. “Not all the time.”

Bones’ face was soft. Soft blue eyes, soft lips, soft eyebrows, soft frown lines, and just a soft expression that bled things Jim had only seen on Bones.

“Well, then you aren’t sex repulsed sometimes,” whispered Bones as he returned to a grumpy expression. “Yer orientation doesn’t have anything to do with that Jim Kirk labido.”

Jim wrapped his arms around Bones tightly and tucked his head against the other’s chest.

Bones made a noise and stroked his fingers against Jim’s back. “You live under a rock back there in Riverside?”

Jim sniffed and rubbed his face hard against Bones’ chest. He thought of his mother and how overprotective she had been of him. “Something like that,” mumbled Jim. “My mom wouldn’t let me leave the house alone.”

There had only been one time he’d been out alone.

That mistake had sent him straight to Tarsus for punishment. “She castrated her own brother because he talked shit about my dad.”

---

A shiver ran up Leonard’s spine. Winona Kirk sounded like a mighty fierce woman. “Your mother really wanted to protect you huh?” asked Leonard.

They were waiting for Jim to be a little more sober and a little less alcohol fogged.

Leonard didn’t even mind that he was stuck on the floor now with a clingy bastard shoved so far into his armpit that it was a miracle Jim was able to breathe.

Jim puffed air out of his lips. “Didn’t work out too well. Her protectiveness.”

“Yes.” Leonard swallowed and leaned back against the station. Understanding he didn’t really know what Jim meant by that. “You have a brother right?”

Leonard could feel the scowl Jim pressed into his armpit. The tone that followed was void of Jim’s usual snarky lightness. “Sam.”

Leonard swallowed at the growl and utter disdain to saying that simple name. “Y’all don’t get along?”
Jim pulled back and released such a dry laugh that twisted his face into one of pure Imperial influence. “Sam and I got along like...” Jim licked his lips and dragged his canine tooth against his lower one. “There is a really old saying. Cats and water?” He pulled away and stood on unstable feet. “Sam is a piece of shit.”

Leonard stared up at Jim. Sam really must’ve been a piece of shit if Jim was like this. This version of Jim that he had never seen. Closed expression, distant eyes, and a stiff grip on the countertop.


Jim’s hardened exterior melted at the significant touch. Down came the closed off expression as those eyes became focused on Leonard. “He bailed planet because of the Kirk name.”

Samuel Kirk sounds like more of a coward than Jim does. Bailing planet because everyone sees your last name as a branding… well that is just stupid.

Jim was strong for staying. For dealing with the backlash of the Kirk name.

“Well.” Leonard grinned. “Here’s to never seeing his stupid face again.”

Jim grinned something sharp. “Enough about me…”

Something like dread settled in Leonard’s stomach. What was Jim going to ask? What would Leonard have to tell him?

Jim moved down to the floor once more.

Leonard joined him and felt his heart swell as Jim leaned against his shoulder.

Jim leaned in further his breath ghosting the nape of Leonard’s neck. “Hey, Bones?”

“Yeah, Jim?” Some of that dread melted away as Jim slurred and snuggled deeper into Leonard’s body.

Jim was still just a little too drunk for cohesive thoughts.

Jim pressed his lips together and furrowed his brow. “Can we go back to the dorm?”

Leonard blinked. “Yeah. Of cour—”

“And can we sleep in my bed and cuddle?”

Leonard’s heart nearly burst from his chest and his mouth was left a little dry. “Yeah. Of course.”

Chapter End Notes

Until next time!

This fic still has no set update schedule, but for the month of August I tried to do every other Wednesday or every other week. We will see how September goes.
Fly Me To the Moon

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Swearing, Mentions of smoking, and alcohol.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was nine in the morning on a Sunday when Leonard’s PADD dinged. Signaling a message, but he found he was stuck in a vice grip.

A soft warmth seeped its way into his bones and pin pricks stabbed into his frame.

His leg was asleep.

Leonard opened his eyes. The room was dark, blood rushed to his ears, and he could hear the upticks of his heartbeat. Why would his leg be asleep? He inhaled deeply. The scent of green apples and booze invaded his senses.

The smell tipped Leonard off that he’d fallen asleep in Jim’s cramped bed again.

Speaking of Jim.

He was plastered against Leonard’s body, legs wrapped tight around one of Leonard’s thighs, and face shoved so far into Leonard’s neck that he couldn’t breathe without getting hair in his mouth or nose.

Leonard grunted and nudged Jim gently. Trying to get the half naked man off of him without rousing Jim from sleep.

When that didn’t work Leonard struck an elbow to Jim's ribs.

Jim’s body stiffened, a small gasp could be heard, and he shoved Leonard out of bed in a fit of fighting limbs.

“Computer lights fifty percent,” hissed Jim. The computer complied with a deep male voice.

Next thing Leonard knew he thumped heavy onto the floor and rubbed at his head. He peeked up at the lip of Jim’s bed.

Jim groggily looked over the edge of the dorm bed and like a sated feline he blinked slow.

“Morning, Bones.”

Leonard scowled and grumbled, “Morning my ass.”

A ringing noise bounced off the walls of their dorm room.

“What is that?” asked Leonard.

Jim moved off the bed and over to his backpack. A communicator was pulled out. “Mom is calling,” said Jim as he took the communicator off to the bathroom with him.
Leonard just stared and shook his head rubbing at his sore limbs. At least now he could move over to his PADD and check his messages.

The opaque screen bursted to life with a soft cool glow. The first few messages were schedules for the coming days.

The tenth one was sent from someone with the screen name: S. Grayson.

S. Grayson didn't sound like anyone Leonard had met yet.

Except when he read the message Grayson was… too obviously Spock.

S. Grayson : Are you able to meet me in the science labs tonight?

Leonard glanced toward the bathroom.

He could vaguely hear Jim talking to his mother about how things were going well.

It always made Leonard’s heart sing when he heard actual fondness in Jim’s tone.

It was weird how Jim seemed to enjoy his mother.

Leonard looked back down at the PADD knowing it would show the message had been read. It had only been a day since their first ‘date’.

Was it too early to have another?

“No, Mom, I’m busy tonight,” said Jim’s voice. Crystal clear as the bathroom whooshed open.

Leonard lifted his eyes up and made contact with Jim’s towel clad hips.

Jim pulled the communicator away from his face just a little bit. “Hey, toss me some deodorant from my bag?”

Leonard swallowed heavy and jolted over to Jim’s bag.

Jim had it chaotically organized, but it was easy to find the tube of deodorant.

“With that Uhura girl I was telling you about.” Jim held his hand out to catch the tube.

Leonard strolled over with his PADD still in hand as he plopped the tube into Jim’s hand.

Jim mouthed a thanks as he returned to the bathroom.

Leonard plopped down on his bed and stared down at his PADD.

If Jim was going out… there was no harm in seeing Spock in the science labs.

L. McCoy : I'll meet you there.
Leonard didn’t have to wait long for Spock’s speedy reply.

S. Grayson : Excellent.

Leonard set aside his PADD. There was still time until tonight. Maybe he could go out somewhere with Jim for a little bit? Or… call home…

Leonard squinted his eyes and shook his head. Calling home would not be something he would do… today at least.

Plus it was Sunday. A significant day to his mother, but not to himself.

Leonard stuck out his tongue, made a gagging noise, and wandered over to Jim’s bag.

Jim wouldn’t mind if Leonard stole a shirt right?

He glance toward the bathroom, Jim still inside, the shower running, and the tone deaf bastard singing to something that had probably been long forgotten to the Empire.

He could just wash his shirt from last night. Afterall, snot was washable.

But taking a shirt…

It’d be in retaliation of course. Jim had ruined Leonard’s only shirt! It was the only option.

Take one of Jim’s.

Take one of Jim’s that won’t fit in the shoulders, and will probably be cropped or short on Leonard’s frame.

Leonard pressed his lips together and unzipped the bag quickly. He dug through the varying fabrics, knew where Jim kept his shirts, past the rough scrape of dark wash jeans, and behind the smooth feel of dress shirts.

Leonard fisted a few and laid them out on Jim’s bed.

He glanced at the bathroom again and bounced on his toes.

The T-shirts Leonard had grabbed ranged from aged Imperial slogans, ancient band shirts, and one that had a little black cat with a colorful flag embroidered into the pocket.

Jim stopped singing.

That shirt was of course cropped, but Leonard wanted to wear it.

The shower stopped running.

Leonard shoved all the shirts back into the bag, retreated to his bed, and preoccupied himself with his PADD.

Like he hadn’t been snooping in Jim’s things.

The bathroom door whooshed open and Leonard could hear Jim’s bare feet slapping on the floor.
Like he hadn’t just thrown things hazardly into Jim’s organized bag.

“You going out tonight?” asked Jim. His feet stopped and there was a clear crunch of a zipper.

Jim would know the moment he looked in that bag.

Knew that Leonard went through it.

How would Jim react to that?

“Yeah.” Leonard’s chest tightened as he flipped through some of the apps on the PADD.

There was a long pause.

“Did you go through my things?”

Leonard sat up and set the PADD aside.

Jim stood by his bed, hand on his hip, and in his undergarments.

Leonard had no reference to people rifling through Jim’s things.

“If I did?” Leonard chewed on his lip.

Jim blinked slowly and his stance changed just a little into something more relaxed. His eyebrows drew together, he frowned, and facial muscles pulled at the corners of his lips as he formed words. “You...you could have just asked, Bones.”

Leonard scowled and rubbed at the back of his neck. “It’s that easy?”

Jim coughed and strolled over. He plopped down on the bed next to Leonard and crossed his legs. His stance read a little irritated as his fingers drummed against his knee and his teeth sucked in his lower lip. Jim released a noise. “Yeah, Bones, it is that easy.”

Which Leonard couldn’t get through his skull. It was unfathomable. Weird.

His heart beat wildly in his chest.

Jim wasn’t going to be belligerent. “I just have to ask?” asked Leonard again.

Jim narrowed his eyes. “Ask, but if you go through my shit again I’m revoking asking privileges.” He then grinned and nudged Leonard. “So go on. Ask.”

Leonard’s heart soared. “May I borrow a shirt for my date with Spock?”

Jim’s grin dropped. “Oh. You’re going out with Spock again?”

Leonard quickly glanced over at the photo that still had a knife stabbed between the eyes. “Well you’re busy tonight. So yeah.”

Jim hopped off the bed. “What kind of outfit were you thinking?”
Leonard bit his lower lip. “The… the cat shirt.”

Jim took the short distance in a few long strides and dumped everything out onto the small bed.

Leonard knew it’d all be back in the bag by the end of the day, but it was still a sight to see Jim haphazardly throw off his own organization.

“Which cat shirt?” Jim looked back toward Leonard.

Leonard perked up. Jim had more than one cat shirt? He scrambled up to his feet and bounced over to Jim’s side. “You have more than one?”

Jim shuffled through the pile and produced three different cat shirts. Two looked a little oversized and old. The third was the crop top Leonard had found.

Leonard looked up at Jim and bit into his lower lip. “What are you wearing tonight?”

Jim laughed and pulled out a shirt that clearly used to be white crop top. It had yellowed over time and had little green cacti printed on it. “This and some jeans.”

“So I can wear any of these?” Leonard raised one of his brows and stared back down at the three shirts.

Jim was already starting to put his clothes back into the bag. “You can keep whatever one you pick if you want.”

Which made Leonard’s eyes bulge. “You’re sure?” His voice even cracked.

Jim paused as if he was thinking about it and then he put another shirt back in his bag. “I’m sure.”

Leonard swiftly hugged Jim.

Jim fell stiff at first.

This wasn’t their first hug and Leonard knew sometimes Jim was averse to touch.

He was about to pull back when Jim sighed and melted into it, wrapped his arms around Leonard, and squeezed just the slightest.

Leonard smiled and pulled back from the hug. “Thanks, Jim, I owe you one.”

Jim’s slim grin spread ear to ear. “You owe me two, but you are under no obligation to uphold those.”

A sinking feeling solidified in Leonard’s stomach.

Jim patted Leonard’s shoulder and went back to putting his things away. “Don’t worry about it, Bones, wanna grab some breakfast?”

“Yeah… Let me just… shower and get dressed.” Leonard grabbed a shirt hazardedly and sped into the bathroom. What would Leonard owe Jim?
The mess was loud as always, Fleet Cadets of all walks flooding in for breakfast, and bullshit time. People bumping into others, ‘accidentally’, as they tried to slip this and that into the food. Leonard gripped his tray tight and took long strides over to where Jim was sitting.

Isolated.

No one wanted to be seen with a Kirk afterall.

Except Leonard.

He sighed and lowered himself down next to Jim. Close enough to touch and share food, but hopefully not too close.

“Bagel.” Jim held his hands out with a big grin and wiggly fingers.

Leonard raised an eyebrow. “Who said this was your bagel?”

Jim pouted and even whined, “**Bones.**”

Leonard leaned into Jim’s space with a smirk. “**Jim.**” Then he handed the bagel over. “Grabbed it just for you.” A fruit bowl and scrambled eggs joined Jim’s side of the tray.

Jim bounced in his seat, shoved a portion of the bagel in his mouth, and then piled the insides with scrambled eggs. “I love you, you salty bastard.”

Jim of course grabbed a salt packet from the corner of Leonard’s tray and ripped into it.

Leonard bit the inside of his cheek as Jim put a pinch of the packet onto his fruit. The rest of the salt made its way onto the eggs.

“Too much salt is bad for your diet.” Leonard was one to talk as he put a generous amount of salt on his melon.

Jim narrowed his eyes at Leonard. “I’ll just blame a certain Southern Doctor who is currently pouring salt on his food.”

Leonard huffed and shoved his salty fruit in his mouth. “I'm full of salt, Jim.”

Jim’s glare didn't hold for long as he laughed. A sound of pure sunshine in the dreary world of the Empire.

Something that didn’t come from pain.

Leonard could swear his heart fluttered, but he'd probably have to check that out later. It could be anything.

“**You sure are,**” purred Jim.

Leonard felt his face heat up. What did that mean? “**Yer a pain.**”

Jim waggled his brows and took a big bite of his eggy bagel.

Leonard shook his head and sighed heavily. He leaned back and focused on his breakfast. Taking a
Jim shoved some fruit in his mouth. He chewed a few times before he answered with a full mouth. “Yeah.”

Leonard bit his lower lip, stabbed his fork into the flesh of his melon, and tapped the fruit to his lips. “And the orion?”

Jim dropped his fork and leaned into Leonard’s space with eyes that danced with emotion. “First,” purred Jim. He tapped on Leonard’s chest.

Leonard was fearful that Jim might feel the beat of his heart over their cadet reds. Leonard told himself it was a natural reaction. Most people were dangerous this close.

“Her name is Galia.” Jim pulled back and took a big bite of his bagel. He swallowed this time before he continued. “Second; They are setting me up on a date.”

Leonard’s fork decided to clang loudly onto the tray.

Jim jolted back for a small moment, eyes trained on the fork, and then slowly they glided up Leonard’s all too stiff frame.

A date? They were setting Jim up on a date? Who wanted to date the Kirk kid? Did Jim even… date? Did Jim hold romantic attraction? Not that there was anything wrong with him having romantic attractions or romantic feelings for someone.

This also was the Empire. Where they encouraged you to date anyone you wanted, because you’d fight harder. You had more of a reason to stay alive.

More of a reason to keep a hold on you.

Leonard swallowed hard, picked up his fork, and shoved more food in his mouth.

The rest of breakfast was silent.

Jim was distant.

Leonard was equally detached from their week long attachment. Until something nagged at the back of his head. “I’m sorry,” said Leonard. He put the fork down and angled his body to look at Jim. “A date huh?”

Jim’s eyes slitted momentarily, but he swiftly tilted his body into Leonard’s. “Yeah, I’m not too stoked about it.”

Jim didn’t sound stoked about it either. It was his tone. Dull and gravely. “Who they setting you up with?”

Jim made a face and groaned, “Gary Mitchell.”

Leonard blinked and scowled. “The guy you met up with in the bathroom?”

Jim’s cheeks burned red and he sank in his seat. “Yeah, that asshole.”

Leonard raised one brow. “Why him?”

Jim straightened himself out and tilted his head with a grin. “Oh, Bones, I can’t tell you here.” He
sucked on his lower lip and dragged his teeth across it as he leaned into Leonard’s ear. “Not where everyone can hear.”

Jim pulled back with a big grin. “But I have to admit. It’s a great reason.”

Leonard was curious now, but decided to not press for details here. “Nyota and Galia will be keeping an eye on you?”

Jim grinned wide. “Of course.”

The afternoon sun beat down as Spock held his head up high. He strolled the grounds of the fleet campus and took great care in scanning the area as to not get caught. To make sure he wasn't seen.

To make sure he wouldn't be seen by cameras or other members of Christopher Pike’s secret police.

Confident that he was free and clear he headed to the observation building, a secluded area where most cadets dumped bodies, or attempted murders.

Spock had other plans and slipped behind the building.

Jim leaned against the wall with a backpack held protectively against his stomach and a cigarette burning between his fingers.

Strange. Spock hadn't taken Jim as a smoker.

Perhaps he was a stress smoker?

Perhaps it was fake.

Spock slowly approached Jim and leaned his back against the wall.

The smoke held an almost floral scent and made Spock’s toes curl in his boots.

He glanced over at Jim.

Those eyes were trained on him. Waiting. Jim’s brow quirked and a small twitch of his lips gave way to a quite knee weakening smirk.

Spock’s knees were not feeling weak under that gaze. Definitely were not. This was business after all.

Strictly business.

“You gonna stand there all day or say something?” asked Jim, with a low voice and a glimmer in his eyes.

Spock snapped his head forward and cleared his throat. “Do you have anything for dates?”

Jim made a noise between a chuckle and a scoff. “That isn't why we met up here.”

No. They were to go over the plan. Spock’s plan that he had wanted to make sure was fully
understood. “Can I not cover both subjects?”

There was a long pause. Perhaps Jim was smoking during this moment?

Spock didn't dare look toward Jim to find out.

Jim broke the silence. “You like Frank Sinatra?”

Spock’s brow furrowed. “Frank Sinatra of 20th century earth?” Wasn’t he in the Mafia? What did he have to do with romantic atmosphere?

Jim broke out into a laugh. Hard yet light in the still air. “He was a singer.”

Spock could almost imagine Jim’s grin.

“You know that right?”

Spock had not known that. “How do you know that?”

“My dad’s family really liked music and that was the one thing they could never give up to the Empire.” There was a pause. “Undying Kirk loyalty and all that jazz...”

There was a noise as if Jim were shuffling against the wall. “Until the Kelvin incident of course.”

Spock made a hmmm noise. He had been aware that ‘Kirk’ had once been a fearful name, but centuries of fear and loyalty simply fell apart in one unfortunate incident. “Do you have his music?”

A zipper sound broke the still air around them.

Spock dared to glance over and found that Jim placed the cigarette between his lips. It was burning quite quickly. “Does your mother know you smoke?”

Jim only smirked and pulled an aged looking case out of his bag.

Spock furrowed his brow. “What is that?”

Jim plucked the cigarette from his lips and cracked the case open with ease. Inside were thin disks in smaller cases.

Spock was aware these items were once known as CDs, obsolete in their world, but still used by some. Spock’s heart did this little flip against his side. Jim truly was an interesting human.

“You said romance right?” asked Jim.

Spock blinked and cleared his throat. “Preferably something romantic, yes.”

Jim nodded and fingered through the smaller cases. “I take you as a man who doesn't use these.”

Spock shifted closer, shielded Jim from one side of the building with a lean of his long body, and decided to check around to make sure they were still alone. “You would be correct.”

The air was still at this end of the campus. Saturated with an unsteadiness that had Spock on his toes.

“When I get Gary’s PADD I can send you so many playlists.”
Spock glanced back at Jim and blinked. “When you get Gary’s PADD?”

Jim crushed the cigarette against the wall and pulled out a small data chip. “I mean I am definitely getting his PADD from him.” He held the chip out. “For now here is a data chip. Easy to download for some music.”

Spock took it into his hand with a gentle touch. “You are certain you will be able to steal the PADD?”

Jim put the case back in his bag and patted Spock’s shoulder. “Fuck, Spock, I bet you ten credits he doesn’t even notice it missing. Not when I work my magic.”

Spock bit lightly into his lower lip. “You… do not have to do anything you are uncomfortable with.”

Jim blinked and shrank back from Spock. “That… is very… comforting to hear.”

Spock swallowed thickly.

Jim flexed his lips in a strained grin as he patted Spock’s arm. “I should get going. I have a date. You have a date and it kinda smells like dead bodies out here.”

It was meant to be taken as a joke, Spock knew that much, but it did indeed smell of decay covered up by a light floral aroma and whatever Jim had been smoking.

Spock pressed his lips together and eyed the hand that was still patting at his arm. “You are correct.”

Jim lowered his hand and used it to push himself away from the meeting place. “And for your information, Lieutenant Commander, that was catnip.” Jim’s strained grin turned into a delighted smirk as he put a hop in his step and made his way away from the building.

Spock was left standing there with a data chip in his hand and so many fascinating questions on his mind.

Perhaps it was the catnip messing with his mental functions.

…”You want me to what?” Nyota cocked her hip and crossed her arms over her chest.

Spock cleared his throat and shuffled only the slightest bit on his toes. He was meeting her inside her dorm. “Do I need to repeat myself?”

Nyota’s eyes narrowed and she squared her stance. “Do you not trust Galia and I?”

Spock rose his eyebrow. Trust was the kind of word one didn’t use often. Of course he didn’t trust Galia and Nyota. He trusted Gary even less.

Yet, he was putting his trust in Jim.

He could trust that Jim would accomplish this mission.

Spock must’ve not answered fast enough because Nyota flagged in her stance and sighed. “No I get
you. I’ll slap a listening device on him.”

“Thank you.”

Nyota shook her head and plopped down on her bunk. “Yeah, Yeah, You going to your date like that?” Nyota eyed him up and down.

Spock stared down at his own clothes. He wore a simple black imperial t-shirt that he had gotten when he first arrived on Terra, the Empire’s emblem pressed into a breast pocket, and a pair of black jeans that his mother had bought him when she last visited. He looked back up at Nyota. “What is wrong with it?”

Nyota shrugged. “Looks… Human.”

Spock bristled and grit his teeth. “Is that not the goal of the Empire?” Conform. Forget. Age old colonization. *Civilizing* cultures they deem barbaric? *Savage*? The game was as old as time itself.

“Doesn’t mean you have to follow it,” said Nyota.

Spock grinned at her; it wasn’t a soft grin, it was a split grin, one that stretched to his ears, and wrinkled his eyes. He shrugged and headed toward her door. “Be careful, Nyota, you never know who might be listening.”

Chapter End Notes

Apparently I can't write date chapters fully. I have to split them apart :///
How to Be a Heart Breaker

Chapter Summary

Two Dates with the same ending.

Chapter Notes

Warnings: Dubious Consent in the form of spying. Jim has the suspicion he is being spied on, but he didn't agree to being spied on. Some mentioned violence toward the end. It's not too detailed I think, but there is some mentioned violence. Swearing. Alcoholism is a strong reoccurring theme. Manipulative behaviors. Some Tarsus IV stuff is in here. The Trope of "What could go wrong?" Everything. Everything goes wrong.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Are you sure you have everything?” Leonard knew he was being a little overbearing in his questioning. “You’ll message me if things are going south? Maybe I should stay in and not go out with Spo—”

Jim rolled his eyes and groaned, “Bones, stay in your yard.”

Leonard snapped his mouth shut and reared back. Jim was setting a boundary. That was something important. A boundary Leonard should not cross. Leonard swallowed and nodded. “Thank you for letting me know.”

Leonard was finding their relationship odd. He bounced on his toes and examined his outfit for the night.

Jim was lending him his jacket. The brown leather one with the soft cream colored insides that smelled distinctively of Jim’s green apple soap. The science lab had been pretty chilly so the jacket was welcomed. Then there was the cropped shirt that was also Jim’s and Leonard’s own pair of ratty jeans.

In other words it was a good look. Jim knew how to dress.

Speaking of Jim knowing how to dress. He looked… adorable. Heart stopping. Yellowed cactus shirt cut just below where his last few ribs would be.

The shirt fit close to his skin, but still allowed for flexing and bending. Then he had on a pair of high rise light blue jeans which he had rolled up to show off the fact he wasn’t wearing socks.

His body had changed with PT and so did his stance. Jim used to slouch just slightly, like he was shrinking away from attention, and now he stood tall with the cockiest smirk. Was he settling in? Basking in the fact he could be his own man here?
Sure he was still tethered to the Kirk name, but being branded a coward didn’t drag him down.

Jim patted his hands along his denim clad thighs. “I’ll message you if things go south, but please enjoy yourself a little?”

Leonard crossed his arms and huffed.

Jim shook his head and rolled his eyes. “Come on, Bones.” He slid closer with that cocky grin. “You’re the one who agreed on a second date with him.”

Leonard felt his cheeks burn up and he twisted his body away from Jim. “Why did I do that, Jim?” He fell onto his bunk and ran his hands through his hair. His leg jerked and bounced a few times.

Leonard could see Jim’s frame just standing there, a little stiff, like he didn’t know how to respond to this, and he probably didn’t know how.

The Empire didn’t teach comfort.

Leonard curled up tight on the bunk, gripped his hands in his hair, and suppressed the urge to scream. He knew Spock had agreed to just start out as friends, but what if things got too romantic? What if Leonard liked it? What if he hated it and had to continue this little charade?

God.

He was just as big of a mess as Jim.

The bunk sank with Jim’s added weight.

Leonard lifted up his head, turned it toward where the bed was dipped, and he met the face of an oddly serious looking Jim.

A really close serious Jim. Who looked like he was close to wrapping his entire being around Leonard.

“If it gets too romantic, let him know, and express what you want out of tonight.” Jim pulled back, sitting on his knees, and looking off toward his own bunk. “And if he doesn’t respect that…” Jim smirked.

Leonard followed his eyes over to the picture on the wall. A fresh knife embedded between the eyes.

“I have been getting better with my aim.”

Leonard pushed Jim with a grin.

Jim barely toppled over. Another pro from PT.

Jim was awful good at talking Leonard into things. Things Leonard wanted to do deep down, but was a little afraid of. “You are awful good at talking me into things, Jim.”

Jim shrugged and hopped up from his position. “I’m not talking you into anything.” He picked up a pair of black ankle boots that had the barest amount of heel.

Leonard bit into his lower lip. “You’re dressed to impress.”

Jim grinned and slipped on the boots. “Why, Bones, I gotta look hot for this.” He even touched his
fingers to his chest and grinned.

Leonard rolled his eyes. It was great to see Jim’s ego boosted, but he knew it was a cover. Jim wasn’t excited for this. Sure he might be the slightest bit intrigued by the thrill of it all, but Jim was Jim. The same Jim who cried when he was drunk and slurred how disgusted he was with his life choices. “You do look good though.”

That act dropped, Jim fell into his bunk and sighed. “Thanks, Bones.” Then that mask was back. Big grinned and steepling his fingers. “A question for you. Heels or your ratty boots?”

Leonard busted into laughter that sounded too mocking to be genuine. “I’m not extra enough to wear heels.”

A puff of air left Jim’s lips in a ‘pffft’ sound. “Bones, everyone has seen how extra Leonard Horatio McCoy is.”

Leonard scowled, Jim didn’t need to say what he was talking about, Leonard knew, and so did everyone else who wanted to look up the doctor’s escapades before the Fleet.

“I don’t want to think about that, Jim.”

Jim pressed his lips together. “I understand.”

Leonard sighed heavily. Now for an uncomfortable question to ask Jim. “Eat your dinner tonight.”

Jim narrowed his eyes. “I eat.”

Leonard leaned forward and slung Jim’s jacket over his shoulders. “Enough to keep a bird alive and sometimes more than that.”

Jim sighed heavily and pressed his lips together. “I know. It’s just really personal, Bones.”

Leonard shrugged into the jacket and pulled the oversized collar up to his face. “Just saying.” When he took in a deep breath he could smell Jim’s soap mix with Leonard’s deodorant. He buried his face in further to hide his heating up face. God this was weird. He was sniffing Jim’s things.

Jim slapped his hands on his thighs in a small rhythm. “Soooo, I have to meet up with Nyota and Galia.” He rose from the bed.

Leonard lifted his head up from where it was buried in the lining of the jacket. “And I should get a move on to meet Spock.”

Jim bit his lower lip and offered a smile. “Put this moment behind us?”

Leonard stood from the bed and walked over to Jim. “Yeah, though… one day I’m gonna have to face what I did.”

Jim’s eyes flickered with some unknown light and he clapped Leonard on the shoulder. “Hopefully I’ll be around when you do.”

Which made something hard settle into Leonard’s stomach.

He quickly pulled Jim in for a hug.

Jim was still. Stiff before he melted into the show of… affection? Was that what that was?
Jim pushed back and patted Leonard’s biceps. “See you later.”

Leonard sagged. He placed a hand gently on one of Jim’s and removed it. “I’ll see you later.”

Jim gave an eye wrinkling smile and pushed off from his position. “I’ll work my Kirk magic and keep you posted.”

Leonard rolled his eyes a little and shuffled back over to his bunk so he could grab his PADD. “Thanks, Jim.” He felt the smooth texture of the screen and scooped it up.

“No probs,” called Jim as his heels clicked all the way to the door.

Leonard didn’t turn back around until he heard the door swoosh closed. He frowned, gripped his PADD, and whispered, “Be careful, Jim.”

The device beeped in his hands. Blinked with a new message.

**Grayson, S.** : I am prepared for our date.

At least one of them was.

Leonard sighed heavily, tucked the PADD under his arm, and made his way out the door.

---

Spock breathed in deeply and scanned the lab to make sure everything was in order. Fake candles provided a slight warm glow to the lab, illuminated the plush blanket and picnic.

For dinner he had made a simple dish of Vulcan inspired Udon with a plomeek soup base. Vulcan dishes were still wildly popular with those of the Empire, but a majority of them had been edited slightly. Would Leonard even like the dish? There was also a bottle of Vulcan Port wine, which was non-alcoholic to Spock.

He hadn’t been sure if bringing wine was… smart, but he found when it came to Leonard… He was lacking a little on logic and working more with his primal emotions.

His mother always provided wine or tea when they had soup or dinner, but Leonard was an alcoholic.

Would he pick the tea Spock had brewing on a bunsen burner or the wine?

Spock ran his hand through his hair knowing it’d stand a little on end. A flat iron only did so much to tame his hair throughout the day.

He sighed and hopped up onto one of the lab tables. He was proud of the set up he had.

A static pop interrupted the swell of Beethoven’s Moonlight Sonata in the background—an excellent choice of music on Jim’s part—and diverted Spock’s attention away from the blanket. A reminder of what he had instructed Nyota to do.
“You look great, Jim.” Nyota had planted the bug.

Good. Now Spock could monitor the Gary Mitchell situation.

“I’ll be even better when this night is over,” crackled Jim’s voice.

Something boiled low in Spock’s stomach. He was still aware that Jim did not want to do this, but Spock had told him he didn’t have to do anything that he didn’t want to.

“But it is for a good cause, so.” Spock could almost see that little shrug Jim does.

“Are you spying on Jim?”

Spock refrained from jumping in surprise at Leonard sneaking up on him; however, he did hop down from the counter. “You are very light on your feet, Leonard.” Spock turned his head and felt a feeling surge below his skin. Perhaps it was desire from seeing the tanned man with his hands shoved in an over-sized jacket, cropped shirt, and some mid-rise jeans.

Things Spock was sure that Leonard had not owned. Hadn’t Pike said Leonard only had the items that had been in the jail?

Half of the outfit must be Jim’s.

Which made Spock’s brain spark with a short jolt. “You are wearing Jim’s clothes.”

Leonard’s eyes narrowed, he crossed his arms over his chest, and cocked a hip. “Are you spying on Jim?” he repeated.

Spock blinked slowly and swallowed thick. “It was logical…”

Leonard’s head tilted in the way that made his lower lip jut out in concentration and thought.

Was Leonard psychoanalyzing Spock? Trying to dig into his brain and uncover some major plan or thought?

“You’re worried Gary will do something?” asked Leonard.

It was the tone Leonard used that made Spock know it was a question.

Spock’s stomach clenched.

Gary Mitchell had seemed relatively safe to dick over, but he was still someone who was on Pike’s side.

“That would not be logical,” responded Spock with a glance away.

Leonard’s hands moved to his hips. “Vulcans ain’t known for logic, Spock.”

Of course Leonard would know that about Vulcans. Spock fixed his gaze on Leonard and narrowed his eyes. “Do not make me say it, Leonard.”

Leonard’s lips twisted upward in an unnatural grin. “You’re right though.” Leonard shrugged his shoulders and stared at the set up. “It isn’t logical to worry.”

Spock scowled and leaned backwards. Did Leonard worry? Was he worried about Jim’s interactions with Gary? “Do you wish for me to not?”
Leonard’s face dropped and his brow wrinkled. “Now… I wouldn’t say that.”

It wasn’t unnatural. Spying. Listening. Keeping tabs on those in a circle of acquaintances.

“Not that I don’t believe Nyota and Galia are not capable of keeping an eye on the situation…” Leonard bounced on his toes, rung his hands together, and glanced away with a drag of his teeth over his lower lip. “I just know Jim.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. “I told him to not do anything that would make him uncomfortable.”

Leonard gave a hollow laugh at that. “Well, we will see what he does.” Leonard then plopped down onto the ground and cocked his head up at Spock with an almost forced looking grin. “What’d you provide for us tonight?”

Spock swiftly sat on the ground with his legs crossed. “I have prepared a traditional udon with plomeek soup broth, Vulcan spiced tea, and various sweet breads for desert.”

Leonard nodded along and leaned into his hands as he rested his elbows on his knees. “Got any booze?”

Spock sighed and pulled his basket of goodies closer to himself. “I do have Vulcan Port wine…”

Leonard made a face at that. “I’ll stick with the tea. You need some real alcohol.”

Spock raised a brow. He didn’t know whether to be offended or pleased that Leonard would not be drinking. “Human alcohol would have no effect on me.”

Leonard slitted his eyes and shifted his position. “Then I’ll find you some damn good potent alcohol.” Leonard laughed and snapped his fingers.

Jim’s events were becoming background noise and sinking into the soft instrumentals of the music.

Leonard cleared his throat. “... Tell me about your mother.”

Spock lifted his head up and blinked. “You wish to know of my mother?” He turned to the bunsen burner that was boiling the tea. “You would not be interested.”

Leonard rolled his eyes and scoffed. “I’ll tell you about mine then,” groused the man.

Spock paused, checked on the tea, and then poured it into the two cups he provided. “I doubt you would stop if I told you no.” It was rude to say; however, Spock was actually finding himself curious about Leonard’s upbringing.

Leonard had a lot more information on his documents than Jim had, but it was still vague.

Spock filled the cup with two hundred and fifty milliliters of tea and then held it out to Leonard.

Leonard scowled, then leaned forward and cocked his head. He gave a sly grin and squinted his eyes. “You’re right, Spock.” He took the tea cup from Spock. Their fingertips touched lightly together, but Spock put the sensation out of his mind.

Leonard examined the mug and then sniffed the tea. “This shit isn’t going to kill me right?”

Spock blinked slowly. “I would not poison a potential suitor.” He was not his mother who had accidentally left out—in Spock’s father’s words—a delectable tea made from coprinus atramentarius. A simple mushroom, but fairly toxic to any species. Spock shivered just at the
thought of his father had enjoyed the tea.

Leonard put the tea down without taking a sip. “How much of my life is public record?”

Which caught Spock off guard.

The room grew quiet aside from Jim’s crackling voice. “I want to bet Gary will be late. You wanna make a bet or continue to make out over there?”

Spock half kept his mind on the conversation while the other half searched his mind for all he knew about Leonard’s public record.

Nyota could be heard clearing her throat. “What was that, Jim?”

Medical school. Many surveillance videos of his cell. Surveillance of his personal life as a doctor. As a student.

There was something underlining Jim’s tone. “Nevermind, I’ll let you two make out.”

Surveillance of Leonard torturing his own ailing father.

Spock took in a deep breath. “... Medical school to present day.”

Leonard scowled at that and reared back. “Shit they have that much?”

“If it makes you feel better a lot of it is vague,” said Spock with a small head movement as he poured himself some tea and took out the rest of the food.

Leonard’s PADD dinged.

Spock handed Leonard a container of the soup.

Leonard took it and quickly uncapped it to sniff it. “This smells good.”

Leonard’s PADD dinged again.

“Is it okay to spy on Jim like this?”

Spock furrowed his brow. Was Leonard having second thoughts about spying on Jim’s progress? Had Jim not previously spied on their first date? Why was Leonard second guessing?

Again the PADD dinged. “It’s just... I don’t know. I don’t understand why I feel like this. Like it’s a bad thing.” Leonard ran his hand through his hair and started to dig into the dish in front of him.

Spock shifted his spine, pressed his lips together, and glanced towards where Jim’s voice was coming in clear.

“Come on, Bones, answer... tell me I’m doing something good... tell me...”

Spock felt his side tighten. This... this did feel wrong, but he was spying on Jim tonight to make sure Gary wouldn’t harm him. To make sure things didn’t go too far.

Spock looked toward Leonard. “You are worried.” Which was fascinating. Worry. Care. Things that should have been erased from the human condition, but they were alive in some individuals.

They just didn’t have the words for them.
“I have to answer him,” said Leonard.

Spock glanced toward the PADD. “I won’t stop you.”

“See.” Leonard grinned just a little as he opened up his PADD. “We both care for him.”

That struck Spock in the heart and his hand shot up to cover his side. Spock couldn’t say he cared for Jim.

This was only a logical thing to do.

Wasn’t it?

Spock furrowed his brow and brought his fingers to his mouth in thought.

He could hear Leonard typing.

“Jim is just anxious,” said Leonard, smooth and calming.

Spock glanced up and pressed his lips firmly together as he lowered his hand.

Leonard showed a slight warm smile. “You just gotta know what to say to him.”

The message was sent off with a whoosh.

“What did you type?” asked Spock. He lowered his hand into his lap, and moved to grab his own container of soup.

Leonard shrugged, set the PADD down, and shoved some noodles into his mouth. “The right thing.” He then slurped up some broth. After he chewed and swallowed he added, “Probably.”

Spock rose his brow and tilted his head. Probably wasn’t a solid response. Probably meant there was a large margin of error. A likelihood of Leonard typing the wrong thing and Jim not pulling through with the plan. “Probably?”

Leonard cleared his throat and slurped more soup. “Probably.” He shrugged and grinned the smallest grin. “I’m a surgeon with a minor in psychology, and psychology doesn’t work with Jim.”

Spock shifted and leaned forward more, curious about what was on the PADD, and what the conversation was even entailing. “Gary hasn’t shown up yet?”

Leonard’s PADD dinged right away.

Leonard shoved more noodles in his mouth before looking to his PADD.

Spock shifted again. Closer. He wanted to take a look at the PADD with Leonard. Wanted to know Jim’s internal thinkings of the situation.

Sure he told Jim to not do anything uncomfortable, but it was clear Jim would never show how uncomfortable he was.

Not with Spock who was still under Pike’s controlling shoe.

“May I see?”

Leonard’s fingers stalled. He glanced up quickly at Spock with this air of caution. A thin pressed
lip, teeth nibbling just slightly at the chapped flesh. Then he moved the items out of Spock’s way, and leaned back against one of the lab stations. “Come here.” He held his arm out invitingly.

An extended arm could mean anything. It could mean come closer, but stay at a distance. It could mean Leonard wanted Spock pressed against his side like old terran romance. Spock wasn’t sure what Leonard had meant by the added space, but he easily took it as an invitation to snuggle against Leonard’s side to read what was on the PADD.

Leonard’s heart up-ticked as Spock slid into the open spot and situated himself comfortably with a hand gently placed on Leonard’s sternum. “You are very close.”

Something in Leonard’s high tone made Spock glance up. Spock was indeed close. He could smell the tartness of the jacket mixed with a fruitiness that might be from Leonard’s deodorant. He shifted to press further against Leonard’s side and slipped a finger down to barely touch the open flesh of Leonard’s midriff.

That beat up-ticked again and Spock tilted his head like some domesticated feline. Or so that is what Leonard thought. Spock was certain Leonard didn’t know much about Vulcans being touch telepaths.

“Is this a problem?” Spock was surprised by his own voice, a little rough purr, and with the slightest fluctuation of emotion.

Leonard’s face looked redder than before, his heart was racing in his chest, but he shook his head. “Nope, this is fine.”

Spock nodded and returned to looking at the PADD.

It was logical to read from the beginning of the conversation.

**Kirk, J.:** Why am I doing this again?

**Kirk, J.:** I don’t even like Spock.

**Kirk, J.:** I don’t even like Gary. He is an ass.

**McCoy, L.:** Because I’m going to date Spock. And you are terrified of that. >:)

Spock glanced up at Leonard and rose a brow. Were the characters near the end significant of something? They seemed rather unnecessary.

**Kirk, J.:** ptaspefjodsklgda was this supposed to help? >:U Also are we from the twenty-first century? We have emojis in this century, Bones. Using characters seems a little unnecessary.

Spock grinned slowly. See? Even Jim thought the characters were unnecessary. Though emojis
were also unnecessary. Not to mention hideous monstrosities.

While Spock was reading the past conversation Leonard had sent his second reply.

**McCoy, L.** : Distracted you though didn’t it?

Jim’s small chuckle could be heard from the speaker. Warm and light accompanied by the next song in the playlist. Another instrumental. This time with the distinct sound of a violin and flutes.

Spock found it interesting Jim hadn’t picked songs with words. Had he been expecting them to spy on him?

“What has you all smiley and laughing?” asked Nyota with a subtle purr to her words.

Jim’s reply was quick. “Wouldn’t you like to know.” Snarky and fully Jim.

“It’s McCoy isn’t it.” That would be Galia.

Pizzaria noise filled the background of the silent conversation.

“Don’t give me that look.” Galia sounded amused.

Leonard laughed. Soft. Like he knew what look Jim was giving Galia.

Spock wished he had reference to all of Jim’s facial expressions. Perhaps in time he would categorize all of them.

For now all he could picture was that look Jim gave when he declared he had been smoking catnip. Delightful cockyness didn’t fit the context though.

Spock furrowed his brow, picked up his soup, and rested his head on Leonard’s chest as he slurped it up from the container.

“Gary,” crackled Jim’s voice, calm, and alluring which made Leonard and Spock sit stiff.

“Well…” began Leonard. “Looks like it's gonna be a long night.”

Spock shifted and sipped on his soup. “At least we are in good company.”

Leonard laughed a little, he picked his tea up, and clinked it with Spock’s. “To good company.” He then took in a long and slow sip.

“Don’t give me that look,” said Galia with a slow grin spread across her lipstick smudged face.

Jim wasn’t going to tell her that it was smudged. He simply rolled his shoulders, averted his slitted eyes from her, fell back into the booth with a sly smirk, and glanced toward the entrance of the crowded pizzaria.

Seconds after Jim glanced toward the door a familiar man strolled in. Gary Mitchell. A stockier
much paler version of Bones.

Not to mention he was a man most didn’t forget. That is to say it was the worst head Jim had ever given in his life.

Gary spotted them and swiftly approached the table.

Jim slipped easily into his flirty persona with a crack of teeth and an air of seduction. All Jim had to do was seduce his way into Gary’s dorm or apartment. Subdue Gary in some way, get the PADD, and get out. That’s all he had to do.

Galia and Nyota shifted uncomfortably. Trained like hawks on Gary’s every move.

Jim was trained on Gary in a different way. Gary was Jim’s prey. Jim could do this.

Gary was now in front of the table.

“Gary,” purred Jim. He shifted in the booth, cocked his head up at him, and moved his mouth with just the right twists. “What is your favorite position?” purred Jim, he grinned so much wider and squinted his eyes.

This version of Gary blushed like… What would Bones call it? The Virgin Mary? Some religious figure that had been burned in his head since childhood, probably. “You assume I have a favorite?”

Even Gary’s voice felt wrong in Jim’s ears. Someone with that blue of eyes should have an undertone of warmth.

Jim didn’t drop his long built persona. “I meant do you want to sit on the inside of the booth or outside?”

“Pick the inside, I don’t feel like getting kicked out because Jimmy over here decides to vault over the table,” hissed Galia.

Jim turned his eyes on her, narrowed them, and pulled his lips out in the way that would show mock hurt.

Gary laughed. Something that sounded forced and all too wrong. “Wall it is.”

Jim fought a scowl and looked up at Gary once more. He spread his legs, slammed his booted heel down onto the empty table, it seemed sturdy enough, and looked to Galia as he propelled himself up. “Bold of you to assume I won’t vault over the table right now,” said Jim with one foot on the table and the other on the back of the seat.

“Jim!” hissed Nyota with her teeth gritted and her beautiful eyes narrowed up at him.

Gary passed a judging stare over Jim’s choice of theatrics.

Shit, grumbled Jim internally. Most of the time a show of skill wooed the person Jim was trying to seduce, but of course… Gary wouldn’t be one to be wooed by Jim’s theatrics.

Of course Gary wouldn’t want to be the prey.

Jim had to work with this. He kicked himself into the booth over and rolled his way onto the floor where he slowly rose to his feet. “Sorry, thought you’d want to experience…” Caesar. What could Jim say to pull himself out of this?
Jim furrowed his brow and then cocked his brows. “... My ass?”

That made Gary laugh. “Oh I hope to. Experience more than your ass.” Gary slid into the booth.

Jim allowed his flirtiness die for a shy moment. Gross, but good. He hadn’t fucked this mission up.

He smirked to himself and slid back into the booth with a smooth motion. Not yet at least.

“I hope vegetarian is okay with you, Gary,” said Nyota with a forced smile and a squeeze closer to Galia.

Gary made a face but shrugged. “Who’s the vegetarian?”

Jim put a hand on Gary’s knee and squeezed. “That’d be Galia,” lied Jim. He wouldn’t be feeding Gary with any information on how allergic he was to all of the meat toppings.

Gary’s eyes darted to Jim’s hand. Gary then wrapped his arm around Jim’s shoulders like he owned Jim.

Jim knew it. In order to get Gary’s PADD, he’d have to play the long con, and act like prey.

Docile. Sweet.

Jim needed ten drinks and he needed them now.

“How about we get drinks!” Galia jumped up from her spot with a big grin. “You want to help me get drinks, Jimmy?”

Jim lifted his head up and glanced at her. Almost questioningly. How had she picked up on Jim’s uncomfortableness?

Galia blinked her eyes and stretched her mouth out into a thin line. “Drinks?”

Jim’s face drooped for a moment. Of course. Galia was Orion. She could literally smell the terror and disgust rolling off of Jim.

“Of course I’ll get drinks with you.” Jim then placed his hand on Gary’s arm and nuzzled into him. “What would you like to drink?” Jim blinked his eyes at Gary like an extinct white tailed doe.

“Beer,” said Gary as he released Jim.

Even beer sounded wrong. Maybe Jim was just so use to the usual whiskey sours or makers mark. Or just the straight up bourbon Bones downed out of a full flask every morning.

Jim smiled softly.

Bones loved himself some bourbon.

Jim slid out of the booth with a lingering touch on Gary’s arm. “Beer it is.”

He followed Galia to the open bar and rubbed at his face.

Jim would rather be back on Tarsus IV having his teeth yanked out just to scrounge for some damn food. Sure back then he had had some remaining baby teeth and they took that...

He pressed the palms of his hands against his eyeballs and took in a deep breath.
No. No. He never wanted to go back to Tarsus. Never wanted to live that waking nightmare ever again.

A soft touch was placed on his shoulder. He knew it was Galia, but he still vibrated out of his skin for a small moment.

Jim lowered his hands to look at her.

Her red painted lips pouted and she rubbed down his back. Her gaze lingered on Jim’s hands and never rose to look him in the eyes. “You don’t have to do this, Jimmy.”

Jim didn’t need to do this. He could say fuck it. Use his own PADD or Bones’ to communicate with Spock, but that would put Spock out of Pike’s favor.

Jim inhaled sharply.

He knew what it was like to be out of Christopher Pike’s favor. Not that he didn’t believe at one point Christopher Pike was probably a good guy, but the man he was now?

Jim gritted his teeth.

Pike was a twisted monster now. A twisted monster who would do anything to stay in command of a situation.

Even torture someone into being a fraction of their former self.

Yeah.

Jim didn’t have to do this, but he would never wish for Spock to share the same fate as those in Pike’s past and present.

He wouldn’t wish for the Vulcan to be on Pike’s bad side.

Like Jim.

Like Jim’s mother.

Probably at one point even Jim’s own father. The mud dragged coward George was painted to be. A persona that overshadowed the many endeavors and favors he had pulled for the Empire.

No. Jim didn’t wish that.

 Wouldn’t wish Spock to end up on a place like Tarsus IV for crossing Pike and fraternizing with a Kirk.

Scrambling for any sign that the next day would come. Any sign that those you cared for would live another day.

Jim leveled his gaze and gave a dry laugh. “You don’t know what I have to do, Galia.”

Jim didn’t need to do this. He had to do this. For the future of the Empire, for Bones, and for Spock. No matter how he felt about the Vulcan.

Galia’s face dropped and she glanced up quickly into Jim’s eyes where they held contact for a fraction of a second before they tore back down to Jim’s hands.
Jim wondered what she saw there as her face twisted into something that almost resembled pity or maybe it was terror.

The bartender circled around to them and Jim cocked his head. He needed to be drunk. Needed to drown his past out with something reminiscent of his present. Something that “Give me a makers mark, a bottle of vulcan port wine, and a boring beer.” He grinned at the bartender and tapped his hands rhythmically on the counter. Then something sparked in his brain and he grinned wide. “Actually. The makers mark and can you dump the beer out and fill the bottle with Romulan Ale?”

He’d get Gary too drunk to remember his fucking name, walk him to his dorm, and snag whatever he could from him.

“I can do that,” said the bartender with a sly grin in return.

“Excellent.” Jim steepled his fingers together. This would be fool proof.

“You sure you know what you’re doing?” asked Galia when the Bartender went to prepare the drinks.

Jim grinned to himself and then at her. “What could go wrong.”

…

Jim breathed in deeply and clutched Gary’s PADD close to his side as blood dripped from his nose and mouth.

Jim smeared the blood along his free arm and continued with rushed strides. He wasn’t even looking up. He just needed to get away.

Everything that could’ve gone wrong... Had went wrong.

Jim’s stomach churned as he recalled ending up at Gary’s after dinner. Yeah getting Gary drunk had worked, but not in Jim’s favor.

Flashes of the night passed in Jim’s mind, but he didn’t want to even entertain the image of leaving a possibly dead Gary sprawled across his bed with his head oozing.

Didn’t want to entertain how he’d lead Gary on for the first few steps into the dorm.

Then Gary had found the bug.

The bug Jim had a suspicion had been planted on him before dinner.

He hoped Spock and Bones enjoyed the show while it had lasted.

Gary had attacked Jim when he found it.

Jim had refused to give up who he had been working for and that was that.

They fought and there had been so much blood.

Jim’s strides stalled, he gagged, and ran into some bushes to throw up.
Gary’s roommate would find him right? Get him help? If he needed help?

Jim was feeling light headed as he lost his dinner to the bushes.

Would Bones and Spock come looking for him? Make sure he was okay? The bug had been destroyed in the fight. Cut off when Jim had been fucking begging.

Jim curled his fingers tightly into the grass and breathed deeply. He got the PADD.

He lifted his head up and slid his eyes shut. He didn’t need to panic.

He hoped he didn’t ruin their date.

Jim took a few moments in the bushes to breathe before he patted down his pockets for his communicator. He’d downloaded the school’s messaging app to the aging device. He kept the thing around for private use. Mostly just calls to his mother.

He flipped it open, the screen lighting up just the slightest bit, but right now he’d use the device to let Bones know he was fine.

Except his vision was fading just the slightest bit. He hadn’t lost that much blood had he?

He took in a rattling breath and blinked.

Had he?

Jim shook his head the slightest bit in the hopes that it would clear up the fog. It of course didn’t help.

“Fuckkkkk.” His ears were ringing.

Something was going on in the distance…

Jim slowly sank onto his back. His adrenaline was dying down.

“How far could he have gotten from the dorm?”

Jim furrowed his brow. Were they close or distant? Jim couldn’t tell.

“I’m thinking!”

Someone was screaming.

“Cadet Kirk,” called a voice.

Calling for him.

“Can you shut up for one Goddamn second?” hissed a voice that brought a blossom of warmth to Jim’s chest.

Or maybe that was the growing red spot. Jim couldn’t rightly tell what that was from. Everything almost felt numb, but hey. At least Jim knew the best way to get blood stains out of his clothes.

“Do you smell vomit?” asked this boring monotone voice.

Jim stuck his tongue out and made a bleh noise.
The bushes rustled and soon Jim was faced with a glowing eyed Spock. “Hello, Cadet Kirk, we really have to stop meeting when you are in significant pain.”

If Jim could feel his body right now and not feel like he is about to pass out. He’d give Spock a middle finger to look at instead of a solid death glare. “You’re very lucky you’re dating, Bones,” rasped Jim.

Chapter End Notes

Is this a plot heavy chapter? I don't know. It's long.

Comments and Kudos are appreciated.

There will be no updates in October as I will be focusing on Inktober.
It was a small relief to be thrown into the fleet's terrible scheduling after that stunt Jim and Spock had planned.

Sure Jim got Gary's PADD and Gary unfortunately survived with some missing parts, but it just felt good to get a grasp on how their days would go.

Not that Leonard was any good at staying with schedules.

He was terrible with schedules and this first year schedule was no different from any other schedule of the past.

He had fleet classes. Combat to keep his body as fit as his mind. Xenobiology to understand how to murder and care for other species they’d come across. Past and Present Imperial History, etc;

Then he had a four hour interval between classes and Medical. Where he had little time to nap and eat.

Fuck medical.

Leonard wanted to cast every single one of them into the hell he didn’t believe in.

The other doctors and those in charge of Medical gave Leonard the longest damn shift in existence. He wouldn’t be getting back to the dorm until three in the goddamn morning and he had combat with Jim at six. Then there was that shitty agonizer fitting they had to do.

That gave him three hours to sleep.

They clearly did not want him to have a damn social life, nor did they want to see him actually succeed in the field.

Not to mention they’d stuck him with the most mundane of jobs.

Stuff he could do with his eyes blindfolded and his hands cuffed together.

Bless Jim Kirk though. Bless his goddamn roommate with his crooked smiles as he breaks an arm or a leg or just gets into a really bloody stabbing to just sneak Leonard some time.

Jim would also sneak in a variety of food and an offering of a nap while his bones are being knitted back together.

It’s damn beautiful of Jim, but Leonard can’t keep using the knitter or the regen.
Jim’s body needed a rest.

Jim’s body needs to remember to heal itself.

They both need a damn rest from their extensive schedules.

Especially when they both were in the buffers of too tired to function at three in the morning.

Too tired to function in their combat class.

Too tired to bother replying to all the spamming messages the Lieutenant-Commander was leaving on both of their PADDs.

“It’s Spock again,” groused Jim as he is laying flat on the biobed at midnight with the bone knitter doing its job against his rib cage.

His PADD—the PADD Jim had stolen from Gary—had just dinged and flickered.

Leonard was stuffing his face with a salad Jim had made and brought over. The lettuce crunched. A sweet vinegar mixture that vaguely tasted like it had pomegranates in it coated his tongue.

God. Leonard needed to remember to message Winona Kirk. The only thing that damn overprotective mother had done well was allow Jim to experiment in the kitchen.

That was unfair of course.

Mothers weren’t perfect beings and even when trying their best they were bound to make some mistakes. They were bound to have some regrets. Things they wished they had done different.

Not that Leonard was speaking from experience.

Leonard swallowed the bite after a few more chews, tossed the salad bowl into his lap, and rolled over to Jim’s bedside snatching up the PADD. “Doesn’t he ever sleep?”

Leonard could clearly see Jim struggle to not do a full body shrug. “He is a vulcan.”

Leonard sighed and opened up the message app on the stolen PADD.

**Grayson, S.:** Greetings.

Was all that blinked up at Leonard.

Leonard took a big bite of the salad and simply put the PADD back down.

It dinged not a moment later.

Leonard smirked.

Spock would have to wait until Leonard was finished with his salad and Jim was finished with the bone knitter.

“‘You love making him wait,’” purred Jim with a smirk and a miniscule twitch.
Jim was way too hyperactive during these sessions, but Leonard knew Jim tried his best to fight off the need to shift.

“I do,” admitted Leonard as he yawned a little and took a few more bites of salad. “I never knew salads could be this good.”

Jim’s cheeks dusted a little pink. “It’s just lettuce and other vegetables.”

Leonard lifted his foot up onto the biobed and nudged Jim’s leg softly. “Damn good vegetables.” He finished up his salad just as the PADD pinged again.

He picked it up and opened the message app once more.

**Grayson, S.** : Did you just look at my message and not answer?

**Grayson, S.** : Humans are illogical.

**Mitchell, G.** : I was eating and working :P

**Grayson, S.** : Have you still not changed the name?

**Grayson, S.** : Your use of ‘:P’ is illogical and grammatically incorrect.

Leonard actually laughed. “Get this, he called my use of the tongue face ‘illogical and grammatically incorrect’,” mused Leonard. The world knew Spock just loved playing up logic.

Jim chuckled at that and responded, “Type this out for me. ‘Fuck you, It’s a face.’ no punctuations or anything and add the middle finger emoji.”

Leonard smirked. “Will do.”

**Mitchell, G.:** Fuck you it’s a face 😑

“He probably doesn’t have emojis on his PADD,” said Leonard as he leaned back in his rolly chair.

Jim gasped. “I almost thought you were going to say he probably doesn’t have emotions, and I almost felt so proud of you.”

Leonard laughed and smacked a hand against his knee.
“But yeah he totally doesn’t have emojis,” agreed Jim.

Grayson, S. : . . .

Leonard waved his hand a little. “He is typing.”

Grayson, S. : Why does that box have a question mark in it?

“No emojis,” confirmed Leonard as his timer went off.

“A tragedy,” gasped Jim.

Leonard sets the PADD down and turns his attention to Jim. He removes the bone knitter pats Jim’s leg. “You’ve got a few minutes until I gotta kick you out of here, go back to the dorm, and get some sleep.”

Jim groaned. “Wish I could get some sleep, I’ve got our Imperial History homework to do.”

“Remember to message me with the questions so I can answer them in my own words, also my little Ls sometimes look like Rs.” Leonard pushed away from the bed with the bone knitter.

Jim nodded. Slowly he sat up, his body protesting with a few pops and cracks. “See you at three, we don’t have combat today, and Imperial History is at noon. Sleep in time and time to look over the homework.”

“Thanks, Darlin’,” admired Leonard with the smallest hints of a smile. “Catch ya at three.”

“Don’t make this weird, Bones,” hissed Jim with a sly smile. “See you at three.”

Jim left with that.

. . .

Jim wasn’t in the dorm room when Leonard arrived at three in the morning. He wasn’t in bed, and he wasn’t in the bathroom.

Gary Mitchell’s PADD was there though, and his clothes from medical were tossed on the floor. History homework half done in Jim’s not stolen PADD. The stylus looked as if someone had worn the nub down with teeth.

The questions Jim had stopped on were of the rise of the Children’s rebellion on Tarsus IV. How their rebellion could have been avoided.

‘How could the visionary Governor Kodos avoided his downfall and death?’

Jim had written in all capital letters, ‘HE COULD HAVE NEVER BEEN BORN AT ALL. HE
COULD HAVE DONE SOMETHING FOR HIS PEOPLE. HE DID NOTHING BUT EAT WHILE OTHERS STARVED AND DIED'

Clearly something about the worksheet had set Jim off. Starfleet and Pike were just constantly pushing Jim to impossible lengths.

Leonard’s stomach sank. He picked up his own PADD from his belongings and messaged Winona Kirk.

McCoy, L. : I know it’s pretty late or early.

Winona had seen the message instantly, why wouldn’t she? Iowa was only three hours ahead.

McCoy, L. : It’s about Jim.

Kirk, W. : I’m all eyeballs.

Leonard took in a deep breath. Jim didn’t talk about his past and it didn’t seem right to ask Winona about it.

Jim would probably be pissed that he even involved Winona.

McCoy, L. : It’s about Tarsus IV.

Winona had read it, but it had been a solid five minutes before it showed she was typing.

Kirk, W. : Jimmy doesn’t like to talk about Tarsus IV.

So Tarsus had been what set Jim off. Tarsus was why Jim wasn’t here.

Kirk, W. : Why are you asking about Tarsus IV?

He didn’t dare tell Winona that Jim was missing.
McCoy, L.: Just reading over his medical history.

Winona obviously knew something was wrong as her response was lightning fast.

Kirk, W.: Doctor McCoy.

Kirk, W.: … If you’ve cracked Jimmy’s personal code on that blocked medical file I’d applaud you.

Kirk, W.: But I do not think you are remotely capable of doing that.

Kirk, W.: Now what is wrong with Jimmy?

“Shit,” hissed Leonard.

___

Three in the morning was quiet on Fleet campus.

Spock didn’t live too far from the Campus, but he was still surrounded by humans going through their various routines.

Some grumbling as their alarms sounded. Others shifting comfortably in beds as they sleep.

Spock learned from the past that humans often made protests for being roused early.

In the same breath there were humans who would just be getting off medical shifts.

He was of course thinking of Leonard McCoy and his roommate James Kirk.

Exceptional cadets he had messaged not too long ago, but Spock had managed a light meditation since then.

He was half vulcan of course and hadn’t required as much sleep as the humans around him.

The humans he was sure to lock his door too.

Yet, something roused Spock from his light trance. A breeze in a room that there should not be a breeze in.

Someone was in his apartment.
Someone who smelled like alcoholic beverages and iron.

Something he could smell above the incense and candles he had burning.

Spock snapped his eyes open and came face to face with James Kirk.

James Kirk had broken into his apartment, sitting cross legged with a bottle of Vulcan Port wine that he had clearly stolen from Spock, and he was bathed in the warmth of candle light.

Crimson glistening in the light cross his face and sticking to the hands that were wrapped around the neck of the wine bottle.

Jim took a big gulp of the bottle. Swished it back and slid shut his glistening eyes.

Spock could see pink trails down his cheeks and moisture dripping from his nose.

Jim had been crying.

Showing Spock weakness.

Something tightened against Spock’s side.

“I’m messed up,” slurred Jim as he sloshed the bottle at Spock and slid back open his eyes. Fresh tears fell down his face. “I’m so fucking messed up.” He scrubbed hard at his mouth with a hand. Sticky crimson transferred to those normally pink lips.

The sensible thing to do in the Empire would be to remove Jim from his apartment. Kill him. Fight with him.

“Tarsus,” whispered Jim, small, and significant.

The logical thing would be to demand to know what Jim was even doing there. Find out who’s blood bathed his skin.

“Kodos.” Jim’s fingers gripped tighter on the bottle and a fist slammed down onto his knee.

Spock always found himself doing something logical or sensible, but confronted with Jim in this manner… made something foreign surge within him. A sense of protection perhaps? Possessiveness? Something that urged Spock to tend to Jim.

To care for him.

Jim threw back the port wine once more and cackled something deep. Sorrowful. “Pike,” growled Jim.

Spock has still yet to move. Hasn’t dared move as he takes in Jim.

“Pike is a huge fucking dick,” cackled Jim–no he wasn't cackling. He was sobbing. Murmuring softly and rocking ever so slightly.

Spock slowly moved out of his meditation position.

Jim jerked backwards and gripped the bottle to himself.

Protecting the bottle like Spock would take it away or use it to bludgeon him to death.
“Would you like to use the bath?” asked Spock as he froze his movements. “We could talk afterwards.”

Jim sat stiff with the bottle gripped tight.

Minutes passed and Spock could hear the first signs of daybreak in the form of chirping birds. He began to think Jim would not move. That Jim would not accept the promises of cleanliness.

“A bath sounds nice,” mumbled Jim, but he didn’t move.

Spock swallowed and blinked. “Do you require assistance?”

Jim blinked and nodded stiffly.

Of course. Vulcan port was very alcoholic for humans. If Jim had been drunk before the break in, he was probably beyond the point of being able to control his limbs.

Spock blew out some of the candles and slowly rose to his feet. “Allow me to assist you,” whispered Spock as he collected his gloves, put them on, and then extended his hand to Jim.

Jim eyed the extended hand wearily, he set the wine aside, and gripped onto Spock’s bare forearm instead of the hand.

It sent a jolt up Spock’s spine as sticky blood and a shockwave clung to his skin. It was so shocking he nearly dropped the cadet.

“Ew,” hissed Spock, he breathed through the discomfort of it all, and lead Cadet Kirk to the bathroom.

Spock was conflicted on if he should leave Jim alone.

Was he sober enough to wash himself and not drown?

He set Jim down on the toilet and proceeded to collect two fluffy towels his mother sent him from Vulcan.

Jim slumped himself over the sink and scrubbed groggily at his face.

Perhaps he was too inebriated to undress himself.

Jim’s trimmed fingernails picked at some of the dried blood on his face.

Too inebriated to be left alone.

Jim kicked off his shoes and tore at his uniform.

Perhaps Spock should remove Jim’s clothes?

“No,” muttered Spock as he strolled over to Jim to remove his hand from his face and the outfit.

Jim’s eyes grew wide, his body stiff, and a swift kick was delivered to Spock’s dense shin.

It of course wasn’t fatal, it hurt, but it didn’t floor Spock; however, he stepped away from the Cadet and cleared his throat.

It was clear Jim would not be letting Spock near him any time soon.
Perhaps he should contact Leonard? Was Leonard worried about Jim?

Perhaps that would be the best approach to getting Jim cleaned and calmed down. “Stay. I will call Leonard.”

Jim curled up tightly on the toilet, his arms wrapped over his head, hands transferred blood into his hair, and knee squished as close as possible.

Yes. It would be logical to contact Leonard.

Spock bit his lower lip and went to collect his PADD. He sent a message to their usual decoy PADD.

**Grayson, S.** : What does one do when someone breaks into their apartment?

**Mitchel, G.** : He isn’t.

**Grayson, S.** : I am afraid he is… Erratic. Drunk. Quite unstable.

Spock heard a noise from the bathroom, a primal scream, running water, and some breaking of glass.

It made Spock’s side cramp. He wanted to soothe Jim, but he wasn’t sure how.

He needed help. Needed Leonard’s help.

Spock breathed in sharply. He would not panic. There was not much he would be able to do if he were also to panic. If he were also to get thrown into one of his inconvenient states of mind.

**Grayson, S.** : I do not know how to handle this. I don’t know how to handle this.

**Mitchel, G.** : I’m on my way, just… don’t leave him alone.

Spock’s heart squeezed and he rushed back into the bathroom.

Jim was sprawled over the tub in the wrong direction, the length of his body squished against the width of the tub, his feet hung out with his uniform pants around his ankles, boots thrown against the sink, uniform top thrown over the mirror, and this left Jim in his underwear and a black fitted top.

Water filled the tub with bubbles and Jim halfheartedly smacked at the faucet to stop the water as he stared blankly at Spock.
Spock sighed heavily. “You… do not look comfortable.”

Jim smirked and let out a huff that sounded like laughter. “Comfort? In this Empire?”

It almost made Spock laugh. Almost.

___

The silence was too much. When there wasn’t some form of talking or distraction there was nothing to keep Jim away from the territory of hating the fleet. Of wishing for the Empire to just crumble into dust or burn in the ashes of its own wake. Like ancient Rome. The stories of Rome that they wanted to keep buried deep. The stories of Cesar being stabbed by the senate instead of ruling for eons to come.

The world wars.

Then the continuous rise of dictators that the people of old earth really should have been taught about more. Maybe then the Empire wouldn’t exist.

Maybe they’d have peace if they just looked at their governors. Their presidents. Those people who craved political power, ruled with iron fists, and charmed smiles.

Heck. Some of them didn’t even try hiding it...

Yet, they all fall. Burn into ash. Qin Shi Huang. Caligula. Cesar. Attila the Hun. Tamerlane. Vlad the Impaler. Mary Queen of Scots. Mussolini. Stalin. Hitler. Franco; That one guy who looked like an orange alien. So on and so forth. They were loved, they were hated, and out of all of them… The Empire was still sticking to teaching about Kodos and his fall to mere children.

The Empire could have done something about that.

Could have done something on Tarsus IV.

They could have done anything, but the Empire just wanted to run their little tests.

Genetic experiments like those of old medicine that Bones ranted and raved about when he was too drunk to keep his mouth shut.

In the end of it all. The Empire didn’t care.

No one in the Empire should care.

Jim took a sharp glance over to Spock.

The stoic Vulcan all straight back off set with a rumpled mess of a bowl cut. It wasn’t even pristine like all the other Vulcans Jim had ever seen. No. Spock looked like he had this wild energy about him. Like he could rip someone’s throat out.

… Spock had done that before though. Not rip someone’s throat out, but literally ripped them in half.

Yet, Spock didn’t kill Jim when he broke into the apartment.

No, Spock offered Jim a bath, supplied an odd comfort to attempt to calm the drunk Terran, and
tried to care for him.

Like Bones who offered gentle touches when Jim was sobbing uncontrollably or showing weakness.

Like Bones who was racing over because Winona probably found out and Winona would murder Bones in cold blood.

Jim shifted in the tub, slammed his hand down to stop the water, and splashed water out onto the tile floor. These were the things he wanted to stop thinking about.

Spock had the audacity to twitch and show displeasure. He still didn’t demand Jim exit for spilling water all over the bathroom and he still didn’t hold Jim under the water.

More silence.

“I broke your mirror by the way.” Jim wasn’t even as drunk as he could be. As drunk as he should be. “Can I have that wine?”

Vulcan Port was actually pretty good and those last few sips Jim had of Spock’s stash of it were—for lack of imperial words—heavenly.

“Leonard will be arriving shortly,” muttered Spock.

Jim just scowled at him now.

Spock sighed heavily, sat on the toilet, and placed his hands in his lap. “What happened, Cadet Kirk?”

Could he tell Spock that the Empire had made the homework about Tarsus? About the children’s rebellion which he was part of?

That he was the one who shot Kodos?

That he was just so fucked up because of it all?

No.

Not without liquid encouragement.

Jim slid down the wall of the tub until the water covered his mouth, he blew bubbles in the water, glared at Spock, and reached his toe out to poke lightly at the Vulcan’s knee cap. Jim wasn’t going to tell Spock.

Not now and probably not ever.

Spock’s face twisted up with a scowl.

Jim grinned wide, entertained by the show of emotion, and slid back up so his chest barely touched the water. “You’re gonna have to get me that wine if you want me to talk.” Jim’s eyes squinted with his grin and he attempted to kick the pants off again; to no avail.

“I was told to not leave you alone,” hissed Spock.

Jim sank back down, covered his nose with the water, blew out more bubbles, and rose again. “I’ll behave for as long as it takes for you to get me that Vulcan Port Wine.”
Spock narrowed his eyes and sneered. “Cadet Kirk, I will not be leaving this room to procure liquid for your alcoholism.”

Jim’s heartbeat picked up when he saw the deathly peek of sharp vulcan fangs. “Holy shit,” breathed Jim.

Spock squinted his eyes and lofted a brow. “Are you a holy man, Cadet Kirk?”

Which caught Jim off guard. He blinked hard and reared back against the wall of the tub. “No.”

Spock blinked slow and stared him down like he’d eat Jim alive. “I am to assume you have adopted Leonard’s quirk of cursing out the old christian deity then?”

Jim jolted up and growled. “I swear to whoever the fuck you vulcans worship—”

Spock held up his hand to shush Jim.

Jim huffed and glared.

“I find it—in lack of better term—adorable.” Spock tilted his head only slightly. Perhaps it was fondness Jim saw dancing in the vulcan’s eyes.

Or maybe Jim was just drunk and his head was spinning.

Jim sank into the water again with a small grin. “You like himmmmm.” And then his mouth was covered by water.

The bathroom went silent once more.

Spock sighed heavily. “How is your body healing after surgery?”

Jim shrugged.

“That is not an answer.”

Jim popped up with a wicked grin. “I have one wicked scar.”

Spock’s eyes leveled out and he raised his brow. “How…” Spock squinted his eyes and sighed heavily. “Wicked is your scar?”

Jim sighed, shifted in the tub, and sloshed the water out of it as he struggled to roll up his wet shirt.

The scar was jagged red, long across his under belly, partnered with aged stretch marks that never seemed to go away, and bruises from minor fights Jim had gotten into in the past few hours.

Spock’s gaze lingered for a little too long before he glanced up again with yellowed cheeks. “That is quite wicked.”

Jim grinned, kept his shirt like that, dropped his hands in the water, and watched the liquid turn pink.

He scrubbed at the blood and lowered his head. “When is Bones getting here again?”

Spock sighed before he rolled up his pant legs. “He did not say.”

Which was like Bones. To laser focused to remember to give a time. Too caught up in the moment.
Spock’s feet joined Jim’s bath water as the Vulcan shifted on the toilet seat. “Who did you kill?”

Jim’s face blanked. He had been… very drunk when he exited the dorm. Beyond drunk before he broke into Spock’s apartment and just a little tipsy when he entered the Vulcan’s window with blood slicked hands. “A good question.”

Chapter End Notes

I said I wouldn't update in October right? you know. Like a Liar, but I got... bored.

Anyways hope this chapter was enjoyable. Comments and Kudos are appreciated!

... Next Chapter there is a depiction of said murder. in detail.
Leonard was taking too long. Spock rested his head against the sheer curtains of his bedroom window. The dawn had this misty look to it, maybe it would rain, and Spock found it fitting that the sky would wish to wash away whatever Jim had done out there.

“Fu—” The curse was interrupted by a soft hiccup.

Spock shifted and angled his body so he could turn his attention to the now clean Jim.

Drunkenly wrapped in a fluffy red blanket with that bottle of Vulcan Port Spock had taken away.

Jim lapped at the opening of the bottle, he had only had a few sips, but his cheeks were dusted pink.

Jim must’ve caught Spock looking because he grinned wide. “See something you like?”

Spock rose an eyebrow, but aside from that he held an unamused look.

Jim was attractive, Spock gave him that, but a drunk Jim was not very amusing.

Especially because Spock had already washed Jim’s clothes.

Jim was just refused to put them on.

Jim furrowed his brow, abandoned the bottle, stretched his torso out onto the bed, a portion of back escaping the confines of the blanket, and he tapped on the head board. “Spock, Spock, Spock…”

Spock sighed heavily and rubbed at his temples. When would Leonard be arriving? “How did you get into my apartment, Cadet Kirk?”

Jim sucked on his tongue and rolled it over his teeth. He made a clicking noise with his cheek. “What time is it?”

Of course Jim was not going to disclose how he had entered the building. Spock narrowed his gaze, sighed, and then crossed his arms. “Five o’clock in the morning.”

Jim rolled himself into the blanket so his mouth and nose were buried in its softness. Jim’s reply was muffled, or perhaps he was just groaning about the time. His mouth popped up from the confines of the wrap. “Where’s Bones?”

Spock opened his mouth to reply, but there was a knock at the door.
Leonard wasn’t a devil.

Spock exited the bedroom, strolled over to the front door, and touched the panel next to it. “Computer front door.”

The screen on the panel flickered to life with the pixelated image of the hallway.

Leonard stood in his damp work clothes, he looked tired, and rough around the edges. Not to mention there was a plastic bag in his hands.

“Open up, Spock,” hissed Leonard.

Spock quickly unlocked the door and it whooshed open.

Spock leaned into the doorway with his elbow propped against the frame. “You are approximately two hours late.”

Leonard narrowed his eyes, snarled, and pushed himself past Spock. “Shut the hell up.”

Spock made sure the door was locked when it closed.

The plastic bag clanked down onto the dining table in Spock’s kitchen, along with it came the thump of Leonard’s elbows hitting the counter of Spock’s island.

Spock stood straight and cautiously approached.

He did not speak, but watched as Leonard clawed at his hair and face.

“Do you have any idea what it’s like out there?” Leonard lifted up his head with a deep scowl in place.

Spock shook his head and rested his elbows against the cool marble.

Leonard gave a dry laugh. “I’m lucky I got off the goddamn campus with the way the cops are surrounding the place.”

Not that the police would help any.

Spock felt a small amount of pride that Leonard was comfortable cursing God in front of him. Then a shiver ran down his spine and he glanced toward the bedroom. “... What happened?”

It was quiet for a moment.

Spock glanced back to Leonard to find the man looking quite serious.

The dark circles under his eyes only accentuated the serious look. Almost made it murderous.

“Teacher was murdered.” Leonard shifted so he was standing. “Pike is not happy.” He pushed headed toward the bedroom.

Fantastic. Spock would probably get a call from the monster. No doubt Jim was their prime suspect.

Spock followed quickly. “He will question everyone who has been involved with the teacher.”
Leonard laughed again and grit his teeth. “Why do you think I’m late?”

They entered the bedroom.

Jim was still awake, bathed in the clouded light from the window, sprawled out on his stomach with his arms twisted above his head, and the blanket wrapped around his lower half. He twisted his head when Spock stepped on a loose floor board. “Bonessss!”

Leonard gritted his teeth together and pulled his lips back to show off his teeth. “You’re drunk and naked.” A murderous glare was sent toward Spock. “That’s fan-fucking-tastic.”

A shiver rattled Spock’s bones. “He was persuasive and refused to put back on his clothes.”

Leonard squinted his eyes and pulled his lips back in a twitchy grin. “I can imagine.”

Spock looked toward Jim who just looked absolutely gleeful. Sitting up fully now, a lean forward, hands between his legs fisted in the blanket, and a wide satisfied grin.

Spock narrowed his eyes at Jim and scowled.

Leonard slapped Spock on the arm and sighed heavily. “Let’s you and me have a chat and *Jim*.”

Leonard glared at Jim. “Can put some goddamn clothes on.”

Spock took in a deep breath and angled his head toward Leonard. “That sounds adequate.”

Jim opened his mouth to more than likely protest, but a duel glare from Spock and Leonard silenced him.

“Kitchen,” hissed Leonard and he stormed out of the bedroom back to the kitchen with Spock in tow.

“I can assure you I did not touch him,” muttered Spock quickly.

Leonard furrowed his brow and raised it. “I’m not upset about that, Spock.”

Spock felt his cheeks heat up as he strolled over to his kitchen and hopped up onto the counter. “I was just… stating.”

Leonard’s face almost looked light hearted, fond as he gave a small smile, and hopped up onto the counter next to Spock. “I just… He was gone without a word and then I had to message Winona —”

Spock slipped his hand over Leonard’s.

It shut Leonard up right away.

Warmth blossomed in Spock’s side as Leonard curled closer into Spock’s side. “You were worried.”

“Yeah,” responded Leonard with a bite to his lower lip.

Spock’s communicator rang against his side.

“That’s probably Pike.” Leonard started to pull away.

Spock squeezed his hand and fished for the communicator.
Leonard stilled and took in a slow breath.

Spock could feel a shiver down his back as Leonard stroked the back of Spock’s knuckles.

Spock didn’t have the opportunity to tell Leonard how intimate such a thing was as he quickly answered the call. “Grayson.”

“I need you to come to my office,” hissed Pike.

Spock glanced toward Leonard knowing fully well that this call was not private. “Of course,” responded Spock, keeping his tone smooth, and unaffected by the smooth strokes of Leonard’s fingers against his knuckles. “I’ll be right in.”

The calls never lasted long and Pike hung up first.

Spock shifted and looked to Leonard. “You may stay for as long as you like.”

Leonard laughed a little. “We’ll be gone before you get back.”

Spock nodded and wandered back into his bedroom where Jim was sitting in his underwear and a t-shirt sipping on the wine.

“Can I keep this?” asked Jim holding the mostly full bottle to himself.

Spock sighed heavily. “You may.” He then changed quickly and headed out the door.

It started to rain on the walk over to Pike’s office, Spock wished he’d brought an umbrella, and began taking long strides.

It was hard to avoid the murder site as students and faculty did their best to push everyone near the incident.

Police were doing a poor job at keeping the scene together, but that was normal.

For all they knew the killer was still free.

Still around.

Spock flickered his gaze over to the body slumped over the fountain that now ran pink.

Did they not think about shutting the fountain off? *Humans*.

The imperial history teacher was of course the body in the fountain.

For all Spock cared he got what he deserved.

Death by the same hands that had murdered the Empire’s beloved Governor Kodos.

The police flipped the body over, the teacher was barely recognizable with the word ‘Coward’ carved into his chest and ‘Long live the children’ slashed into his stomach.

Not to mention his face was mangled and his guts were spilling out.

Spock smiled the barest smile. How fitting.

He continued on to Pike’s.
Those he passed whispering low about Tarsus IV. If the—Spock shuttered—if the female who had killed Kodos was now in the fleet.

A strong feeling filled Spock’s side.

A strong feeling to protect Jim in the coming days.

He entered the office building and shook off his wet hair.

Then made his way to Pike.

When he entered the office the man was sitting at his desk.

Head in his hands and a holo photo of the Kirks laying flat on top.

Pike almost looked fond of the photograph that clearly showed Winona and George Kirk as cadets in the fleet.

Perhaps the man between them smiling wide was a shadow of Pike in his younger years.

That fondness was a split second, before a deep frown pulled Pike’s face down. Made him look older than he should be.

Was Pike the shrike making his home in the dark tangle of thorns past?

Perhaps, but Spock needed to make his presence known before things grew too weird.

“Having regrets?” asked Spock. “Or missing someone?”

Pike jumped out of his skin, tossed the holophoto in the trash—there was no crash which made Spock think there was perhaps something soft breaking the photo’s fall—, and glared at Spock. “That is none of your business. Now sit down.”

Spock took long strides and sat straight in the chair.

Pike sighed heavily and pulled out his PADD on it flashed a news broadcast about the history teacher’s death.

Specifically it said, “Fleet teacher murdered for questions on homework. Child’s rebellion survivor or sympathiser?”

Spock looked up at Pike and tilted his head. “Media works fast.”

Pike scowled and pulled the PADD back. “You’re responsible for this.”

In a way Spock was responsible for James Kirk being drafted for the fleet, but Jim belonged here. Where his mother and father stood. Where his grandparents stood.

Spock crossed his leg and rested his hands in his lap. “I fail to see how I am responsible for the history teacher’s untimely murder.”

Pike rose to his feet, placed both hands on his desk top, and leaned forward. “You know who did it.”

Spock shifted his leg once more and raised a brow. “I do not have any information.”
Which was a lie. Spock’s information was, hopefully, sleeping soundly in the dorms.

Information was on the victim’s body in the jagged knife stabbings of a drunken fool.

Information was that James T. Kirk had murdered the History teacher for working Tarsus IV into the curriculum.

It was sloppy, but necessary.

Or so Spock… felt.

Pike sneered. “It was Kirk wasn’t it?”

Spock blinked slowly and let a grin slip. “I have no information.” He rose from the seat. “Are we done? I have a call to make to my mother.”

He looked forward to speaking to his mother. Looked forward to tidying up his apartment. Looked forward to strengthening his security to keep Kirk from breaking in again.

Pike fell back into his seat and crossed his arms. “We are done.”

Spock paused and pressed his lips together. “Perhaps on a later note we can talk about Cadet McCoy’s schedule?”

Pike blinked, but agreed.

Spock raised his head high. “Fantastic.” He turned on his heels and took long strides out of the office.

…

True to what Leonard had said. They were gone before Spock walked in the door, but the plastic bag remained.

He locked the door and took long strides over to the bag to investigate what Leonard had brought.

There was a small note next to the bag.

_For taking care of Jim for me._

_-Leonard_

Spock raised a brow and opened the bag.

A bottle of whiskey.

Spock smiled a little. Perhaps he would try some.

He brought it over to the counter and poured himself a glass as he prepared his PADD for a video chat with his mother.

Spock brought the glass to his nose and took a sniff.
It smelled like any terran alcoholic beverage, but there was a hint of something.

Spock took a small sip and scowled.

Honey. Hints of it in the underline taste of the alcohol.

It was decided that whiskey was not Spock’s favorite drink.

His PADD flashed with his mother’s contact and he answered it quickly. “Hello, Mother.”

Amanda opened her mouth then closed it and eyed something on her screen. “What are you drinking, Spock?”

Spock glanced at the beverage still near his lips.

He swiftly moved the glass away and winced when it landed with a clack onto the table. “A gift from my potential mate, Leonard.”

“You’ll have to tell me more about this Leonard later, Spock.” Amand grinned and curled a greyed lock of hair with her finger. “I do hope he didn’t poison your drink.”

Spock shivered slightly. Spock would have picked up on poison, but in playing along with his mother he answered, “I am sure he did not.” He bit his lower lip and glanced around the screen.

Amanda wore something black, sleek, and radiant. Her lips painted red and her hair worn loose around her shoulders.

A relaxed look that made Spock think she and his father had been doing something right before the call.

She was in her greenhouse, Spock could tell from the various flowers and vines that crept in the background of the screen.

After a small bout of silence Amanda leaned forward and smiled. “Your father and I are redoing the library.” She laughed a little. “Finally I am able to have vases.”

Spock could not help the small chuckle that escaped through his lips. That was important to his mother, being able to have vases, free of the worry she held when Spock came in and would knock one over.

“What have you done today?” asked Amanda. “Other than have a visit from your object of soon to be affection?”

Spock raised a brow as he safely stored a bottle below his kitchen counter. “Someone broke into my apartment, but I took care of it.”

Amanda’s gaze leveled out with Spock’s. “I heard the Imperial history teacher was found murdered.” She pressed her red painted lips together as if trying to read Spock. “Were these two incidences intertwined?”

Spock knew his mother knew how passionate he was about the tragedies of Tarsus IV and if the news was telling her anything it was that the teacher was killed for is questions on Tarsus IV.

Spock shifted his shoulders, stiff, uncomfortable, and hopefully giving his mother enough insight. “I will tell you what I told Christopher Pike.” He leaned over the countertop for a moment and slipped the glass back up to his lips to take a long sip of the honey liquid. He smacked his lips
together and ran his tongue over his teeth. “I have no information on either of these accounts.”

“A surprise then.” Amanda smiled and leaned back to grab one of her many plants. “Speaking of surprises I am sending you a gift.”

“Is it poison?” asked Spock with a tilt of his head. Eyes level with his mother through the screen. Amanda showed off her white teeth and laughed. “If I told you it wouldn't be a surprise, My Dear.”

Which surprises were unfair.

Spock downed the rest of his drink, shifted up onto his counter with a leg pulled up, and the other kicking slowly in the air. “I do not enjoy surprises.”

Amanda’s face shifted from a huge amused grin to something wide eyed and shocked. “Contact me when it arrives? I just realize I left your father tied to the rack.”

Spock barely got out a goodbye before Amanda ended the call. Spock sighed heavily. “Mothers…”

—

Jim took in a deep breath and stretched his arms up above his head. He felt groggy, a little fucked up, and with a pounding headache.

Fuck. His ears were ringing and he was hungover.

Slowly he opened his eyes to find himself back in his and Bones’ dorm room.

Jim sat up and rubbed at his face.

When did he end up back here? He looked over at Bones’ bunk.

Empty.

Where was Bones?

Then it all slowly started coming back. How he’d left shortly after beginning his history homework, the alcohol binge, the murder, breaking into Spock’s place, and Bones confining Jim to a ‘Self Care’ day.

Jim fell back against his mattress, covered his face with his pillow, and screamed.

That didn’t explain the ring—

Jim wrinkled his nose.

The dorm buzzer. It was just the dorm buzzer.

Jim threw his pillow off, stretched himself until his back popped, then he sat up, and glared toward the door.

Who the fuck would be at their door?

The buzzer came in quicker intervals.
Jim took in a deep breath before he bolted upright and slammed his pillow down. “If you’re here to murder me you better do a good job at it!”

He made it over to the door in no time flat. “Who—” The air in Jim’s lungs seized as the door whooshed open.

Winona Kirk stood in the doorway. Her hair wild around the frame of her face and a fire burned deep in her eyes. She was a woman on a mission. Dressed in a frumpy sweater and an ankle length skirt.

Was… Was Jim seeing things?

“James Tiberius Kirk,” hissed his mother.

Jim’s heart lodged in his throat. He was definitely not seeing things and he was definitely frozen in the doorway.

Winona couldn’t be there. Shouldn’t be here of all places.

“Are you going to let me in?” She tried to squeeze past Jim.

Jim clenched every part of his body. Held his ground. No. No. No.

Winona stomped her foot when she couldn’t push past him. “Let me in.”

Jim had been so happy to have freedom from her.

To not be smothered by her.

She wasn’t supposed to be there.

Jim stood stiff for a few minutes, stared down at his mother, and then, reluctantly, he twisted out of her way.

Winona beamed, triumphant, and strolled into the dorm room.

She stood and examined the room.

Jim’s heart hammered in his chest.

He watched as she went to his bag.

She picked it up and put her hand on her mouth in thought. “Where is your shampoo?”

Jim walked away from the door, it whooshed closed, and he stood near the divider. He curled his fingers a little and stared at his mother. “What are you doing?”

Winona turned her head toward him, blinked as if her intentions were clear, and then she laughed. “I’m taking you home, sweetie, back to Riverside.”

Jim felt as if his feet had snapped off his body, and his torso had been filled with helium.

He would not—He couldn’t go back to Riverside. Not now. Not ever. He wouldn’t have Mommy swooping in with her shroud of… of… Cesar. Jim couldn’t even think. Or maybe he couldn’t stop thinking.
Winona went to the bathroom with Jim’s bag. “Where are your pills, sweetie?”

Jim tapped on the divider and took in a deep breath. His voice started out as too many mouth movements and zero vocalization. Then it crackled into something useful. “I don’t need them anymore.”

Which had Winona swooping out into the living space once more. “You… don’t need them?”

“I… I…” Jim needed boundaries. Needed to set them before she took him away. “I…”

Jim didn’t want to go back to Riverside.

His mind reeled, his breath picked up, and he could feel his heart settle in his throat once more.

Jim looked toward his mother. Her head tilted with interest and curiosity as to every word that would come out of Jim’s mouth.

Jim couldn’t set a stupid boundary. Not with his mother.

“I can’t do this,” hissed Jim. He dragged his hand through his hair and inhaled deeply.

Winona put the bag down. “Oh, Honey.” She strolled over and placed her hands on his arms. “That’s why you’re coming home with me.”

He wanted to flinch back.

He didn’t want to go back to sleeping for his meals or doing favors just to have a place to sleep.

He didn’t want to be this version of his mother.

Jim pushed away from her, lips pulled back to show off his teeth, and a noise pushed up out of his throat until it became full fleshed words. “I’m not talking about the fleet,” hissed Jim. “I’m talking about this.” It probably didn’t clarify anything as he waved his hands about the room.

Winona blinked and set her mouth in a thin line.

Jim ran his hand through his hair and inhaled a deep breath. Calm. He needed to do this calmly. “I don’t want to leave the fleet, Mom.” He swallowed and rubbed at his arm.

Winona held up her hand. “What do you mean?” She took a small step forward.

Jim took a long step away from her and held his shoulders in a tight line. “I’m staying here in San Francisco. I’m staying in the fleet.”

Something flashed in his mother’s eyes and she sagged backwards before moving over to the bed.

Winona plopped down onto the bed and stared at her hands. “I haven’t been the best mother have I?”

Jim sighed, here we go.

He moved over to the bed, sat next to her, and stared down at his hands which he placed in his lap. He wasn’t going to play a game. Wasn’t going to lie. “You haven’t.” She was better than most, but too much was too much.

Winona winced and sighed heavily. “Jimmy, I just...” She rubbed at her face. “I just want to protect
Jim shook his head and gave a hollow laugh. “You wanting to protect me hasn’t been too effective, mom.”

Winona rested her head in her hands and sobbed.

Jim couldn’t tell if it was real, or a game to her.

Don’t get him wrong, Winona had done what she could, and at least in some way she cared.

“You need to go home.” Jim pressed his lips together and stood on his feet. “Go back to Riverside, Mom.”

Winona looked up and rubbed at her eyes. She hiccuped. “You’ll call me every day?”

Jim bared his teeth in a forced grin. “I’ll call you every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. If I don’t call I’m probably busy.”

She hiccuped again, rose to her feet, and attempted to tame her hair a little more. “Promise?”

Jim slipped her a smile. “I promise.”

Winona brushed her hands along her skirt and nodded.

Jim lead her to the door. “Call me when you make it to Riverside.”

Winona smiled and nodded. “Of course.”

When she left Jim fell back into bed with a groan. “Mothers.”

A woman was hanging around the front door to the dorms when Leonard arrived back after the weirdest day of his life.

Well maybe not the weirdest day.

It was certainly up there with when he had first met Jim on that shuttle, threw up on him, and then got him as a roommate… Then again.

Every single day after he had known Jim had pretty much been the weirdest days of his life.

“You’re Jimmy’s roommate.” She had stopped Leonard in his tracks and squared up her smaller frame. Her blonde hair was wild, she wore a long sleeve shirt, and a pleated skirt that dragged down to her ankles.

What was it if he was Jim’s roommate? Leonard squinted his eyes at her and raised a brow. “What did he do now?”

The woman looked taken aback for a moment, reduced her stance to something calmer, and then she was once again stiff shouldered. Making herself appear taller. “I’m his mother.”
Leonard shifted his hip just a little and bounced. “What did he do now, Miss Kirk?”

Winona Kirk hadn’t looked like she had years ago before the Kelvin incident.

Before Riverside.

This woman looked like a shell of her former self. A spindly haired scarecrow who had given under the spell of Riverside. The once powerful Commander Kirk had turned into a different kind of powerful.

She had raised Jim after all. To the best of her abilities. She’d taught Jim compassion, showed him love, support, and had put her heart into it.

Heart, compassion, and love only did so much in the Empire though.

Commander Kirk had been the woman who ran the show. Showed the fleet what a power couple looked and acted like.

She stood unmoving in front of him. Possibly processing that this was the man who had lied to gain knowledge about Jim’s time on Tarsus IV.

Which had gotten him nowhere and he wasn’t about to go asking Jim about Tarsus.

“You can’t help him,” said Winona.

Leonard swallowed hard. “I don’t want to help him.” Did he? Jim’s issues were his own and Leonard had always struggled with… wanting to help.

“What do you want to do?”

Winona could still slip into that cold calculated Commander Kirk. Excellent engineer and wife of the late George Kirk. Except now she was a mother and if there was anything Leonard knew… it was how motherhood or parenthood made one increasingly protective of their child.

Leonard didn’t think. “I want to be his friend.” Whatever friendship was. Whatever this gut gnawing caring was called.

Whatever it was that flooded his brain and his heart when Jim was in danger. Whatever it was that made him feel? He wanted that. He wanted whatever this was.

Winona’s eyes turned steely. She flicked them up and down Leonard’s frame. Studying. Waiting to pounce like a Lioness after her prey.

Leonard felt that gaze in his bones. They rattled and he bounced on his toes to try to expel the unsettling nature of it.

“You need a bigger place.” Winona shifted and that cold calculated Commander slipped away into the warmth of a mother.

“What?” Warmth Leonard had only seen on his own mother in short bursts, but he’d seen it many times on his father. It made him miss David McCoy something fierce.

She dug around in the oversized pockets of her skirt. She produced a set of papers and key cards. “A bigger place.” She shoved the items into Leonard’s chest. “It’s a two bedroom apartment. It has a kitchen and a living space, it’s closer to medical, and I have already discussed your move with the brass.”
Leonard blinked quickly.

“Oh and I hope you don’t mind I bought you some new clothes because Jimmy said you had one outfit and we can’t have that.” Winona patted his shoulder than stormed away with her head held high.

Leonard looked down at the items she had given him. “What the fuck just happened?”

Again. James Tiberius Kirk brought weird into Leonard’s life.

Leonard shook his head and made his way into the dorm building.

When he entered the dorm he wasn’t surprised to find Jim brooding on the bed like some hen. “Pack your shit,” groused Leonard, he picked up Jim’s bag, and slapped it down on the bed.

Jim looked up with furrowed brows and was about to open his mouth when Leonard held up the things he got from Winona.

“We got an upgrade.”

Chapter End Notes

I just got excited about this chapter because of Amanda and Winona and the tastes of plot.

Until Next time!
It had taken them a while to move into the place. It was fully stocked, with barest personal items, and it had room for personalizing.

With the barest amount of personal items from Winona’s and George’s lives littered around the apartment…

Leonard should have known he’d find Jim sprawled out on the couch in the living space with a holo photo of a happy couple in one hand and a nearly empty bottle of really gross cheap wine in his other.

Leonard squinted his eyes at it.

“My Mom hasn’t called yet,” slurred Jim.

He was drinking Yellow Tail.

Leonard’s lips slipped back against his teeth in a sneer. Just because Leonard was a drunk. Didn’t mean he condoned drinking any kind of alcohol. Let alone something that tasted like it came from down under the kitchen sink.

Jim… Jim wasn’t as picky with his vices. Boy had probably never had a good brand of alcohol in his life.

That being thought about.

What was Jim doing out on the couch? Had he tried sleeping?

Sleep. That was laughable that Leonard would be wondering if Jim had tried to sleep. Laughable because even Leonard hadn’t tried to fall asleep.

He was thinking too much. About Jocelyn. About his Mother. About a roaring dumpster fire of a life he left back in Atlanta.

Hell. He was even thinking about Jim.

Finding out about Tarsus IV—or the vaguest idea of Jim’s time on the death planet—Leonard was finding he was tip toeing.

Which wasn’t... it wasn’t something he should be doing and he didn't want to continue to do that. Why was he doing that?
Treating Jim like he'd break.

They were both trying to put out the flames of their past and move forward.

Leonard went to make himself half a pot of coffee. Which he poured enough Baileys into to make a full pot. He then took the pot into the living space, and drank from it like any normal person would drink from a coffee mug. But a coffee pot.

He did this right in front of Jim and made just enough eye contact while he did it.

It had been enough of an oddity that Jim actually placed the holo photo down and raised the bottle of wine. “Oh look. We are both disasters.”

Leonard only shrugged and swatted at Jim’s feet with his free hand.

When Jim moved into a sitting position Leonard plopped down close, but still far enough away from the dip of Jim’s seat.

Leonard took another few sips from the coffee pot. He much preferred black coffee, but the Baileys was a nice touch.

Jim took a final swig of his wine. He set the bottle aside, and shifted on the couch so his head was heading toward Leonard’s lap.

Leonard stiffened when Jim’s head made contact with his thighs; it was a quick stiffness that settled after a few more sips of the pot, and a hovering hand above Jim’s ear. Leonard wanted to make sure Jim would be okay with this so he asked, “This okay?”

Jim nodded.

Leonard’s hand made contact with the shell of Jim’s ear before it carded through his hair.

Silence would have fallen if Leonard hadn’t kept sipping.

Should he ask Jim about Tarsus IV? Should he bring up that he knows that Jim was there? What could he do? What would be best for Jim? Could Leonard just rip off the bandaid without consequence or would it be best to ignore the situation? Ignore Tarsus IV until Jim was ready? If he was ever ready.

“You want some coffee?” asked Leonard after a few moments of internal screaming and conflict.

Jim groaned at that. “No more alcohol.”

Leonard smirked into the rim of the pot. “I meant I could make you some. The way you like?”

Leonard instantly felt the bend of Jim’s nose against the pads of his fingers and glance down to see Jim grinning up at him.

“You’d go against your stubborn ways and make me my weird Midwestern egg coffee?”

Leonard took in a big breath. Taking the things Jim had done when Leonard had grueling shift hours into account... Making egg coffee would be nothing.

Plus. A lot of trauma had probably popped up with those history questions.

Leonard released the breath and took a sip from the coffee pot. “Yeah. I'll make your weird ass
coffee.”

Jim made a humming noise and shifted again. “In a minute. You have a really comfortable lap.”

Leonard returned to running his fingers in Jim’s hair and pressed his lips together.

He was thinking of a way to bring up Tarsus without dancing around Jim.

Leonard was almost finished with his coffee when he asked, “You watch the news?”


Leonard retreated his hand and took a big gulp of hot coffee. “I just wanted to know if you were okay? I noticed you weren’t sleeping and that I was treating you diff—”

“Bones.” Jim sat up and grabbed Leonard by the face. “Bones.”

Leonard felt his face warm up. It was probably just his boozed up coffee. Not Jim’s hands squished against his face. Not Jim’s intense burning eyes as he leaned forward.

“Bones.” Breathed Jim against Leonard’s face.

Jim then bowed his head and rested his forehead against Leonard’s shoulder. “I’m fucking drunk and don’t understand a word you are saying.”

Leonard stiffened and put his hand on Jim’s side. He’d just have to be aware of himself. He guessed. “I know about Tarsus IV.” Apparently his mouth had different ideas.

Jim pressed closer. “I still don’t know what you are talking about. Make me coffee.”

Leonard sighed and nudged at Jim’s body. “I’ll make you coffee when you let go of me.”

Jim whined.

“Don’t give me that. If you want coffee I gotta get up,” groused Leonard as he nudged Jim again.

Jim grunted and slipped his way back to the armrest of the couch. He gave a soft gasp. “I have a better idea. Let’s go to a really greasy breakfast place.”

Leonard thought about that. If they weren’t going to sleep maybe they should go to a diner. Drunks weren’t exactly unwelcome at these establishments, but the campus was still swarming with cops.

Plus with curfew in play because of the police investigation it’d be difficult to sneak out of their new apartment and high tail it off campus.

Difficult, but not impossible.

Even drunk Jim has shown to have incredible sneaking abilities. He’d gotten into Spock’s apartment for pete sake.

Leonard downed the rest of the pot and slid his gaze over to Jim. “How capable are you of sneaking past cops?”

Jim opened his mouth wide to respond but Leonard could see the moment the train derailed as a noise broke through their apartment.
Jim’s communicator.

“I’ll get it,” said Leonard already pushing himself up to his feet and through the apartment toward Jim’s room.

Jim’s bag was spotted easy. Rested on the head of the small twin sized bed.

Leonard’s earlier questions had been answered as the bed was perfectly made with the communicator placed on the nightstand. He answered it quickly, “Leonard McCoy speaking.”

There was a pause and then he could clearly hear Winona Kirk’s voice filter in. “Pike wants to talk with Jim.”

Which now that all seemed very complicated. “Uh… at his office?”

Winona let out a breath. “Too many nosy people there. We are at Denny’s.”

Leonard raised a brow. Was Winona involved with Christopher Pike? “We were just about to get a bite to eat, would you mind if I joined you fellas?”

“If you are answering Jim’s phone… he could be drunk and if he is drunk I will need all of your help to keep him from… attacking,” said Winona, but Leonard could hear the sound of Pike laughing.

Leonard couldn’t hear whatever remark Pike gave her.

“You’re drunk. Shut up,” hissed Winona.

Leonard bit his lower lip. “So… Denny’s?”

“Yes.”

Leonard nodded. “Be right there.” He hung up on Winona and cracked his knuckles.

This would be a disaster. Leonard would get a front row seat to juicy Kirk Drama. How fun.

He walked back into the living space where Jim was slipping on these clunky looking silver studded combat boots that easily had an inch heel.

At least Jim was trying to.

“So!” shouted Leonard.

Jim nearly jumped out of his skin and then trained his eyes on Leonard.

Leonard bit into his lower lip, then bounced, and rocked on the balls of his feet. He just couldn’t choke out that Winona had just called. That Pike wanted to see Jim. Talk to Jim. Probably about the murder. “Denny’s?”

Jim grinned a little and successfully got on one boot. “Midnight snack of champions.”

—

Jim was a little sober when they arrived at the Denny’s, but he was dead tired. Combination of
wine that dulled his mind in just the right ways, but set off his depression.

He wanted to go back to the apartment and curl up in Bones’ bed.

Jim glanced over at Bones, he didn’t have to look far, considering Bones was supporting him, and clutching Jim’s clammy hand in his warm one.

Bones was too soft for his own good. Almost like Jim’s own mother who was kind, supportive when it came down to it, and she could still snap anyone in half with her tone alone.

She’d done it when Jim returned home those years ago.

Jim sucked on his cheek and clutched Bones’ fingers.

Bones had confessed on the way to the Denny’s that Pike and Winona would be waiting for them.

Jim wondered if his mother had dug into Pike. Demanded he send the Police off of Jim’s trail. He also wondered why she wasn’t back in Riverside, but he didn’t have to wonder long as Bones caught his attention more than the train of thought that lead to his mother.

“You ain’t gonna attack Pike right?” asked Bones.

Jim pulled himself closer to Bones and sighed heavily. “I make no promises.”

They approached the doors and Jim slipped his hand away from Bones.

So Bones decided to put a hand at the small of Jim’s back. Which wasn’t what Jim needed right now.

Jim stiffened, bent his spine away from Bones’ hand, and pushed the doors in. “If I leave don’t worry. I just… need some time sometimes.”

“Gotcha,” responded Bones, backing off just a little bit.

Jim sighed heavily and scanned the interior of the place. It was old timey, or trying to appear so. Checkered floors, red booths, the smell of greasy breakfast food saturated into every crevice.

It almost reminded Jim of the diners clients would take him to back in Riverside.

The Empire really liked to keep that old timey american diner vibe going.

He took two steps in.

It wasn’t long until he spotted Pike slumped in a booth that faced the door and the back of his mother’s head.

Winona wore something different from the sweater skirt combo he had seen her in earlier.

Her frizzy hair was pulled back into a ponytail, her shirt was still this loose hanging teal sweater, a white collared shirt under that, but Jim was sure she was now wearing jeans. Still looking comfortable, but a little more put together.

Jim scowled. She would pull herself together for Christopher Pike.

Who Jim could now clearly see was glaring at the door.
Pike was glaring at Jim.

Jim was just going to turn right back around, but there was Bones.

Narrowed blue eyes, scowl plastered on his grouchy face, and all too Bones.

Jim scowled, took a deep breath, twisted himself back around, and made enough noise with clunky feet as he defeatedly slinked over to the table.

He got to the booth behind his mother, looked Pike in the eyes, then climbed into the booth, and over it to plop down next to his mother. “Hey, Mom,” said Jim with the smallest smile as he gave her a peck on the cheek.

Winona gave him this mother look, but with a soft smile she shook her head.

Bones stood awkwardly and Jim bit his lower lip.

“Hey, Mom, think you can sit with Pike? Bones likes the end seats.” Jim then narrowed his eyes over at Pike who looked absolutely murderous. “I don’t want Pike getting his germs on my Bones.”

That of course earned him a glare from Bones, but who cared. Bones was his roommate. His friend. He could be a little possessive of the one person who he trust.

That made Jim freeze. God he trusted Leonard McCoy. GOD. He just mentally adopted cursing out that idiotic religious figure.

Jim came back to the forefront of his mind after a bunch of internal screaming and realizing Bones was starting to be more of a friend than an enemy.

Bones was sitting next to him with a good gauge of distance and his mother was sitting next to Pike.

Who still looked like he was going to jump across the table and murder Jim, but he also looked stiff. Uncomfortable even.

Good.

“You guy’s order yet?” asked Jim.

Winona simply held up a mug of black coffee that Jim hadn’t processed as he sat down.

Pike grumbled something that Jim couldn’t translate because he couldn’t hear what he said.

Winona, however, jammed her elbow in Pike’s gut.

Pike let off a string of colorful words and squeezed himself further away.

“Why don’t you start your questioning, Christopher.” It wasn’t a question. Commander Winona Kirk was present and it didn’t matter if Pike was a Captain.

Jim trained his eyes on Pike and leaned forward. “Questions? Questions about what?” Playing innocent wouldn’t give him anything, but Jim liked messing with Pike.

He could feel Bones shift just the slightest bit closer. Still leaving their physical frames untouched, but enough that Jim knew it was for... Comfort. Support.
Jim snaked his hand into his lap and moved it to squeeze at Bones’ thigh. It was his own show that he was currently fine and his friend really shouldn’t worry so much.

Pike scowled and lifted his head up at Jim. “How about we let them order first?” hissed Pike.

Something fierce sounding left Winona’s parted lips, but she grumbled, “Fine.”

She then said, “Jimmy, you won’t like the coffee.”

Jim looked at her and squinted. He wasn’t a big fan of black coffee. He thought it tasted like old wet socks at the bottom of the clothes hamper and that was when it was a little watery. Strong coffee he liked even less, but at least he could drown it with enough of those flavored creamers at the table. Dump sugar packets in it.

“It’ll be fine, Mom, I’m twenty two not five.” He could have worded that better, but being in Pike’s presence made things… Iffy.

“Don’t talk to your mother that way,” hissed Pike, “You’re lucky you have teeth in your mouth.”

Jim’s lips pulled back in a full on snarled grin as he turned his head back to Pike. “Luck has nothing to do with why I have teeth.”

Warmth covered the hand that was on Bones’ thigh. It was Bones’ hand, always warmer than Jim’s hands, calloused, but soft all the same.

Bones knew about Tarsus.

Jim knew that Bones knew. Jim knew that Bones knew what happened on Tarsus IV. Why wouldn’t he? He was a doctor and was probably a medical student at the time.

There was this tense silence as if Pike hadn’t registered anything.

A silence Winona broke. “Coffee, Cadet McCoy?”

Bones kept his hand on top of Jim’s and tilted his head in thought before he said, “I already drank an entire pot back home, but I could go for some more coffee.”

Jim let out a small chuckle at that. “That was mostly Baileys and you know it.” He could almost forget Pike was here. Could nearly forget the comment.

Pike was right though.

Jim shouldn’t talk to his mother like that.

“Better than wine,” hissed Bones. “Now you best get some coffee and order some pancakes. If you want pancakes.”

Pike laughed something dark and void of life, but it earned him another elbow from Winona.

“Wine and Baileys are far better than half a bottle of bootleg moonshine from Cesar knows when.” Winona glared at Pike the entire time she hissed the words. “Coffee and pancakes, Chris?”

Jim crossed his arms and curled his toes in his boots.

In the same movement as Pike who leaned back and crossed his arms.
They glanced at one another.

Was that a flush of embarrassment on Pike’s face mixed with a little fear?

Possibly, but Jim didn't want to read into it too much.

He looked to Bones.

“Can I get blueberry pancakes?” asked Pike and Jim in unison squeaky voices.

Winona had lifted her coffee to her lips and froze.

Bones scrunched his face up and nudged Jim with an elbow. “Why you askin’? Just get the pancakes, Jim.”

Jim blinked and glanced around the place. From this waitress orbiting around the area, to Pike who looked like he was going to piss himself for liking something Jim liked, and then to Winona who was giving Pike this side glance. Past secrets stagnant in the air between them, but Jim wouldn’t dwell on what those secrets could be.

He would dwell on why he felt the need to ask Bones—or anyone on that matter—for permission. Why did he ask Bones? Why did he feel like he needed to ask if he could have something? If he could do something? Bones was right. Jim didn’t need to ask. “You are absolutely right, Bones.”

Bones flicked his free wrist a bit and covered a small smirk with his hand. “So we gonna tell that waitress she can stop orbiting around the table and actually come take our orders?”

Winona flicked her wrist at the young imperial worker.

They ordered their respected meals and then everything just grew silent as the waitress poured coffee in their mugs.

Jim had both of his hands back to himself, but now Bones’ hand was rested on Jim’s knee as he took small sips of his coffee.

Jim was fine with it this time around as his hand landed in the creamer bowl. He wanted to grab the blue plastic containers of french vanilla creamer. He had grabbed about five of the creamers—tasting the coffee now and then to determine if it was to his liking—and three paper packets of sugar when he heard it.

Pike had made a huffing noise. Close to an amused chuckle or a mocking giggle.

Winona smiled and released a small giggle.

So amusement. Something was amusing to the two older pair.

Jim had the spoon he was tasting the coffee with on his tongue and he closed his lips around it.

“What’s so funny?” hissed Bones with a glare as he drank his black coffee.

Pike snorted, took a sip of coffee, and swallowed around the lip of his mug. “Nothing you’d know, Cadet.”

Jim sucked on the spoon, released it with a pop, then set it aside, and nudged Bones. “Mom jokes about it all the time. Dad isn’t even around and I still make my coffee the way he use to make his.”
Bones made a face. His brows furrowed and lips drawn around his mug. “Huh.” He slipped his hand away from Jim’s thigh.

Jim shrugged and sipped on his coffee.

Their meal came and that was pretty silent.

Until it was near the end.

Pike sighed and set his fork down. “Where were you last night, Cadet Kirk?”

Jim tilted his head, he was nearing the end of his pancakes, proud in himself for getting through as many as he had, he then shifted, and looked around the table.

Winona was chewing on some very burnt bacon.

Bones was making his way through another cup of coffee.

Jim could see the small shift of one of Bones’ bouncy ticks and the quick flick of his blue eyes toward Pike.

The world outside the diner was void. Star speckled and void.

Jim knew where this was going. Knew this must be what every cadet had gone through today, but Jim had watched the news. Read it on his PADD before downing that bottle of wine.

Jim took in a deep breath.

“Pikey,” purred Jim as he leaned a little forward with a grin. Elbows set parallel on the table top. “You want me to say I killed the guy, but I’m not saying I did.”

“Plus isn’t their top suspect a woman from the Tarsus IV incident?” Jim slipped back, took a big chunk of pancake into his mouth, and then waggled his brows. He didn’t even bother swallowing before he continued. “I mean… Do I look like a woman, Pike?”

Bones coughed on the sip of coffee he’d just taken, and Winona covered her face.

Pike blinked and slumped a little in his seat. “No, Jim, you don’t.”

It was a while before the tense silence after had dropped.

Winona had broken it with a final sip of her coffee and a crunch of bacon. “Why don’t you need your pills anymore, Jimmy?”

Bones coughed on his coffee again and set the mug down this time.

Jim took another bite of syrupy goodness and looked to his mom. “I mean I still take my antidepressants, but my doctor took care of that other one.”

Winona raised a brow. “Your doctor said he wouldn’t…” and then her eyes settled on Bones. Wide and nearly full of murderous intent. Like she was shooting the ‘how dare you touch my baby.’ look.

Bones lifted his hand just a little and then covered his face. “I’m doctor.”

“Consensual Bathtub surgery!” shouted Jim.
This time Pike let out a full blown laugh and got dragged out of the booth by Winona. “Since you find this so funny, Chris, I won’t feel bad about sparring with your drunk ass.”

Jim grinned wide with absolute delight. “This was a great meal.”

Chapter End Notes

Until next time. Whenever that will be.
“You coming to the mess hall tonight?” asked Leonard as he riffled through his drawers.

The apartment might’ve been a two bedroom, but there was still only one full bathroom. Of course it was off Leonard’s room or maybe it was Leonard’s and Jim’s room?

When Jim wasn’t passed out on the couch his cold toes were pressing into Leonard’s legs. Jim was like a goddamn boa constrictor.

Not that Leonard would complain. Sometimes Jim was a living and walking furnace. Other times he was as cold as the antarctic.

The bathroom door was wide open to provide air circulation while Jim touched up his roots with some foul smelling hair bleach. “Nah,” replied Jim, “Mom is still in town and wants to take me out to dinner.”

Leonard made a noise as he shut the one drawer and moved to the next. “That’s nice.” Where had he put his kit? He couldn’t rightfully remember. “Wish my family would visit.”

There was the sound of ripping paper as Jim tore into some Sweet and Low packets. “Have you told them you’d like it if they visited?”

Leonard pushed himself away from the dresser and twisted the ring on his pinky finger to stare down at the blue stone he’d always kept close to the palm of his hand. “Well it’d just be my older half sister and my dau—and someone else. Ma died while I was in the slammer and y’all know what I did to my Pa...” He sighed heavily. That was close.

“Well tell your sister that you’d like it if they visited you,” hissed Jim.

Leonard looked over at Jim and frowned.

Jim sprinkled the entire packet of Sweet and Low over his head.

Leonard’s frown turned into a thin lipped grin with a raised brow. “Why you doing that?”

Jim raised a latex covered hand. “For the burning.” He scratched at his hairline a little before putting on a clear plastic cap and then he removed the gloves and tossed them in the garbage. “Having hair this good requires a lot of pain, Bones.”

Leonard hummed and sucked a little on his cheek. “You add toner?” He moved over to the bathroom and started looking around. Where had he put it? He bent down to push the curtain away
from the bathtub/shower combo.

“Your medical kit is under the bed, we went through it last night to make sure things were labeled, and of course I’m going to add toner.”

Leonard could hear that grin in Jim’s tone and huffed. “Under the bed?” He got up from the floor and headed back into the bedroom. “Your side or mine?”

“Your side,” said Jim. Was it odd that they had sides?

The kit was where Jim said it was and all the vials were labeled. “So just Galia, Uhura, and Spock for mess hall dinner tonight?”

Jim made a small noise. “Uhura and Galia are going out tonight.”

Leonard paused as he grabbed one of the vials that had Jim’s chicken scratch handwriting on it. So it’d just be Spock and him. That would be awkward. “You labeled this as ‘keep bones in their homes’ with a smiley face at the end.”

The medical kit bounced as Jim plopped down at the foot of the bed. He wore a white t shirt and some red sweatpants. “Yeah it’s your EDS pain medicine.”

Leonard scoffed a little and plugged the vial into his hypo. “Jim, I swear to god,” groused Leonard. He then rubbed at his face. “You'd be dead by now if I didn't enjoy you so much.”

Jim grinned impossibly wide, half his mouth higher than the other, and eyes squinted. “Bones, same goes to you.”

The room grew silent before they both broke out into some laughter.

Jim sighed as his laughter broke off. “Spock though… Spock needs to watch himself.”

Leonard scowled and arched a brow. “Jim, we talked about this.”

An inhuman sound left Jim’s throat. Something from deep in one’s stomach. Vile disgust that sounded like a poisoned man gurgling on the foams of his liquefied innards, but Jim wasn't poisoned.

Leonard knew that much.

No. Jim just loved playing up how much he disliked Spock. Though actions spoke louder than words and Leonard could tell there was the tiniest bit of fondness. The tiniest bit of—if not trust—faith in Spock.

All in the same breath; Leonard knew Jim was scared. Not that Leonard spent every waking moment psychoanalyzing his strange roommate, but he did.

Jim read terrified, cautious, and all too attached at the same time. Even if he did cover it up with new found confidence. It was still there.

Was Jim afraid of growing attached to the idea of Spock only to have it be something that ended in pain and suffering?

Leonard could only speculate, but he was sure that if Spock or Leonard did anything. Jim would be
the broken shell the empire wanted him to be.

Leonard would do everything in his power for that not to happen.

Jim huffed and rolled his eyes. “I guess I'll have to live with this arrangement you two have.” Jim bit his lower lip and grinned. “Which… I mean… I’m saying I support your quest for romance or whatever. You and Spock make a deadly pair.”

They could. They'd be even deadlier than Jim’s and Leonard’s friendship. Or whatever this was.

Deep down… Maybe Leonard wished that Jim would be involved. The triad would bring the Empire to its knees.

Jim’s destructive nature. Spock’s cunning fantastic brain. Leonard’s swift careful thinking. Their strategic minds would work together beautifully.

But that would be their downfall. All three of them in their current states would… crumble.

Jim. A tightrope suspended over two very tall buildings or maybe a body tied to a rack. Pulled in every direction. Waiting for the right words.

Leonard. A locked vault with liquid secrets pouring out of every crevice revealing a terrifying past. Only the mind numbing burn of alcohol and structure keeping him from bursting at the seams.

Spock. Spock was a bomb of secrets wrapped neatly in a bow and daring you to peel back the coverings.

Yeah. They'd be unstoppable together, but it would be a disaster waiting to happen.

At least that's what Leonard told himself everytime it slipped out of the vault.

“I'm gonna take this win, Jimbo.” He rolled his sleeve up and injected the hypo into his skin. “Where is your mom taking you for dinner?”

Jim shrugged and scratched at his head. “Someplace I have to dress up for. I hope she isn't bringing Pike.”

Leonard could see that trainwreck from a mile away. Winona and Pike were King and Queen of secret keeping, but if Leonard knew anything. Those secrets would be seen by the light of day eventually.

One can only tip toe for so long.

“I doubt she invited Pike.”

Jim sighed. “You and Spock have a good dinner tonight.”

Yeah. Spock and Leonard had an unofficial date—Leonard would guess—and it'd be filled with other cadets. Plus gross mess hall food. “It'll be awkward as fuck.”

“This is awkward,” admitted Spock.
It wasn't that he didn't appreciate his and Leonard’s alone time. It was great to have these moments away from Jim. The two of them taking the time to discover things about the other in multiple attempts to build and develop a healthy foundation for a relationship.

It was just… different in the mess hall. Not having Jim plucking bits of food off of Leonard’s tray. Not having Jim be a little shit. Teasing and prodding on and on. Whether words of romantic encouragement between the two or just weird puckered lips in which Leonard called a ‘Kissy face’.

It was oddly missed and Spock would never want to admit that aloud. That he missed Jim’s presence.

He would at least never want to admit it where others could hear.

“You miss him,” teased Leonard as he chewed on something that resembled meat.

Maybe a casserole or mystery gunk that had nothing of value. Strange. Was Leonard missing Jim as well?

“Not that you'll admit it.”

Spock took a gulp of soup and chewed on the crunchy bits of lotus root. He would deflect the conversation soon. Get off the topic of the missing piece that brought them closer together with words of encouragement and guttural noises of disgust. Followed by the fond nickname of ‘Bones’.

“How is your new apartment?” asked Spock.

Leonard’s lips twitched. “Been two weeks.”

Spock blinked. Had it actually been that long since he’d been face to face with the two. Perhaps he should find a way to juggle work and his relationships. He’d be free next week. He should disclose that information.

“You thinking of coming over?”

Spock took another sip of his soup and stirred his spoon around the bowl. “I doubt Cadet Kirk would appreciate my company.” Which struck him in a way. Deep on his side. Squeezed at his heart.


Spock sighed and leaned back.

“What’ve you been doing by the way?” asked Leonard.

Spock perked up and blinked slowly. “Adding code to the simulation I have been put in charge of and running errands for Pike.” It was odd. In a way.

After Pike disclosed the information of what occurred at Denny’s. He had wanted Spock to grab a coffee for him from this downscale hole in the wall place and it wasn't his usual black coffee.

“He has been quite strange since Winona Kirk reinstated herself into the fleet.”

Which Spock must’ve said something that took Leonard by surprise. Because he coughed and banged on his chest.
“She what now?” asked Leonard after a short moment.

Spock blinked. Had Commander Kirk not informed her son? Or had Jim not informed Leonard? “She was offered to escort cadets during their summer missions…” All first year cadets went on missions to get used to ship life. Spock wished he couldn’t remember his.

“Let me guess, Pike’s idea?” Leonard scowled and stabbed at the slab of mystery meat.

Spock picked up his spoon only to watch the liquid and chunks slosh back into the bowl. “Insurance. To make sure Cadet Kirk doesn’t abandon the fleet.”

Leonard scoffed. “Insurance? Jim ain’t gonna abandon the fleet. He wants to stick it to Pike too much.” He bit his lower lip and stabbed more at the food. “And what if Commander Kirk gets hurt? Or Dies? Doesn't Pike know…”

Leonard’s face dropped and his hands fell onto the table. “He’d be alone.”

That wasn’t true was it? Jim wasn’t exactly alone anymore.

“Jim would have you. He would have Nyota and many others who have taken to him.” Spock reached across to offer his hand as a sign of comfort. Even though it was more to a vulcan. “She has not yet decided if that is what she wants to do. I am to infer she actually wants to honor Jim’s boundaries.” To a point obviously.

“Oh… I… I hope they talk about it,” muttered Leonard.

Winona would be the only other mother Spock could assume actually cared about her children. At least her youngest. As the elder Kirk child was swallowed up by the Empire years ago and Jim. Jim—at the time—was still this sweet young naive thing on his way to Tarsus IV.

Speaking of loving and caring mothers, Amanda had sent Spock a gift. A tea set. Three cups with a blue hydrangea pattern, two with rose patterns, and one with sunflowers. They all had matching saucers and matching cursive print at the bottom.

Spock adored them.

Leonard’s hand clasped Spock’s. “You got any plans?”

Spock was fond of affectionate hand holding. Especially with Leonard. His toes curled momentarily as he intertwined his fingers with Leonard’s. “I will be busy, but next week would you like to get together for tea?”

“Tea?” asked Leonard with a tilt of his head and a soft squeeze of his fingers.

“Yes. Tea.” Spock sipped on some soup. “Perhaps I could message you my schedule and we can find a mutual time that would be beneficial for us both?”

Leonard offered a small smirk. “Thanks to a certain someone I have tuesday nights off and get off early on wednesdays, but yes I think sharing our schedules would improve this relationship we want to build.”

“Perhaps we should also run our schedule’s by Jim’s,” said Spock before he could even analyze the thought. He furrowed his brow. Of course he knew Leonard and Jim were often a shared package, and he wouldn’t be against growing closer to Jim and Leonard at the same time.
Spock leaned back and tilted his head down. Why was he wanting to include Jim in their dynamic? Sure. When he meditated the background thought was often there. Thoughts of Jim providing an added layer of something unique and unknown to the Leonard and Spock dynamic; however, there was a danger to that.

Leonard pressed his lips together. “I think we should talk about that in private, maybe when we have that tea. Unless Jim does something stupid that day.”

Which was a high probability. Jim was a magnet for danger and destruction. A charming quality of his really.

Spock shook his head and sighed heavily.

Leonard squeezed at Spock’s hand. “Either way we will meet for tea.” He raised Spock’s hand and gave it a small peck. “By the way. I’m surprised you let me hold your hand considering Vulcan anatomy.”

Spock felt his cheeks burn and he pulled his hand back. “If you know about…” Spock cleared his throat and dusted his hands over his shirt. “Then you know it is discourteous to engage in such behaviors in public.”

Leonard smirked and leaned forward. “Discourteous behaviors in public? Ain’t you Vulcan’s known for that?”

Spock opened his mouth, but it just flopped around without really verbalizing anything. He closed his mouth, picked up his bowl of soup, and slurped loudly.


Spock set his soup down and opened his mouth—

Leonard’s communicator sounded off. Leonard pulled out his communicator and flipped it open. “McCoy speaking.”

Of course the conversation would not be private, but Leonard didn’t seem all too worried about his phone call being public knowledge.

The person on the other end sighed heavily. “Doctor McCoy, long story short Cadet Kirk has been stabbed, is refusing treatment, unless you are his doctor, and now he is starting a fight with Captain Pike.”


“Enough said,” responded Leonard as he rose to his feet. “I’ll be over right away.” He hung up and looked toward Spock.

“You wanna come? I’ll probably need some help.”

Spock sighed heavily and rose to his feet. “Of course.”

Chapter End Notes
Next Chapter: Drama unfolds and Secrets are reviled! But I mean. Is it really a secret if I've been hinting at it for a few chapters now? *waggle fingers*

Until Next Time.
Poor Icarus hath Licked the Fucking Sun

Chapter Notes


See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Cadet Kirk, you do not know what is in my soup, would you please not steal portions of it?” Spock scowled from next to Bones, and across from Jim.

Jim stuck his tongue out with a big grin and shoved the spoon full of broth in his mouth.

Spock’s soup was oddly delicious. Jim had learned that first hand after some time in medical for a minor stabbing and a few broken ribs.

Spock had visited and brought soup! A peace offering really.

In Spock’s defense it was his fault for breaking Jim’s ribs in the first place, but Jim wasn't going to hold a grudge.

No. He'd just steal soup.

Jim sucked on the spoon and glanced around the mess. It was packed with bodies. Alive of course. That wasn’t surprising.

What was surprising was that their little table had grown in size.

Originally it had been designated the ‘Kirk Avoidance’ table of Bones and Jim. Now it had grown to include Nyota, Galia, this really smart russian kid—what was his name again? Partric? Parker? It'd come to Jim eventually—and occasionally Spock.

When Spock wasn’t being a hell hound for Pike or when Spock wasn’t working on important tweaks to the Kobayashi Maru code.

Yeah, that was a bonus of being around Spock.

The secrets and tricks to the unwinnable simulation. That was truly unwinnable.

Currently.

One day Jim would get his hands on it. The code. One day he would pass that stupid test. Probably fairly, but hell. Maybe he’d cheat.

“Jim, stop eating Spock’s soup,” grumbled Bones as he barely looked up from his breakfast of half an apple and eggy covered toast.

He’d have to wait three years until he was eligible, but a man could dream about beating the unbeatable.

Could dream about being a Captain.
Jim sucked on the spoon and squinted his eyes at the couple.

Something pushed against Jim’s leg and he knew it was Bones’ foot.

He knew it was Bones because Bones looked up with a light in his eyes and said, “Eat what I put on your plate and you can steal all the soup you want.”

Jim released the spoon with a POP, a lick of his lips, and then a lick of his teeth. He looked down at his food which was a bowl of oatmeal and strawberries. Jim looked back up at Bones and sucked on his cheek. “Fair.”

Galia laughed at that and rubbed her face against Jim’s arm. “Say, Jimmy, I heard about this party tonight, you wanna hit it up?”

Jim dipped his spoon into his oatmeal and scooped the mush up into his mouth. He chewed the lightly sweetened food up before swallowing. A party sounded fun. A party that Galia heard about sounded better. “A party you say?”

“Jim,” hissed Bones. “It’s a weeknight and you have a paper due on early history.”

Jim rolled his head over to Bones and lifted his eyebrows. Hopefully the look he was serving Bones read ‘Really, Bones.’ Jim could write that paper in his sleep, and it would still not be good enough for the new history teacher.

Not with the words Jim had to say about the early history of Terra.

“If Cadet Kirk wants to go to a party,” began Spock as he took a graceful sip of his soup, “then he can go to a party.” He looked up and glanced to Nyota who was on the other side of Jim.

Bones snapped his head toward Spock. “Spock.”

What was Bones worrying about anyways?

Spock glanced toward Bones, but returned to settling his gaze on Nyota. “We are having tea later correct?”

Bones crossed his arms and returned his foot to himself. “Don’t you have a meeting with Pike?”

Gross. Gross at the meeting with Pike. Not gross in Bones knowing when Spock had meetings.

Whatever, Jim would drown out their conversation anyways. He twisted his body toward Galia and grinned wide. “This party. Where is it?”

…

Jim had been at the party for a solid twenty minutes and he’d already lost Galia in a sea of bodies.


Heck. It was a party. An Imperial party.

And fuck. Jim’s head was spinning with the rush of bodies.

Or maybe it was that flower this man had shoved in his face? Either way; There were so many
people. So many things going on.

It was maddening.

Maybe he needed air.

He passed by someone with a glass of some sparkling liquid. Thoughts of leaving subsided.

Jim needed to score on those free snacks or booze. Free booze was nice about parties.

The kitchen was nearly barren—a blessing. A few women stood around sipping on their drinks and chatting about. They all looked how Jim felt. Clouded. Tipsy.

How long had they been in the house?

No one looked familiar here. No fleet cadets. None that Jim had ever seen.

Jim furrowed his brow and went to picking up a corn chip. Which he dipped in something red.

Whose party was this?

“I hope you know that salsa is very hot.”

Which was said too late as Jim shoved the chip in his mouth. With instant regret.

His tongue was on fire and he raced to the sink to spit it out. It was like licking… Fuck what was he looking for? What words was he looking for.

The brunette who had warned him too late laughed at him. “Oh you daft fool. You are Icarus and the salsa is the sun.”

Nah. That wasn’t what he was looking for. Something Bones would’ve said.

Jim spat and dunked his head under the faucet where he ran water in hopes of dispelling the sensation.

When Jim surfaced the brunette was still grinning at him.

She was beautiful. A good bone structure, fantastic hooded eyes, and a permanent flirtatious aura. “I do want to ask, Icarus,” began the woman, “how does the sun taste?”

*Like satan’s asshole*, groused a voice that sounded strangely like Bones.

Yeah. Bones would say that, but Jim wasn’t Bones.

“Like hot wax and instant regrets,” answered Jim with a small purr to his words. At least the best he could do with his tongue still on fire.

She continued to giggle and then held her hand out to Jim as if she wanted him to kiss it like a gentleman of old would. “I’m Janice Lester.”

Jim slipped so easily into his role of flirtatious stranger. “You can just keep calling me Icarus, Janice.” He slipped his hand below hers and brought her knuckles up to his lips.

Janice raised a brow and tilted her head. “Icarus, do you love the stars?”

Jim tilted his head, lips a little tingly, and head still a little clouded. “Why do you ask?”
Janice slipped herself closer to Jim. Close enough that he could smell a sort of perfume. Fruity and stronger up close.

Jim was finding it was a smell that surrounded the entire party. “I was getting bored at this party, then I saw you, and I wondered if a man as gorgeous as you wanted to talk about the stars.”

Jim felt like he was soaring now. Head too clouded. He felt like he was melting. He shouldn’t go with Janice.

He should get Galia and get out of here.

Hell. He should leave. Galia or no Galia.

“Let’s go for a walk,” purred Janice.

Jim took in a deep breath and nodded at her.

She lead him out of the house, squeezed between bodies, and squeezed his hand.

The air outside was like a punch in the face. Not that it was cold—Jim wouldn’t call this cold—it was just a drastic change from stuffy interior to crisp clean exterior.

The sky was always a sight that made Jim freeze and tonight it was beautiful. Not easily seen due to the light pollution of the city, but he knew it’d get better as they walked.

Janice clung to Jim’s side as they walked.

Jim puffed out some air and gave a little laugh that showed off some teeth.

He could hear Janice gasp from next to him. “Your incisors glow in the dark,” hissed Janice.

Jim grinned wider, his head still felt cloudy, but he was sure the air would do something about that. “They do.”

“Oh my, Cesar.” Janice pulled herself closer and closer till her face was mere inches from Jim’s. “You have fangs.” She shrunk back and hooked her arm with Jim’s.

“Yup.” He did. Why wouldn’t he? Tarsus IV had left him with missing teeth. Why wouldn’t he get dental implants?

Why wouldn’t he make his canine teeth sharper? A little more elongated?

Why wouldn’t he make them glow in the dark.

He was surprised Bones hadn’t noticed yet.

“Why would you need a dental implant?”

Jim felt a jolt to his spine and he squeezed his hand into a tight fist.

His smile dropped and he stared ahead. He couldn’t come out and say Tarsus IV. Couldn’t say that Kodos had children get their teeth pulled one by one for a damn ration of food.

Jim couldn’t say he volunteered for the littlest ones.

Couldn’t say he gave up eating comfortably so others could eat.
He grinded his teeth together and looked up toward the sky. The dancing lights he knew were just beyond the pollution of the city. Being out here didn’t make his head feel any better. “Let’s go to my apartment.”

“Your apartment?” asked Janice in a small kind of purr. She was still pressed so close to Jim.

It made Jim feel almost sick. To have her be this close. To have this strange smell still surrounding his head. “It’s just on the Fleet Campus…” He tried to think of what direction that was from here, but the clouded daze was affecting him in unknown ways. “I don’t know where that is from here.”

“That’s okay. I know exactly where to go.” Janice pulled him in one direction and he could do nothing but follow.

—

Spock sighed heavily as he gathered his research on Jim. Research that was for Pike.

Some nagging feeling stabbed at Spock’s side. He shouldn’t give this information to Pike. He should fabricate it and make it just as vague as the answers Jim gave him in moments of seriousness and delusion.

Jim.

He tossed his PADD onto his bed and thumped onto his stomach.

With his head now buried in the fluffy blankets and mattress he screamed. It was something that tore up through his stomach and shredded apart his throat.

This information was vague enough to be used by Pike.

Against Jim. Someone who hadn’t even necessarily done anything wrong to Spock.

Jim encouraged him to pursue Leonard. Encouraged Spock even while throwing knives at pictures of him and saying how much he disliked Spock.

In repayment Spock was passing secrets onto Pike. In fear? In logic? In a way to obtain favor?

Spock’s PADD beeped. A reminder that he had an appointment in fifteen minutes.

Normally Spock would’ve been halfway across campus by now, but he was clearly fighting himself over this.

Logic over loyalty, but who was Spock loyal to?

What was logic?

What was loyalty?

Why was Spock doing this to Jim?

He screamed again and tugged at his hair.
The alarm eventually subsided and Spock picked himself up from the bed.

He’d be late to his meeting with Pike.

Fuck it.

He left his file on Jim in the middle of his bed. He wouldn’t be selling ways to destroy Jim Kirk. Not to Pike. Not to anyone.

…

It didn’t seem to matter if Spock was late or early, because the secretary informed him that Pike’s prior appointment was running longer than expected.

Fantastic.

Spock could wait outside, but something pulled him in the direction of Pike’s office. Fate? For those who believed in fate and destiny.

To Spock it was simply… a coincidence. Something that was bound to happen eventually.

Winona Kirk was in Pike’s office.

Light on his feet he was able to stand behind the door.

Winona Kirk stood with her hands balled into fists at her sides. “For Caesar's sake, Chris!” shouted Winona. “You can’t keep doing this to me. You can’t keep doing this to him.”

“I can do what I want,” returned Pike, his back to the doorway. “You act like I make him get into fights. You act like it’s my fault he is out there getting beat up, shit faced, and fu—”

Spock was sure to remain quiet as he slipped into the room and settled himself down in a chair.

Winona snapped her finger at Pike her face twisted into a scowl. “Don’t you dare finish that sentence!”

Interesting that they hadn’t really noticed him. Yet.

“—cked,” finished Pike with a twisted grin.

Spock’s stomach churned uncomfortably. Of course they were talking about Jim. It was only the obvious subject.

“Like George right? Before he met you. Like you before you met George.” Pike laughed something that was bone rattling. “He is your’s and George’s kid.”

Winona’s body shook, her shoulders stiff, pulled up, her face twisted up with rage, but then it was set aside. Melted away, her shoulders lax, face numbed, she glanced directly at Spock, her lips quirked into a smile, and then she turned it back to Pike. “You know better then that, Christopher. We know better then that,” said Winona and she looked at Spock once more. “Enjoy the show Lieutenant-Commander?”

If Spock had a camera… Well. He’d just commit Pike’s reaction to memory and replay it every time he meditated.
An expression of pure terror. Like he’d been caught with his pants down or even better like he had 
pissed himself. “FUCK!” shouted Pike. “When did you get in here?”

Spock raised a brow and tilted his head. “Do continue speaking of Cadet Kirk. I didn't mean to 
interrupt.”

Winona looked back to Pike and headed toward the door. “I’ve said all I need to,” said Winona. 
“I'll see you around, Lieutenant-Commander Grayson.”

“Commander Kirk.” Spock nodded at her and then turned his attention to Pike when she left.

Pike sank into the chair across from Spock and ran a hand through his hair.

Spock cocked his head and allowed the barest smirk to turn the corners of his lips. Winona Kirk 
had brought some fascinating thoughts.

“I feel like I’ve brought up,” whispered Spock as he leaned in just the slightest bit, “your history 
with Kirks.”

Pike’s head snapped up and he glared at Spock. “I can turn this right back around on you, 
Grayson.”

Spock’s brow furrowed and that smirk dropped from his lips. How could Pike turn this on him? 
Spock didn’t have affairs with Kirk’s.

It wasn’t like he was hiding anything. That Pike knew about anyways.

For all Pike knew Spock was settling into his role of spy.

“Or do I need to point out your history with Kirk?”

Spock raised one brow and tilted his head forward. “You are referring to the work I’ve been doing 
for you?”

“Work. He says.” Pike scoffed and slitted his eyes. “I’m talking about the break in the night he 
killed that history teacher.”

Spock’s blood ran cold and his eyes grew wide.

“That doesn’t seem like work.” Pike had been watching him. “He visited you and is still alive.”

Watching his apartment.

“Oh poor Icarus you hath licked the fucking sun.”

Spock’s toes curled and his breath picked up. What did Pike know?

Pike’s face twisted into an unkind expression. A smirk plastered on his lips. “I need you to ruin 
everything he is, Grayson.” Pike leaned forward and narrowed his eyes at Spock. “Make him 
regret. Not to make friends or whatever the fucked up relationship you have is.” Pike tapped on his 
knees. “Stop making friends or I’m going to get a hold of mommy, daddy, and Kirk. You got it?”

Spock’s heart hammered in his side. He’d been caught gallivanting with the enemy. Taking care of 
Jim in a feeble moment.

Would he harm Spock’s parents? That would be very bad on all accounts. Vulcans were fierce
warriors. Invoking a war by killing a known family? That would be psychotic and not the good psychotic.

“I understand, sir,” replied Spock.

“Good.” Pike leaned back in his chair. “Oh, but you can keep that little Doctor. I like him.”

Spock took in a deep breath. “Yes, sir.”

Pike grinned at Spock. “Now leave.”

Spock stood up quickly. “Sir, thank you for your time, sir.” He was at least thankful Pike hadn’t ordered time in the booth or to see Spock’s agonizer.

Everything felt like a cloud as he left that monster’s office. Aware of everything and aware of nothing all the same. Anyone could be watching him.

Like Winona Kirk. Who Spock could hear following him.

He was sure it was her foot falls following him from the building to the dimly lit grounds.

“Lieutenant-Commander Grayson.”

Spock willed himself to stop. His movements were too stiff. Too telling of his emotional distress. “Yes, Commander Kirk?” He turned on his heels to give her a once over.

Her stance was not one of aggressiveness. “I wanted to make sure…” Began Winona as she rubbed her arm. “That…” Winona pressed her lips together and shuffled her feet, a motion that read Jim, but on a different frame. “I wanted to make sure you were okay, but I am aware you are Vulcan.” She covered her face and sighed heavily. “We could talk about tonight? It’s a lot to take in and Pike is…” she rubbed at her face. “Pike is a monster.”

Spock furrowed his brow and glanced away. Winona was a caring mother, from what he could gather, and it must be difficult to see someone near her son’s age in turmoil.

Spock puffed up his chest and squared his shoulders. “I was… heading back to my apartment to set up for tea with Leonard…” A small docile date.

Their fourth, but in reality it would be their third. Spock was not going to count that one time they had dinner together in the Mess as that had been… the slightest bit awkward without Jim eating off either of their trays.

“Would you like to come over for tea?” Perhaps he could have tea with Winona and wrap it up in time to have tea with Leonard.

Leonard was thankful for Spock taking time to talk to Pike about his grueling shift hours. Today for example. He was heading back to the apartment—early for once!—to disinfect, take a shower, change clothes, and head off to his domestic date with Spock.

That’s what he had been doing until he opened the door to find Jim sprawled on the couch with some woman who wasn’t Galia. Which didn’t seem like it’d be out of the ordinary, but no.
Jim looked dazed, not present, digging his nails in like he wanted the entire situation to stop, and the woman was grinning as she leaned in for her kill.

Literally her kill. She had a knife nearly pressed to Jim’s neck.

Until Leonard slammed his medical bag against the wall.

She jumped out of her skin and quickly glanced toward the door.

Jim’s head rolled and a small grin spread over his face. “McCoy,” slurred Jim.

As if saying Leonard’s name would mean something.

Which it apparently did—imagine that. Leonard made the McCoy name nearly as famous as the Kirk name—as the woman’s eyes go wider and her breath picked up. “McCoy? As in…”

Leonard flexed his fingers and tilted his head at her. “Howdy there, Kirk,” began Leonard, something sickly sweet and saturated with southern drawl.

The woman snapped her head back toward Jim, her knife clattering to the floor, and she jolted off of him. “Kirk.” The way she said it. Disgusted with herself and nearly terrified. She turned back toward Leonard.

Leonard gave her a slit mouthed grin. “You best be getting out of here in the next second or you’ll be in a body bag in two.”

The woman didn’t even pick up her belongings as she rushed out of the apartment.

Leonard strolled over to Jim. “Get your pretty face dressed.”

Jim’s head lolled forward into his awaiting palms. He rubbed at his face, slowly, and roughly. “Something… wrong…” came the snail slow reply. “Don’t feel good, Bones.”

Leonard bit his lower lip. Jim was able to form a few sentences, that was good. Leonard glanced toward the hall that would lead to their bathroom, and then looked back down at Jim.

Leonard couldn’t— wouldn’t leave Jim at the apartment in this state. He rolled his eyes, sneered, and reached out to run his fingers through Jim’s hair.

Jim picked up his head when Leonard’s fingers drug across the soft locks. Cloudy eyes turned focus onto Leonard. “Bones! When did you get here?”

What had that woman done to Jim? What was making him like this?

Leonard pushed the pads of his fingers against Jim’s scalp. Softly just rolling his fingers through Jim’s hair.

Jim’s pupils were blown wide with very little hazel showing and his lips were quirked up in the softest way.

Leonard took in a deep breath. He would have to be a little more gentle in his wording. Tender. “I’m taking you to Spock’s, Jimbo.” Like Leonard had said the week before. They’d talk about it, but only if Jim hadn’t done anything stupid.

Lo and behold. He gets himself drugged.
Jim’s lips fell open into a toothy grin. “Great. That’s definitely what I want to do.”

Leonard narrowed his eyes and tugged gentle like on Jim’s hair as he retreated from the touch. “Go get dressed for me yeah?”

Jim’s brow furrowed, the smile dropped, and his left leg twitched out slow. “I… I think I can.”

Leonard pressed his lips together again and furrowed his brow. Even drunk Jim was never in this state. Never needed much help, but whatever was in his system was making Jim’s body work against him.

Leonard had said the words before he even realized he was saying them. “Let me help.”

Jim squinted his eyes, his jaw working to open, and shut his mouth. “Didn't the alien fuck who wrote that, like, die?”

Leonard covered his face and shook with held back laughter. “I wasn't quoting him.” He shook his head. “I was quoting that one human who thought a peace movement in the 1940’s would work. You know the one. Edith something.”

Jim scowled. “Gross.” He then held up a shaking arm. “Help me.”

“Just to your room.” Leonard easily fitted his side against Jim’s to help him off the couch. “Can you get dressed by yourself?”

Leonard helped him hobble off to the bedroom. Not the one he shared with Jim, but the one that was supposed to be Jim’s.

The one where Jim’s backpack was laying on the twin sized mattress like it had been the day Jim claimed the room.

It took Jim a while to answer. Whether it was the drug or Jim’s own choice to draw out his answer. “Yeah. Go take your shower.” Jim fell onto the bed with a plop.

Leonard nodded and went to take his shower. He felt a little tug on his heart leaving Jim alone in the smaller room just to take a nice shower. It really wasn’t a long trek and he knew he could hear Jim call out if Jim really needed him.

Still.

When he returned nice, clean, and dressed; Jim was hazardly sprawled, halfway dressed, nearly passed out on his back with his arms contorted in a black t-shirt, and his legs intertwined in a pair of dark navy sleeping shorts that had off white stars speckled on them. Along with blue crescent moons.

The shorts were not the issue at hand and Leonard wouldn’t spend too much time ogling at how they rested high on Jim’s upper thighs and showed off his boxers that looked like they had cats printed on them.

Strange really. He’d taken Jim as a dog person.

“Damn it, Jim,” hissed Leonard as he approached the other to help him get the shirt on over his head. The shirt ended up falling short of Jim’s midriff, but Jim would probably fix that by hiking up the shorts.
Jim’s head popped through with a humming noise and squinted eyes. “Bones, just leave me here.”

“Unsupervised?” Leonard huffed and patted Jim’s face. “That would be a disaster waiting to happen, Jim.” He squinted at Jim’s face and squeezed softly at his cheeks. “I gotta keep an eye on you.” He then spread Jim’s eye open to see the affect of having that woman leave. “Feeling any better?”

Jim’s pupils were still blown wide and he felt like he was running a bit of a fever. “Spick would know about experimental poisons on the market right?”

Leonard pulled away from Jim and shut his eyes. He was going to ignore the clear speech issues going on, but Jim was right.

Spock was active in science and poisons. He’d know. “That’s why I’m taking you to him, Jim.” He opened his eyes to Jim and released a sigh. “Put on some socks and comfortable shoes.”

Leonard had to support Jim halfway to Spock’s. The first half Jim had no troubles navigating, but then he started wandering off.

Leonard didn’t need a lost Jim. So, he hooked his arm with Jim’s and tugged him in the right directions.

When they were standing outside of Spock’s door Jim poked and prodded at the system. Apparently the bug he hid was still in place or he was hacking it again.

What was with this kid? How smart did someone have to be to be able to do this drunk and drugged?

“Takes longer,” admitted Jim after two minutes of tinkering around with the door.

The door opened soundlessly. No whoosh of acknowledgments. Nothing.

That was deadly.

He lead Jim inside and was about to call out when he heard it. Hushed words and the soft melody of classical piano drowning in the background.

“I know it isn’t smart to admit fear,” said a feminine voice. It wasn’t any voice. Leonard might’ve only heard it a few times, but he knew it was Winona Kirk. “But I fear that Chris will hurt him.”

Confirmation came when Leonard moved further in. Enough to spot Winona Kirk and Spock sitting at the small table near Spock’s window.

“Why would he want to hurt Jim?” asked Spock.

Spock’s back to the door and Winona cornered in a way she wouldn’t be able to see anyone approach. They were just drinking tea. Talking, but why?

“To get back at George for dying? To get back at me for wanting him out of Jim’s life?” What had happened in Pike’s office tonight?

Leonard paused. He knew he had to say something. Anything to alert the two of their presence.
“You were aware he was not the same person you or George knew and Leonard and I will do our best to make sure—”

“I got drugged!” shouted Jim; then he promptly fell to the floor with a loud THUMP.

“God dammit, Jim.” Leonard stood with his arms out in front of himself and eyes wide at the set of heads that spun around toward them.

Winona looked absolutely murderous and instead of rushing to her son who was on the floor practically prone and possibly having a slow poison work its way through him she rushed toward Leonard and slammed him against the wall.

“What did you do to my baby,” snarled Winona her spit hitting Leonard’s face.

Leonard didn’t even push against her, he just smirked, and tilted his head back. It wasn't something that sounded like a question; however, Leonard still responded, “You really think I’m stupid enough to drug Jim?”

Spock was the one to rush to Jim.

Leonard could hear him ask questions like ‘What did it smell like? How was it administered? Who had done it and what sort of effect did it possess?’

Jim answered them all to the best of his abilities.

While Winona still wasn’t letting up. She pushed Leonard further into the wall, slammed his head against it—hard enough that Leonard could see a partially star speckled void—, and she leaned in with a fire burning up her eyes. “Too many people have said that about my son. ‘I wouldn’t dare’, ‘I love him’, but each and every one of them has ended up hurting him.”

“I don’t rememb…” Jim muttered then paused. “Janice Lester. Her name was Janice Lester.”

That is when Winona’s eyes grew wide and her body pulled away from Leonard.


“I need to know what it is so I can treat it,” stated Leonard.

“I am not a botanist,” responded Spock, Leonard could almost swore he heard panic. “I have been focused on code and am finding…” Spock paused and his eyes dashed around. He swallowed hard. “I am emotionally compromised.”

Great. Just what he needed, a Vulcan having a meltdown and a Jim laying on the floor looking absolutely dazed and far too happy. “Think, Spock, who do you know with botanical preferences?”

Spock inhaled sharply and rested his hands on Jim’s stomach. “You will not like him.”

“We don't know how this shit works,” hissed Leonard, “We don't know what this does or if it will kill him.” He pulled Spock off of Jim and smoothed his hands against the others face. “Who do you know?”

Chapter End Notes
I was just... way too excited for this chapter to get up. Also I'll probably be busy next week? So Early update??????

The next chapter is a bit of a darker chapter in which I put focus on agonizer fittings and don't include as much fluff as I usually do. This is just a bit of an early warning.

Until next time!
They’d left Winona Kirk to her own devices.

She’d be fine.

Spock was sure of it.

Then again she’d been deathly close to murdering Leonard against the wall…

Spock mentally shook his head.

No. She’d be fine.

He bit into his lower lip.

Probably.

They hurried to the dorm buildings that were further from Spock’s place of residence.

He hadn’t anticipated these events when he chose where to live. Hadn’t anticipated Jim dying. Probably. Jim was probably dying.

In danger of dying if he wasn’t treated.

Then again he wasn’t dead yet?

ENOUGH!

Spock’s mind was growing increasingly confused with the flood of irrational feelings toward the idea of Jim’s impending doom.

He really should be more focused on getting there. Less focused on the flood of unusual thought patterns.

Perhaps the culprit of such thoughts was the hammering in his side? The twisted churning of his stomach? Either way Spock wished he could calm himself with the logic of a more civilized Vulcan, but logic hadn’t worked out before. It especially wasn’t working when it came down to Jim.

With Jim it was this primal surge of pure vulcan and human instinct driving him forward.
They must’ve been sprinting because they made it to the dorm building in what seemed like seconds. Perhaps minutes faster than usual.

Jim’s lithe body was being dragged behind them. Well, nearly dragged.

“You guys are fast,” muttered Jim with a voice crack.

“You are in danger, darlin’, better to be punctual than have you dead,” groused Leonard as he pushed open the doors.

“Wow I must be dying,” commented Jim. “You’re calling me darling.”

Leonard cleared his throat then looked to Spock. “What floor do we need?”

“Third. There should be a lift down the hall.” He would not disclose that the botanist use to be his roommate back when Spock was a cadet.

It hadn't worked out and it wasn't just because Spock had been years older than his ex roommate.

They entered the building with Jim plastered to Spock’s side so he wouldn't wonder off. Not that Spock thought Jim could.

The cadet’s body was pretty limp.

They took the lift that was down the hall up to the third floor and Spock lead the way to the correct door.

He knocked on the door and adjusted Jim at his left side. “I assure you if anyone knows what plant did this it will be him.”

Leonard huffed. “I don’t know why you think I won’t like the guy.”

There were plenty of reasons someone would not like this specific individual.

Spock took a deep inhale and knocked again.

There was some grumbling from inside as the owner of the dorm room approached the door. “What do you want, Grayson?” hissed a voice over the speaker.

Spock shifted Jim once more and glanced away from the door. He could feel the beginnings of his cheeks burning. “I am in need of your assistance.”

Did it really matter? Jim did not seem to be in terrible peril. He was alive wasn’t he? He also seemed… overly happy and increasingly odd.

Odder than usual. Obviously.

No, that was not the line of thinking Spock needed right now. He could not let his emotions dictate the situation. Even though stubbornness and pride were so very present.

The door whooshed open and in the doorway stood an asian man. Japanese to be more specific.

Cadet Hikaru Sulu; specializes in plants and was making his way through the security track.

A pointless endeavor in Spock’s mind. He was a fantastic pilot and botanist. He would waste potential in a mere security position.
Cadet Sulu had this cocky smirk plastered on his face. “The infamous Spock Grayson needs my help?” Sulu’s eyes scanned the three in his doorway. “Must be important if he is bringing Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dumb.” His gaze landed on Jim and that smirk only grew. “I have to say though. Tweedle Dumb is quite a…” He inhaled a little bit and crossed his arm. “A specimen.”

Jim laughed and nearly slipped from Spock’s hold. “Tweedle Dumb is way above your pay grade.”

“I highly doubt that,” purred Sulu.

Leonard cleared his throat and pressed himself closer so Jim was squeezed between the two of them. Protectively covering Jim. Perhaps Leonard was fully understanding Spock’s stance on Cadet Sulu.

Spock could feel his lips curl up in a snarl as Sulu’s gaze drifted lower and lower.

“Eyes up here, Cadet,” snarled Leonard.

Sulu straightened instantly and narrowed his gaze up to Leonard’s face. “Of course, Tweedle Dee.”

A vein pulsed on Leonard’s neck.

Sulu stepped aside and rolled his hips to the side. “I have company, but I can give your pet a look over.”

“He ain’t our pet.” Leonard was the first to enter the dorm.

Spock took Jim in with him and glared at Sulu the entire way in. “He is Leonard’s friend.”

“Ohhhh. It pays to have friends,” replied Sulu.

The Cadet did indeed have company. Another male was tied to the bed with a sheet thrown over his body for modesty. “Don’t mind Ben.”

“Hello,” said Ben from under the sheet.

Ben had been one reason their time as roommates was short lived.

“This is Cadet Hikaru Sulu and his boyfriend Ben,” said Spock as he pulled Jim over to the open bed. “Yes they are in a committed closed relationship, but Cadet Sulu likes to get handsy.”

Handsy had been the second reason.

Jim bounced on the bed with a dreamy grin. “Handsy.”

He could hear Sulu scoff as he strolled over and plopped down next to Jim. “People like handsy,” whispered Sulu as he brought his knee up and settled in a way so he was facing Jim. “Cadet Kirk. Have you been to a party tonight?”

Jim fell back against the bed with the biggest grin. “Of course.”

Spock looked toward Leonard and shifted closer to the bed to keep an eye on Sulu.

Sulu made a simple hmmm noise, rose from the bed, and moved back over to Ben without a word. Leonard snarled. “Hmmm? Is that all you have to say?”
Sulu turned around and rested his backside against the edge of the bed. “I’ve been seeing it all night,” replied Sulu. “This plant is not deadly and he really just needs to get some sleep. We have agonizer fittings in the evening. Honestly it's the coffee maker all over again.”

Spock narrowed his eyes. The third reason their time as roommates had been short… Was the coffee machine incident.

Spock—in a state of sleep deprivation—had neglected to plug in the coffee maker.

Sulu had walked in while Spock had been glaring at the object and questioning why it wasn't working.

Sulu pointed out it was unplugged.

Spock had been embarrassed in not knowing how to work a simple coffee machine. So embarrassed that he had thrown it out the window proclaiming ‘YEET’ and then as the machine hit the ground he had turned to Sulu and said, ‘We don't own a coffee maker and now we need a new window.’

He would never be able to escape the coffee maker incident.

“Thank you, Cadet Sulu. We will let you get back to… your company.” Spock could feel his eye twitch with the corners of his lips.

He the scooped Jim up off the bed and looked to Leonard. “Come along Leonard.”

Leonard nodded and followed Spock out of the dorm room.

When they entered the lift Leonard asked, “Back to your place or mine?”

Spock curled his toes and pressed his lips together. Leonard’s and Jim’s would be closer, but Winona was possibly waiting back at Spock’s to hear word of Jim.

He could always contact Winona from Leonard’s apartment. It was getting quite late and it was a busy day tomorrow.

The lift opened and they stepped through.

Something stabbed at Spock’s side. Metaphorically of course. Terror in the knowledge that Pike would not be happy to know Spock had spent the night with Leonard and Jim.

Pike would not be pleased in the slightest, but Spock wasn’t doing this for Pike. This was for Leonard. Who must’ve had some trust in Spock. Despite Spock’s affiliation with Pike.

Then something else surged within him. Mortification for reacting so quickly to Jim’s ailment. Jim would be fine and Spock had been too caught up with emotion to read the situation with logic.

“Your place,” responded Spock as Jim’s head slammed down onto his shoulder.

What was Jim doing?

Leonard nodded and lead the way. “I can’t believe I panicked like that,” groused Leonard. “I’m a doctor and I couldn’t even give Jim a diagnosis.”

“It has become increasingly hard to… detach from Cadet Kirk.” In more ways than one really.
Mentally Spock was finding himself wanting friendship from Jim, but knew that would be impossible.

Physically because Jim was wrapped around Spock’s shoulders and sighing into his neck with exhaustion. “Is Jim always this clingy?”

“When he is tired,” grumbled Leonard. “Or drunk… Like a damn boa constrictor right?”

Spock blinked and tilted his head. He could see similarities to Jim’s clingy nature and an earth snake. “Perhaps.”

They stepped out of the dorm building. The air was brisk to Spock who had still yet become accustomed to Earth’s seasonal changes. Though it wasn’t a drastic change it was still becoming increasingly cooler at night as the Earth shifted below their feet and the stars changed angles above them.

Of course the stars weren’t moving, just the Earth, orbiting around its own star, and constantly wobbling on its axis.

The stars were easy to see on the barely lit campus. Beautiful really.

“It’s beautiful tonight,” mumbled Spock as Leonard followed the lit up path.

Leonard scoffed and placed a hand on Spock’s shoulder. “If you are fond of space and endless blackness.”

Jim inhaled and exhaled against Spock’s neck. “You think it’s beautiful,” mumbled Jim.

A quick glance downward allowed Spock to know Jim had closed his eyes.

“It’s beautiful, but I hate it,” hissed Leonard as he lead Spock along the lit up pathways.

Spock pressed his lips together. “Leonard?”

“Yeah?”

He swallowed and continued behind. “Why are you afraid of space?”

Leonard stopped and made a 180° turn. “That is none of your concern.”

Spock pressed his lips together again. “You will have to find a way to cope with your fear of space, Leonard,” muttered Spock trying to not pick up on the emotions Jim was snuggling into his neck. Humans. Such feelers.

“Oh yeah?” asked Leonard with a cock to his head. “What was Sulu saying about a coffee maker?”

Spock felt heat rocket up to his face. “… That is none of your concern.”

Leonard huffed out a laugh and smirked. “That’s what I thought.”

They continued their walk.

Spock sighed and looked downward. Being secretive wouldn’t be the best thing here. This was Leonard… and to a point a placid Jim. Jim had probably done worse things and Leonard… Leonard hadn’t done anything that silly. That Spock knows of.
After a moment he said, “I yeeted a coffee maker out of the third story window because I was too embarrassed to admit I had forgotten to plug it in.”

Jim must’ve been dazed or tired because he could only giggle and repeat the word ‘yeet’.

Spock had been aware the word had not been used outside of the 21st century, but it was a fantastic word.

Leonard huffed out a small laugh and said, “Now that is something I’d pay to see.” He paused like he would say something else. “Instead we pay for gladiator fights and people like Jim.”

“Hey,” whined Jim.

Leonard turned on the balls of his feet and started to jog backwards. He put a hand over his heart and laughed. “Oh I’m sorry. I thought you were still laughing at the word ‘yeet’.”

Jim released a breath and lolled his head away from Spock’s neck. “I can do two things,” sleepily replied Jim.

Leonard’s face softened with a downward twitch of his lips and a small movement of his eyebrows. “Put your head back down before you break your neck.”

To Spock’s fascination, Jim obeyed the simple order, and snuggled his face back into Spock’s shoulder.

“... I do not like this,” announced Spock. It wasn’t that it was uncomfortable having Jim buried in his neck, but it was uncomfortable. Uncomfortable in the sense that there was no barrier and even Spock’s shielding could not stop the fluctuation of intense emotion rolling from the tip of Jim’s nose to the base of Spock’s neck.

Leonard huffed, “Welcome to my life.”

—

Jim took in a deep breath and curled his leg against the warm body next to him. Since when did Bones take to wearing clothes to bed?

Whatever.

He rubbed his cheek against the clothed chest and curled around the arm.

More sleep.

“I told you. A boa constrictor,” hummed Bones, low, and throaty. Like he’d actually gotten some sleep.

The chest below Jim’s cheek rose then fell with an inhale and exhale. “I was not doubting you.”

Jim furrowed his brow and shifted his head a little. Why’d that sound familiar? like...

… Spock.

FUCK IT WAS SPOCK!
Jim stiffened, snapped his eyes open, and propelled himself away from the body.

Spock was in their bed.

Jim’s head spun as he fell onto the floor. He squinted his eyes and bared his teeth with a hiss. What had happened last night?

“I believe I’ve startled him,” said Spock.

_**Spock was in their bed**._


Bones cleared his throat. “He’ll live.” Then there was a pause. “At least until agonizer fittings.”

Jim stayed on the floor and scrubbed his hands over his face. Fuck. *Fuck*. *Fuck*. What had happened last night?

Jim rested his fingers over his eyes and angled his chin up into the palms of his hands. The party. There was a party.

Jim couldn’t remember much of the party. He recalled the guy who shoved a flower in his face, that guy had been a fleet cadet, and Jim had seen him around before.

He couldn’t remember coming back to the apartment.

Couldn’t remember much that happened after that.

Maybe bits and pieces of distorted events.

His mother trying to kill Bones. Someone getting handsy.

Distorted but they were there. Jim slowly dragged his hands down his face and rolled onto his stomach before he rose to his feet. “I need a shower.” He scowled and glanced over his shoulder at the couple on the bed.

Bones rested on his elbow and ran a finger over Spock’s clothed chest.

Jim turned on his toes and felt his chest tighten. This was _fine_. He was _fine_.

Spock rose a brow and tilted his head slightly. _Absolutely fine._

Jim must’ve been giving them a nasty look because Bones had shot him this look before it melted away with a squint of his eyes and a toothy grin. “Go and shower, Jim, we will talk about last night after fittings.”

Jim furrowed his brow and slowly walked backwards into the bathroom. “Righhhhhhhht.”

The door whooshed closed when Jim stepped in fully, he locked it, and then pressed his forehead against the cool metal.

_What the fuck_. His breath picked up and he could feel his heart hammering harder against his chest.

Bones and Spock could be in bed together. Jim was _fine_. 
Wasn’t he?

Jim smacked his head against the door very lightly. Fuck.

Jim pressed his hands to the sides of his head and took a sharp inhale.

Focus on something else, he told himself.

Maybe agonizer fittings? He could focus on that.

Agonizers. Used as a desperate quick punishment when the booth isn’t available.

Jim pushed off the door and started to undress himself. He found it odd that he was dressed in his favorite pajamas, but whatever.

He slipped the shirt over his head and breathed slowly.

Agonizers. Pike was in charge of giving those out.

Jim stared at the shower as he slipped his shorts down to his ankles and hopped on one foot to take off his socks.

The monster. Pike would fight tooth and nail to make it hurt. To ensure Jim was in the worst pain imaginable.

Jim kept his boxers on while he brought the water up to temperature. The water was usually slow at getting to the perfect skin welting temperature, so, that left Jim time to think, and over think.

Last night… No. Jim shook his head. He couldn’t make sense of those bits and pieces littering his mind.

Jim sank down onto the toilet and rested his elbows on his knees.

Pike was going to have fun today, but Jim knew that Pike would get ugly fast.

Especially if he went out of order.

Went by first name or class scores.

Pike would get angry with Jim. Furious? Furious would probably be the best way to describe the level of anger Pike will have today.

Jim scrubbed at his face and closed his eyes.

Pike would make a fool of himself and then make a fool out of Jim.

Show the world exactly what a monster Captain Christopher Pike will be. What a perfect ruler he is. Perfect specimen of the Empire.

_Tweedle Dumb is quite a specimen._

Security Cadet Hikaru Sulu said in Jim’s mind.

Jim flinched inwardly. He’d met Sulu before last night. Hadn’t he been watching Spock for Pike? Jim kept tabs on his enemies. On the people he wanted to turn away from Pike’s side.
Hikaru Sulu had so much potential that he was wasting following along with Pike’s game.

Spock probably didn’t know about Sulu.

Jim threw his head back, snapped his eyes open, then rose to his feet, and removed his underwear.

The water was steaming now.

Jim took in a deep breath and went under the spray.

“FUCKING SON OF A BITCH!” He screamed and twisted his spine away from the hot water.

There was pounding on the bathroom door moments later. “You okay, Jim?” called Bones.

“I’m fine!” Jim called back with a sharp inhale as he put himself back under the water, Bones would question him if there were second degree burns on his back, so, reluctantly he turned the heat down to a tension melting warmth. “Don’t worry so much!”

…

Jim grabbed an icecream sandwich from the freezer, he knew fully well these were Bones’, but hell. Jim was going to be put through hell today. He wanted chocolate and delicious dairy.

“That is not breakfast,” groused Bones.

Jim took a bite and smushed the thing in his mouth. “It’s delicious though.”

Spock was gone by now. The lieutenant-commander had to put on a show. He had to help the Monster with agonizer fittings, and that meant not being in the same clothes he had been in last night.

“Sweet sweet death sandwich,” purred Jim as he took another bite and hummed with bliss. God, he loved chocolate.

Bones huffed and drank coffee straight from the pot. This time it was just straight up black coffee. “Not enough chocolate in there to kill you,” remarked Bones.

Jim rolled his eyes and plopped down on the couch. He then turned on the holo viewer and came face to screen with the news woman.

The headline read ‘Many Drugged at Wild Party.’ Title could use some more work, but Jim recognized the place instantly as the party he’d been at.

Bones came over and created a dip next to Jim. “Turn that up,” said Bones.

Jim nodded and turned the news up.

“This was not a fatal incident, but the culprit has not been found,” said the news anchor. “In other news an arrest has been made in connection to the murder of Starfleet’s history teacher by our competent police force.”

On the screen flashed a picture of the guy’s wife, who had apparently wanted to kill the guy for a long time, and wanted to admit to anything.

She had motive, a big life insurance policy put out on her husband, but she didn’t have any connection to Tarsus IV.
Competent police force Jim’s ass.

Jim leaned back and ate the rest of the ice cream sandwich.

Whatever. If she wanted to admit to it it was nothing to Jim.

“Are you upset that someone is taking credit for your kill?” asked Bones.

Jim sucked on the cookie bits stuck to his thumb. He hummed, popped his finger out of his mouth, and shrugged. “Not really.”

Bones made a noise as he slurped from the coffee pot. “God, you’re weird, Jim.”

Jim shrugged and grinned to himself as he rose to his feet. “Say do we have any good gin?”

Bones made the same noise again. “Yeah, but it’s too early to drink.”

Surprising coming from Bones.

“I’m just asking because I want to make a drink after Pike embarrasses himself today,” said Jim as he bounced on his toes and vibrated. “Had this drink back in Iowa they named Jim and Tonic. It’s mostly just gin and lemons.”

“Again, Jim, you’re fucking weird.” Bones slurped his coffee and then bit his lower lip. “What do you mean Pike is going to make a fool of himself?”

... 

“James T. Kirk,” called Pike. “Come up here for your fitting.”

Jim bit his lower lip, glanced toward Bones, and then made his way to the stage that had been set up in the gym.

Jim knew Pike would call him first. Probably wanting to get it out of the way, but he’d be in for a surprise.

Really. This would be a surprise to Pike and Jim was sure going to be a cocky little shit.

The device they had for pain testing wasn’t even an agonizer. It was this belt like object with flashy buttons embedded in a green circle and it had a hand held pain level setter that looked like an old smart watch.

Jim stood in front of Pike and cocked his hip while Pike attached the device around Jim’s midsection. Right about where his scar was.

“This is gonna be fun,” chirped Jim with the biggest grin.

“For me,” hissed Pike with a grin void of joy.

Jim’s lips twisted into a smirk. “No, Pikey, I mean this is going to be fun for me.”

Pike scowled and secured the device. “Let’s see how you enjoy a seven.”

Going from zero to seven was noticeable.

The pain made Jim squirm, his limbs seized up momentarily, and he grunted just slightly. He’d felt
worse though and truly if this was a seven for a normal person, he wondered what a ten felt like.

Jim could work with this level of pain. “You call this a seven?” asked Jim with little strain to his voice. “Feels like a four. I’m aware of it, but wouldn’t really stop me from doing anything.” That was a lie. He’d place it at a six, like his old organ pains before Bones had removed it, but god was Jim feeling cocky.

Pike scowled.

People in the crowd gave slight motions of holding back giggles.

Hell. Even Spock—the only Vulcan on the sidelines—was biting at his lower lip.

“So, what’s next?”

Pike scowled. “Ten.”

Jim’s knees gave out with that, a shrill scream escaped past his lips, but that soon turned into laughter.

Pike’s scowl deeped. That made all types of wrinkles show up on his face.

Jim shuttered and rose to his feet clutching at the area the pain was centered. All Jim had to do was project the gnawing hunger pains of his past and the white hot agony of having his teeth yanked out of his mouth.

Jim’s legs shook as the pain continued to go through his body. “You done? I have a glass of gin with my name on it.” His voice was raspy, broken, but laced with pure joy of seeing Pike crumble as many cadet’s let loose their held back laughter.

Spock had his mouth covered. Was it in laughter? Or concern?.

Jim didn’t know if Spock was concerned, but he knew if he looked at Bones there would be concern. A strictly Bones softness.

Jim would not be able to continue if he looked at Bones.

“Come on, Pikey, take out all your frustrations on your bastard child,” hissed Jim. Very low. He knew Pike didn’t want to acknowledge his ripped apart past, but nothing could bring down Jim’s glee in fucking around with the monster.

Pike’s face fell from the scowl and Jim almost swore he could see tears in the man’s eyes. Then those blues were cold and void. “Lieutenant-Commander Spock.”

Spock jolted and took long strides to be at Pike’s side. “Yes, sir?”

Pike held his hand out to Spock without breaking eye contact with Jim. “Your agonizer.”

There goes the glee rocketing out of Jim’s body into the void. Jim’s stomach dropped and his eyes grew wide. Fuck. Fuck.

Spock was hesitant, stiff, slow as he lowered his hand to the small device attached at his hip, his fingers rested over it, but he had to hand it over.

He had to.
Jim sent Spock a pleading look. Spock was Vulcan. Surely his pain tolerance was way fucking up there.

Spock couldn’t meet Jim’s eyes. No. Spock’s eyes were cast to the ground as he placed the agonizer in Pike’s hand.

Fuck. Jim swallowed hard and the pain from the machine stopped.

Pike’s grin was so wide.

White hot terror settled in Jim’s stomach, but that terror didn’t last long.

It was replaced by an unimaginable pain. There was screaming. Jim was sure it was his own straining vocal cords. No. Yeah. No. Bones? Jim couldn’t pay much attention to it his body was on fire from his toenails to his teeth and even his hair. Worse than the hunger he felt on Tarsus IV. Worse than having his teeth yanked out. He knew he was crying. The tears dripped down his face like a waterfall flowed down into a pool of water below it.

He was on the floor. Curled in on himself as Pike laughed above him and Spock couldn’t even open his eyes.

Someone had to pry Pike off, someone held his face, and ran their fingers in his hair.

Jim couldn’t see straight. He couldn’t even move.

“Jimbo,” said a warped voice.

“Jimmy,” whispered another voice. It almost sounded like his mom.

Fuck. Jim’s eyes slipped closed and the world was black.

Chapter End Notes

Until next time. Comments and Kudos are appreciated.
Even before Jim had dropped to the floor Leonard had found himself advancing onto the stage. Pike had been taking this shit way too far, even for the Empire’s standards, and Leonard wasn’t going to stand for it.

He wasn’t going to let this asshole kill Jim.

It’s why he pushed Pike off. Away from the agonizer.

Then Leonard fell somewhat hard on his knees next to Jim.

To check on him.

Leonard pressed his hands into Jim’s cheeks and furrowed his brow. “Jim?” He tapped on Jim’s face a little, but got no response to that.

Leonard turned his head to where Winona was kneeled next to him. She had a vice grip on Jim’s hands and looked about ready to go berserk.

She’d have to wait in line.

Leonard slipped up to his feet and away from Jim with a scowl plastered to his face.

The room was deathly quiet.

He turned to Pike and narrowed his eyes. “Are you happy with yourself?” hissed Leonard as he tossed his arms out to his sides, then brought them back down, clenched his fists, and took heavy strides toward Pike. A man on a mission. “Because if you are fuck you!”

He threw a punch at his superior officer.

Pike had to have seen it coming, but he hadn’t dodged. The fist had hit him with a sickening crack.

Pike turned away, clutched at his face, and made a high keening noise.

Good. The asshole deserved all the pain.

Blood hit the floor, a lot of it, but Leonard didn’t seem to give a shit.

In fact Leonard kicked Pike in the back, shoved his face into the stage, and snarled, “Stay the fuck down.”
Pike didn’t move, but he hissed, “I am your superior officer.”

Leonard shook his hand off and pushed his toes into Pike’s spine. If he wasn’t in public. God if he wasn’t in public. Pike would be mangled. He pushed off Pike’s back then turned on the balls of his feet toward Winona.

She was kneeling next to Jim, now stroking his hair back. She looked a little shaken, but Leonard knew she’d be fine.

Knew she’d stick with Jim.

Leonard took long strides over to Spock and squinted at him. “Get Jim to medical. Make sure he gets Christine Chapel and then wait for me.” Because lord knows he was going to end up in the booth for assaulting a higher ranking officer. Even if Pike had gone against protocols for agonizers. “If I’m late I’m in the booth.” Leonard huffed.

Spock nodded slowly and went over to Winona Kirk.

Winona showed hesitation in allowing Spock to even get near Jim’s prone body.

Leonard glanced over to the cadets standing around. “Look away or get out I’m in no fucking mood,” shouted Leonard as he rubbed at his hand. Fuck what was Pike’s face made of?

A stupid question really. Bones were made up of calcium phosphate, collagen, and other things Leonard couldn’t list off right now.

Cadets scattered, whistled, and kept their eyes on the floor or ceiling. Some of them went to the corners of the room and others ran out. Probably to suck up to the higher ups. Whatever.

Leonard glanced over at Spock.

Spock put a gloved hand on Winona’s back, said something, and then was able to scoop Jim up gingerly.

Though Winona still had a grip on Jim’s sleeve and shot looks at Spock that were not so kind.

“You should go with him,” snipped Leonard at Winona. “Sorry for the tone, Commander.”

Winona nodded and twisted her fingers in Jim’s uniform.

They left and Leonard plopped down onto the stage. “I need a drink.”

“Same,” grumbled Pike.

“Wasn’t talking to you, sir.”

...

Leonard’s nerve endings were buzzing when he walked into the medical building. He really should rest after time in the booth, but he needed to make sure Jim got here okay.

Was he still unconscious? Was there any damage?

Leonard leaned against one of the walls, closed his eyes, and took in a deep breath.

“You look like shit,” rasped a nearly familiar voice.
Leonard shifted and opened his eyes to look at the person speaking. “You shouldn’t be out of bed.”

There stood Jim.

Jim narrowed his eyes, his entire body shaking, but he was still trying to support himself on what looked to be some stolen crutches. “Maybe I was making a break for it,” rasped Jim. He was definitely losing his voice.

“How?” asked Leonard with a cock of his hip and a heavy lean against the wall for support.

Of course Jim wanted to get out of here. How many hospital visits had he been to after Tarsus? How many doctors did he not trust?

Was Leonard the only one on the list of doctors Jim had let treat him frequently?

Jim puffed up his cheeks and then pouted. “They wanted to stick me with Boyce.”

“Hate him,” grumbled Leonard as he mustered up the muscle to push himself away from the wall. “Pike’s hospital lacky.”

Jim nodded, but Leonard couldn’t tell if it was a nod or a body tremble.

Maybe it was both.

Leonard offered a soft smile, he drew closer to Jim, and wrapped his arm around Jim’s waist.

With an arm around Jim Leonard can definitely feel every twitch of muscle. Every shudder that ran through Jim’s body. How was this idiot standing?

“Come on. You look like you’re about to fall over,” whispered Leonard. There was also no way Leonard would be able to support himself and Jim if Jim did fall over.

No if Jim’s legs gave out so would Leonard’s and they would both be on the ground like two goddamn idiots. “Spock here?”

“He is with mom. They went to get coffee and I made a break for it.” The crutches fell to the floor with a metal clang as Jim swon his arms around Leonard’s shoulders with the biggest grin. “Mom said you punched Pike.”

This was more of a waltzing dance pose that shaparones of old earth would deem too close, but Jim was always like this.

A damn boa constrictor, but less so in this moment. Could Jim tell Leonard wasn’t in the best condition to support them both?

Granted Leonard was never in the best condition to support two people. PT had helped with that, but Leonard still needed to clock in some gym hours.

Leonard smirked and rolled his eyes. “Gotta fight for my friend.”

Jim’s spine trembled and he gripped onto Leonard’s uniform. “I really am going to fall over, Bones, and we are kinda standing around like a couple of dumb asses in love.”

Leonard felt his heart pick up, he knew Jim was just joking, but a man can dream. “Right.” Leonard swallowed. All he had to do was get them from point A to point B. Point B maybe being a couch or those gross ass waiting room chairs.
Or the floor. They might just end up on the floor unable to move for a while.

“Bones,” hissed Jim with his crackling voice. “Are you okay?”

Leonard blinked quick and looked at Jim who was semi hanging forward against Leonard’s frame. “Just came back from the booth is all.”

Jim’s eyes grew wide, his spine stiff with the barest bit of tremble, he—oh so dramatically—swung his arm out, and hissed, “Are you some kind of idiot? You should be resting.”

Funny coming from Jim.

Leonard tilted his head at Jim, squinted, and pulled his lips together before he hissed, “I’m fine.” He shifted Jim quickly trying to get a good grip on his waist. “Besides I can still hold your heavy ass up.”

Jim scowled and wrapped both of his arms around Leonard’s shoulders once more.

“Also that is rich coming from you.” Leonard huffed and prepared to take the first few steps. “What room are you in?”

Jim made a noise that sounded like a long drawn out ‘uhhhhhhh’.

Leonard sighed. “Let’s just get to a waiting room and I can see about getting a hold of your mom or Spock.”

“How about the floor?” Jim’s voice cracked and he rested his head against Leonard’s.

Leonard paused as his stance was widened slightly. “Why?”

“Because I think my knees are going to give—” Jim wasn’t able to finish that thought as they both came crashing down to the floor.

“SHIT!” shouted Leonard. He landed right on top of Jim.

Jim clutched and dug his nails into Leonard’s back. “Out,” hissed Jim. “Your elbow is digging into my ribs.”

Leonard scowled and was about to give Jim a piece of his mind when—

“His elbow could be in worse places,” muttered someone from above them.

Leonard’s cheeks burned hot as he slowly scanned his gaze upward. Only one person he knew was that light on their feet. “Spock,” drawled Leonard with the twitchiest smile.

Spock raised one brow and tilted his head. “Leonard, I see you found James.”

“I liked it better when you called me Cadet Kirk,” hissed Jim.

“Help me get him back to bed,” groused Leonard with an eye roll. Spock would be able to do it. He was a strong vulcan. Externally and hopefully internally.

Spock sighed and kneeled down. “It would be easier if you were not on top of him, Leonard.”

Leonard scowled and huffed. He wasn’t exactly doing this on purpose, Jim wasn’t letting him go, but ultimately Leonard didn’t have the heart to pry Jim away. Not when he—Jim—was this hurt.
“I doubt he is gonna let me go,” grumbled Leonard.

“You’d be right.”

Leonard looked down at Jim to find the idiot with a smirk plastered on his face and those darn squinted eyes.

Leonard glanced up at Spock. “Help me out here, Sugar.” Not that he was even trying to get away from Jim. Just accepting his fate.

Spock’s gaze turned to Jim in the most unamused way. “I cannot determine if I am able to manage this task of unfurling Cadet Kirk from you.”

Leonard could just imagine Jim’s grin widening at such a statement. “Asshole,” hissed Leonard. Not that he actually even meant it, they were just playing along right? The three of them? “He is cute right? Like a snake.”

Spock laughed only a little. “More like a giant puppy who doesn't know about personal space.”

“Don’t act like you both are actually trying.” Jim released his hold and smacked his arms down onto the linoleum floor above his head. “It’s so fun laying on the floor.”

Leonard bit into his lower lip and slid off of Jim with ease. “Right.” He slowly got to his feet and patted Spock’s back.

“What room is he in?” asked Leonard.

Spock paused as he scooped his arms under Jim. “I do not recall.”

“Oh my Cesar,” hissed Jim. “I need more friends.” Had Jim realized what he just said?

Spock was going to have a fun time with that. Leonard shook his head. “Let’s get going the nurse’s station maybe someone will guide us if I do them a favor.”

Spock nodded and scooped Jim up all the way before straightening himself. “Do you consider me a friend, James?”

Jim groaned loudly and flopped his head back. “Fuck you, Abraham.”

Spock stiffened and his cheeks flushed green.

“What floor?” Leonard rolled his eyes, rolled his shoulders, and then turned on his heels to lead the two to the nurse’s station or the elevators.

“Three,” responded Spock.

Jim had lasted three floors? Hm.

Leonard could only assume Spock would follow if Jim’s teasing was anything to go by. “Really though. Don’t read into it too much. I’m in pain,” squeaked Jim.

“Of course,” responded Spock.

Leonard sighed heavily and began to go past the empty lobby desk. “You got Christine Chapel, right?”
“I informed them ahead of time to give us Christine as a nurse,” responded Spock.

Good. Christine was a fantastic individual. She was equal parts intimidating and sweet in the same breath. She rarely gave Leonard a hard time when they worked together and was nice enough to warn him when Boyce was lurking about the medical building.

Boyce wasn’t a bad doctor, but he was a nightmare. Leonard could still remember the sickening grin on his face as he set up that bone chilling slide show.

The skinny malnourished children of Tarsus IV. Had Jim been among those shown? Who had he been in the past? What kind of child had he been? What—

“Bones,” hissed Jim.

Leonard blinked quickly and found he’d been standing in one spot for a little while outside of the open elevator doors.

Jim propped up against the railing and Spock showing the slightest bit of concern as he held his hand out to Leonard.

Leonard shrugged and gave this small tooth peek of a smile. “Was just thinking a little too much.” He took a step into the elevator and bit into his lower lip.

The ride up was quiet.

Leonard bit into his lower lip and glanced over at Spock.

Spock sighed heavily. “Go on, Leonard, I can sense something is on your mind.”

“Abraham?” Leonard raised a brow and grinned a little.

Spock’s cheeks tinted with a light blush. “I do not know how Cadet Kirk found that name.”

Jim threw his head back in a hard laugh and spread his legs out to get a little bit of a better grip on the lift railings. “You need to implement better codes, Spock, yours are too easy to crack.”

Leonard furrowed his brow then gave a small chuckle. “If I’m guessing right... I’d assume you were gonna name yourself Abraham?”

“I was advised against it by my mother,” snipped Spock, then he crossed his arms, and looked away.

Leonard nodded slowly, looked over to Jim, and then back to Spock. “If it makes you feel any better I almost named myself Noam.”

Jim busted out into laughter again. “Your name isn’t so bad after all, Leonard.”

Leonard took in a deep breath and shot a glare at Jim. “Why don’t you like my name Jim?”

Jim shut up and bit into his lower lip. “Leonard isn’t a bad name,” admitted Jim as he looked away and finally slipped onto the floor. “I actually like the name and I’m sorry for making fun of your name.” He looked down at his shaking hands and the lift grew quiet again.

Spock smacked the stop button and the lift jerked momentarily.

Leonard sighed and sank down onto the floor with his knee resting over Jim’s thigh. “You can tell
us, Kid.”

Jim pointed up at the ceiling.

Spock was staring down at them with a raised brow, but above him was the object Jim was motioning toward.

The security camera.

Leonard knew they didn’t really work and were just for show. “Those don’t work.”

Spock sank down onto the floor and nudged Jim’s foot with his own. There was the barest smile on his face. “I’ll start the lift back up momentarily, but for now it is okay, Cadet Kirk.”

Jim sighed heavily and scooted just a little so he could rest his head against Leonard’s shoulder. “I just… knew someone with that name a long time ago. I don’t really like to think about it.”

Jim didn’t like to talk about a lot of things, and Leonard could only assume Jim had known the person on Tarsus IV. The only place Jim refused to even mention.

Unless he was trying to make a jab at Pike.

“Okay,” replied Leonard with a small squint of his eyes. “I’m not gonna push you.” He rose to his feet and started the lift up again. “Also. Is someone going to clue me in on the reason Pike nearly killed Jim?”

Spock lifted Jim up off the floor and settled the injured other into his arms bridal style.

They both looked at one another, blinked, flapped their mouths like a couple of fish, and then finally turned their heads over to Leonard.

“Well—”

“You see—”

They looked at each other again with furrowed brows.

“It involves me I should tell him,” hissed Jim.

“You need to rest your voice,” hissed Spock back with a scowl firmly planted on his face.

Leonard rose an eyebrow at them both. “You two can’t agree on anything can you.”

“His fault,” they both hissed.

Jim pouted and crossed his arms.

Spock faced the doors and brooded like a goddamn hen.

It was adorable really.

Leonard sighed and rode out the rest of the elevator trip in silence.

When the lift doors open and they were greeted with one pissed off looking Nurse.

Nurse Chapel to be more accurate. “Christine,” greeted Leonard.
The unnatural platinum blonde put her hand on her hip and ran her other hand through her hair. “I don’t want to know. Just get Cadet Kirk back to his bed before Commander Kirk murders us all.” She dragged her hand back down toward her face and pinched the bridge of her nose. “First room to your left.”

“Thank you, Nurse Chapel.” Leonard angled his head toward Jim and Spock.

Leonard clapped Spock on the shoulder. “Get that idiot to bed.”

Jim gasped, put his hand over his chest in mock hurt, then grinned, and purred, “Fair. This wasn’t my best escape attempt.”

Leonard rolled his eyes at Jim and stepped out of the elevator. “You bet your ass it was.”

Spock took Jim out of the elevator and began to walk toward the room. “Will you meet me in the medical facility’s cafeteria?” asked Spock to Leonard.

Leonard pressed his lips together and glanced over at Christine and then back to Spock. “I’ll have food brought to Jim’s room and we can talk there. Cafeteria isn’t all that private.” A place for Boyce to spy on their conversations, but even the private rooms weren’t that private. “I’d love to whisper sweet nothings in your pointed ear down there, but you know me. Public displays of affection.” Leonard shrugged his shoulders. That shouldn’t peque Christine’s unwavering nosey curiosity.

Leonard could hear the clack of Christine’s heels against the floors as she walked away from the three. “I can’t even really trust Christine,” added Leonard with a glance back as he followed Spock into Jim’s room.

“I know of a corner where we can have alone time together but for right now I have a patient.” Leonard ruffled Jim’s head.

“Ow.” Jim stuck his tongue out and sagged in Spock’s arms.

Winona sat to the side of the bed clutching and picking at a styrofoam cup of coffee. Not that Leonard would ever encourage anyone to drink the coffee here. She glanced up quickly when they approached and rose to her feet. “Where was he?”

Leonard nodded his head at Spock. “Put him to bed and I’ll make sure you guys get the good stuff.”

He then looked to Winona his face falling on a not quite a smile but not quite a blank expression. “Caught him near the front door trying to make an escape.”

Jim gasped at Spock put him down into the bed. “Oh please. You only caught me because I stopped to tell you that you look like shit.”

Leonard turned a glare onto Jim. “You look worse, so shut up, and stay in bed.”

Jim narrowed his eyes and pouted. He looked about ready to retaliate like the little brat he was, but all he did was huff and cross his arms.

Spock took a seat next to Winona and placed his gloved hand on her arm. “Leonard will take care of him, why don’t you go to where you are staying, and I’ll let you know when we bring Jim back?”
Winona frowned, then nodded, and said, “Thank you, Lieutenant Commander.” She rose to her feet, dumped the coffee in the room’s sink, glanced over at Jim, and then left.

Jim sighed, uncrossed his arms, and then sank into the bed. “I. Am in so much pain.”

Leonard raised a brow, then shook his head, and took his seat on the other side of Jim. “What do you want from me?” asked Leonard with a flicker of his eyes up to Jim’s face.

Jim furrowed his brow, then looked to Spock, and back to Leonard. “That food offer sounded really good.” Jim’s eyes crinkled with a grin.

Leonard sighed heavily and looked to Spock. “I’ll go get it, but y’all gotta tell me what you want.”


“Vanilla pudding.” Leonard sent a glare toward Jim.

Jim narrowed his eyes back. “Butterscotch pudding?” tried Jim with a small tilt of his head and a stretch of his lips to show off some teeth.

Leonard sighed. “I’ll get you butterscotch pudding.” He looked to Spock.

“Same for you? Veggie burger?”

Spock tilted his head in thought and said, “And a chocolate pudding.”

Leonard narrowed his eyes at Spock. “Vanilla pudding. I am not going to deal with a drunk Vulcan.”

Spock even pouted. “Vanilla will do.” It was quite adorable.

Leonard’s lips spread with a wide grin that showed off a small gap in his teeth. “Great, make sure Jim doesn’t strain his voice, and I’ll be right back with food.” He rose from the seat and Spock’s eyes followed his path toward the door.

“I’ll watch, James.”

“Jim,” hissed Jim.

Spock took in a deep breath and glanced over at Jim. “Of course.”

Jim sank further into the bed, sneered, but didn’t make any attempt at conversation.

In return Spock didn’t make an attempt either, but just blankly stared at Jim.

How long had Jim known about his parentage?

Winona had been certain Jim hadn’t known. She had tried her hardest to hide it.

Silence was apparently not Jim’s favorite past time as he groaned loudly then angled his head toward Spock. “Which one of us is going to tell him?”
Spock raised a brow. Which one of them would tell Leonard the semi-secret? Jim should rest his voice, but Spock understood that he did not know everything.

Jim seemed to know a lot more. Winona knew so much more.

“Your mother had assumed you didn’t know,” muttered Spock before he could think of anything else.

Jim chuckled softly and rolled his eyes. “That isn’t what I asked.”

Spock looked down at Jim’s hand that was twitching against his thigh. It was obvious who should tell Leonard what he wanted to know, but Spock would not allow Jim to wear his voice out. There was no reason for Jim to exert himself beyond his limits.

“I do not have all the details, but Leonard was clear about how you should rest.” Jim needed rest. He should rest. Spock had nearly gotten Jim killed on multiple occasions and still had to put Jim in danger because of Pike.

Jim made some small noise. “Spock.”

Spock wanted it all to stop. Wanted Jim to be safe, able to relax, not worry for a day, or a few hours.

Spock took in a deep breath.

“You don’t have to exert yourself on mine or Leonard’s account.” Spock wrung his hands together and kept his head down. “I don’t understand why you continue to agree on being put in dangerous situations when you don’t have to. When you could just…” What did he want from Jim?

Spock sagged in his seat. “Just…”

Spock froze as Jim’s hand was put over his. “Spock.”

Spock glanced up quickly and felt his cheeks flush. Even with his gloves on Spock could feel Jim’s mind reaching out to his.

Jim was giving him this look. A look Spock couldn’t decipher. Jim had his eyebrow raised, head tilted, and a small smile on his face. “It’s so weird when you care about me,” commented Jim with a squeeze to Spock’s hands. “I’ll let you tell Bones what you know, but I will interrupt.”

Spock frowned. “What is the full story, Jim?”

Jim swallowed and slipped his hand away. “Well… What do you know?”

Spock pressed his lips together and looked toward the door. “Just that Pike is…” Jim’s father and Winona had parented Jim alone with little help from the—in Winona’s words—asswipe of a brother.

“George was not your father, but Pike had relations with him in the past.”

Jim’s hand returned to Spock’s personal space. This time at the clothing above his wrist. “Oh no George was definitely my father.”

Spock’s brow furrowed.

Jim sighed heavily and flung his arms over his head. “Modern science is amazing, Spock.”
Spock tilted his head. Modern science was in fact amazing, but Spock still couldn’t see what science had to do with Jim’s creation or the story known by all. Eye witnesses accounted for Winona’s birth of Jim and George’s death.

While it was possible to be created through science—Spock should know he too was a product of science, but older science. In Vitro fertilization specifically—but it was unlikely for Jim to have DNA from Pike and George and be born to Winona. Right?

“I’m confused,” admitted Spock. “I understand the abilities of being created in a lab, but I do not understand how George is still your father? Or how… Pike would agree to give his DNA…” Spock’s shoulders sagged. Of course. History with Kirk’s. The male drive and need to want a family. It was always simple to return to those who had loved you before.

Jim grinned to himself. “You can’t see him happy and wanting a family can you?” His voice came out slow and nearly all too quiet.

Spock frowned. “I can’t imagine him wanting to give up what he has now.” Which was true. Pike was a man who craved power no matter the cost.

Jim put his hands over his eyes and pressed. “Yeah. Mom said it wasn’t his speed. Not to me of course but Asshole sure loved rubbing it in my face.”

Spock could not bring himself to speak. Half because he knew Jim was not done and half because he did not know how to respond.

Jim rubbed at his eyes. “George Kirk had a hysterectomy after the birth of Sam, but he froze his eggs for a time later. Two years later in May of 2232 Pike comes back into George Kirk’s and Winona’s lives wanting to start over. Maybe make something of what they use to have.” Jim dragged his hands down his face, his eyes were damp, and so were his cheeks. “They’d gotten into fights before and gone right back.”

“It’s easy to,” commented Spock, softly, and with a bit of surprise.

Jim gave the smallest smile to Spock. “I read about T’Pring, and trust me. You’re not missing much.” Jim shrugged. “Anyway I was made in a lab in July and implanted in an artificial womb in my mother. Pike got into a nasty fight with my dad and they never spoke again.”

Spock bit into his lower lip and squinted his eyes. “When did you find out? About Pike and your Dad?” Spock knew George would always be seen as Jim’s dad and Winona as Jim’s mother. Jim would want it that way.

Jim looked toward the door. “Before Tarsus IV. Mom was sending me away because Pike had been harassing her to see me and she thought Tarsus IV was her best bet. It wasn’t even like he wanted anything to do with me you know?”

Spock squeezed Jim’s knee.

Jim sighed again. “Maybe I’ve known for longer, but never truly understood until I heard my mom arguing with Asshole.” Jim glanced back up at Spock and rubbed at his eyes with his arm. “Would… would it just be easier to show you?”

Spock froze and blinked. “What?”

“Vulcan mind meld thing or whatever.” Jim waved his hands about. “You’re telepathic, right?”
It would not be wise, Vulcans were taught the mind meld for torturous reasons, it was a tool for the
Empire, and not permitted to use under other circumstances.

Spock furrowed his brow, but that wasn’t even true was it? In the past the touching of minds had
meant something. Something pure and lovely.

“My species is telepathic,” responded Spock in a dull monotone way, “but it would not be wise to
initiate such an act.” Not to mention, Spock knew medical rooms were often bugged, not usually
with cameras, but listening devices. Not that the higher ups really cared about parentage.

Jim groaned and flopped his arms down again. “But it’d be so much easier.”

Spock rose to his feet and scowled at Jim. “Perhaps I should leave then?” He attempted to wink at
Jim, but he simply blinked.

Jim raised a brow and his upper lip. “What the fuck?”

Spock rolled his shoulders and began to search around the room. “What do you not understand the
concept of leaving?” He ripped up a pillow from the chair in the corner, not there, and then he
tossed it on the floor.

He then moved to the rest of the room. Each failed attempt at finding the bug allowed a new piece
of furniture to join the floor pile.

“Ohhhhh,” replied Jim as Spock tore a painting off the wall and revealed a bundle of wires
attached to a thicker piece.

Spock took the end of the wire, broke the mic, and then turned to Jim. “Showing me would be
much simpler.” He walked back over to Jim and situated himself on the bed at Jim’s feet. “Are you
able to move closer?”

Jim bit into his lower lip and glanced toward the door. “Shouldn't we lock that?”

Spock’s eyebrow twitched, he rose to his feet, walked toward the door, and pressed a few buttons
on the panel next to it before he returned to the bed.

Was Jim afraid of sharing his mind?

He gave Jim this slited glare. “Now move closer.” Jim had thought of this. What did he have to
fear?

Jim scowled, but did his best at scooting closer. “So, how does this work?” asked Jim.

Spock slipped one of his gloves off. “I touch my hand to three points on your face, I will be able to
share, and see anything from your life or mine.”

Jim swallowed heavily.

Spock bit his lower lip. The pure intentions of traditional melding of the minds was usually all
about consent. “Are you sure you wish to share minds?”

Jim rubbed his hands together and stared down at them. Instead of a verbal remark Jim nodded
stiffly.

“At any point in time. If you wish for me to cease I will stop. Do you understand?”
Jim looked up his eyes burning holes into the back of Spock’s mind. “Yes,” hissed Jim.

Spock split his fingers; he placed his thumb under Jim’s lower lip, his joined index and middle finger just a little above Jim’s temple and then his pinky and ring finger settled below Jim’s left ear.

He could feel that golden spark shock his finger tips, he could sense that Jim felt it too, but it went ignored. “Our minds our one,” muttered Spock making eye contact with Jim. “My thoughts are your thoughts.”

“And mine are yours,” whispered Jim as something blinding and painful propelled itself straight at Spock’s mind.

A vision of an older balding man staring him down from the front porch while a metal cop squeezed a bruise into the flesh of Spock’s—Jim’s forearm.

It was warm for that time of year. Late spring in run down Riverside, Iowa. Sam had just left and Jim; Jim had gotten himself into trouble with the Law and with the asshole standing in the doorway.

The information came to Spock without trouble.

Flash forward to Asshole dragging Jim into the farmhouse by his shoulder length hair and ordering Jim to sit down while Asshole made a call to Winona.

“You’re not my parental figure,” sassed Jim and Spock could just feel the ghost of a wide smirk on Jim’s young face. “I don’t have to listen to you.”

Which of course was the wrong course of action. Jim had known that back then.

“No you have three of those and neither one of them loved you enough to stay,” hissed Asshole.

Jim’s brow furrowed at that, his mouth flapped like a fish, but no words came out.

His shoulders sagged and he swiftly took a seat on the couch in the beer littered living space. His hands clasped together between his knees and his head down.

“God, Winona would have a bratty child like you,” grumbled Asshole on his way to the phone.

This was not meant to be this easy. Jim was well receptive to Spock’s mind. Almost as if their minds wanted each other. Made for one and other.

The scene melted again and Jim was sitting on the staircase pressed tight against the wall as to not make a sound.

“Just admit it, Winona.” Asshole again. “You can't take care of George’s sloppy second child so you're finally sending the brat away.”

“Don't you dare call them that!” shouted Winona. “They are mine. I've raised them. I've loved them. I’ve...”

“Been busy screwing every John who rolls up into town because you can't live with the fact you're taking care of Pike’s bastard.”

“Stop calling them that!” hissed Winona. “My child. Mine. They are mine and George’s and they will forever be mine and George’s no matter what.”
“Whatever. So what are you going to do about what happened today?”

Jim curled into a tight ball and chewed on the inside of his mouth.

Winona took her time to answer. “I’ll just... send them away for a week. Have them visit George’s sister out on Tarsus IV... Pike is coming by anyways and it will be good for them to see their father’s family.”

Something snapped into place and Spock was pushed back. Physically and mentally. He stared at Jim and skittered his way off the bed. What was that? What had happened?

His mind was reeling. Whirling with confusion and residual emotional feedback.

“You're crying,” muttered Jim who was rubbing at his wet face.

Spock’s breath hitched and he touched his face. Cheeks wet and droplets still pooling at the point of his chin. He looked up at Jim who’s eyes were red, damp, with tears pouring down his face, and Spock’s heart ached. “So are you.”

Jim forced a laugh. “Yeah well. I’m only human.” Jim’s voice cracked, he bit into his lower lip, and glanced away quickly. “Don’t make a big deal about it.”

Spock wasn’t. He pressed his lips together, settled back at the foot of the bed, and looked down at his hands. “You've known for a long time,” muttered Spock as he took up the glove he’d put on the bed.

Jim flopped back down, rolled over onto his side, faced away from Spock, and then he tried to tuck his knees like that child back in Riverside. “Hard not to when it was drilled into my head constantly. Three parents all of them wanting nothing to do with me.” If it were possible Jim’s voice grew softer. “No one ever wants to be around me.”

Spock frowned, that was unfair, Jim was putting Spock in a position, and Spock wasn’t sure how to respond. He felt something bubble up inside of him. Words and thoughts he needed to express. “Why do you think that?”

Winona loved Jim in her own way and Jim loved her back in his own way. Their relationship wasn’t perfect, but Jim sometimes seemed like he wanted to try.

Jim curled up tighter and sighed heavily. “Because of Asshole.”

“Name some people who want to be around you.”

Jim groaned and flopped onto his back. “Mom, but It isn’t perfect.” Jim flopped onto his side so he was facing Spock. His hair tossed about in a messy way and his eyes trained up at Spock’s. “It took us a while to get where we are, so, yeah… I know that.”

Spock pressed his lips together and nodded. A sign for Jim to continue.

“Bones,” mumbled Jim. He lifted his hands up to settle them near Spock’s glove. “Strangely Nyota and that Patric kid.”

“Pavel,” corrected Spock.

“Pavel?” Jim snorted, his eyes focused on Spock’s hands, he gave a small grin, and rested the tips
of his fingers over and under Spock’s gloved fingers. “I knew it started with a p.”

Spock bit on his lower lip and didn’t dare move. “I want to be around you.”

Jim’s pupils dilated and they flashed back up to Spock’s face. “... Wow. That’s gay.”

Spock chuckled a little. “Are you complaining?”

“Yeah.” Jim nodded, focused his eyes back on the hand, and furrowed his brow. “You actually like being around me? Even though I’ve only been super drunk and drugged out of my mind while breaking into your apartment?”

Spock narrowed his eyes. “I’ve grown fond of your presence.”

“Gay.” Jim flexed his finger tips

Whatever Jim needed to do to defuse an emotional moment. Spock sighed. “I’ll give Leonard the information he needs and I’ll leave out Asshole.”

Jim chewed on the cracked skin of his lower lip. “Thanks, Spock.”

“Who in Go—Cesar’s name locked the door? SPOCK!”

Oh no. Spock turned his head toward the door.

“You should get that.” Jim smirked and slid his hands away. “Because I really want that pudding.”

Spock squinted his eyes down at Jim, then rose to his feet, and said, “Of course, Cadet Kirk.”

Chapter End Notes

Heyyyyyyy. Been a while. I did not anticipate having to put this on the back burner— for various reasons other than the holidays—but uh. Here was chapter 16!

Happy Holidays! *wave wave* Until next time. Which will very likely be sometime after the holidays.
“You disobeyed me,” hissed Pike from behind his desk with deep frown lines and shadows casting over his aged looking face.

Spock held his gaze, more focused on the far wall than Pike, and then pulled his shoulders back so his back was straighter.

It wasn’t a lie. Technically he had disobeyed Pike’s orders in having contact with Cadet Kirk, but Spock had not been the one to save Kirk from Pike’s path of destruction during the agonizer incident of last week.

That had been Leonard, and Spock would be lying if he said he didn’t feel some sort of rush in the fact Leonard had attacked Pike to save Jim.

“How can you hate your own son so much?” asked Spock.

Pike reared back at that, a simple motion that now only reminded Spock of Jim, and scowled. “You are dismissed, Lieutenant-Commander.”

Spock tilted his head. “Is it that you don’t see Cadet Kirk as your son?”

Pike was clearly humoring Spock at this point as he crossed his arms and glared.

Spock inhaled deeply and took four steps backwards toward the door of Pike’s office. “Perhaps you regret that you could not be there and instead of forming a bond with your child you sabotage any chances you have of being in his life.”

“Dismissed,” repeated Pike with a nearly sickened tone. As if to say ‘How dare Spock insinuate that Pike actually has any shred of human decency.’

Spock hadn’t felt the need to remove himself. Pike was not yet belligerent, Spock felt he could get more information, or at least try to learn more about Pike’s motives.

“I have another appointment,” hissed Pike, “but if you really want to continue whatever this mess is you can wait outside.”

Spock blinked slow and cocked his head to the side. “With whom is the appointment?”

“Me,” said a nearly familiar voice. Full of subtle sunshine and mischief.
Spock turned on the balls of his feet. His eyes widened at the appearance of Jim in the doorway.

Illuminated in the bright fluorescents of Pike’s office Jim looked worn. Overly tired and a little roughed up. That is to say Jim’s skin appeared paler than usual, not to say he didn’t still have that slightly there sun kissed look from being outside. It was just that it seemed duller, and translucent under his eyes. “Need to pick up my agonizer and change up my focus.”

Spock furrowed his brow just a little. “Change your focus?” Spock realized he had no idea what Jim had signed up for. Spock had just assumed he was on the command track.

Jim’s gaze nearly looked through Spock towards Pike. “Command is a little more my style. Engineering is a little boring and tedious. I don’t feel challenged.” As an afterthought Jim added a grinded out, “Sir.”

Pike’s voice nearly sent a chill up Spock’s spine. “I thought your talents would be better suited with the other cowards, whores, and criminals. Plus a red shirt would look fantastic on your corpse.”

Something blinding and red hot surged through Spock as he snapped his head back towards Pike. “Pike does not handle that type of work, Cadet Kirk.”

Jim made a huffing noise.

Spock’s mind had appeared to be distracted by the haggard appearance of his boyfriend’s friend and he could feel a dulled pain in the back of his mind.

A soft gentle nudge of glowing warm chaos and a mere whispered thought. ‘I’d be better suited as a corpse at his feet.’

Spock’s heart clenched, he rushed the wall back up between their minds, and then he turned back to Jim. Their minds should not be linked anymore, but Spock could still occasionally feel Jim’s dulled chaos in the back of his mind when he wasn’t actively blocking Jim out. Spock should still get his head checked or at least have a conversation with his father about it.

“Cadet Kirk,” began Spock, “if you would get your agonizer from Captain Pike I will show you to where you can change your focus.”

Jim’s lips bowed into a sharp smirk. “What does the Biologic Fucker have to say to that?”

Spock swallowed and glanced back toward Pike who had casted a shadowed glare over the both of them. “Just remember to throw yourself in the booth, Lieutenant-Commander.”

A shiver ran up Spock’s spine and settled in his shoulders. “Of course, sir. I will be outside the door, sir. Waiting for Cadet Kirk.” He turned back toward Jim and with his gaze focused past Jim he walked out of the room.

The door was shut behind him. Spock scooted over and cornered himself so he could peer at their interaction through the glass walls.

Jim hadn’t yet moved closer to Pike and Pike wasn’t exactly making any effort at approaching Jim.

They were also not speaking to one another.

Jim tilted his head slowly toward the right and took small steps toward Pike’s desk.
Spock pressed his ear to the wall, allowed his mind to open, and then bit into his lower lip.

“A coward like you would make a terrible Captain,” said Pike once Jim reached the desk.

Spock’s heart clenched. He wasn’t sure how true that statement was. Jim showed promise for the role of Captain he just needed to control the chaos that thrummed beneath his skin.

He could feel the small pin prick of sadness radiate from the back of his mind. Jim put a hand to his heart and laughed. “I’m here for my agonizer not the lip.”

“I would think you were here for something else.” Pike’s gaze landed on Spock, he scowled, and opened his desk.

Jim went through the motions of a sigh as he leaned against the desk.

Pike grabbed something from the desk, then grabbed Jim by the back of the neck, and pulled him down to hiss something into Jim’s ear that Spock could not hear through the glass.

Whatever it was made a panic race through the dulled bond.

Spock threw up his mental barriers and twisted his fingers in his sleeves.

Jim jerked away with the agonizer clasped in his hand and began to back up toward the door. “I’ll be seeing you around, Pike.”

“No you won’t,” replied Pike.

Spock could not see Jim’s face from here but he just knew the human had a smirk plastered to it.

“I know what I said. I’ll see you, but you won’t see me. Have a good night, sir.” Jim then raced to the door, swung it open, walked out, and then slammed it shut. Hard enough that the glass vibrated.

Spock picked his head up from where he had pushed it against the glass to get a better sense of hearing.

“Come on, alien fucker.” Jim clapped his hand on Spock’s shoulder with a shit eating grin. “You’re having dinner at my place.”

The campus lights were just starting to illuminate the walkways as the late day was shifting into night.

Jim let out this little laugh that made Spock a little unsettled. “Not really. I wanted to surprise you
both because you’ve been such great enemies.”

Spock nearly smirked in memory of how Jim had put it last week in medical. How he was re-
writing his spoken word of ‘friend’. “I believe the term you used was—”

“ *Enemies*,” hissed Jim as he put a finger to Spock’s lips. “I hope you like pasta made from
zucchini because my mom planted way too much zucchini again and sent me some. I’m also
making zucchini bread. Which is. So fucking good.”

Right, Winona had gone back to Iowa for a period of time. Perhaps she became aware that she’d
have a mental breakdown every week from her son’s antics on campus or perhaps she just needed a
small break from the fleet once more.

“You are going past the building I am to go into for punishment,” muttered Spock as they passed
another building.

“Don’t worry about it!” shouted Jim as they continued the walk to the McCoy-Kirk apartment. “I’ll
take care of it.”

Spock decided he did not want to know what Jim meant by that and he certainly didn’t feel this
flash of irritation in his brain at the idea of what Jim meant by that.

It was an unending cycle in Spock’s mind. Gratitude for Jim’s mysterious nature coupled with
irrational irritation.

Spock sighed heavily and picked up his pace as he really could use a dinner with Leonard at this
point in time.

“By the way pretend you did everything,” added Jim as they arrived at the apartment complex.
“Because I got bored and a little carried away.”

Spock did not like the way that sounded. How had Jim gotten carried away with setting up a
dinner?

Spock did not want to know and it was unfortunate that he was about to see just how carried away
Jim had gotten.

Jim held the old fashioned door open with a big split grin that made him nearly resemble Pike, but
also not resemble Pike. Jim definitely took more after George in the looks department, but there
was no doubt about it that in his more crazy moments he resembled Pike. “Bones should be back
any minute and I have a few things to still set up before he gets here.”

Spock nodded slowly and stalled before entering the complex.

Jim hopped in behind him.

The apartment complex was set up in a way that made it easier to use the stairs than the turbo lift,
so, Jim had gone straight for the stairs and took them two at a time while Spock took them at a
more sensible pace.

They got to the apartment door at the same time anyways. Probably because Jim had been
bouncing on his toes at the door with a wild look in his eyes while he waited for Spock to catch up.

Jim’s hands did a small little motion that he stopped immediately when he saw he was doing it.
“I’m just so… Cesar, there is an old terran word for it, but whatever.” Jim’s body did a tiny little
vibration as he punched in the code for their apartment and then scanned his Fleet ID.

Spock was hit with a cloud of something burnt, but Jim didn’t seem all that alarmed by the smell.

Did Jim even know how to cook?

“Don’t mind the smell,” said Jim as he walked right in.

Spock heard a small guttural noise and realized it had come from his own throat. “You are not alarmed by the burnt smell?”

Jim waved Spock in and motioned toward the couch in the living space that was just to the right of the entryway while the kitchen was to the left. “I burnt a pan.”

Spock entered and swiftly sat down on the couch that felt like it was covered in plastic.

The door shut swiftly and Jim locked it before entering the kitchen.

Spock felt his fingers twitch against his knees and looked around the apartment. He had been there before, but somehow could barely remember the details of it. He certainly hadn’t remembered the couch being covered in plastic nor could he remember the small dining room table against the sliding doors. The dining room table had candles on it, a little paper centerpiece that was simply little flowers and hearts, and a lace doily that one would usually find in their grandmother’s home.

It had probably been dug up as it looked stained darker here and there.

“Is the plastic new?” asked Spock with his gaze focused on the holoscreen just against the wall.

“I meant to take it off,” muttered Jim. He sounded like his head was buried in something.

Spock chanced a glance over to see Jim with his body twisted in a way that his head was nearly upside down as he looked in the oven. “Why… did you put it on the couch?”

Spock could nearly tell that Jim had a grin on his face as he said, “Bones put it on.”

Which did not clarify why it had been on, but Spock could live with not getting an answer.

“Bones didn't want me spilling wine on it or throwing up on it last night.”

Which only made Spock’s brain reel with more questions.

“Do you like wine by the way? Because we have other drinks. I picked up some tea or I have romulan ale.”

Spock tilted his head. “Romulan ale is banned on terra.”

“I have a half Romulan friend who begs to differ,” remarked Jim with a snide undertone to his voice as he straightened himself up.

Which was fascinating. That there was an alive half Romulan and that Jim knew them. That Jim was friends with them.

“So, what do you want to drink, Spock?” Jim turned around with a big smirk on his face.

Spock swallowed thickly and sank into the couch as best he could. “What kind of tea do you have?”
Jim shut the oven door with his hip, walked over to the threshold between the kitchen and the living space, and leaned against the wall. “I think I have some formerly known Vulcan spiced tea, but other than that you’d have to deal with sweet tea or strong iced tea.”

“Imperial spiced tea sounds lovely.” Spock hadn’t been able to find any adequately tasting Imperial spiced teas, but if Jim could get Romulan ale he had no doubts in his mind that Jim could acquire actual Vulcan made imperial tea.

Jim nodded and pushed himself off the wall to get back to the work he was doing in the kitchen.

Spock glanced over at the dining table once more and rose to his feet to get a better look at the center piece. “Did you make this?” asked Spock as he traced his fingers along the edges of the three dimensional paper craft.

Jim didn’t respond at first, and Spock didn’t feel the need to keep pushing the topic.

Spock glanced toward the kitchen.

Jim was staring at Spock. A nearly unreadable expression on his face. “Yeah I made it,” said Jim, finally, then he walked into the living space, and plopped down on the couch with his head in his arms.

Spock sighed and walked back over to the couch. “Is something on your mind?”

Jim shrugged and turned his head toward the kitchen.

Spock slowly sat down on the couch a good distance from Jim.

It was silence filled with nothing until the kettle whistled to signal the water was up to boil.

Jim hopped up from the couch, made the tea, and brought it over to Spock in this chipped oval shaped red mug that had the Fleet crest printed on it.

Spock took it with care and stared at the dark contents of the mug. “What is in the oven?”

Jim plopped back down on the couch, rolled his head back, and slipped his eyes shut.

Spock couldn’t look away from his host and slowly took a sip of the tea.

It was a little strong, but it was still well brewed.

“Just something I had on warm while I was out getting you.”

Which made Spock nearly spit out the hot liquid in his mouth. Nearly. He inhaled deeply from his nose and swallowed the bit of liquid. “What is it?”

Jim’s breathing had evened out, but Spock could tell he wasn’t asleep. “Some roasted vegetables and honey chicken.”

How much had Jim made for this evening? “Lemon bars.”

Was Jim planning on eating any of this?

“Have you eaten today, Cadet Kirk?” asked Spock as he set the tea down on the coffee table.

“I had a can of pears.”
Spock raised an eyebrow at the human as irritation once again rose up from his gut. “You will eat with us.” It was a command more than anything.

Yet, Jim wasn't having it. He slowly sat up and opened his eyes up to look at Spock. “I'm not going to intrude on your date with Bones.”

Which Spock could state many reasons why Jim would not be intruding on a romantic date, but he couldn't.

Or he didn't want to because of all the uncertainties in his head that addressed the human.

“You will eat dinner though?” asked Spock, his voice too small for his liking.

Jim’s eyes softened just a little and he nodded. “I'll eat dinner.”

Spock released a small sigh of relief and relaxed into the couch. “Good. I fear Leonard learning that you haven’t found the proper nourishment today.”

Jim made this humming noise and brought his knees up so his feet pressed into the couch.

Spock began to wonder if Jim would fall asleep, but he knew better.

Jim didn’t trust Spock enough to allow moments of opportunities.

Jim swallowed saliva and blinked slowly.

Spock picked back up the tea to sip on it slowly and threw his other arm around the back of the couch.

Jim finally fell over into Spock’s lap with a squint of his eyes at the far wall as if scolding gravity for pulling him into Spock’s body.

Spock stiffened, but made no movements to remove Jim. He just continued to sip on his tea. “Have you been sleeping well, Jim?” asked Spock after a particularly loud sip. It seemed they were just waiting for Leonard to arrive. Spock hoped his boyfriend would arrive quickly. If only to save him from any awkward conversations—or lack of conversation—he and Jim would have.

Jim hadn’t made any movements aside from stretching his legs out. “None of your business.”

“Does Leonard know?” asked Spock.

“Waiting to see how long it takes him,” muttered Jim with underline amusement.

Spock’s fingers twitched just a little bit against the back of the couch.

Jim’s fingers drummed against Spock’s thigh.

Spock could feel every light press of fleshy finger tips and he found his own fingers twitching faster and faster with the pounding of his heart.

“You can play with my hair.” Jim ruffled the top of his hair with Spock’s thigh. “If you want to.”

Spock’s fingers stilled, he took a gulp of hot tea, and inhaled slowly. Was this a sign of trust? To have Spock’s fingers so close to Jim’s face? Spock could execute Pike’s plan, not that he wanted to, or take this small moment of Jim’s trust.
Spock swallowed thickly, slowly he moved his hand from behind the couch, and rested it around the shell of Jim’s ear where the hair was shortest. “Are you certain?” asked Spock, waiting for the consent to be taken back.

Jim’s body grew stiff in Spock’s lap as if he was thinking.

Jim hadn’t been able to respond as the door whooshed open and Leonard walked in with a small rant about how Boyce was being an asshole and was trying to get Leonard to work later and later.

Spock turned his head to stare at his boyfriend.

Leonard paused in his rant as he threw his medical bag haphazardly. “What the fuck is happening in here?” It wasn’t asked in malice, but Leonard still looked pretty taken aback to see Jim in Spock’s lap.

Jim rolled onto the floor with a cat like hiss and his arms tucked close to his frame.

Spock bit into his lower lip and inhaled a deep breath. “Jim made us dinner,” said Spock.

Leonard held his finger up, then lowered it, and furrowed his brow. “Was he just ...?”

“Shut up,” hissed Jim as he got up from the floor with the help of the coffee table. “You saw nothing.”

Leonard’s lip quirked up in a half grin. “Really? Because I thought I just—”

“NOTHING,” shouted Jim as he stormed into the kitchen.

Leonard’s gaze followed after Jim and he pressed his lips together in a small half smile. It was good seeing Jim returning to his somewhat weird self. Even though something was different.

Even though something nagged at the back of Leonard’s head. Jim was hiding something.

Jim was always hiding something.

Even from Leonard.

Spock cleared his throat.

Leonard’s half smile twitched into a softer full smile. Not nearly as happy as Jim’s strained grins, but still just a little amused as he looked back toward his boyfriend. “Hey,” greeted Leonard as he walked toward the couch.

“Should you change and shower?” asked Spock.

Leonard blinked slowly as his feet stalled in front of his boyfriend. “What?”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. It was nearly a little irritation, but had become a normal facial expression. “You have just returned from medical and are still in your scrubs.”

Leonard smacked himself and released a small chuckle. He’d been distracted and forgotten about decontaminating. “Right, I should get changed and cleaned up.”
“I’ll have dinner set up when you get out,” said Jim from the kitchen.

Leonard lowered his hand and looked down at Spock. “Make sure he doesn’t set anything on fire while I’m away, Sugar.” He even poked his thumb out in Jim’s direction.

Not that he thought Jim would start a fire in the kitchen. They were both guilty of starting fires in that damn thing.

Spock furrowed his brow and tilted his head. “Of course.”

Leonard turned on his toes and walked toward the bedroom. He looked into the room that had once had Jim’s bag on the bed. Jim had moved the bag down to the floor and Leonard could tell it was losing its structural integrity. Not a lot, but Leonard knew some of the clothes had been put away into their shared bedroom closet and dressers.

Leonard didn’t linger long in that doorway as he entered their bedroom to gather up a change of clothes before entering the bathroom where he threw his scrubs into the designated dirty scrubs basket Jim had repeatedly pointed at the third time Leonard had thrown his scrubs in the corner of the room.

Granted the fourth time Leonard still hadn’t used the basket, so, Jim had slammed the basket down in the corner where Leonard had thrown the clothes before.

Leonard sighed heavily as he started up the shower. His head circled back to this sick cyclone twisting up his guts. Jim hadn’t really held anything back before, aside from that Tarsus junk that Leonard didn’t even want to bring up to his mentally unstable roommate.

The water came up to temperature and Leonard put himself under the steaming spray. Water showers always felt nicer, cleaner, and refreshing. He dreaded the day he’d follow that lunatic out into space. Not that he had to follow Jim, but what else did he have?

He ran his damp hands through his soaking hair and scrubbed hard at his shoulders with a rag and Jim’s new pomegranate scented soap until they were raw.

What was going on in Jim’s head these past few days?

Was it depression? Untreated/undiagnosed ADHD Leonard was sure his roommate had? Whatever it was Leonard knew he wasn’t going to get answers if he didn’t ask and he wasn’t going to ask. Jim would tell him at his own pace.

He moved on to scrubbing his hair with Jim’s shampoo.

Leonard knew he could buy his own bathroom products, but it was just easier to share with Jim.

He shouldn’t spend too long in the shower.

He quickly rinsed his hair and got ready for dinner.

Once he was back out into the bedroom he could hear Jim and Spock bickering back and forth. It was hard not to as they were screaming.

“Oh boy,” groused Leonard with a roll of his eyes as he shook his hair out. “What are y’all fighting about this time?”

Leonard walked back out into the living space and had to pause.
Jim stood with his hands balled up into fists at his side, his chest heaving up and down with labored breaths from their argument. “Nothing,” hissed Jim with his glare still fixed on Spock who nearly mirrored Jim’s body language.

“Spock,” hissed Leonard expecting an answer.

Spock’s gaze only flickered over to Leonard and then moved back to a fixed position on Jim. “Jim was…”

Jim’s stance shifted at that, his fingers uncurled, and he forced a relaxed pose. “I’m too tired for this. I’m taking dinner to my room and then going to bed.” True to his words he disengaged from Spock and fixed himself up a plate then disappeared for the night.

Leonard sighed heavily and walked into the kitchen. This had been a new normal. Something getting stuck in Jim’s head and nothing could tear him away from the emotions he had on said thought.

He fixed himself and Spock a plate before walking it over to the dining table. “Come on and get some food. He will be fine.”

Spock hadn’t moved a muscle and was glaring at the door Jim had disappeared into.

Leonard sighed again. “Spock.”

Slowly and robotic like Spock came over to sit at the table. He then slumped and stabbed at the main vegetable dish Jim had made. “I’ve nearly forgotten how frustrating he can be,” grumbled Spock.

Leonard shrugged and chuckled a little as he took up some of the zucchini noodles. “What started you two bickering?”

Spock twirled his fork in the noodles and took a bite. He looked like a brooding chicken from Leonard’s perspective. Spock chewed and swallowed his bite before he said, “I am aware you wish for Cadet Kirk and I to get along, but he is far too irritating.”

Leonard sighed heavily. Here he was thinking they were actually starting to get along. “Spock, Jim has issues with trust. You’ve met Pike and you must’ve done extensive research on Jim.” He shrugged. “It’s too out of your nature to not conduct research on him.”

Spock put his fork down and crossed his arms.

Definitely a brooding hen.

Spock and Jim were nearly two peas in a pod it was hilarious to watch. They wanted nearly the same things in life. Wanted more out of their lives. Wanted Pike taken down. Jim wanted command. Spock wanted change. “You two need to stop working against each other and start working with each other.”

Spock visibly bristled at that. “Excuse me for the use of this human phrase, but when pigs fly.”

Leonard shrugged his shoulders and smirked. “Anyways, how was your day?”

Spock seemed to accept the change in conversation as he pushed his foot into Leonard’s and offered his hand across the table. “I have the code re-work ready and Pike is having me implement it soon.”
That was good. Spock was so proud of that code. Made the simulation even harder on cadets. “That’s good,” said Leonard with a small smile. “I’m sure you’ll horrify many cadets.” He rested his hand over Spock’s and poked back at his foot.

Spock bounced just a little in the chair which didn’t escape Leonard. He often never took a break from using his minor in psychology. Most of the terms were no longer used or accepted in the Empire, but that didn’t mean humans and others didn’t show the signs of mental disorders and neurodivergence.

“I’m excited for you,” said Leonard.

“Thank you,” said Spock with a more active bounce and wriggle of his fingers. “I cannot wait to beat Cadet Kirk with it.”

Leonard knew better. Jim would beat that test one way or another. “I’m sure you can’t.”

“How about you? How was your day?” asked Spock as he returned to his meal.

Leonard rolled his eyes and gave Spock’s gloved hand a small squeeze. “Oh where do I even start...”

Jim curled around his pillow and twitched with the aftershocks of his one morally good deed.

Something was nagging at him since Spock’s and his shared moment in medical. He really wanted to question Spock about it, but that wasn’t going to happen anytime soon.

Jim carded his shaking fingers through his hair and curled them around the ends of his hair.

Bones was currently on the other side of the bed asleep, and had finished his date with Spock a few minutes ago in the living space while Jim was ‘asleep’.

Jim honestly hadn’t been sleeping. He’d gone to the booth and begged Cupcake to tell Pike that Spock had taken the punishment. When in fact it had been Jim scratching his nails down the glass planes of the machine’s walls and his food thrown up on the grass outside of the building.

He’d come back and climbed in the dorm through the bathroom window.

Then he’d just laid there scheming.

He needed to take care of Pike’s loyal party of idiots.

Coax them over to his side and get them off of Spock’s ass.

Jim grinned sleepily to himself. He needed to go after the weakest links.

Pike’s weakest link was Gary Mitchell, but Jim had something special planned for Gary fucking Mitchell.

The next in line would be Cupcake, but all Jim needed to do with him was look at him funny. So, that wasn’t exactly a challenge.
What Jim needed to do was go after Hikaru Sulu.

Cadet Sulu shared their history class and mostly just preyed on poor individuals.

If Jim got to Sulu before everyone else he wouldn’t need to do much.

It would take care of Spock’s stalker and they could be in the same room again without this dark cloud of chaos in the air.

Maybe then Jim could get some…

Oh, Cesar.

This was worry wasn’t it? He was worried about Spock.

Jim made a face of disgust.

He needed to put this plan into motion so things could return to normal.

“Y’know I’m not usually one to complain,” mumbled Bones his breath hitting the back of Jim’s neck.

That was rich coming from Bones. When wasn’t he complaining? Complaining about work, complaining about something stupid Jim did, complaining about something idiotic Spock did, or hell even complaining about the professors.

Not that Jim ever minded Bones’ complaining. It was nice to hear someone else’s problems and thoughts from time to time.

It was nice that Bones trusted him with those problems.

Jim mustered up enough energy to shift onto his other side to face Bones. His arm hugging at his pillow while his fingers fell limp into his own hair. The other arm was situated between Bones and him. Not touching Bones, but not exactly not touching him. “Huh?”

It was dark in the room and Jim couldn’t make out any of the grumpy doctor’s features. He was pretty sure Bones would be scowling. Maybe Bones was sporting that little forehead wrinkle with the corners of his mouth stretched just a fraction to show off a peek of teeth. “You haven’t been sleeping and you’ve been hoping I wouldn’t notice.”

Jim squinted at the black blob taking shape and then grinned. “Oh, I knew you noticed,” replied Jim. “I just wanted to see how long it’d take you to say something.”

Jim could make out the smallest features to Bones’ face now that he was smiling. The soft glow of his implants making it easier to make out the furrow of Bones’ brow. Concern covered with an intimidating snarl. That and the little forehead wrinkle was clear as day.

Jim’s smile grew a little softer. “Bones,” mumbled Jim, sleepily.

Bones growled something low and then louder snarled, “Well at least try to get some sleep before I decide to drug you.”

Jim ruffled his head into the pillow, sighed softly, and scooted closer to Bones. “Why aren’t you asleep, Bones?” Did Bones like to cuddle during sleep? Or did he just miss Jim’s bedtime cuddles? Or was he worried about Spock too? Not that Jim wanted to admit he was worried about the Vulcan.
There was this strangled noise that unearthed itself from Bones’ side of the bed. “No reason.”

Jim made a noise low in his throat, then shuffled closer until the skin of his cheek met Bones’ shoulder, and he mumbled, “Sure.” He could hear Bones’ heart beat, just faintly, every inhale, and exhale.

It was strangely calming. Jim wondered why he hadn’t just gotten over himself and snuggled up to Bones sooner. Probably because of the recent nightmares that had been plaguing what little sleep he did get.

Jim frowned into Bones’ shoulder and pressed himself as close as he could to the other man. “Hey, Bones?” Jim wrapped an arm around his friend’s side and flexed his fingers against the stretched out skin over Bones’ ribs.

Bones made a grunting noise and buried his nose in Jim’s hair.

Jim yawned and nuzzled his nose into the skin near his face. “I have something important to do in history tomorrow.”

Jim knew Bones said something, but he was already being lulled to sleep by Bones’ steady breathing.

... 

Jim clapped Bones on the shoulder, harder than intended, and then grinned wide. “See you after class.” He then climbed the aisle stairs and advanced toward the back row.

Hikaru Sulu sat there in perfect ignorance. Unaware of Jim’s scheme.

Time to put his plan into action so he could get some fucking sleep and make those dark patches under his eyes a thing of the past! Then he could stop feeling this swirling annoyance in his chest and head when it came to Spock.

This would make that go away.

This one thing.

Jim slapped his PADD down on the seat next to Sulu, which was occupied by Ben.

Jim really shouldn’t have set the PADD down that hard because the screens to those things cost an arm and a leg to replace, but Jim did always have a back up.

Hikaru Sulu froze and slowly looked up at Jim with a raised brow.

Ben was just in the corner of Jim’s eye and furrowed his brow.

“Do I know you?” asked Sulu.

Jim’s head turned toward Ben with an unknown expression—at least to Jim it was unknown. Whatever the gaze plus body language spoke Ben simply seized up, gulped, and then rose to his feet to sit elsewhere.

Jim took the seat with a wicked grin and turned his attention to Sulu.
It was a brief silence before Sulu said, “You know it is rude to not answer someone’s question.”

Jim leaned in with a squint of his eyes and a raise of both his brows. “I’m your worst nightmare,” rasped Jim with a quirk of his upper lip.

Sulu was good at keeping a regal sharpness to him, but with a gulp he faltered just a bit. “What do you want?” He whispered.

Jim rested his elbow on the table and put his chin in the palm of his hand. “I want you to stop spying on Spock other than that I haven’t thought that far ahead, yet.”

Sulu’s face shifted with a scowl. “You’re an even bigger idiot than Pike gives you credit for.”

Jim curled his toes in his boots and tilted his head. “Actually Pike knows I’m a genius. I just do dumb things.” He grinned at Sulu. “Just back off of Spock or there will be another body on the news.” He took his PADD up and pulled up the homework from the night before. “By the way did you understand the homework? I got far too caught up in ranting about what a terrible fucking person Gandhi was and forgot to actually write about how peace didn’t last long in the Empire’s past.”

Jim glanced up at Sulu to see the man had the most confused look on his face. Jim couldn’t blame him. He’d just gone from being threatened to being asked about history homework.

Sulu picked up his own PADD, unlocked it, and then opened up the homework. “I focused on Edith Keeler and her ill timed peace movement.”

Jim furrowed his brow and nodded slowly. “... I’m just going to stick with my rant about Gandhi.” He put the PADD down.

“You are a terrifying person,” hissed Sulu as he put his PADD back down. “I can’t promise anything, but perhaps we can make an arrangement...” His hand gently slipped up Jim’s thigh.

Jim glanced down at the hand, then turned his head slowly over to Sulu with what he hoped was a good murder stare, and then he gripped hard at Sulu’s wrist with just enough force to pop the bones inside. “The arrangement is you let off or I get a little happy with my knife tricks again. Maybe share with the cops what I know about that mass party drugging.”

Sulu swallowed thickly. “Blackmail?”

Blackmail wasn’t Jim’s usual style, it was more Pike’s style, and that knowledge honestly made Jim’s stomach churn.

Jim tilted his head with an eye squint, ripped Sulu’s hand off, and smirked. “Such a strong word, blackmail.” He shrugged and returned to adding a few things to his little rant on Gandhi.

Somehow he’d loop in the failure of peace.

“Who says I won’t go to the cops with the information I have on you?” asked Sulu.

Jim took in a deep breath. He’d thought this through and had an answer right away. “Because Pike would never let you do it and if you did you’d be on his shit list.”

Pike was confusing like that.

Sometimes Jim hoped it was fatherly instinct, but deeper down he knew that Pike just wanted the
pleasure and satisfaction of ruining Jim all on his own. Even if he didn’t notice. Even if he hired all of these people to keep tabs on Jim.

Pike was not someone to be involved with. He ruined people. Ruined relationships and pissed on the smallest notion of long forgotten happiness.

Hikaru Sulu deep down had to want happiness like any other human. Happiness with Ben. If he continued to do things for Pike that happiness would be long forgotten and swallowed up by a monster.

Jim stared down at his PADD and then with what he hoped was a sincere look of sorrow said, “Do yourself and Ben a favor, Sulu.” Jim stood up, now wanting to move back over to where he usually sat with Bones. “Pike isn’t a person you want to mix yourself up with. He will ruin you just like he ruins everyone else.”

Jim was about to walk back down to where he could see the back of Bones’ head when he heard Sulu’s soft reply. “I’ll consider it.”

Which meant he’d do it. Jim turned slowly to look at the other man. “I sure hope you will.” He then continued down to Bones and plopped down in his usual seat.

“You feeling okay, Jim?” asked Bones.

Jim stared ahead as the teacher entered the room. “I’ll feel better once this is all over with.”

Chapter End Notes

Hooooo boy. This took a while to get out to y’all, but I hope the chapter was enjoyable!

Until next time. Whenever that is.

Also a big thank you to my friend Fox for being a beta reader and catching the mistakes I cannot!
Warnings: A Violence warning, but it's more your typical AOS get the shit beat out of you violence. Y'Know Movie Violence that doesn't make any sense because logically that character would be dead in any real life situation. Alcoholism warning, a drowning warning (It's in a dream sequence and if you are at all triggered by drowning I suggest skipping at least the Italicized paragraphs in Jim's POV), horrible wound care, swearing, and some brief descriptions of Panic attacks. And of course Mirror Pike is a dick.

A big thank you to my friend and beta reader Fox. I know this wasn't the easiest thing to read and I love you friend.

It was like any other day in the fleet, except more rain, and a little cooler weather. Leonard woke up for his residential shift already aware that Jim’s spot was cold, but that didn’t bother Leonard because he knew Jim had basic fighting and defensive classes early in the mornings.

Leonard stared at the empty side of the bed for a few minutes then rolled over to examine the time. He furrowed his brow and frowned. The time didn’t make sense. It didn’t correlate well with the empty side of the bed.

Jim’s classes were at eight today and the flickering digital clock read five in the morning.

Leonard slowly rose from the bed and groggily looked about the room. “Lights fifteen percent,” groused Leonard to the computer.

It complied with a mechanical male voice that nearly covered up the sounds of sobbing Leonard could barely hear coming from the bathroom.

“Jim?” called Leonard with sleep still ghosting his tone. What would Jim be doing in the bathroom?

The bedroom was quiet for a few minutes as Leonard padded his way over to the door.

It was locked, but he could see small peeks of intense light coming from inside.

He could hear small sniffing noises and what sounded like crying being smothered out by a towel.

“Jim,” tried Leonard again. “You wanna unlock the door?”

“No,” came the crackled reply from behind the door.

Leonard sighed heavily and sank down onto the floor so his head was near the bottom of the door. “Jim, I’m a doctor, not a mind reader, and I feel like…” He’d have to chose his words carefully, because he didn’t want to go accidentally saying something that would make Jim feel like Leonard was blaming him. “I don’t know what’s going on in your head and I can’t pretend to know.” He scrubbed at his face as he felt the signs of a crying spell coming on. “I won’t pretend to know.”
He could hear the floor creak on the other side of the door as if Jim were shifting into a more comfortable position.

The last thing Leonard needed was to be weak in this moment. “I want to though,” said Leonard. “I... I want to know your hair brained schemes that are surely going to put you into medical.” His chest tightened a little and he could hear his voice cracking. He tried to reign those things in. “I’m not trying to be your mama because I’ve never been a perfect...” He bit at his lower lip before the words could slip past his lips. “I’ve never...”

“I know about Joanna,” came the broken reply through the door. “No one is a perfect parent, Bones.”

Leonard’s hand fell from his eyes just as dampness settled on his cheeks.

“I’m...” A frustrated sound came from behind the metal, “Some...” Jim sighed with signs that he was still crying. “Some things in my head. Need to stay in my head and I will never share those. Just like you didn’t want to share about Joanna. This is one of those things that needs to stay up there.”

Leonard swallowed slow and dampened his lips with saliva. “I just feel that we haven’t been communicating like we used to.” He could hear the rain patter against the windows and the soft little sniffles Jim was making. “I want to know what is going on.”

There was a long pause filled with the rain and nails dragging against the floor tiles of the bathroom. “I’m worried and scared.”

Leonard could understand now why Jim hadn’t wanted to voice these things.

Jim sighed from the other side of the door. “I have to deal with Pike. I’m scared about what he will do to Spock. To you.”

Jim must’ve really been in a bad place if he was admitting to being scared for Spock.

“So, what’s your plan?” asked Leonard with a slow drawl.

The door was unlocked and slid open to show Jim who was mirroring Leonard’s position. Except Jim was on his stomach with his face nearly buried in a towel. “First I get people off of Spock’s tail, but I have to get four years of Fleet classes out of the way in less than three years.” He screamed into the towel and smacked his feet onto the tiles.

Leonard rolled onto his side, reached out to comfort Jim, but stopped short near the crest of his ear. Jim’s body stiffened as if he knew the hand was there. On the verge of being too close and possibly not close enough. It all depended on how Jim saw it. “I want your input,” mumbled Jim. “I want your help.”

Leonard dropped his hand down so it was resting on the towel. “First, stop smothering yourself.”

Jim groaned into the towel and lifted his head up with a small pop and crack of his neck. “Fine.”

Leonard took the towel and gently tapped Jim’s chin. “Look at me.”

Jim turned his head. All puffy eyed and nearly blue in the face.

Leonard gave him a small grin. “Maybe you and Spock should start working together like you
planned. Take it one day at a time. Space out your moves between the next few months and two years you’re in the fleet. You have the time. Sure it might fail a few times, but you’re Jim.”

Jim frowned and slumped his shoulders. “... That supposed to mean something?”

Leonard nearly chuckled. “Yeah, it means you’re Jim. You’re stubborn, full of pride, and don’t know when to quit. Even when you’re bleeding and my God, do you fucking bleed.”

A smile ghosted the corner’s of Jim’s lips as he sighed and rested his head on the floor. “Do I have to work with Spock?”

Leonard made a hmmm noise as if he was contemplating it. “Hell, you can always beat his simulation first and then work with him.”

Jim slowly stretched out like a satisfied cat, popping his back, and shoulders. “You should get going.”

Leonard rose to his feet and stepped over Jim. “And you should get your ass back into bed so you don’t get your ass kicked in your class today and eat a good breakfast today, please, coffee cake holds no nutritional values.”

Jim didn’t move from his spot on the floor, he made a groaning noise, and whined, “but coffee cake is so good, Bones.”

“So is a balanced meal,” countered Leonard as he went to brush his teeth in the sink.

Jim made a hmmm noise from the floor. “Is zucchini bread a balanced meal?”

Leonard paused his hand as it reached for the tooth paste. “God damnit, Jim,” grumbled Leonard.

Jim got up off the floor and padded back to the bed. “You don’t have classes today, right?” asked Jim from the bed.

Leonard of course had his toothbrush in his mouth at the time and made a simple grunting noise.

“I can wait,” Jim replied to the grunt.

Sure he could. Jim would probably be asleep by the time Leonard was done with his small morning ritual.

Leonard spit out the contents of his mouth. “I don’t have class today. Just medical.”

The reply he got was a soft grumbled, “I’m gonna lay on the couch.”

Leonard got ready for shift, grabbed a banana from the kitchen, and then glanced toward Jim.

Asleep, snoring softly, stomach down on the couch, semi-dressed with white sneakers untied against his bare ankles, a white crop top, and some beetlejuice looking pants that rose well above his hip.

“Cute,” mumbled Leonard as he ruffled Jim’s hair and set out for work.

It was only when he arrived at the medical building that he questioned if he had even locked the door.
Jim was in a car, distorted music filtered through his head as rain hit the windshield, a stretch of tar black road illuminated by the warm glow of headlights, dark shapes passed by, trees, shrubs, and then those things became sparse as he pulled up onto what looked to be a beach. Jim could tell he felt calm. Which seemed to alert his conscious to something being wrong, it was only when he drove off the end of a wooden dock, and splashed heavily into the water below that he knew he was dreaming.

The slow panic began to rise, but the version of him in the dream was still calm. Collected. Waiting for the water to fill the car. Waiting for it to claim his body. This wasn’t the first dream he has ever had where he has driven a car into the nearest body of water, but this was the first time his conscious started to panic —

He couldn’t live the rest of the dream out as a loud crash roused him from sleep.

Jim’s eyes snapped open, his automatic response to this was to curl up, protect his vitals, but sleep still rang heavy in his head. His limbs wouldn’t listen.

Someone pushed Jim into the couch as someone else screamed at him and roughly pulled his arms back as he tried to struggle.

The cold slide of metal against his wrists made Jim struggle harder. He screamed, wriggled, and kicked as hard as he could against the people putting him into cuffs.

He didn’t understand what was going on and he didn’t get the time to understand as he was soon smacked against the head and knocked out.

Jim woke back up and tried to jerk his hands up to rub the sleep away from his eyes. Only to find out that he couldn’t exactly move his arms as they had been cuffed under the chair he was sitting in. His heart rate started to pick up and he could feel his limbs shaking with the slow build of panic. He looked around the bare bones room and found the lights to be far too bright. He knew by the barest glance that this was an interrogation room.

He wasn’t new to being interrogated by the cops, but he didn’t even know if it was the cops who had taken him in.

Breathe , whispered a memory of Bones’ voice. You gotta breathe, Jim.


The door opened.

Jim’s eyes snapped open. In. In. In. He wheezed, tugged at the bonds against his wrists, a rough scream ripped up through his throat, and he stomped his feet.

When he fixed his eyes on the door he saw it was a cop. Aged a little order than Pike, or maybe the same age as Pike, clean shaven, and with a full gut. He was also mean looking. Had a jagged scar on the right side of his face and a full head of greying black hair.

Jim inhaled through gritted teeth and pulled at the cuffs again.

“James Tiberius Kirk,” said the Cop as he entered further into the room to sit across from Jim. “Car theft. Institutionalized for three weeks for ‘depressive’ episodes.” The officer laughed a little and
muttered something about depression not being a real thing. “Prior jail time. House arrest back in
Iowa for...” He squinted as if trying to recall the sheet he had likely just read back in the hallway.
“Attempted murder of a police officer…”

Jim smirked at the man, tested his arms again, and then glanced down at his feet. He just had to
stay silent. “He wanted to get his rocks off and so I bit them off.” So much for staying quiet. He
lifted his head slowly and sucked on the inside of his cheek.

The officer didn’t seem all that amused. “It says that enlistment in the Fleet got you out of serving
your time.”

Jim released his cheek and gave the officer a show of his upper teeth as he hissed, “This power
over people thing really gives you guys a hard on doesn’t it.” Jim often realized he could never
shut up once he got going and he was just getting started.

“You fleet people think nothing can touch you,” hissed the cop.

Jim tugged at his bonds again. “Right because murdering superior officers to get a better pay grade
is living life thinking you are untouchable.” He laughed and pushed the toes of his shoes into the
floor.

“Is this a game for you?” asked the cop.

Jim tried to wriggle his wrist out of the cuffs, but they were on pretty tight. “Maybe it is. You
haven’t really told me why I’m here. So I might as well play a little game.”

“People like you are always so cocky,” hissed the officer with a slam of his hands on the table.
“You left a messy trail, Mr. Kirk, and it took months...”

Jim wiggled his fingers under the chair and put a deadpan look on his face. “Honestly if you were a
more competent police force you might’ve had a better profile to go by other than ‘Female and
Tarsus IV survivor’. ” He smirked and tilted his head just a little. “Who even made that profile? An
alligator? A monkey could have done a better job.”

The officer still remained unamused in fact he looked like he was fuming. “I made that profile.”

“Well, congratulations,” snapped Jim straining his shoulders as he jerked against his bonds again.
“You are less intelligent than a monkey flinging it’s crap at the Emperor's face.”

Jim’s heart jumped when the table was flipped over and thrown to the side.

The officer then grabbed Jim by his shirt and hissed, “Bet I can make you shut up.”

“Gross this whole dynamic really does make officers like you horny.” Jim couldn’t help it when his
face split into a grin. The officer made a mistake in tilting Jim’s chair a little too far back.

“Do you ever shut up?” growled the officer.

Jim hummed, glanced around the room, and sucked on his cheek again. “Anyone ever tell you that
you should put handcuffs on the ankles too?”

The officer looked confused for a moment, but understood soon after Jim delivered a hard double
kick to his gut.

It of course flung Jim backwards into the floor head first. “Fuck,” hissed Jim as his vision swam
just a little.

“You little shit,” snarled the officer as he climbed on top of Jim to pull him back up into a series of punches.

Jim blinked quickly as he felt blood drip down from his nose. He then tilted his head, and caught the glint of something shiny. “Is that a fucking oyster shucker?” He croaked.

“Guess where it’s going,” hissed the officer.

Jim squinted a little bit. “My knee cap?”

The officer squinted back and raised the knife.

Someone then knocked on the door and that knife went straight into Jim’s lower abdominal area. The two inch blade fully submerged in his body.

Jim cried out and pulled his arms up against the chair.

“What?” shouted the officer.

The atmosphere of the room grew stale as the door opened to the even brighter hallway.

Jim tilted his head to try and see around the hefty officer.

“I’m here to take James T. Kirk out of your custody,” said a cold voice from the doorway. “You did not have a warrant and destroyed Imperial property.”

Jim’s blood ran cold. That voice was far too familiar to him by now.

“Do I know you?” asked the officer.

Jim could now see Pike’s little smirk as he leveled his gaze with the officer. “I’m going to give you till the count of five.”

Jim tugged again at the restraints. The count of five was a generous offer coming from Pike of all people.

“You look very familiar,” continued the officer taking a few steps closer to Pike.

Jim wriggled and clanged his wrists together. He just wanted out of this situation.

Pike got to the count of three when the officer’s face finally stretched with remembrance. “Now I remember you, you were in that group of fleet cadets we arrested back in the day.”

Pike stalled.

“Maybe I should give this boy the same treatment I gave your fuck toy. George Kirk was his name, right?” continued the officer. “Bet he is just as good as his daddy was.”

Pike’s usually calm demeanor changed. A fire burned in his eyes and he rushed forward into the room and slammed the officer up against the wall. “You will not lay another hand on my—on this cadet,” hissed Pike as he roughly shoved the man up against the wall again. “Give me the keys now and if you don’t give me them this instant your blood is going to be sprayed all over this fucking room and your wife won’t even have a body to show at your funeral.”
The keys clanged as they hit the floor. Pike released the officer, picked the keys up, then walked over to Jim, and released the cuffs.

Jim didn’t get a chance to stand as Pike picked him up like how a parent picks up a tired child.

Jim didn’t retaliate, just knew to fall limp like an opossum playing dead.

The big issue was working around the knife nestled into his body.

The rain had died down slightly leaving the city with a grey sky and the threatening long distant sounds of thunder.

Thunder that made Jim clench his entire body.

They didn’t talk. Not until Pike placed him in the car, smoothed out Jim’s—more than likely blood stained—shirt, and buckled him in safely.

“Was that for me or for you?” asked Jim as he put his hand against the slowly bleeding wound. He debated on if he should take the knife out or leave it in.

Pike didn’t answer. He closed the passenger side door and walked over to the drivers side.

Jim stared down at the knife as Pike settled into the car.

“I’m going to take you to medical when we get back,” grumbled Pike, “you look like crap.”

Jim felt like crap, but the thought of Bones worrying over such minor injuries drove his mind to turn back to the only other constant in his life. He really needed a drink. “No,” snapped Jim and then softer said, “no. Just… take me to a bar or something.”

Pike fixed a look on Jim that was a little odd to see on Pike’s face. Something mixed with concern. The concern was there. Traces of it in his dull eyes. “It’s too early for bars to be open.”

Jim laughed and leaned his head back into the headrest. “You and I know better, Pike.”

The car’s engine started up and Jim glanced over into the drivers side. “We’d have to go to Los Angeles.”

In an old car like this it’d take a little more than six hours.

Jim had time to kill. He could feel the blood drying on his face. “I could go for a ride to Los Angeles.”

“You have classes,” hissed Pike. Even as he took the turn that would definitely not bring them back to the Fleet Campus.

Jim raised both of his brows and tilted his head just slightly. This didn’t feel right, and it was more than likely the head whirling ‘worst case’ scenarios. Being at Pike’s lack of mercy with no one knowing where they had gone. “I haven’t missed one assignment.” Even when he had been held up in medical. “Nothing a few nights of sleep deprivation can’t accomplish.”

Pike frowned just a little. “It’s so crazy how I can sometimes hear George coming straight from your mouth.”

Jim bit at his lower lip and didn’t respond. Nature vs Nurture playing ping pong with his brain or maybe he had a concussion.
Along the way to LA they stopped by a gas station where Jim got some duck tape, paper towels, and rubbing alcohol. He then used the gas station bathroom to hastily yank the knife out of his side.

A cry left Jim’s throat as he pushed hard on the wound. His head swam with the sudden gush of blood from his wound. “Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.”

He used paper towels soaked in the rubbing alcohol to clean the wound up, stuff it, and then sealed that in with the duck tape. He was careful to cover his stab wound with the paper towel so he didn’t rip his skin off later.

It was also in the gas station when he first got a look of his face. His nose was slightly swollen, there was still a little fresh blood trickling down, and he had a horrible split lip.

Jim frowned at himself, took the duck tape with him, and then went back to the car without bothering to clean up anymore.

The rest of the car ride was spent in silence as they drove the six hours and twenty two minutes to their destination. By the time they got there it was definitely well into a normal drinking time, but there was still sunlight.

“Do you normally drive over six hours to get your drink on?” asked Jim with a raised brow.

“When I was your age,” replied Pike as he parked the car in the parking lot of this rustic looking bar.

By rustic Jim meant it looked like a place fishermen and journalists would frequent in the sixties. Maybe even down on their luck soldiers, but whatever. A bar was a bar and it would have drinks.

Jim let Pike get out of the car first and then slowly followed him into the bar.

The place was crowded.

People were having fun laughing with their buddies and talking about… Things Jim would rather not hear.

It definitely wasn’t a classy place. “Have you gone to this bar?” asked Jim as he followed Pike over to a booth.

“Nope,” responded Pike as he plopped down into the seat farthest away from Jim. “What’s your creature feature?” asked Pike.

Jim raised a brow at him as he stepped into the booth and curled his left foot under his right thigh. “Really cheap wine,” said Jim as he scrubbed a hand through his hair. “Also brandy.” Romulan Ale was a bit of a treat, and illegal to have in the Empire. Plus it gave Jim one massive hangover after one simple glass.

Pike made a small noise and nodded. “George liked brandy.”

Jim flinched inwardly, but smiled at Pike. He was used to being seen as George. Winona had done it for years before the Tarsus IV incident when she was confronted with the damaging effects it had on Jim’s psyche.

“I’m gonna go get a drink,” said Jim as he rose to his feet and strolled over to the bar.
The bartender was a Vulcan. Short curly hair, perfectly manicured eyebrows, and sharpened fingernails. “What can I get you, sir?” they asked with a tilt of their head.

Every now and then he’d have to play a role in George’s shadow. Son of a coward. Son of a whore. “Three blackberry brandy shots.” Kelvin Baby. “Make that four.” ‘That child is bad luck did you hear about his father? About his mother? Poor boy.’ George’s eyes. George’s hair. George’s perfect smile. “Actually give me an entire bottle and a glass of your cheapest white wine.”

The Vulcan rose their brow, nodded, and then produced the beverages shortly.

“What would he like?” they asked motioning toward Pike who was still seated.

Jim squinted and swallowed slowly. “Hell probably a gin and your most alcoholic beer, but I wouldn’t trust me to give him a drink.”

They nodded. “Understandable.”

Jim took the bottle of brandy by the neck and took the glass of wine with his other hand before he returned to the table. “Go get your own drink.”

Pike swept his eyes up from the alcohol Jim had gotten to Jim’s face. He said nothing as he rose from the booth and went to grab a drink.

He should check on his wound and apply new duck tape...

Jim’s stomach grumbled with hunger and he bit at his lower lip. He’d forgotten to eat nearly all day, but there was no getting out of drinking with Pike now.

He started with the wine. Sipped on it slowly while taking in the other patrons of the bar. A rather hairy woman in a revealing black dress sat a few tables away with her long hair covering most of her facial features. There was almost a familiar feeling budding in Jim’s chest at the sight of her, but then Pike returned.

Jim finished the glass and set it aside.

“George use to. . .” And Jim began the game of drowning out every single thing Pike said. Every reach made Jim’s mind burrow further away.

George use to dance on the table tops after two drinks. George use to. . . George loved you before you were even born.

Don’t get Jim wrong he loved hearing stories about his father, but stories from Pike’s perspective? They were always a little twisted.

The brandy bottle was still pretty full when Jim felt the alcohol drag his body down.

Pike, from what Jim could see, was also starting to be considerably affected by the alcohol. “And you were so tiny .”

Jim blinked zoning back into the conversation at hand. Were there tears in Pike’s eyes? Jim must’ve just been really drunk.

“So. So. Sooooo small. Little toes. Little hands…” Pike took another sip of beer.

Jim stared at him from across the table. Winona had mentioned before that Pike had visited when Jim had been put in the hospital due to the premature birth in space. Jim had been tiny for a baby.
Pike had tried to smother him for not being a perfect little imperial infant.

“I’ll be right back,” said Jim as he rose to his feet, a little wobbly, but he was able to stabilize himself slowly. “Bathroom.”

Pike nodded and downed another drink.

Jim bit at the inside of his cheek, he decided to take the brandy bottle with him, and forced his legs to carry him the few feet he needed to take to get to the bathrooms. He entered the women’s restroom and found it to be barren, but someone could be in the stalls hidden away.

“Is anyone in here?” asked Jim out into the room.

There was no response. Jim put the bottle next to the sink, then grabbed a bunch of paper towels, and shoved them in one of the sinks with water and a ton of soap. This was stupid. Going out here with Pike.

Jim was miles away from Bones and miles away from anyone who could help him if things got out of hand.

Sure he and Pike were getting along now, but Jim was terrified of what would happen when the glow of ‘Just like George’ would fade out.

Jim leaned against the sink and rested his head against the mirror. Breathe.

Jim wasn’t George Kirk and he couldn’t imagine that Pike was going out of his way for Jim.

George would fade with more and more drinks. Then Pike would be left with rotten mouthed and less than perfect James Tiberius Kirk. Jim was going to say one wrong thing and then there would be hell to pay.

Jim could imagine it now! Being murdered by Pike and dumped off in the most barren part of Los Angeles.

Jim needed to get a phone. He needed to call the apartment or call the medical building or…

The bathroom door opened with a clear creaking.

Jim stiffened and his eyes darted up to the mirror. It was that woman from the table away.

He twisted around to face her. “Uh. Sorry,” muttered Jim. “I’ll get…” he trailed off and furrowed his brow.

She was locking the bathroom door.

Jim’s heart hammered hard in his chest. Breathe. Breathe. He took a small step back and stumbled. He nearly fell onto his ass but the woman caught him and pulled him close.

Jim’s body tightened in her hold. He couldn’t. Breathe.

“Jim,” she said. No. Not a she.

Breathe, whispered something in the back of Jim’s mind.

A sense of calm washed over him and is lungs filled with air as a hand brushed through his hair. “Spock.” He looked down at the open neck of the black dress that Spock was wearing. “You are
“Jim,” snapped Spock with a small growl to his words.

Jim pawed at the silky hairs on Spock’s exposed chest. “Seriously there is an entire cat on your chest.”

“Jim,” hissed Spock.

Jim snapped his head back up toward Spock’s face. “Why are you wearing this anyways?”

Spock’s cheeks dusted with a fine yellowish green blush. “You… have a tendency to use the women’s restroom and I did not want to be recognized by Pike.”

Jim pressed his lips together and attempted to regain his footing without Spock’s help. “They are cleaner, Spock. So much cleaner.” Why was Spock here? “What are you doing here anyways? Did you have like a feeling or—” he gasped, then put a hand over his mouth, and pawed at Spock’s chest again. “You had a feeling didn’t you? What is that like for you?”

Spock gripped at Jim’s arms. “Jim, focus, please.”

Jim pouted and looked Spock up and down slowly. “Do I get a sexy outfit?”

It was hard to tell, but Jim swore Spock’s eyebrow twitched. “Jim, you already have a sexy outfit, please focu—”

Jim gasped again. “I have a sexy outfit, Spock????”

Spock smacked his head down and sighed angrily. “Jim, please, I will leave you here with Pike.”

Jim sucked on his lower lip, but for once he’d actually shut up.

That got Spock to look back up as he pulled the bangs of the wig back. “Did he do this to you?” asked Spock as he turned off the sink and grabbed the paper towels from it.

Jim wobbled on his feet and rubbed at his face. “No.”

Spock smacked at Jim’s wrists. “Lower.”

Jim lowered them and glanced into the mirror.

Through it he could see the concentration on Spock’s face as he cleaned up Jim’s face.

“Who did?” He couldn’t remember ever hearing that tone in Spock’s voice.

A tone that sent a shiver up and down Jim’s spine. A tone one would carry when vowing to destroy another living person.

Jim had heard it many times from Bones. Mostly when the subject of Gary Mitchell came up or Pike or even Boyce. “Cops dragged me out of the apartment.”

Spock’s fingers stalled as they gently wiped away the crusty blood from Jim’s upper lip. He made a hmmm noise and put his two pointer fingers in the inner corners of Jim’s eyes.

At this Jim stared directly into Spock’s eyes. Something in Jim’s gut knew Spock would do what Pike didn’t do. “Don’t,” hissed Jim as Spock stroked down his nose.
The skin around Spock’s eyes crinkled. “I did not say a thing.”

Jim squinted his eyes back at Spock. “You don’t have to.”

“You will need to have this set.” Spock hummed again and pulled back. “We will have to spend the night in a hotel, but we should be able to get back to the Campus tomorrow.”

Jim huffed and curled his fingers into his pants. “Are you forgetting something?”

Spock tossed the paper towels in the garbage and picked up the bottle of brandy. “Pike will find his way back to San Francisco—”

“Spock, last time I checked hotels don’t want you bleeding all over their sheets,” snapped Jim as he tried to take a step forward, but was unsuccessful.

Spock extended an arm. “... A motel then.”

Oh wow that sounded sanitary. Jim scowled and leaned heavily against the sink. “Carry me.”

Spock’s face swiftly moved back into neutral Vulcan territory. “Carry you?”

Jim nodded and pouted. “Can we get pizza too? I haven’t eaten all day.”

Spock blinked slowly. “... I will see what I can do.”

—

Spock inhaled slowly and stared at the empty cardboard box Jim had tossed onto the bed hours ago. Jim of course was now laying on top of it, shirtless, in nothing but his underwear, and looking to be in a light sleep.

“Are you sleeping?” asked Spock, softly, and below a whisper. He had long ago changed out of the dress and was considerably more clothed than Jim.

The response was a soft grunt and a full body wriggle. “Yes, Spock, I'm sleeping. I'm definitely sleeping.”

Spock stared at the duck tape covered wound, He had watched a rather drunk Jim change the dressings earlier, but he knew there would be a rather intense tongue lashing from Leonard. “You shouldn't have taken the knife out.”

Jim grunted, “It's covered.”

“... I should call Leonard,” mumbled Spock as he rose from the bed.

Jim didn't protest this time, and Spock was certain it was because he was too tired. Or perhaps blood loss? There was a considerable amount of oxidized blood on his clothes.

Jim released a slow breath and looked to be struggling to open his eyes. “Can you... like... lay down???”

Spock lowered himself slowly onto the bed. “I am laying down.” He really should call Leonard. Let the doctor know of Jim’s injury. An injury he was well aware was not well kept.
Jim shifted with a small hiss as he rolled off of his wounded side. “Can I put my head on you?”

Spock felt his heart rate spike. “That would be… okay.”

Jim wriggled closer and came to rest his head on Spock’s chest. “Ate too much,” grumbled Jim as he curled even closer. He went as far as curling his thighs around Spock’s leg. “Drank too much.”

That had been true. Jim had nearly finished off the bottle of brandy by himself and Jim would have drunk it all himself if Spock had not thrown the bottle out the window of the motel room.

Jim’s frame trembled, and Spock wondered if it was from his injury, or was it medicine related? Had Jim even taken his medicine today? He probably hadn’t had the time.

Jim’s fingers curled tight into the sweater Spock had changed into and there was a sharp wet sounding inhale that came from Jim’s throat.

Spock’s heart started to beat faster and his breath came quicker. “Jim?” Was Jim dying? What was Jim doing?

Jim pressed his face into Spock’s side, his grip tighter, Spock couldn’t feel his leg, and yet the muffled sounds continued.

Spock frowned and looked down at the strange terran. “Are you dying?” asked Spock with wide eyes.

Jim laughed, but it was broken down into… sobs.

Spock covered his hand with the sleeve of his sweater and hovered over Jim’s shoulder.

“Please,” pleaded Jim, sounding so unlike the smart ass who shouted how he would do whatever he wanted. Who didn’t listen to orders. Who seemed to push and push and push until he made a new enemy or a friend.

Spock put his covered hand on Jim’s shoulder and stared up at the bumpy ceiling.

The terran pushed further into Spock’s side.

They didn’t speak.

Eventually Jim fell silent, his clinging worse, but at least he was still breathing.

At least Spock thought he was still breathing.

Spock lowered his mental walls just slightly.

Yes. Jim was alive and breathing.

He put them back up swiftly and sighed. He had to wait for his father’s visit to understand exactly what was going on with his and Jim’s minds. Sarek would be able to tell his son what exactly was going on, until then Spock could live with having this small link with Jim.

It had helped find the human after all.

Jim made a small noise and seemed to curl tighter around Spock’s frame.

Spock felt his eye twitch. He should meditate. With another slow inhale Spock closed his eyes.
He must’ve fallen into a rather heavy meditation—no he would not admit that he had been sleeping—because when he awoke there was soft beams of sunlight streaming in from the window.

Spock squinted his eyes and stretched a little. Which made his eyes bulge. Why was he able to stretch across the bed? He sat up his breathing became labored as he glanced around the small motel room for Jim. “Jim?” Spock called out as he rocketed to his feet. He checked the bathroom—No Jim, but there was a considerably large dead rat in the bathtub. Spock scowled and shut the bathroom door on the rat.

Spock stared at the room and ran his hand through his hair. He noted his hand was shaking, knew his once low blood pressure skyrocketed with every thump of his heart, but that wasn’t all he noticed.

Sure there were the clear physical signs of panic in his system, but he also noticed that his bag had been missing. Along with his bag would be his wallet.

Spock scrubbed hard at his face and gripped at his hair. “Kirk,” he growled lowly. Kirk had never been the trustworthy sort. Of course he stranded Spock here!

Spock sank to the floor. Work with Cadet Kirk, Leonard said! He has trust issues! “Well maybe he isn’t a very trustworthy person,” hissed Spock as he tried to control his breathing.

When he finally felt a sense of calm a shadow disrupted the steady stream of light from the window.

Spock lifted his head and trained his eyes on the door as he rose to his feet. Something nagged at the back of his mind and he knew it was Jim. Which only made a surge of anger wash over Spock, but Spock held that back.

Jim looked like he was in a pretty good mood when he opened that door. He was a little cleaned up, in a dark brown tweed suit jacket, a loose hanging white tank top, a pair of dark slacks, and of course those white sneakers he had been wearing the day before. He also had a brown paper bag in one arm.

“...Hey, Spock!” greeted Jim with a wide smile. Granted his eyes were considerably puffy from both the crying and whatever else.

Spock nearly thought Jim was high or drunk off his ass with the unsettling nature of the grin. “Where is my bag, Cadet Kirk?” snapped Spock.

Jim’s big smile shifted with a simple wrinkle of his nose, a shift of his brow, and a little frown. Much of a teenager mocking their parent or about to make some snide remark. “Under the bed. I got your wallet though so I could get us breakfast.” Jim walked in and shut the door with his foot. “Dark in here.” He set the paper bag on the bed and dug Spock’s wallet out of his back pocket with a little shake of his butt.

Spock narrowed his eyes. How irritating.

Jim had released the wallet and sniffed just a little. “Hope you like doughnuts and because Bones
would kill me if I didn’t eat at least one healthy thing I got some apples and granola bars for the ride.” Jim had moved over to the paper bag and pulled out a box of brand name granola bars that clearly had chocolate in them, two plastic bags with three apples each followed, and finally a box of doughnuts.

“You used my money,” hissed Spock.

Jim turned his head and cocked his hip just a little. “I can pay you back,” purred Jim.

Spock felt his eye twitch once more, but he sighed heavily. “How is your injury?”

Jim lifted up his shirt to show off the irritated looking skin. In the middle of that irritated skin was the duck tape covered wound. “Probably infected and in need of treatment from Bones, but nothing I can feel currently!” And then Jim promptly fell over onto the bed. Thankfully missing the food he had just laid out.

Spock kneeled near the bed to look under it for his bag. He found it under the bed skirt, pulled it out, and then put his wallet back. “Did you sleep at all?”

“Not at all,” mumbled Jim from the bed.

Spock made a hmmm noise, slung the bag over his shoulder, returned the items to the paper bag, and then looked to Jim. “We should get you back to San Francisco and to medical.”

Jim made a noise and groggily got back up to his feet. “Right. Yes.” Then he fell back down. “Three minutes.”

Spock sighed, but would grant Kirk his three minutes. He took the paper bag and went out to Pike’s car.

Spock hadn’t really stolen it per-say; he had made sure a drunk Pike had gotten on the next shuttle back to San Francisco, and Spock had been gratefully left with the car.

He put his bag and the food in the back seat.

Then Spock waited.

Jim came out of the room less than three minutes later, his body nearly dragging.

Spock stared at Jim from over the roof of the car. “You said you required three minutes, it has been two minutes point three seconds.”

Jim squinted at Spock, slumped up against the passenger side, and rested his chin on the roof. “Figured if I didn’t move I’d never move.” He gave Spock that same stinky little face he’d given him when Spock had asked where his bag was. “My high is wearing off and I’m in pain so, let’s go.” He climbed into the car and drummed on his knees.

Spock sighed heavily and slipped into the car. A six hour ride with Jim was going to be a test of Spock’s own mental strength.

Jim waggled his eyebrows. “Spock?”

Spock reached into the back of the car for his bag, took the keys out, and then started up the car. “What?”

Jim sank deeper into the passenger seat, his sneakers set dangerously over the glove compartment,
and of course he was sockless. “... You’re a vulcan,” said Jim, groggily. Speech slurred with traces of an all too tired man. “Should I go after Cupcake or Gary next year?”

Something ached in Spock’s gut as he pulled the car out and away from the motel. “Neither.”

Jim huffed and laced his fingers over his stomach. “I don’t mean date them.”

“Neither,” hissed Spock, firmer in his tone.

Jim scowled. “Come on, Spock.”

“Neither of them, Cadet Kirk,” Spock growled. What was Jim not understanding? Pike’s crones were loyal to anyone with a strong presence and not to bring Jim down, but he didn’t have that strong of a presence. Jim was mostly written off as weak or a coward without conviction. Spock didn’t even want Gary Mitchell near Jim. Not after the last time. “Focus on your studies like everyone else.”

Jim laughed, delirious sounding, but still a laugh. “Everyone else is murdering their way to the top while creating these little alliances held together with nothing but paper clips, string, and spite to live on.”

Spock shook his head. “You are already ahead of them in that area.”

“What do ya mean?” asked Jim.

Spock focused on the road ahead. “I mean…” That people care about you. Spock couldn’t say that. That people love you. Or that. “That the people who you’ve touched will ride and die with you, for you.”

Spock awaited an answer, but all he got was the sounds of soft snores.

A glance to his right made him aware that Jim was slumbering softly.

Spock swallowed the saliva forming in his mouth. “Even I would.” And he was sure Jim would do the same.

He looked back toward the road and worked on getting out of LA as fast as he could.

Chapter End Notes

I'M here to bring you angst and sap. Comments and Kudos are appreciated! I love reading your comments :D

Also my goal is to make you both love and hate mirror verse Pike, and if I've done that I feel completed.

Until next time *wave wave*
It was raining in San Francisco. The large droplets of rain and cold sunk straight into Leonard’s bones. He’d been at the hospital longer than he’d wished, but he couldn’t exactly find the strength to leave.

He scrubbed at his wet face.

Jim had been such a goddamn idiot to let his wound go untreated like that. Sure he tried his damn best to ‘treat’ the stab wound, but he’d done a piss poor job and was lucky he wasn’t two feet into his grave.

“Bones?” Speaking of the idiot.

Leonard turned around with a scowl planted on his face. Sure the wound hadn’t been fatal, the knife hadn’t hit any vital organs, but there had been a substantial amount of bleeding. Alcohol hadn’t helped and neither did the duck tape. “You shouldn’t be out of your bed, Cadet Kirk.”

Leonard could see the downcast and sag of Jim’s body. Shame. Easy to read on his friend’s face. “I…” Jim stayed in the doorway of the medical building, holding his dressings, and not even looking up at Leonard.

Rage built up in Leonard’s gut. No not rage, but something with the same intensity as it. Sorrow? A feeling Leonard hadn’t felt since David McCoy’s death. “You could’ve died!” And it was all Leonard’s fault for not locking the goddamn door. Leonard scrubbed hard at his face aware that it was no longer just rain trickling down. “You could’ve fucking died and it's all my fucking fault goddammit.” He felt safe cursing God’s name. No one would be stupid enough to be out in the rain.

Unless you count Leonard and Jim.

“I know you’re hurt. It’s all my fault and don’t you dare fucking say this is your fault. Because my choices brought me here.” Jim took a step forward as lightning cracked through the sky and then his entire body froze when a loud crack of thunder followed. “I’m sorry!” shouted Jim.

And he knew Jim was sorry. Knew Jim wouldn’t be saying it if he didn’t mean it, but God. Good
God! Did that not make the sting of almost losing Jim fade.

“I know that doesn’t help,” squeaked Jim as his body tensed up again with another crack of thunder and flash of lightning.

Leonard bit into his lower lip, scowled at his friend, and then stormed over to where Jim was standing. He grabbed a hold of Jim’s bare bicep. “Your choices did bring you here, and goddamnit, Jim, you need to go back inside.”

Jim’s body was as stiff as a metal pole; he trembled, but didn’t move.

Leonard furrowed his brow. “What the fuck is wrong with you?”

Jim’s chest rose and fell in uneven intervals. He was watching the sky as if it would come down and swallow him whole. “Me and storms don’t get along.”

“Then come inside and get into bed,” hissed Leonard with a tug on Jim’s bicep. “Before you open your goddamn stitches.”

Jim didn’t fight, which was out of character, but necessary.

They returned to the room in silence.

Spock was asleep in the chair nearest to Jim’s bed with a thin hospital sheet over himself. He’d done his best to get Jim back as quick as possible, but Jim had already been running a fever at that point. Spock deserved the rest for all that he had done.

“Where is your damn hospital gown?” grumbled Leonard as he put Jim back to bed.

Jim still looked flushed and pale under the intense fluorescent. “I don’t remember,” muttered Jim as he settled onto the bed. Gooseflesh pimpled his cold skin as it made contact with the even colder bed. “I… I don’t…”

Leonard sighed heavily and made his way over to the door. “I’ll get you some more blankets, okay?”

Jim sat back up with a small hiss. “I’m fi—”

“Like hell you are,” snarled Leonard with a snap back of his head.

“Like hell you are,” snarled Leonard with a snap back of his head.

“Please don’t leave,” whispered Jim, “Bones, please.”

Leonard shut his eyes for a moment, lowered his head, and pressed his lips together. His heart ached, his chest felt all too heavy, he turned around, raised his head, and opened his eyes to look at Jim.

He didn’t turn his head around. He couldn’t bare to look back at Jim.

“Please don’t leave,” whispered Jim, “Bones, please.”

Leonard shut his eyes for a moment, lowered his head, and pressed his lips together. His heart ached, his chest felt all too heavy, he turned around, raised his head, and opened his eyes to look at Jim.

Jim trembled as another crack of thunder broke through the walls of the building. He looked small. Cowardly. Broken down. How many people had Jim never seen again?
Leonard walked back over to the bed aware of the wet trail he had left earlier. “I’m just going to get you some blankets and then I’ll be right back.”

Jim’s pupils were small and his body language made it clear he wasn’t going to be calming down any time soon. His shoulders were drawn taught and Leonard could see the small movement of his jaw as he clenched it.

Leonard sighed heavily, looked to Spock, then to Jim, and finally back to Spock.

He didn’t really know what he was doing when he shook the Vulcan’s shoulder hard. “Spock.”

Spock hummed slowly as he awoke, then he squinted his eyes at Leonard like a cat who had just been woken from a deep sleep, and finally he tilted his head.

“Jim won’t let me leave and he put the only damn blanket in this room on you.” Leonard went back toward the door, shut it, and locked it. “So if you wanna stay, get in the damn bed, and share.”

Spock and Jim stared at Leonard for a moment.

After a long drawn out silence filled with staring and thunder Jim scooted over and laid down.

Spock rose to his feet, removed his shoes, and then climbed in the bed a distance away from Jim.

Leonard narrowed his eyes at them, slowly took off his wet clothes—aside from his underwear—, shoved them in the bathroom, and then returned to Jim’s bed. “Don’t comment,” he growled as he scooted Jim over closer to Spock and squeezed himself against Jim’s back.

Jim was tense, but didn’t say a word as Spock draped the blanket over them and wrapped his arm around to Leonard’s back.

Something soared in Leonard’s chest. Made him feel that this was right. Right to have Jim encased in a warm cocoon between them. Even if it was on a cramped hospital bed that was not built for three full grown men. It just felt right.

Leonard fell asleep but was woken up by Jim’s wriggling.

“This is cozy,” complained Jim with a wriggle.

“Go to sleep, Cadet Kirk,” mumbled Spock, voice heavy with sleep.

Jim wriggled, tensed at another crack of thunder, and then continued to wiggle.

“Stop wrigglin’,” growled Leonard. “You’re gonna open your stitches and I’m fucking tired.”

Jim’s body stiffened. “It’s itchy though.”

Leonard sighed heavly. “Spock, can you do anything to knock him out?”

There was a pause, then Spock’s hand snaked up the stretch of Jim’s back, up past Leonard’s nose which was buried in Jim’s neck hairs, and then toward the temples of Jim’s head. “Cadet Kirk?”

Jim huffed. “I don’t believe that you can make me fall asleep with that shit.”

“Yes or no?” asked Spock.

Leonard exhaled against Jim’s skin.
Jim’s toes curled, snaked back between Leonard’s calf, and hooked his feet around Leonard’s leg. “Yes.”

Spock mumbled something and Jim’s limbs relaxed one after the other. “He is asleep,” said Spock when he finally lowered his hand.

Jim snored softly between them.

Leonard sighed heavily. “Thanks.” He lifted up his hand to rest it over Spock’s. “Thank you so fucking much.” He curled his fingers around Spock’s.

Spock sighed softly. “It would be illogical if I had allowed Jim to die.”

Leonard scoffed and gently stroked Spock’s fingers. “I love you.”

“I love you too,” replied Spock. “Now please get some rest.”

Leonard hummed, closed his eyes, and nuzzled into Jim’s neck. “You love him don’t you?” asked Leonard after a few more silent moments.

“... As time goes by I am finding less and less excuses to deter my feelings toward James, yes I have to admit just as I feel for you, the feelings toward him are mutual,” mumbled Spock. “I feel drawn toward you both in the same manner, a chance of love, a chance of friendship, but as we know; James doesn’t care for me.”

Yesterday Morning played out in Leonard’s head. Jim admitting that he was scared. Scared for Spock. He said Spock’s name first. Scared for Spock. Jim had gone out of his way to do things for Spock that Spock didn’t even know about.

Spock didn’t know how much Jim cared.

Did Jim even know that he showed care for Spock?

Did Jim even know that Spock was showing the same things in return?

How clueless were these two?

That stabbed Leonard in the chest. “Did Jim say that or are you telling yourself that to deter your feelings again?”

Spock silenced himself.

An ache settled in Leonard’s core in waiting for a response from his beloved.

Spock’s fingers twitched. “Go to bed, Leonard.”

Leonard allowed the subject to be dropped and allowed himself to drift off into sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the wait! I got put on some new meds and the side effects are not that fun. Plus I’ve been a little busy in my personal life :/// But hope you enjoyed this chapter!
San Francisco never ceased to make Amanda feel at home. Of course Earth had not been her home in many years, but it brought back memories of coming with Sarek and a young Spock to Fleet events.

“Spock informed me that it has been raining quite frequently,” stated Sarek as he donned his waterproof gear.

Amanda couldn’t help herself, she laughed at her ridiculously cute husband, and then gathered up her black umbrella. They would be taking a shuttle shortly to their destination, Spock would pick them up, and then they would spend a few days in their San Francisco apartment.

Meet Spock’s friends and his soon to be Captain, Christopher Pike.

Amanda scowled at the thought of that man. Christopher Pike. She recalled meeting him once prior at an imperial party held by the emperor of the time. It had been when Spock was only two years old, but Amanda remembered him.

Amanda pushed Pike to the back of her mind, gracefully approached her husband, lowered his hood, and hung her arms around his shoulders. “Sarek, my husband, all tucked away and adorable.” She put both hands to his face and squished.

Sarek’s trained expression did not waver, but a light yellow flush had colored his cheeks. “Amanda, my sweet, we must prepare for departure.”

Amanda placed a kiss to her husband’s lips and pouted when he pulled back from the chaste kiss. “I can whisper horrid nothings to you and prepare to visit my son at the same time.” She grinned and pulled his hood back up. “But you are correct. We must get going.”

…

Amanda could barely recognize Spock. Sure she held conversations with him via holo phone, but it was nothing like seeing her boy in the flesh. “Your hair is an absolute mess, bet the boys go crazy for that.”
Spock’s cheeks colored with a deep yellow. “Mother.”

Sarek placed a hand on Amanda’s shoulder while addressing Spock. “Your mother is excited to meet your boyfriend.”

Spock avoided eye contact and shifted on his feet as he said, “Leonard is at the apartment preparing tea… Leonard’s best friend has recently been released from the hospital and will be joining us.”

Amanda raised her head at this. Spock had mentioned his partner, Leonard, had a tag along. Was this the individual who would be joining them?

“Oh my is he okay?” asked Sarek as Spock began to lead them out of the docking station.

“What happened?” added Amanda as she kept up with her husband’s strides.

From her vantage point Amanda could see her son’s eyes darken with a hurricane of emotion. “The police stabbed him and he went quite some time without treatment. Leonard was quite upset with us both.”

That also piqued Amanda’s interests. Why would Leonard be upset with Spock over this individual’s actions?

“Were you also arrested?” asked Sarek. Quite possibly he was wondering the same thing.

*You are thinking rather loudly*, said Sarek through their bond. *I do not wonder I am Vulcan and require facts*.

Amanda scoffed at that. Sarek and the insinuation that her sweet little Spock had been arrested. Her son had never had a brush with the law. Spock was too good at not getting caught.

Spock paused outside of the doors that lead to the rain drenched world. “No, he had gone to Los Angeles with Christopher Pike…”

Amanda’s spine jerked and she prepared to open her umbrella. “That does not explain why your partner was upset with you.”

Spock looked at her and then opened the door. “…. That is a complicated situation.”

Amanda popped the umbrella and held it up for her son.

“Where is your jacket, young man?” asked Sarek.

Spock cheeks flushed as he took the umbrella. “I gave it to Leonard’s friend.”

Amanda squinted at Spock, looked to Sarek, and then back to her son before walking out the door. Fascinating as her child and husband would say. Simply. Fascinating.

“I can't wait to meet them both,” said Amanda with a small smile.

…

Leonard was not at all how Amanda had pictured him. Granted all Amanda had going for her was the name, and the fact her son was dating a doctor.
“Ma’am it’s a pleasure to meet you.” The doctor was in his scrubs as if he had gotten off shift or was about to go in. His hair was an absolute mess and he had a squinting blonde beneath him in a headlock.

“Bones,” hissed the blonde with a squirm and a kick. “I don’t need a sedative!”

“You haven’t slept for three fucking days,” snapped Leonard as he wrestled with his friend.

“YOU HAVEN’T EITHER!” shouted the blonde.

Amanda looked to Spock, who barely seemed phased with the events unfolding, then she looked to Sarek who watched the display with raised brows, and finally back to her son.

“This is normal,” responded Spock with a glance to his mother. “Follow me into the kitchen and I will prepare some tea.” Spock simply stepped over the two humans.

Sarek followed past the pair.

Amanda furrowed her brow and stared at the squabbling pair. “We can hopefully have a better first impression when you are done?”

The second Leonard was distracted the blonde beneath him scrambled out of the hold and bolted into the room off of the main apartment.

Amanda could assume it was her son’s bedroom.


He then looked at Amanda and rubbed at his face before extending his hand. “Leonard McCoy.”

Amanda raised one brow slowly and glanced toward where Jim had escaped to. “Is Jim always accompanying my son and yourself?”

Leonard lowered his hand and Amanda caught the small bob of his throat. “Not always,” said Leonard.

“Always!” shouted Spock from the kitchen at the same time. “It is rather annoying!”

Amanda was not sure why her son would be shouting, but understood why not even a beat later—“Annoying? Me? Why I thought we had something special, Spockums,” purred Jim, now in the doorway to the bedroom looking quite frumpy in an untucked white tank top and jeans.

A noise erupted from Spock’s throat. “Special? Well you certainly are special.”

Was that a laugh? Or the beginning of one choked off and strangled?

Amanda turned her head from Jim to her son.

Jim hummed.

Leonard went into the kitchen area and sat down at the table. “I have to live with this.” Leonard waved his hand in Jim’s direction.

Amanda looked back to Jim.
Jim had this smug little look on his face. With a little wrinkle to his nose and a near sneer to the curl of his lips. “Not funny.”

“I am vulcan,” snapped Spock.

Amanda turned her head back toward her son.

“It was no joke.” Spock had a slight squint to his eyes and a frown on his face.

Amanda bit her lower lip and walked into the kitchen to take care of setting up the tea. Her son had changed since his move to San Francisco, but he had seemed to be changing again. A good change. A change that made her feel like he would find true happiness in an unhappy world, and she felt this Jim had a hand in that.

Jim and Leonard respectively were having an impact.

“Jim, just sit your ass down at the table, and, Spock, how about you help your mother with that tea you said you were gonna make,” grouse Leonard.

“*He started it*,” hissed Jim and Spock in unison.

Spock’s hair spiked up like a cat and Jim glared.

Leonard slammed his hands on the table and snapped his head from Spock to Jim. “I'm finishing it! Both of you sit the fuck down!”

Leonard pulled the chairs out on either side of him. “Spock here. Jim here.”

Spock stood in defiance, but stiffly took his seat.

Jim crossed his arms, turned back around, raised his middle finger, and said, “I'm going to take a bath.”

Leonard rose to his feet at that and walked behind the counter to riffle through the kitchen. “Shirt up, y'ain’t getting into a bath without wrapping up your injury.”

Jim pouted, came into the kitchen, and stood on the other side of the island. He lifted the tank top and lowered his jeans just enough for Amanda to catch a glimpse of a few scars and one blood spotted white bandage.

“Sorry,” said Jim.

Sarek had taken his seat nearest the window and seemed to be taking this all in silently.

Leonard tapped at Jim’s cheek. “Stay still.”

*They have quite a relationship*, thought Amanda while staring at the back of her husband’s head.

*Spock and Leonard?* asked Sarek, silently.

Amanda hummed, grabbed the tea kettle from the stove, and filled it with water while Leonard wrapped Jim’s midsection. The scars there seemed oddly interesting. Nearly nagging in the back of her head. A thought she’d block from her husband.

Something to get out of the boy later.
“James, would you like my wife to prepare you some tea while you are in the bath?” asked Sarek. Jim slapped his stomach once Leonard was done with the cling film. “Nah I’m allergic to the crap I gave him, so.” He shrugged and went back into the bedroom.

Leonard joined Spock at the table once more.

Amanda furrowed her brow. “He gave you tea?”

Spock’s cheeks took on a dusting of yellow. “Vulcan Spiced.” Leonard shook his head. “Never understood where he got the stuff. I’ve never seen that boy near another vulcan.” Amanda hmmed and went back to the stove with the kettle.

…

After their first meeting Jim should have been the furthest thing from Amanda’s mind. Spock seemed tense around the other human, and equally Jim seemed defensive in the Vulcan’s presence.

Amanda already liked Leonard and found he would be an excellent fit for her son, but there was something else. Something that continued to pester her about her son’s triad. Not that Spock would admit they were a triad.

Jim and Leonard had left hours ago back to their own apartment.

Amanda sat at the kitchen table staring out the window into the dimly lit outdoors. Sarek had retired to Spock’s bedroom to meditate and Spock was seated next to her sipping from one of the tea cups she had gotten him for a belated or early birthday gift.

Amanda glanced toward her son and tilted her head into her hand. “Are you polyamorous, Sweetie?” Spock’s cup trembled, his eyes a little wide, his brow furrowed. He lowered the cup, and cleared his throat. “Polyamorous; involved in the practice of engaging in multiple sexual relationships with the consent of all the people involved…” Spock paused, shifted in his seat, and avoided eye contact with Amanda. “…By definition, I would not say so. I have only involved myself with Leonard.”

Amanda placed her hands down on the table, crossed her legs under it, and leaned forward. “You say Jim is involved in your relationship?” A little choked off laugh bubbled up from Spock’s throat. He took a rather aggressive sip of his tea, his cheeks tinted with the yellowish blush of a vulcan, and then he said, “I said James is always there, I would not say he is involved.”

“I want to know, sweetie…” Amanda tilted her head, lifted her forearm so her elbow was rested on the table, her chin perched in the palm of her hand, and her other hand reaching for her son. “Do you want him to be involved?”

Spock flinched away from Amanda’s advances. “He is not interested in me and I am not interested in him,” snapped Spock, finally looking up at his mother with a fire in his eyes, and then that fire
died down with a rise of Amanda’s eyebrow. “I apologize, mother.” Spock looked down at the tea cup and rubbed his fingers along the smooth porcelain.

Amanda sighed and rose to her feet. “I'm going to check on your father.”

Spock did not protest.

Amanda walked into the bedroom and stared at her husband who was not at all meditating.

Sarek sat at the foot of Spock’s bed with an eyebrow raised. It seems you are scheming, thought Sarek.

Amanda smiled as he approached him, she held out her two fingers, and placed a gentle kiss on the Vulcan’s cheek. “Just keep him busy tomorrow.”

…

“You are certain you will be all right by yourself, mother?” asked Spock as he was leaving the apartment with Sarek. They would be gone for most of the day with their own rushed plans.

Amanda waved, crossed her legs under the kitchen table, and sipped on her tea. “I’ll be fine, Spock.”

“Do not terrorize the cadets,” said Sarek as he motioned for Spock to follow.

Amanda grinned innocently as the door closed. That grin fell from her face as she rose to her feet. Again James Kirk was on her mind. Either Spock was right and there was no need for involvement or they were all too incredibly dense to not see a connection.

As Spock’s mother she was obligated to make sure nothing would harm her son or at least play matchmaker. She dressed in a pair of jeans and a black turtleneck sweater. She would have worn one of her more extravagant dresses, but that would be too noticeable.

After she dressed she exited the apartment through her son’s bedroom window as she did not have the key to lock the door.

She didn’t know where Cadet Kirk would be right now, if he would be going to classes, if he would be at his apartment, or if he would just be sneaking around the campus.

So, she started by walking to the Campus, thinking of obvious spots where she would find cadets that early in the morning.

The mess hall, library, and behind the observatory were all high contenders, but that all depended on the type of person Jim was.

Amanda didn’t know the type of person Jim was. Sure she got glimpses of it yesterday when they had their visit, but that hadn’t given her much to work with. Had it?

She would check behind the observatory first.

It was fairly easy to find the observatory, the campus labeled cleanly for those who were not familiar with the lay out. that, and she had seen a tall dark skinned vulcan woman with a half shaved head heading behind the building.
Amanda followed behind her, very carefully in her eyes, and stopped at the corner of the building.

“There you are,” said a familiar voice, Jim’s voice.

Amanda peeked around the wall to see the two in a friendly embrace.

“Nice to see you, Jimmy,” said the Vulcan woman as she placed her hands on Jim’s shoulders. She towered well above him by a foot. “I was told you had gotten injured.”

Amanda could see Jim’s nose wrinkle from here, he was dressed casually in a navy blue crew neck cropped sweater and khaki colored jeans. Amanda could infer he was not going to classes that day.

“Just a minor stabbing,” responded Jim. “You got the goods?”

The vulcan laughed and ran her hand through her hair. “Depends on what goods you want.”

Amanda furrowed her brow, leaned further in, and rested both of her hands on the rough stone of the building.

Jim bounced on his toes with a big grin. “Well I was thinking about that stuff we talked about. Y’know for Bones and Spock.”

That was concerning, what stuff? Were these two conspiring against her sweet boy?

“How do I know you won’t eat the chocolate?” asked the Vulcan.

There was a gasp from Jim as he put his hand over his heart. Then he laughed, and lowered his hand. “You’re right,” he purred, reaching up to curl a strand of her hair with his index finger. “You curl your hair today? Big date?”

“Jimmy, I’ll give you the chocolate and tea brick, but you have to promise me that these boys won’t hurt you,” said the vulcan in a warning tone.

Jim pouted his lips and shoved his hands into his pockets. “There is nothing to hurt, they are just friends.”

“Friends can still hurt you,” hissed the Vulcan. “One of them is Pike’s minion for fuck sake.”

Amanda’s heart clenched and she bit on her lower lip. It felt almost wrong to eavesdrop on this conversation, especially because the Vulcan could likely hear Amanda, and if not hear possibly smell.

One wrong move and Amanda could alert them.

Someone tapped on her back. She spun her entire body around and pinned the individual to the wall.

Christopher Pike’s cold dead blues stared back at her. He of course remained silent.

“Did you hear that?” asked the Vulcan.

Amanda grit her teeth and bared her teeth at Pike.

“I don’t want to find out, we can go around the other way,” said Jim.

Amanda waited until she was certain the two were not in ear shot anymore before she pushed Pike
further into the wall and backed off. “Christopher Pike, stalking young adults? Or just ones with the last name Kirk?”

Pike narrowed his eyes and straightened out his shirt before he said, “You mean what you are doing?”

Amanda tapped the toe of her shoe in the ground. “It is in my best interest to find out who you are having my son watch.” Which wasn’t a lie, but she was human. She could lie if she wanted to.

“Of course,” said Pike with a fake smile. “Well, don't let me get in your way.”

Amanda glared at him then continued on her way.

“He likes bars, karaoke, and Denny’s,” called out Pike. “And you're likely to find him at the library with Cadet Riley this afternoon.”

Amanda froze for a moment, looked back at Pike, and with a narrowed glare she said, “Thank you.”

…

Amanda picked a quite popular area of the library, one where she could see Jim walk in, and easily follow him. She had even asked one of the librarians if James Kirk was a frequent user of the library.

They had stared at Amanda quizzically for a moment. Their head tilted in such a way that made Amanda think they were cautious of her, but they had given Amanda the information she needed before she took to looking for books to hide herself in.

It was five minutes before the clock hit noon that Jim walked into the library. He was now dressed in his cadet reds and had a nasty looking black eye. He approached a younger man with brown hair and began to talk on their way to one of the study rooms.

Amanda squinted and cursed the fact she could not hear what they were saying, but it appeared Jim was a little frazzled.

Amanda rose to her feet with her book and began to see if she could follow the pair.

“How’d you get the black eye, JT?” asked the younger, who must be Cadet Riley.

“Would you believe that I walked into a door?” asked Jim, bitterly. “Dude was being a total fucking dick.”

They didn’t go into one of the study rooms, they kept walking through the library, and into the more secluded sectors that often reported many unsavory activities.

Amanda was thankful for it though because it meant she could hide behind a bookshelf and still listen in on the conversation.

Cadet Riley’s voice had a slight whine to it, which was quite grating, but it sounded more like he was going through puberty. “I’d believe it, but what actually happened?”

Jim groaned. “Got in a fist fight,” said Jim, bitterly. “Dude was being a total fucking dick.”

There was a long pause and then a plop as they must’ve found a seat.
Amanda situated herself behind a bookcase and began browsing. So, Jim was prone to arguments? Granted that display from yesterday should have clued Amanda in on that.

It was a long while before they started to talk again. “What did Leonard say about your black eye?” asked Riley.

There was a slapping noise and Jim laughed. “I went and saw Christine, she healed it up enough, but I had to beg her to not tell Bones.”

“How’d that go?” asked Riley.

“... Interesting enough,” said Jim with a clearing of his throat. “Change of subject how is your homework going?”

Cadet Riley had grown quiet.

There was a pregnant pause that Amanda was slightly concerned about. She moved some of the books on the shelf to see if she could get a peek of the two cadets.

Riley was sitting in a bean bag chair with his PADD in his lap and his back to Amanda.

Jim sat in the opposite bean bag chair, his legs spread in an almost uncomfortable looking position, his face was visible as he was facing the bookcase Amanda was behind, and his eyebrows were furrowed as he waited for the other cadet to respond.

“I’ve been struggling this semester,” admitted Riley with his fingers curled at the bottom of his PADD. “My pilot teacher had a conversation with me, but it was more along the lines of I’m not doing enough for myself.”

A strangled noise was pulled from Jim’s throat as he rolled his head back and ran his fingers through his hair. He then bolted forward as best he could in the squishy chair. “They should be giving you the tools you need to pass the class.” His teeth were showing and there was a touch of concern in his eyes. “You need to do the work obviously, but they should give you some options.”

“It’s not like I’m a dictator’s kid. My grandparents aren’t important and I’m obviously not going to be much of a use to the empire,” hissed Riley.

“You have one thing those dictator’s kids don’t have,” hissed Jim, a little loud, and with a exuberant hand gesture.

“What’s that?” asked Riley.

“JAMES TIBERIUS KIRK!” shouted an extremely frustrated sounding southern.

Jim’s head snapped up from where it was focused on Riley.

Amanda’s heart thudded as for a split second it looked as if he had seen her in the books.

“Fuck,” hissed Jim as he scrambled to get to his feet. “Bones found me.” He winked back at the Cadet. “Let your teacher know if they don’t help you they have to deal with Winona Kirk. George Kirk’s name might be dragged through the mud, but Winona still has a fantastic reputation.”

“JIM!” shouted Leonard followed by a loud shush.

Jim snapped his fingers. “Welp! Gotta go.” He then raced toward the nearest functioning window and with his tongue out shimmied his way into a comfortable position before he vaulted out of it.
Amanda had to close her eyes and giggle. Cadet Kirk was dramatic? What an excellent fit for her son and what a handful Leonard must have with the both of them.

She pushed away from the bookcase, then began to walk back the way she came, she avoided a fuming McCoy, placed the book she had been carrying around on a cart, and then slipped out the front door.

The last thing she wanted was Cadet Kirk to get ahead of her.

…

Amanda had been following Jim for most of the day. He had gone to his apartment, his classes, and he’d even gone back out behind the observatory where Amanda had found him talking with two Asian males.

Now it was approaching nightfall, the campus was cleared out, and Amanda was pressed firmly against the wall below Leonard and Jim’s apartment. Leonard hadn’t come home, so, Amanda figured he had to work tonight.

Jim was hanging over the balcony of the apartment mere feet above Amanda’s head. “You want to, like, get dinner?” asked Jim to the empty space in front of him.

Amanda furrowed his brow, who was Jim talking to?

“Mrs. Grayson,” hissed Jim.

Amanda looked up with wide eyes to see Jim hanging further over the railing with a big grin on his face and a head tilt.

“Do you want to get dinner?” asked Jim again with a waggle of his brows.

Amanda blinked slowly, but didn’t answer.

Jim pouted. “Well, I’m going out for dinner.” The floor creaked as Jim rightened himself. “I’d just like some input from the fourth person to follow me around this week.”

“Do you have dinner with all the people that follow you around?” asked Amanda with a bite of her lower lip.

Jim had gone quiet for a small moment and then grumbled, “Only the ones with the last name Grayson.”

Amanda smiled at that. “Is that so?”

“I’ll be right back,” said Jim as he absconded into the apartment.

Amanda leaned her head back against the wall and considered what she had learned of Jim in the past few hours. She hadn’t collected much. A lot of it was still a mystery, but she could tell he was different from others in the Empire. Different and burdened with the weight of his father’s legacy.

She pushed off the wall, walked toward a light post, and turned toward the building. From this vantage point she could see the balcony more clearly. She could see Jim walk out onto the balcony. He was in a white t-shirt with an open light wash denim looking button up and dark wash jeans.
“Got my shit,” said Jim as he closed and locked the sliding door.

Amanda furrowed her brow. What was Cadet Kirk doing?

She soon got her answer as the cadet crawled up onto the railing and balanced on it.

A gasp left Amanda’s mouth. Which she covered soon after the noise escaped.

Jim wobbled on his feet a little, crouched, grabbed the railing with both hands, and then brought his feet down. He dangled there for a moment, slowly shimmying his body down to the next balcony which was considerably lower, and then from that balcony he jumped down onto the ground. “Let’s go.”

…

Jim sipped at his steaming green tea without breaking eye contact with Amanda, which was a little unsettling, considering he’d been quiet the entire shuttle ride over to the restaurant.

Which was a decently priced sushi place with a fantastic atmosphere and polite workers for something run in the empire. “How’d you know about this place?” asked Amanda as she sniffed at her water. Not that she’d be able to smell if it had been tampered with.

Jim wrinkled his nose and leaned back in the chair as he checked off what he wanted from a sheet that had been placed on the table. He put the sheet down and looked at Amanda. “You want to share some chocolate covered strawberries?”

Amanda raised her brow at him. He hadn’t really answered her, but that didn’t bother Amanda too much. She was under the impression that Jim was quite closed off. A mystery to everyone around him. “I’d love to,” said Amanda with a small smile. “Do you like chocolate?”


Amanda nodded committing this information to memory, or at least sending it to Sarek so he could remember.

_Only if I think he is a good fit for our son_, added Amanda mentally.

Sarek did not respond, but Amanda knew he had heard her.

The waiter came back over to take the sushi sheet and any other orders.

Jim had ordered some vegetable fried rice to go along with the sushi he ordered and Amanda ordered some shrimp tempura and california rolls.

Jim quickly added, “Odd request, can you make my food away from her food?”

“Of course,” said the waiter.

Jim smiled up at them with a crinkle to his eyes. “Thank you.”

Those two simple words caught Amanda’s attention. _Thank you_. Like a gentleman nearly untouched by the empire. Amanda rested her chin in her hands to cover up the smile she produced at the information those two words gave her.
The waiter left and Jim turned to the spinning conveyor belt next to him that passed with many already prepared treats. Brownies, seaweed salads, naked strawberries with a mystery cream sauce, and then came the chocolate covered strawberries which Jim snagged with a big grin on his face. “What’s it like being married to a Vulcan?” asked Jim as he set the small plate down and took off its cover.

Amanda was here to ask Jim questions, not answer Jim’s questions, so, she pierced her lip in thought. How could she twist this to get information on Jim’s feelings about Spock? She lowered her hands and clasped them on the table before leaning in. “Are you interested in marrying a Vulcan?” she asked.

Color blossomed on Jim’s cheeks and he shoved a dark chocolate strawberry into his mouth to avoid the question.

Amanda wasn’t that easy to avoid. She waited for Jim to spit out the green bit of the strawberry before she pressed further. “Perhaps that Vulcan I saw you with earlier?”

Jim frowned and the color drained from his face. “Cesar, no,” he hissed, “T’Palla is just an old friend.”

Amanda’s brow furrowed. T’Palla was a common Vulcan name, so, Amanda pushed forward. “Perhaps Spock?” she asked.

Color returned to Jim’s face with a vengeance that had him covering his face and rubbing his hands up through his hair. The strands of blonde pulled back enough to show off the peek of darker roots, the flush of his face twisted with despair, and his lips pushed down into an expressive frown. “Spock doesn’t like me that way,” grumbled Jim, sounding more upset than thankful. “He doesn’t like me at all.”

Amanda felt a pain in her heart she hadn’t felt in years. She frowned and reached out toward the strawberries to take the white chocolate one. “Oh…” She plucked it up and took a bite.

Jim lowered one of his hands to take the last chocolate covered strawberry. Then he leaned his entire body onto his free elbow, and rested his head in the hand. He stared at the strawberry like its milk chocolate coating would kill him. “He’s great to Bones,” said Jim with a small smile on his face. “It’s the least a guy can ask for right? Have a guy be the best in the world for his best friend?” He ate the strawberry and chewed it.

Amanda pressed her lips together.

“I don’t know what it is,” continued Jim after the strawberry had gone down his throat. “If I’m jealous of them both for having the kind of relationship they do or… or… There is no easy route here.” He flapped his hands a bit and jerked back in his seat. “No easy way of saying that I want what they have and that makes me feel like I’m selfish because I want…” Jim grew silent as he ran his hand through his hair again.


“Mother fucker,” hissed Jim as he nearly brought his hand down hard onto the table. “Mother fucker.” He repeated and then began pounding on his head as if he were punishing himself for his wants.

It was nearly like watching a mirrored version of her son when he had been younger and longing
after T’Pring.

The mother in Amanda reached out and grabbed at Jim’s wrists to get him to stop punishing himself.

Jim ripped his arms out of her hold, but put his hands down on the table. He scowled at Amanda, but it wasn’t directed at her. “I can see why Vulcans hate emotions.”

Amanda chuckled, shook her head, and lowered her hands back down to the table. “Vulcans don’t hate emotions, humans, humans hate emotions that are seen as a weakness to the Empire.”

Jim made a noise and leaned back in his chair.

He did not say what emotion he had felt, nor did he speak after the waiter delivered their food.

In fact all Jim said after his meal was over was if he could have a box for his untouched egg cake, spicy tuna, and Philadelphia rolls.

“I guess the thing is,” began Jim after the waiter left, “the thing is. As long as I have Bones…” He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes for a brief moment. “As long as I have Bones I feel like everything will be okay.” He sighed, crossed his arms, and opened his eyes again. “I’ll be okay.”

Amanda took a sip of water to wash down her California roll. “As long as you have Leonard…” She asked, “What if you no longer had a relationship with Leonard?”

Jim looked up at her with a frown on his face and a lost look in his eyes. As if Amanda had told him his puppy had just died. He looked down at the table and slowly blinked. “In the words of some old terran, ‘... all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by’. ” He looked back up at her with something missing in his eyes. Like the question had sucked all the life out of him. The life flooded back into his body with a forced smile. “But of course. I’m not going to lose Bones. Not in this lifetime, not in the next, even if my brain is stupid and says he will never lo…” He stopped for a moment and frowned. “Even if my brain tells me I will never be as important as Spock.”

Amanda’s heart ached for him. She smiled at him from across the table. “How about you grab some more chocolate strawberries? I’ll pay.”

Jim waited for the conveyer to bring the treats around. He snagged a plate that had two dark chocolate and one white chocolate on it. “Thank you, Mrs. Grayson.”

Amanda felt giddy with the knowledge that Jim said things like thank you. Did he also say please? “Oh it’s no problem.”

The waiter came back with the boxes and check.

Jim placed his food strategically in the box. Sushi touching while saving enough room for the strawberries so they wouldn’t touch the clump of wasabi he threw in.

After Amanda paid they rose from the table and began their way to the last shuttle craft of the night that would bring them back to the fleet base.

“A... Say someone is threatening a loved one,” began Amanda while the shuttle was mostly empty aside from a couple of fleet cadets, “or harming them. What would you do?”

Jim had his head against the window, likely watching the passing lights, thinking of his answer, but he didn’t put much time into the thought. “... There are so many great ways to rip someone to
shreds. Mentally and physically…” He then looked at her and squinted. “Not everyone wants someone to fight for them.” He looked back out the window and poked at it. “Not everyone needs someone to fight for them.”

Which was smart to say. Amanda leaned her head back in thought. Jim was an interesting man. An interesting individual. “That doesn’t answer the question though… not really.”

Jim chuckled. “... I know what you are doing...” He paused and shifted in the seat. “I’ll answer.” He scrunched his face up in thought and looked to Amanda. “... A big part of me wants to ruin anyone who harms those I am fond of, but a bigger part of me knows that… I wouldn’t be able to do it. Ruin someone’s entire life.” He looked down into his lap. “I try to convince myself if they are a bad person then it is fine. If they are a terrible fucking person it should all be okay, but unfortunately,” hissed Jim, “my mom ingrained remorse into my brain.”

Remorse. Amanda smiled to herself and placed her hand on Jim’s arm. “Do you really think remorse is unfortunate to have?” she whispered. She had tried to raise Spock to strive to be better than the Empire, but Spock was his own person. Better than she could have ever imagined him being when Sarek had talked about them having a child. When they had begun going through the motions of making sure that little idea would grow healthily into a full blown life form.

Remorse. Please. Thank you. Love. Things she had wanted for Spock. Things he had under all that Vulcan. Things Jim seemed to struggle with, but accept.

Jim’s fingers clenched.

The shuttle stopped and they had to get off.

Amanda rose to her feet first and waited for Jim outside of the shuttle.

The other fleet cadets had gotten off before Jim slunk his way off with his bag of leftovers. “It isn’t unfortunate, just kinda sucks to have in this world,” said Jim as he took the lead through campus.

Amanda did her best to keep up with Jim’s stride. “Understandable,” replied Amanda with a glance up at the night sky. The city always hid the stars away from sight, she was happy it was a clear night, and not raining. “It must be hard to act like you don’t care.”

Jim’s form grew stagnant next to her.

She stopped and turned back to look at him with a soft smile. “Isn’t it hard?”

Jim frowned at her, his shoulders lax, and yet the rest of his body was stiff. “What are you doing, Amanda?” asked Jim.

Amanda tilted her head at him and shifted on her feet in a smooth motion. “My son is important to me, Cadet Kirk,” she responded. “It is my duty as a mother to learn about those in his life. The good, the bad, and the equally horrendous.” The three of them had a long road ahead of them. A long journey that would lead them into the clutches of the true nature of this cold cruel world. “It is my job to make sure he is surrounded by the best people he could possibly be surrounded by.”

Jim raised a brow. “Your son hates me.”

Amanda knew she was giving Jim the softest look she could give him. “That does not change the fact that I am comfortable having you around my son.” She smiled at him and jerked her head back. “Let’s get you back to Leonard safely.”
They walked to the apartment.

Amanda made sure Jim got into the door, made sure he was home alone, or at least would be okay until Leonard arrived back at the apartment.

“Yeah, He will be at work until nine, and I should be fine for two hours,” said Jim. To reassure Amanda even as he munched on one of the chocolate strawberries.

Amanda nodded and then was on her way. *I like him,* she thought to Sarek.

…

Amanda approached her son’s apartment door and knocked as she needed to be let back in after the long day she has had.

The back of her mind buzzed with Sarek’s presence even before the door opened up to her adorably scruffy looking husband.

“You look like a soaked cat,” cooed Amanda as she swooped into her husband for an affectionate human kiss.

Sarek hummed into the soft press of lips, stepped back from the door with a hand at the base of Amanda’s spine, and then he pulled back from the kiss to close and lock the door. “You have been busy, my sweet,” said Sarek.

Amanda looked over Sarek’s shoulder to see her son wrapped tightly in a weighted blanket with his eyes wide and fingers intertwined in front of his lips. A man very deep in thought with some horrendous news. “It seems you have been busy yourselves,” commented Amanda as she pulled away from her husband to approach her son on the couch.

She settled next to her son and reached a hand to put pressure between his shoulder blades. “What happened, sweetie?” asked Amanda with a worried glance at Sarek. The healer couldn’t possibly had given them bad news. She looked back to Spock.

Spock did not answer, his body rocked forward for a moment, and then back into Amanda’s touch.

Amanda frowned. Whatever news it was must’ve devastated or shocked Spock to the point he had become nonverbal. Which never seemed like too hard of a task. Spock had always become deathly silent in moments of stress. She looked to Sarek once more. Maybe if she took his mind off of whatever it was he would snap out of it. “I quite like Jim Kirk,” said Amanda.

*Do not,* thought Sarek.

Amanda simply thought he didn’t want Spock to know that she had spied on the cadet all day. “I had dinner with him and he was very… interesting. I can see why you find him so interesting.” She nudged her son.

Had Spock’s body gone stiffer?

“He says things I never imagined hearing from another human in decades.” She nudged at her son again.

She looked to Sarek. “He says ‘thank you’, Sarek, I’ve never heard another human say thank you.
Have you?"

Was Spock shaking?

“I have not,” said Sarek with a waver to his voice.

She turned back to her son. “What I’m trying to say is I approve of—”

Spock jolted to his feet with a snarl and shouted, "WOULD YOU PLEASE SHUT UP ABOUT JAMES T. KIRK, MOTHER?!” Spock’s breath heaved.

It grew quiet.

Then phone rang.

It went to the answering machine. “It’s Leonard. Jim is… in the hospital again… Allergies… Right?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and Kudos are appreciated. I hope you enjoyed this break from the usual POVs c: Until next time!

Also this chapter has 6969 words hahaha...
Spock could have never imagined that a few simple words would have him sprinting across campus in the middle of the night. Well, not quite the middle of the night, but still. He hadn’t even closed his door. Hadn’t listened to his parent’s cries for him to come back and face whatever punishment they fabricated for his outburst at his mother.

He couldn’t focus on that. Couldn’t focus on the stern words his mother would have for him.

He could only focus on one thing.

In the past few months he hadn't planned on developing a fondness for a certain Cadet.

A fondness for two certain Cadets. Both were special and had an impact on Spock’s actions. Whether Spock wanted to admit to these impacts or not.

Spock tried pretending not to care for Kirk, but that was becoming quite difficult to keep up.

With the accidental bond, the fact Pike wanted Spock to watch Kirk closely, but not form attachments.

Still; Pike knew more than he was letting on.

Maybe now that the healer had blocked the bond it would be easier to lie. Easier to hate every fiber of Kirk’s being, but even now there was no hatred in his heart. No sliver of malice as he rushed through the doors of the medical building.

The bright fluorescents hummed above him and made the transition from dark exterior to overly bright interior taxing on his eyes. Despite this he found he wasn’t stopping and halfway through his wander in the hospital he realized he didn’t know where Jim was.

He couldn’t open the bond to find out either.

His feet finally stalled and his brain shifted from determined to…

Spock looked down. What was he feeling? What was this feeling?

He hadn’t felt this way since the days of watching the Tarsus IV experiments play out on imperial news.

“Spock,” greeted Nurse Chapel who gently roused him from his stagnant thoughts. “I wasn’t expecting to see you tonight.”

Spock jumped in his skin and looked down at Christine.

Her brow was furrowed as her hand remained on his shoulder. “Are you okay?” Her hair looked
different and she looked as if she had gotten a new hole in her face. Spock knew outside of medical she had a septum piercing, but he could swear there was a new piece of jewelry she had to take out to deal with patience. “Spock?”

Spock shook his head and pulled away from her. His voice seemed to crack as he asked, “Where is Cadet Kirk?”

Christine’s eyes seemed to dazzle under the bright humming lights. “Oh. Cadet Kirk?” Her tone shifted into one of teasing. “You want to know where Cadet Kirk is?”

Spock scowled. He knew where this was going. He’d have to bribe her. Trade her something in return for the knowledge he craved. “I do not have time for this,” hissed Spock as he put his hands on his hips. “Get to what you want.”

Christine smiled up at him and cocked her hip. “A date with the vulcan in Jim’s room.”


“Doctor McCoy asked the same thing,” said Christine with a predator like grin. “Deal?”


“Room two-fifty,” said Christine as she walked away.

Spock shifted his shoulders and went to go find Jim’s room.

When he approached Jim’s room he could hear a female, but he couldn’t hear Jim responding to her.

“Your doctor doesn’t like me,” said the woman.

Spock paused just before he got to the door.

The female laughed. “What makes me say that?” she asked.

There was a pause.

“Because, Jimmy,” said the female fondly. “He growled at me. Like I was invading his territory. Can’t imagine what your little Vulcan will do.”

Spock stepped into the doorway and knocked on the open door.

The Vulcan’s head snapped up as did Jim’s.

Jim didn’t look too terrible aside from the clear puff of flesh that hadn’t been plump beforehand.

The vulcan female sat next to Jim and Spock shouldn’t have a problem with that. Except her bare hand was clasped with Jim’s.

Which made a green monster settle in the pit of his stomach. He tried to push past this feeling, but it was a failed attempt as the primal vulcan in him growled. Shouted that this woman could NOT touch what was his.

Jim was not his—he knew this—but that primal urge had Spock halfway across the room and
pinning the female against the wall—crashing into some medical equipment while they were at it—before Jim could even wave a hello.

“MINE,” he hissed as he kept a firm hand on her. How dare she touch Jim. How dare she look at Spock like he was some le-matya.

This stranger tilted her head to the side, a near blank expression on her face, a burning fire in her eyes, and then she glanced at Jim. “Down boy. Didn’t work with the last one. It isn’t going to work with a vulcan.”

Spock pulled her forward and then pushed her against the wall again with a snarl. She hissed as her head smacked against the wall and then she glared down at Spock. “Do you really think your possessive nature is going to be doing you any favors?” snarked the Vulcan.

What did she know? Why was she here? Why was she holding Jim’s hand? He snarled at her again, primal vulcan instinct teaming up with that human side of him. Whispering for him to show everyone who Jim belonged to.

Jim doesn’t belong to anyone, came the logical thought. A thought Spock knew and respected deep down within himself… Jim, like anyone else, is not a trophy to be fought over and won.

It was enough for his grip to lax slightly.

Then someone skidded into the door with a shouted, “What in tarnation is going on in here?!”

Spock whipped his head around to see Jim frantically pressing the nurse call button and one frazzled looking Doctor Leonard McCoy picking himself up from where he had run into the door.

Leonard looked from Jim to Spock and frowned.

Spock had to regain control over this emotion. He had to put this woman down.

Spock stood still for a solid ten minutes of silence.

“Darlin’,” began Leonard, “Put the Cadet down.”

Spock scowled at his boyfriend and then looked back at the woman. There was something off about her, oddly familiar, but he couldn’t pinpoint what that was. He lowered her and backed away.

Far away, remaining near Jim’s bedside, the internal battle within himself still raging as he wanted to smooth his hands against Jim’s face, and cup his hands with Jim’s.

Spock fought against that. Stood stiff and prickly like some possessive house cat.

“I’m so sorry for Spock’s actions,” began Leonard as he helped the woman take her seat once more. Leonard glared back at Spock. “He gets a little possessive.”

She dusted herself off and straightened the collar of her shirt. “From what I’ve seen he isn’t the only one,” she said and put a hand on Jim’s shoulder.

Jim looked at her with a frown on his face and a look in his eyes that made Spock’s blood boil.

“I’m fine,” said the woman.

Leonard cleared his throat and addressed Spock. “Hey, Darlin, I see you met T’Palla.” And then in a lower warning tone he added, “One of Jim’s closest friends.”
Spock bristled and then looked to T’Palla. “T’Palla?” he asked.

Now that Spock had stopped to take in her appearance he noted T’Palla still looked very familiar.

T’Palla had dark skin and a nearly terran middle eastern appearance. That was usual for certain members of Vulcan who were humanoid in every sense. Skin color and all.

Yet, something stirred within Spock’s brain.

“Do I know you?” he asked her.

T’Palla looked up from Jim and squinted her eyes. “Not personally.”

Spock huffed. Of course Jim and this T’Palla were friends. They were both hard to crack and seemed cryptic in their words.

“You family banished my girlfriend,” she hissed as she looked back to Jim, “but I’m not here for petty grudges.”

Spock glared at her and snapped, “Why are you here?”

Leonard jabbed Spock’s gut. “She found Jim barely breathing and brought him in.”

“He has always been weak for a good chocolate covered strawberry,” groused T’Palla with a fond grin flashed at Jim. “Strawberries in general.”

Spock clenched every part of his body. His mother had mentioned going out to dinner with Kirk… Had this been her fault? Her doing?

Spock slouched and let out an uneasy breath. His mother hadn’t known about Jim’s allergy and she hadn’t intentionally tried to kill Jim.

At least Spock wanted to assume his mother would not intentionally kill Jim.

Jim pouted his lips and nudged at her.

Leonard sighed. “At least he is quiet.”

Which was welcomed, but also unnerving.

“I can talk,” rasped Jim, “I just don’t want to.”

There was a moment of silence as T’Palla patted at Jim’s hand before she rose to her feet.

“I should get going can’t stand getting the death stare from these two.” She motioned toward Spock and Leonard.

Jim glared at them, but nodded at T’Palla. “Safe trip,” rasped Jim with a light squeeze to T’Palla’s hand.

T’Palla nodded and exited without making any other contact.

Spock’s eyes followed her out of the room with a glare directed at the back of her head.

After T’Palla had left Spock crept closer to the bed. He placed his foot on the end of the hospital bed, lifted himself up onto it, and then lowered himself into a criss cross position.
Leonard sighed heavily and took the seat T’Palla had been in. “Sorry,” said Leonard to Jim with a glance down at the floor and then up. “For scaring your friend away.”

“I’m not sorry,” hissed Spock and then a moment later after he sagged and stared at a stain on the floor he added, “... Perhaps I could have handled the situation better.”

There was a long pause and he looked up to see both Jim and Leonard giving him this look. It read the same but looked far different on both of their faces.

On Jim it made dread fill Spock’s stomach. The small shift in expression, nearly emotionless, with brief traces of a lip twitch, a show of canine teeth, and the briefest flex of his eye lids. Unamused. Expectant of more.

And on Leonard it was a drawn brow, scrunched nose, full of snarling teeth, and murderous intent in his eyes.

Leonard snarled, “You see nothing wrong with what you just did?”

Jim’s gaze soon turned to Leonard with a raised brow and the same nearly blank expression. “Apologize to T’Palla and get the fuck out of my room,” he rasped, “both of you.”

Spock’s guts spiraled together. He hunched over himself, and scowled. Shame. Red hot shame that he had allowed this nature to take hold of him and in turn Jim was upset with him.

Which was odd when Spock thought about it.

Jim was often upset with Spock, but there had always been shouting. There had always been contact and verbalization.

Spock slipped off the bed and stared at the floor. “You...” he started, not recognising his own voice it was so monotone. “... You are correct. I must... apologize for my actions toward her.”

“I broke him,” hissed Jim. “I broke the vulcan.”

Spock turned on the balls of his feet and took in a deep breath. “You have not broken me, I have harmed your friend and realize I have harmed you in the process of harming your friend. I should not have allowed my emotions to get the better of me.”

“I broke him,” hissed Jim again.

Spock could understand why Jim assumed he had broken Spock, but deeper Spock knew what he had done was wrong. If he wanted to remain by Jim’s side... wouldn’t he have to understand that the jealousy he harbored toward this T’Palla was unhealthy? Unhealthy for him. Unhealthy for Jim.

Spock took in a deep breath. “I will return shortly.” He headed out the door and then down the hall to try and find T’Palla.

He didn’t have to go far as she popped out from around the wall of the intersecting hallway with a big grin on her face.

“T’Palla,” muttered Spock that spike of jealousy twisting at his insides. He still questioned who this woman was and how she had known Jim. How long had she known Jim? What was their relationship? Were they truly just friends?
Spock took in a deep breath. His mind racing would not be pleasant in this current situation.

“Spock,” she greeted with a cock of her hip and a hand through her curled locks.

That in itself was strange. Vulcans usually bore slick hair, whether made chemically, or with heat.

Spock himself had naturally wavy hair and it stuck up every so often when he didn’t treat it. “You are Jim’s friend and it was rude of me to attack you.”

T’Palla tilted her head and squinted her eyes. “I’m not a threat to you. I’m not a challenger.” She shifted her hip again. “Jim may be dense, but others are not.” She looked around the empty hall “They can see what you and that doctor are doing and that speaks danger for everyone involved.” She sighed. “I accept your attempts at an apology even though I am aware you are doing it because you know you hurt Jim more than you harmed me, but if you wish to continue pretending like you aren’t drooling over him…” She looked up with a glare that struck Spock in the stomach. “At least be more subtle.”

Shame solidified in Spock’s stomach and he looked down. “I do not understand.” He looked back up with a furrowed brow. What could she see? What were Spock and Leonard doing that warranted a warning? Yes he had… confusing feelings toward Jim, but he assumed that he was being subtle.

T’Palla’s face fell. Her brow knitted and her shoulders slacked. “... You are not as subtle as you think,” she said and then took a step backward.

Spock frowned and then something else popped into his mind. “Who is your girlfriend?”

She had mentioned it. How she knew Spock, but Spock had only a vague idea of who she was.

T’Palla took another step back. “Someone you knew very well. Now if you excuse me.” She took another step back. “Pike is coming down the hall.”

Spock whipped his head around and saw Pike at the far end of the hall at the nurse’s station looking slightly frazzled.

Spock’s spine stiffened as it sunk in that Pike was here.

Spock was not to be here.

As Jim would say, FUCK.

He rushed down the hall back to Jim’s room with a wheeze as the air seized in his lungs.

Jim was sitting up right and Leonard was still in the room chastising Jim for even looking at chocolate.

That all stopped when Spock skidded back into the room. Spock struggled to get the words out of his mouth with Leonard fretting and reaching out with care deep in his eyes and tone.

Pike was here. He needed to tell them that Pike was here. Warn them. What was Pike even doing here? Was he here for Jim?

Was he going to finish Jim off when Jim was weak?

Was he here to manipulate Jim?

Spock wheezed again.
“Darlin’, what are you trying to say?” asked Leonard with a jerk of putting Spock’s head between his hands.

Spock breathed in slow, looked into Leonard’s eyes, then he turned to Jim, wide eyed, and panicking he rasped, “Pike is here.”

—

For a moment Jim thought he had gone deaf with the banging of his heart and the rush of blood in his ears.

It was like he’d stuffed cotton in them the noises beyond his own mind muffled.

Spock was still freaking out and Bones was still attempting to calm down the Vulcan. Jim swallowed. It was a hard task considering the medication they had given him was barely in effect. He needed to get out.

He didn’t care why Pike was there.

He needed OUT.

A shrill noise broke out in the room as Jim ripped off every sensor they had placed on his body. He tossed the sheet aside and hopefully before Bones could separate himself from Spock Jim would be out the window.

He hadn’t really thought about how long of a fall he would have, he didn’t even know what floor he had been put on, but the window still seemed like the best bet on escape.

Of course nothing can go Jim’s way as the moment Jim felt his feet hit the floor he was flat on his face.

Jaw shoved into the mattress by one Leonard McCoy and his legendary hands. “For the love of….” groused Bones. “Where do you think you’re going?” he growled.

Jim dug his bare toes into the floor and wriggled against his doctor. He could only scowl and make a throaty noise of disapproval that he wouldn’t be able to escape Pike’s presence.

“You do know you are on the second floor right? Even if you could manage to get out you’d just be right back in here with more broken bones that I’m not allowed to heal with a regen because you’ve gotten into too much shit.” Bones pushed at Jim’s head again and stepped away. “Ass back in bed. I’ll go see what he wants.”

Jim crawled back under the thin sheet and glared at Bones the entire time.

Spock, still looking like his brain just got thrown into a blender, took a seat next to the hospital bed as Bones left. The Vulcan had rested his arm against Jim’s leg.

Jim’s fingers danced over the sheet, he extended his pinky toward Spock, and nudged at his wrist.

Spock’s eyes flickered from where Jim was poking him up to Jim’s face. He rose one brow and tilted his head just slightly.

Jim tilted his head back at Spock. Spock probably just came to see Bones which was sweet in a way. “What do you think my chances would be if I jumped out the window?” asked Jim with a
rasp still present.

Spock scowled at that. “There are ways to lessen one’s fall from two stories up, and you have a considerably higher percentage of survival…”

Jim nodded and glanced toward the window. “So what I’m hearing is jump.” Pressure on his wrist made Jim twist his head back around.

Spock had wrapped his hand around Jim’s wrist and was now glaring. “You will not jump.”

Jim bit his lower lip. Spock and Bones could list off all the reasons he should stay in the hospital, but he still really wanted to run. To not deal with Pike.

If Pike was here for Jim it would be one of the confusing times. Where Jim thinks Pike cares about him and that there is a chance for them to mend this horrible relationship they have.

Then Pike will say something about George or Winona and Jim will know.

That he is nothing more than a twisted delusion of Pike’s past work. A sack of flesh he rented DNA to in the hopes of his bloodline surviving long past its prime.

Jim’s heart ached and he stared down at Spock’s hand against his flesh. “Jump out the window with me,” whispered Jim as a last ditch plea. “We could go to your apartment or the observatory, or anywhere.” He looked up to Spock’s face with his lips parted and a strained throat. “Please, Spock.”

Spock’s brow furrowed and he paused like he had been considering the option of running away from their joint problem. Then he sighed and placed his other hand over Jim’s hand. “We will not be escaping through the window. Pike might not even be here for you. He could be here for Doctor Boyce or a number of others.”

Jim hadn’t even considered that. He felt some tension melt away from his shoulders. He knew Pike and Boyce had an involvement, but he had been too occupied with the thought that Pike was here to make his life miserable.

Leave it to a Vulcan to find some logic in the illogical mappings of the human brain.

“I didn’t think about that,” said Jim, deflated for a moment. He then jumped a little and leaned into Spock with a sudden rush of that tension back. “But what if he is here for me?” What if he was here because Spock was here?

Spock squeezed Jim’s hand gently and then slipped away. “It will be okay.”

Jim slumped his shoulders and sighed heavily. “This is what I get for getting dinner with your mother.”

Spock blinked slowly. “Did my mother do this?” he asked robotically.

Jim furrowed his brow and shook his head. “It’s not her fault.” Amanda hadn’t known Jim had bad food allergies and he wasn’t about to disclose those weaknesses to anyone he didn’t trust. “Allergies.”

Spock chuckled just a little. “What aren’t you allergic to?”

That was a good question. Jim squinted his eyes and shrugged. “That is the question.”
A silence fell over them, comfortable, yet at the same time the quiet ate at Jim’s chest like a ravenous bear wishing for fullness but never achieving it.

Something felt off about them. Painful and blurry.

Jim looked down at Spock’s hands.

“He is sleeping,” hissed Bones from what sounded like it was just beyond the reaches of the door.

“I’m sure he is,” said Pike dully. “But I am still allowed to see him.”

Jim’s heart sank like a stone into his stomach. Pike was coming to see him.

“No you aren’t!” shouted Bones a roughness to his voice.

The air in the room had seemed to grow still and thick with some unknown tension.

“Did you just push me, Cadet McCoy?” asked Pike, threatening and low.

Jim’s eyes grew wide as he sprang to his feet.

Spock’s arm tried to stop Jim, but he just went around it, and wandered to the door.

He peeked out into the hall and saw Bones standing with his back to Jim. Although Jim couldn’t see Bones’ petrified face, he could read it in the stiffness of Bones’ joints, the tight draw of his shoulders, and the clenching of fists.

In turn Pike looked absolutely murderous. He glared down at Bones with teeth set in a snarl and an even more strung body language.

Bones started to stutter, clearly intimidated by Pike, and finding his defenses lacking luster.

“What do you want?” croaked Jim.

Both of the individuals snapped their heads toward Jim.

Bones’ eyes were wide as he swallowed. “Go back to bed,” said Bones dryly.

Jim furrowed his brow and stepped out into the hall. “No,” he said sternly.

He looked to Pike and went to stand by Bones’ side. “What do you want?” he snipped. Couldn’t Bones see Jim was just trying to keep things from escalating? He was keeping Bones from having a visit to the booth or worse.

Pike narrowed his eyes at Jim, like he could read the thoughts that were whirring through Jim’s head, and then those narrowed eyes became full as a sick smile spread across his face.

The kind of smile that made Jim want to throw up.

A spike of pain stabbed him in the ribs and traveled up his back. Maybe he really did have to throw up. Maybe his body wanted to expel everything he had eaten. He barely flinched with it, but it was enough of a flinch for Bones to notice.

“You are not going to throw up in this hallway,” groused Bones.

Jim didn’t drop his stance or gaze away from Pike. “I’m not going to throw up,” lied Jim even as
the pain grew worse and worse and spit flooded his mouth. Fuck his allergies really.

Fuck himself for eating something he knew would give him this sort of reaction.

Pike was silent. Watching Bones and Jim. Waiting for the moment of weakness. Waiting for Bones to whisk Jim back into the room.

Jim wouldn’t allow it.

He knew he was going to throw up. So what better place to throw up then on Pike’s shoes?

Jim took a step closer with a scowl on his face and bile rushing up from his gut.

Pike was probably assuming Jim was trying to intimidate him, and he was half right.

Jim’s main focus though was to get as close as he could to Pike so he could throw up every single piece of uncooked fish and rice that was in his stomach.

He swallowed out of reflex; that did nothing, and when he opened his mouth all that came out was his dinner.

Right onto Pike like he had wanted.

Chapter End Notes

eyyyyyyy. Updates will be quite slow. I'm working on a new writing project as well as there are some personal family things that will be getting a little in the way of things.

Hope you enjoyed the chapter! Comments and Kudos are appreciated and I hope you have a lovely day/night/morning. Until next time!
“It was worth it,” said Jim. He had this stupid grin on his face as he dragged Leonard over hell’s half acre.

Well, not really dragging Leonard.

Leonard was a willing participant in Jim’s escapades. He walked with Jim nearly everywhere and it wasn’t new to see him walking hip to hip with Jim across campus from their piloting class (Jim’s idea) to the mess hall for lunch. It had been a few weeks since Jim’s little allergy attack.

A few weeks of Jim praising himself for being an idiot and throwing up on the most dangerous person on campus. HELL. Maybe Pike was even the most dangerous person in the fleet.

“Was it worth taking an agonizer to the kidney or the week you spent having to take punishment in the booth or--” Leonard could pretend he was fuming about how stupid Jim was. Right. Pretend. He was pissed at Jim for not being careful.

That pissed off nature didn’t last too long as Jim turned hazel eyes onto him and gave this little grin and pout combo that just did things to Leonard’s insides. “Thanks for caring about me, Bones.”

Why did Jim have to be so goddamn cute? And why did he have to say things like that?

God he was in trouble.

Jim slapped Leonard on the shoulder hard enough that it made Leonard’s steps falter.

“What was that for?” asked Leonard.

Jim shrugged and with a skip in his step he continued on toward the mess hall for a well needed lunch with Leonard following behind.

Per-usual the mess was packed with other cadets obtaining their meals, bullshitting with allies, and poisoning enemies.

Leonard rolled his eyes as Jim cut in front of the tall skinhead he had so kindly called Cupcake. “Come on, Bones,” said Jim with a drawn out whine on the s and a pair of grabby hands. “Cupcake doesn’t mind.”

Jim glanced up at Cupcake with a split grin and a gleam in his eyes. “Right, Cupcake?” asked Jim with a threat underlining his tone and a sickening cheerfulness coating his every word.

Cupcake, who had been sneering reared, back and made room for Leonard to fit in front of him.
Jim gleamed, his face twisting into one of satisfaction, and then he bounced on his toes. “Good boy.”

Cupcake was clearly now wrapped around Jim’s little finger.

Leonard wouldn’t blame the guy, Cupcake had nearly gotten his eye scooped out by the sharp end of the Empire’s emblem, and as Spock would say, ‘Fear is logical.’ That and Jim had been slowly unburdening himself with the weight of George Kirk’s name.

Of course that fake bravado wasn’t working on everyone. Most still saw Jim as a coward’s son. Jim was the son of a coward, but that coward had not been George Kirk.

Leonard slipped in front of Cupcake but kept a little closer to Jim’s backside as the line moved forward.

He scanned the mess hall and could spot Christopher Pike near the entrance and exit.

Pike met eyes with Leonard, smirked, his icy gaze then flickered to Jim, and that smirk turned into a scowl.

Finally, Spock arrived at the mess and took Pike’s full attention off of the tense stare across the room.

It didn’t take long for Leonard to know that Pike was keeping an eye on Jim.

Pike was always watching Jim.

Using Spock as his own personal little camera.

Using Boyce when he knew he would not be getting Leonard to budge from being a protective roll in Jim’s life.

“Spock is so hot I might just make out with him in front of you,” said Jim.

Which snapped Leonard back toward Jim with the realization he must’ve had this dumb look on his face while Jim yammered on about… whatever it was he had been talking about.

Shit.

Jim had his eyebrows raised and was giving Leonard this lopsided grin. “For someone who hates space you sure are up there a lot,” said Jim.

Leonard could feel his face heat up, he narrowed his eyes at Jim, and scowled at him through the burning of his cheeks. “You’re one to talk, Kirk.”

Jim puffed up his cheeks and pouted. “I think I have a valid excuse,” said Jim as the line moved forward.

Leonard tilted his head and took a step closer into Jim’s personal space with a low purr in his tone. “And what’s that?”

Jim’s cheeks visibly colored as his chest puffed up, his little grin turned lopsided, the twinkle in his eye caught Leonard off guard, so did the boastful tone as Jim leaned up into Leonard, mere inches from their faces actually touching, and whispered, “I love space.”
Jim didn’t give Leonard anytime to process as he stuck his tongue out, crossed his eyes, and jolted away as the line moved forward once more.

Leonard could feel his heart hammering in his chest and ears.

“What the fuck just happened?” asked Cupcake from behind Leonard.

Leonard swung around with wide eyes as he looked up at Cupcake and then he snapped back around to see if Jim would answer the towering monster of a man.

Jim only swiveled his hips as he grabbed a tray.

“I don’t rightfully know,” whispered Leonard.

Cupcake clapped Leonard on the shoulder like they were just old Pals.

Leonard glared at the large hand and then up at the body it was attached to. “If you wanna keep your arm, Boy, you best not touch me again,” growled Leonard.

The wall of meat’s hand retreated.

Leonard grinned something twisted and repeated Jim’s earlier statement. “Good boy.” And then he followed Jim lead. He grabbed his own tray and went about picking up lunch items.

Jim didn’t normally get his own food and Leonard wasn’t about to babysit a grown ass man’s eating habits.

At least that’s what he constantly had to tell himself. To not take something off of Jim’s tray and replace it with something that held more nutritional value or at least replace it with something Jim didn’t have an allergy to.

Like the two pieces of toasted bread and generous dollop of chocolate hazelnut spread Jim was every so neatly placing on his tray.

Leonard could feel his blood pressure spike and the cry of ‘Kirk’ die before it escaped his lips. Leonard furrowed his brow and gripped hard onto his tray. He took in a deep breath and glared at the attendant behind the lunch line.

Leonard didn’t pay attention to the food he grabbed as his brain was more focused on the whirling disapproval of Jim’s toast and death spread.

How was that kid even alive?

Leonard said nothing as they departed the line and headed toward their table which was looking a little fuller than usual.

T’Palla had begun joining them for meals after their less than pleasant introduction and with her had come Kevin Riley who was just as odd as Jim, but was growing close to their resident baby, Pavel.

The Sulu's had also joined the expanding table, but they were less than eager to squeeze closer to Jim's various companions.

Nyota swooped up from behind Leonard dragging along Galia and a strange faced Vulcan female who was not dressed in Fleet garb.
Her brown hair was stacked in an interesting way as her scarred face remained regal and nearly blank.

She sat next to T'Palla and extended two fingers to the cadet.

"Always a pleasure to see you, Pringle," greeted Jim as he took his usual seat at the mess table.

The Vulcan Jim had called 'Pringle' lowered her gaze to Jim's tray and then his face. "Jimothy," droned the female. "It is never a pleasure."

Jim puffed his cheeks up and patted the seat next to him for Leonard.

Leonard of course took the offered seat.

"Christine said she would be joining us today. She is bringing her roommate," stated Nyota as Galia stole a bit of Jim's toast.

Jim hissed before he slathered the bread in the death spread. "Bones' nightmares have come true," whispered Jim.

Leonard snapped his head over and scowled.

Before he could say anything an accented voice called from behind Jim and said, "You never learn do you?"

The voice was feminine in origin and maybe British.

Jim's head whirled around.

Leonard's gaze followed.

Behind Jim and next to Christine was a blonde woman with a long bob and striking eyes. She looked to Jim with the whitest of teeth and a sultry smolder.

"Carol," breathed Jim as he rose to his feet and embraced her.

Something shattered inside of Leonard's chest at their familiarity. Their closeness. The way Jim cupped her face and--

And they kissed. Not long and not passionate. More like a kiss one would give their grandmother, but Leonard saw red.

Jim’s lips were moving, his mouth split in the biggest grin as he talked to Carol, but Leonard could hear nothing.

No words left Jim’s lips just sound as Leonard felt everything crash on top of him at once.

He rose to his feet tray in his hands. Jim wouldn’t notice if he left and sat somewhere else.

Of course that was wrong for Leonard to think as Jim’s hand fell on his shoulder and one word had him rushing back to the forefront of his brain.

“Bones,” said Jim with a rush of urgency and a trace of worry. “Where are you going?”

Leonard felt his bones grow stiff as if they were no cartilage between his joints as he slowly turned his head toward Jim. “I was...” He looked to Carol who bit into her lower lip. He looked back to
Jim had his brow furrowed and was lowering his hand from Leonard’s shoulder. “Are you going to sit with Spock?”

That was an idea that Leonard hadn’t thought about. In truth he was just going to toss his food as he had lost his appetite, he would’ve made his way to his next class, and allowed the sour feeling consume him. “Yeah,” muttered Leonard. “I was going to go sit with Spock.”

Jim frowned. “Maybe later tonight we can meet up for dinner? You and Spock?”

That allowed some lightness from the crushing blow of Jim’s kiss with Carol. It would be nice for the three of them to gather together again for dinner. “Sounds like a plan.”

Jim smiled wide a glowing beam that crinkled his eyes as he bounced on his toes and said, “I can’t wait.”

Leonard could look forward to that, but for now he needed to work through the clear jealousy he felt toward Carol. Jim wasn’t his and the jealous feelings he bore toward Carol were, as Spock would say, illogical. “I’ll hopefully see you before then?”

Jim’s gaze flickered briefly toward Carol and then back to Leonard. It was clear Jim had no idea Carol had been in the fleet or on campus.

That spike of sourness targeted Leonard’s insides again. Jim was allowed to see friends. Talk and bond. Jim didn’t have to be wrapped up in Leonard and Spock collectively. “I understand if you want to spend time with Carol here,” muttered Leonard, sourly.


Leonard shook his head and gripped his tray hard. “I’ll see you tonight.” He made a break for it.

Jim would probably want to talk about this later. Hell maybe he’d track Leonard down and demand answers before later even came.

Leonard tossed his food in the bin on his way out of the mess hall. He stalled at the doors with his hand on the frame as he turned his head back toward their table.

Jim was picking at his food, taking the bits of toast to his mouth to just lick away the nutty spread, but Carol was in Leonard’s spot.

She had her hand on Jim’s arm, her lips moving in chatter, but they were too far away for Leonard to hear anything.

“Have you thought about it?” asked a voice that made Leonard’s stomach turn to stone.

Leonard snapped his head away from Jim’s band of idiots to face Christopher Pike. “Not in your life,” hissed Leonard as he pushed himself to exit the mess hall.

He hadn’t yet made it through the door when he heard Pike’s muttered, “You’ll change your mind.”

Leonard took in a deep breath and pretended like his quick steps hadn’t faltered. Gross fucker actually thought Leonard would betray Jim?

Leonard’s strides fell flat as he passed one of the information posts nearest to the mess hall, but still
a ways away.

The campus was nearly quiet at this time of day as nearly everyone gathered in the mess to partake in bullshit.

Had Pike been testing Leonard’s loyalties toward Jim?

Showing up at the medical building when hearing word of Jim’s self destructive behaviors… was that just to test all those involved in this little fucked up life?

The breeze tossed Leonard’s hair in his face and tickled the wisps on his neck.

He released a full bodied shiver as a creeping feeling chilled his bones.

It would be no surprise if Pike had Leonard being watched now.

Leonard had been focused on a crack in the sidewalk that had been sprouting weeds. “Is someone watching me or has Jim’s brand of fucking crazy rubbed off on me?”

A familiar yet low toned voice responded, “Cadet Kirk has a brand of crazy?”

Leonard flipped around to glare at his boyfriend. “You bet your fine vulcan ass he does,” hissed Leonard like some affronted cat. “Now what do you want?”

Spock raised a brow, he looked as poised, and in control as ever. “I am to assume you are upset with the course of events in the messhall and not upset with me?”

Leonard sucked on his cheek and glanced off back toward the crack in the walkway. “Did you even see what happened in the mess?”

Rubber soles tapped rhythmically against the concrete walkway as Spock grew closer. “You assume I am not always vigilant of you and James?”

Now Leonard wasn’t saying that. He knew Spock had a certain fondness for them both, less active to admit a fondness for Jim, but Leonard knew it was there. Leonard was glad it was there. “I ain’t saying that,” whispered Leonard as he dug his boot in the crack. “I’m just asking if you saw.” He looked to Spock as if wanting just a little reassurance that he wasn’t being a total dick with the situation.

Spock had a rare soft smile on his face. His eyes read differently. Coated with that fire Leonard had seen when T’Palla had been in Jim’s company.

It was nice to know Leonard wasn’t the only one with a little green monster eating up his insides.

“I witnessed Carol Wallace and Jim,” said Spock, dully, and with a trace of sorrow. “I also witnessed you react with an intense emotion.”

Leonard scowled. “It wasn’t that intense.”

Spock raised a brow and cocked his head just slightly. “You removed yourself and appeared to be under distress.”

Leonard frowned, crossed his arms, and huffed. Had he looked under distress? He had understood the way that he left things in the mess were less than ideal. A little saturated with clear displeasure in making Carol Wallace’s acquaintance.
With how Jim kissed her.

“You and I have a date tonight,” said Leonard as he averted his eyes back down to the weeds. “Well, not a date in words, but Jim said we should go out for dinner tonight.”

Spock hummed. “Will he be bringing Carol?”

Leonard’s stomach sank and he looked over at Spock once again.

Spock’s gaze was fixed on the ground.

Leonard lowered his head slowly. He hadn’t thought about that. “I don’t know.”

“I will still attend,” stated Spock with a small brush of Leonard’s shoulder. “Where are we going?”

Leonard bit into his lower lip. “Jim’s choice,” he grumbled and shrugged. “So dress comfortably.”

It didn’t take a genius to figure out Bones and Spock had been trying to avoid Jim until the last possible moment.

Jim was going to give them the benefit of the doubt seeing as they had both seemed tense in the past few hours. Really in the past few days. Whether it was deadlines of the approaching new year or Jim getting himself into shit…

They were probably just busy.

“You look all frowny over there,” whispered Carol as she sat at the foot of the smaller bed going through the objects Jim hadn’t unpacked, yet.

The key word being; Yet. He would eventually put them away. He would eventually settle into the apartment further. Eventually.

Carol was dressed quite modestly in a pair of worn cropped blue jeans and a slim fit olive green turtleneck. She looked fantastic. She had always looked fantastic. Natural blonde, intelligent, and positively the most patient person that had ever been in Jim’s life.

Jim was currently shirtless with a towel wrapped around his waist and dripping hair plastered to his forehead. “I don’t know what to wear,” said Jim, smoothly.

Too smoothly for Carol Marcus. She tilted her head and reclined against the bed. “Jim Kirk not knowing what to wear? That is a first,” she whispered.

Jim felt a rock solid lump settle in his gut. Carol knew him too well. Why wouldn’t she? They’d been separated for years and yet she could still read every bodily movement. Every twitch in his face. “They’ve been ignoring me all day,” Jim admitted with a trace of bitterness.

“Maybe they were busy.” Carol popped back up into a seated position and pulled an old crop top. It had once been a normal black shirt, but age had withered the black into a desaturated dark green. The symbol on the front a faded metallic gold of the empire’s crest. “Wear this one,” she said as she raised the balled up fabric.

Jim furrowed his brow and tilted his head at her. “That shirt is ancient and if I raise my arms up
“enough you get a nip slip.”

Carol’s brow raised as he continued to hold out the garment. “Then it’s perfect.”

Jim felt his cheeks heat up. Was it really the perfect shirt? “What will I wear as pants?”

Carol dug into the bag again and fished out a pair of black and white pinstripe pants that had a tie around the waist. They were high waisted and straight legged. One of Jim’s favorite comfort wears.

Jim bit into his lower lip. “It doesn’t look bad.”

Carol smiled at him. “You wore it when I broke up with you.”

Jim groaned in remembrance. It had been ages ago when he and Carol had done that. Still in the stages of figuring themselves out. Not quite young teens and not quite adults. “How’s David?” Jim asked with a glance to the floor as he took the garments from Carol. “You aren’t letting your dad raise him are you?”

A noise arose from Carol’s throat, but it got caught.

Jim raised his head to stare at her.

Her eyes were to the floor and her hands had gripped the never slept in sheets.

“Hand me some boxer briefs while you are thinking about your answer?” asked Jim with a near soft tone.

Carol’s head snapped up her hair flowing easily with the sharp movement. She remained silent as she dug through the bag. She pulled out a pair of boxer briefs and looked up to Jim. “Cats or Cacti?” She asked.

Jim sucked on his cheek. “Cacti.”

Carol handed him the undergarments and settled back to staring at a spot on the floor.

Jim lowered the towel and quickly pulled on the garments he had been handed. “Thanks.” He wouldn’t rush her on talking about David. That was something they had agreed on long ago. “Do you think he’ll come prancing in the door with some story about how he got held up in medical?”

There was a long silence. The kind of silence that would likely stretch on and on without reply.

Jim looked to Carol once he had his shirt pulled on.

She gazed up at him with this knowing smile and a dancing light in her eyes.

Did she know something Jim didn’t?

A feeling irritation impaled Jim straight through the bridge of his nose and beyond. “Don’t give me that look,” snapped Jim, fire dripping from his lips. “I’m not in love with them! They are my friends.” Which even couldn’t believe that lie anymore, so, why was he expecting Carol to believe it?

Carol shrugged and got to her feet. “Right. James T. Kirk doesn’t know what love is.”

That rock hard feeling sank deeper and deeper into Jim’s being. “I didn’t say…” He couldn’t say
anything because it was true.

He was a man who felt love was a foreign concept. Like mushrooms on Vulcan.

Love existed, but at times it was hard to imagine that the concept of healthy love existed for him. Hard to imagine that love wasn’t just one night stands in shit motel rooms and breakfast burritos on the curb outside the local gas station.

The ding of his PADD broke him from his internal pity party.

He stepped into his pants before he retrieved his PADD from the room’s dresser.

Bones’ name on the PADD made Jim feel heavy. He really was avoiding Jim until the last moment.

**McCoy, L.:** Where are we going?

**McCoy, L.:** Spock and I will meet you there.

Jim took the PADD and plopped next to Carol, who he could only assume had been watching this silent interaction with that same look.

He typed quickly and with a small forced grin.

**Kirk, J.:** That pizza place we got drunk at before the Pike shit happened. :)

He sighed heavily, put the PADD down next to him, pulled his knees up onto the tiny bed, and fell into her person. “It’s stupid, right?”

Carol shook her head. “Your mother use to say nothing is stupid.”

“And then I jumped out of a second story window at the Fleet holiday party,” said Jim with a shrug. “So there are things that are stupid.”

Carol scowled. “Fine, you are being an idiot.” She rose to her feet causing Jim to fall to the bed. “Now let’s get going so I can judge you further on your ill attempts to disguise your attractions to your friends.”

Jim groaned and rose from the bed. “Not attracted to them.”

Carol handed Jim his brown bomber jacket and tilted her head. “Of course you’re not.” She grinned wide and then headed out the bedroom door.

Before Jim left he opted to change his pants and slipped on a pair of black high waisted jeans that
hugged the curves of his hips and legs.

The trip to the pizza joint was eerily silent.

Jim sat with his head against the window of the shuttle bus, mostly thinking, avoiding Carol’s wit, and keeping himself focused on the conversation awaiting him.

“David is here with me,” whispered Carol moments before their stop.

Jim looked over at her and frowned. “Didn’t know the fleet had daycare.”

Carol laughed just a little. “Nothing is stronger than a single mother. The fleet knows this. My dad can visit, but is limited.”

Jim nodded slowly as the shuttle came to a stop. Their stop.

“Bones and Spock,” began Jim as they rose to their feet to exit. “They can get jealous easily… so if we could not bring up David… I just… Don’t wanna have this moment be a huge fucking mess.”

Carol patted his back and nodded. “I understand. How David came into our lives is… not ideal dinner conversation.”

Jim chuckled as he exited the shuttle and held his hand out to help her down the ramp. “What even is ideal dinner conversation?” He wouldn’t know. Dinner at the Kirk house was always wrapped up politics and arguments over different views.

“I wouldn’t know,” said Carol with a giggle. “I’m sure I’ll get along swimmingly with your friends.”

Jim’s eyes bugged out of his head for a small moment. With the way Bones had reacted earlier? Jim was skeptical. “I just hope they don’t… I just hope we get past this.” Work through it.

He looked to Carol and frowned. Something he had never done with her. Attempt to work through the mental shit storm.

“You’ve changed,” said Carol with a small smile. “And that is good.”

Jim rolled his eyes a little as they approached the doors to the little pizza joint. “I’m trying.” He held the door open for her.

As they entered he could tell Bones and Spock had not arrived yet. Which was good in a way. It gave Jim time to process things. To argue with himself. To question if he should bring up what happened in the mess. How Bones was ignoring him.

Talk about the past he had with Carol.

“Booth for four,” said Carol as Jim had been lost in the hedge maze of his brain. “If a Vulcan and a tanned southern gentlemen walk in they are with us.”

They were lead to one of the wall booths. Two seaters that are worn in, a little patchy, but clean. Positioned nicely with the edge of the table against the window.

Jim let Carol take the wall seat, he sat down on the end, and started to fiddle with the peeling edge of the laminated drink menu.

Carol slapped at his hands, but it did little to deter him from the act of destruction.
It was either going to be peel plastic or pick at his own skin. Plastic seemed to be the better option.

“I’m going to order some wine while we wait,” said Carol as she allowed Jim to continue to pick at the menu.

“Get a bottle,” muttered Jim as he nibbled on his fleshy lower lip. “You’re… you’re paying right?”

Carol chuckled and nodded her head. “It’s the least I can do.”

He wasn’t aware of how long they waited.

That’s a lie. He knew it couldn’t have been more than a few minutes, maybe two minutes, maybe longer, then he spotted Spock’s fluffy head, yellow tinted face wrapped up tight in what looked to be a hand knit sweater, and an arm around Bones’ waist.

Jim couldn’t help but grin wide. He hopped up from his seat and waved an arm. Too enthusiastic, he knew, but he couldn’t help himself.

Bones’ gaze shifted from the floor to this crazy asshole waving his arms. Bones smiled.

Jim felt lighter than air and in the same moment Jim’s body sunk like a stone with the look of disappointment that crossed Bones’ gaze. A subtle shift to Jim’s right.

Jim knew he was looking at Carol who could only be scrolling her eyes along the paper drink menu.

Bones nudged Spock and pointed over to where Jim had stopped waving.

Where Jim’s arms had sunk lower and lower with the added weight of anxieties.

Spock lead them both toward the booth.

Jim sat back down, left foot trapped under his right thigh incase he needed leverage to escape an awkward dinner, he clutched his hands together, and started to dig his thumbnail into the fleshy part of his palm.

Carol cupped her hand over Jim’s to pry them apart.

It took everything Jim had to look away from the approaching pair. “I can’t do this,” he hissed. A tremble down his spine.

Carol cocked her head and squinted at him. “You’re kind of late, don’t you think?”

He could feel his cheeks heat up with shame. Carol was right. It was a little late to back out of this. Especially when Bones had plopped down across from them.

Spock sliding in with grace and a small sigh.

Jim snapped his head toward them. There were so many thoughts bombarding his mind, so many words he wanted to say, and points he wanted to make on how being ignored all day had put his mind into overdrive.

He didn’t say anything. Those words would just make things complicated. Plus. His emotions were on him, but he would feel a hell of a lot better to know why the fuck he was being ignored.

Carol extended her hand to Bones with a grin. “I do believe we met earlier,” said Carol with a near
chipper tone. “I’m Carol Marcus.”

Bones’ eyed the hand, his ice water gaze traveling up the appendage, and stalling on Carol’s face. “I thought your last name was Wallace.”

Carol’s fingers twitched, she pressed her lips together, squinted her eyes at Bones, and brought her hand back down to the drink menu. “Wallace-Marcus… My parents are divorced.”

Jim nudged at her. “But hey, Your mom is awesome and I’m glad you grew up with her and not that dick.”

Carol snorted with laughter and glanced over to Jim. “I told her I met up with you today and you know what she said?”

Jim tilted his head and smirked. Ms. Wallace was always for Carol’s and Jim’s coupling, even if it had been a farce. “Oh? Does she miss my wit and charm?” he purred as he shifted to rest his chin in his hands. “My handsome face?”

Carol pressed her lips together. “I’m afraid due to our agreement earlier I am not to say.”

Something stabbed at Jim’s chest. So it was about David. He leaned back in the booth and looked over to Bones and Spock who were quiet. Observing with intense gazes.

Jim bit his lower lip. “So, Spock,” he flicked his wrist and tilted his head at the Vulcan, but nothing more came out as the thought popped back up in Jim’s mind. The crushing weight of being isolated. Of how Bones had left the mess earlier. Of how Spock had gone out moments after.

Jim’s words caught in his chest and he looked over to Carol. “Uh!” Jim exclaimed. It was suffocating. The unanswered questions. The feeling that they just hated him. Even though all of these things were on him. Not true. Illogical thoughts. He still hated it.

Hated that he couldn’t look at them and say what he needed to say. Couldn’t open his mouth with them staring into his wounded soul.

Tension was thick in the air. Carol looking to be doing her best, but with this grimace of… of something Jim had only seen when they were young pre-teens scavenging the desimated plains of Tarsus IV. The grimace that she showed when Jim had pleaded with her to pretend that they were involved when he was just shy of eighteen.

He looked back to Spock with a new kind of anxiety spiked adrenaline that forced him to speak through a tightened airway. “I don’t think you two have met,” rasped Jim, “This is my friend from when I was thirteen.” Sure their mom’s had met through a fleet event. “She got me out of a tight spot... “

He squinted at her. “Four years ago?”

She slapped the menu down with saucer wide eyes. “I do believe it has been four years, I’m surprised you… I’m surprised you recalled.”

He had counted. The scar might be glossed over now with Bones’ bathtub surgical scar taking its place, but it had always been a reminder of something he had to do.

He wasn’t meant for kids and picket fences. Just physical and mental scrapes, bruises, and scars. He looked over to Bones.
Bones had leaned forward, his chin rested in his palms, and his eyes slitted like he was examining an experiment. Wondering how the organs functioned. How blood pumped.

It wasn’t sinister in any way, not that Jim was a good judge of emotions, it looked more… curious.

A cat judging how to approach something it had never seen before.

“What spot did she get you out of four years ago?” asked Spock, who was giving much the same look, colder though, trained on Carol.

Carol’s face split with a grin. “Not ideal dinner conversation,” she said, venom dripping from her tongue. “Now do you all like red or white wine?”

Jim leaned forward enough to rest his chest against the table. “Sweet wine.”

“I’m fond of Zinfandel,” said Spock with a tilt of his head.

Jim jolted for a moment as a thought surfaced. He hadn’t commented on Spock’s sweater yet.

Now the sweater was all Jim could focus on as noise blurred away.

How does one approach complimenting a sweater?

It looked soft, hand made, and perhaps it was handmade. Something Amanda or Sarek knitted? A deep warm maroon that neutralized the green tones of his flesh.

Bones looked nice too. Done up in a comfortable looking a plaid flannel, sleeves cuffed at his elbows, and a wispy little strand of hair that seemed to fall over his face while he… was talking.

What was he saying? What was Jim missing?

Carol elbowed Jim and everything came rushing back quickly.

The background noise of a semi-crowded pizzeria the drawl of Bones ordering a glass of water and a coke.

And the waiter who had been waiting semi-patiently. Tapping on the pad of paper with his pen.

“We will get a bottle of Zinfandel,” said Carol, “and a medium veggie, extra mushrooms and onion on half and no mushrooms on the other half. No tomatoes and sardines on the side. Oh and if you would put some pineapple on the side? Not on the pizza, Cesar forbid, but someone,” and Carol glared at Jim while she said it, “Enjoys pineapple.”

The waiter nodded and left to put the order in.

Jim turned to Carol and grinned at her. “Have you ever even tried it?”

“She is right, Jim, it’s… kinda unorthodox on a pizza,” said Bones.

Jim turned to him and winked. “I’m unorthodox.” It was nice to see him agreeing with Carol though.

Bones rolled his eyes, crossed his arms on the table, and groused, “You can say that again.”

For a moment the anxiety that had been wreaking Jim’s body lessened. Maybe this wouldn’t be so bad. Maybe things would be alright for once.
Too hopeful right?

Hope hadn’t done anything for Jim in the past so what was it going to do now?

Jim took in a deep breath and attempted to focus on getting through dinner.

The comments dwindled down, a silence had descended upon the table, tense, and thick enough that Jim felt it in his bones.

Drinks arrived.

Bones sipped on his soda.

Jim dug his nails into his skin and then the wine glass that Carol had plopped in front of him.

The silence was broken when Spock cleared his throat. “Miss Marcus--”

And Spock was interrupted by Carol’s communicator beeping.

Carol held her finger up and fished it out of her pants pocket. She bit her lower lip, furrowed her brow, and gently touched Jim’s shoulder. “I must take this,” said Carol.

Jim nodded, he got up from the booth, and allowed Carol to exit.

She smiled at him, removed herself from the booth, and took the call into the restroom.

Jim sat back down. “It’s probably her babysitter,” said Jim without thinking, but the moment it left his lips he knew he had said a bit too much.

Spock’s eyebrow rose and Bones spat his drink back into the glass.

There was silence for a moment

Then Spock asked, “How old is her child?”

Jim swallowed a thick lump that had formed in his throat in the passing seconds between his slip up and the long pause.

Bones had leaned forward with a drawn in brow and a near murderous expression.

Jim swallowed again and bolted up from the table. “I have to use the restroom!” He shouted and without pause he rushed off to where he saw Carol go.

She wasn’t outside of the bathrooms but he could hear her through the door of the women's restroom.

Jim stalled for a moment before he rushed into the restroom with a high pitched shriek. “We have a problem.”

Carol had been perched against one of the sinks with the communicator to her ear. “Hold on, Sweetie, Mommy has… to deal with her friend…” She smiled and stared down at her nails. “Mommy loves you too. Sleep tight.” She made a kissy noise and then hung up.

Jim opened his mouth to throw up his word vomit, when Carol held up her finger. Jim closed his mouth.
Carol rubbed at the bridge of her nose and sighed heavily. “You brought up I had a child didn’t you.”

Jim opened his mouth again.

Carol held up her finger once more.

Jim snapped his mouth shut.

“And the Vulcan asked you how old he was?” asked Carol with a snap of her head over to Jim. Her blue eyes steely and dark.

Jim felt the twist of tension in his shoulders. It ebbed and flowed down his spine and to his toes. “... Yes.”

Carol rubbed at her face again and sighed. “You really…”

Jim was braced for some backlash. Carol to scream at him. Get angry with him.

Instead Carol threw her head back and laughed. “You really don’t change much, do you, Jim?” she asked in her fit of laughter.

That tension didn’t melt away, but Jim snapped his head at her. He blinked, brows furrowed, lower lip pushed out just slightly, and head tilted.

Carol pushed off the sink and ran her thumb along her bottom lid. “Cesar… I haven’t laughed like this in four years.”

Jim felt his cheeks heat up and he slumped forward. “What do we do?”

Carol tilted her head at him and caught her breath. “Jimmy. We do what we always do… And no we are not taking over the world.”

Jim bit into his lower lip and curled around himself. “I don’t think we are on the same page here.”

Carol approached him and put her hands on his shoulders.

He looked up at her, his brow drawn tight, and his shoulders drawn even tighter.

“We are definitely not on the same page, but what is new,” she said with a twinkle in her eyes. “Let’s get out of here and eat okay? I’ll handle it.”

That didn’t settle Jim at all. It just made the gears whirr faster. What if she said something that tipped Spock off? Spock isn’t a stupid person! Bones isn’t exactly a dumb guy either.

What if Carol couldn’t answer everything? Who David’s father is, granted they didn’t really know who David’s father was, but that was beside the point!

The air hung still as Jim took in a sharp breath. “I trust you with this,” he said, softly, and with a step backward. “... Same time exit or you first?”

Carol lowered her hands and sighed heavily. “Take as much time as you need, but I swear if you leave I’ll skin you alive.” She scooted past Jim and exited the restroom.

Jim stared at one of the crumbled tiles on the floor.
A phantom of the past licked up Jim’s spine and hissed in his ear. *You really know how to fuck something up.*

Jim clenched his jaw, some fuck of his youth was the last thing he wanted to think about currently, he dug his nails back into his palms, and looked toward the mirror.

Maybe everyone had been right. Frank, Pike, Kodos, and the various partners that plagued his sleep. Jim was always fucking something up. Fucking up his own life. Fucking up his body. Fucking up his relationships because of fear or out of fear.

He approached the mirror, movements clunky, and stiff. He was done fucking up and yet, even now he was in a women's restroom trying to talk himself up to face what he had started.

He pressed his forehead to the reflective surface and sighed heavily. "My life is some shit show for other people's entertainment." He smacked his forehead against the glass and pulled back.

Time to take that leap into the unknown.

__

Spock turned to Leonard when Jim had gotten up. “This is much worse than I anticipated,” stated Spock with a nuzzle into the neck of his sweater. The handmade object brought him comfort in stressful situations.

He had known this would be stressful. Sitting across from Jim had been becoming increasingly more difficult with the passing days. The knowledge of their link plaguing Spock’s near sleepless nights… it was agony.

“You’re telling me,” hissed Leonard as he sipped on his beverage.

It must be just as difficult for Leonard. Being in love with his best friend and unable to express the emotion clearly.

Spock slipped his hand near Leonard’s and poked at him with his covered pinky finger. “... Do you think he is the child’s father?”

Leonard chuckled at that. “Not possible.”

Spock furrowed his brow. “Because he lacks a penis?” asked Spock.

Leonard had taken a sip and spat it out with a cough.

Spock, startled, jolted back in the booth.

Leonard coughed, rubbed at his mouth, and when he looked up at Spock his cheeks were tinted bright pink. “Jim told me he can’t have kids.”

Spock blinked slowly. “Ah. Understandable.” He looked toward where Jim had retreated.

Then why did Jim react when Spock had asked how old the child was?

His brow drew together and he took a sip of the wine. “It is strange though,” muttered Spock into the beverage. “Jim’s reaction.” He glanced slowly over at Leonard.
Leonard scowled, shrank against the wall, and took a gulp of his soda.

“I applaud you for not drinking tonight,” said Spock as a change of subject.

“I wouldn’t want to subject Miss Marcus,” the name dripped with venom as it left Leonard’s lips, “to the drunk version of myself.”

Moments had passed before Miss Marcus returned to the table. “My apologies,” she said with a small smile. “My son wished to tell me goodnight.”

Spock tilted his head. Son? He hmmed and leaned back. “Quite alright, Miss Marcus—”

“Call me Carol,” she said with vigor and a slight squint. “Or Cadet Wallace. I despise my father’s very existence.”

Spock raised a brow at her and shifted in his seat once more. “Of course… Carol.”

Leonard snorted from Spock’s left side.

Spock ignored it. He was sure that if he looked over at his boyfriend that there would be a scowl planted firmly on Leonard’s face. “How old is your son?”

He noted the twitch of her lips and the muscle of her eyelid tremble. “He is going to be four years old come September.” Carol leaned into her hand and swirled the wine. “The year went by so fast…”

It had gone pretty fast. Before they knew it it would likely be the beginnings of spring. Spring break would happen cadets would come back for summer trips that would get them use to space. Either that or they would return to their homes. Their families. Training all summer for the moment they return to the academy.

“… My little girl is turning four this summer,” drawled Leonard, he sounded… sad. Tone laced with sorrow at not being able to see little Joanna McCoy.

Spock knew about her. Knew that Leonard wanted nothing more than to be a presence in her life. Wanted nothing more than to take her away from his mother, but that wasn’t going to happen.

In the Empire’s eyes Leonard was not a fit parent and in Leonard’s eyes he was also not fit.

When Spock looked over at Leonard he saw a soft smile had floated up to his lips. He looked back to Carol.

She smiled and asked, “What’s her name?”

Leonard snapped his head up, smile zapped away by the question, and then he whispered, “Joanna.”

Carol held her finger up and turned herself to her bag. She soon pulled out her PADD. “My son’s name is David.”

Just as Carol was powering up the device Jim flopped over the booth behind Carol and the waiter had brought the pizza.

Jim’s eyes grew wide as he visibly salivated and vaulted over the back of the seat. He made a cheerful noise and clapped his hands together quite… adorably. “I came back just in time for food.”
Carol leaned into him and showed him the PADD. “I was going to show them pictures of David… would you like to see them too?”

Jim’s face fell for a moment, something foreign filling his eyes.

Spock squinted his eyes. Very interesting.

Leonard leaned forward. “I bet he is an adorable thing,” drawled Leonard.

“Would you like to see, Jim?” repeated Carol with a soft look in her eyes.

Jim shook his head. “Yeah no, but thanks,” said Jim.

Spock squinted his eyes at Jim and reached for a slice of pizza. “A peculiar statement,” muttered Spock as he took up a slice of pizza.

Jim sent a sharp glare toward Spock and tilted his head. “Peculiar statement,” mocked Jim with a split grin, he leaned forward, and snagged the pineapple cup that had been placed next to Spock.

Spock hissed a little bit. “Are you mocking me, Cadet Kirk?”

Jim dipped his fingers into the cup and fished out a pineapple chunk. “Am I mocking you?” Jim raised a brow and put the fruit in his mouth. “If I am what are you going to do about it?”

“Are we really going to do this here?” groused Leonard. “Because if you two start bickering I can’t say I’ll pull you apart.”

Spock glanced over at Leonard to see he had the PADD in his hands and was scrolling through the pictures.

“He looks like his mommy,” said Carol.

Which was not true in the slightest. He looked nothing like Carol. Maybe the fair hair, but children often possessed light features until a certain age.

“Can’t say I see any resemblance,” said Spock as he leaned back and began to eat his slice.

Carol took a huge bite and wrinkled her nose at Spock.

Jim shoved a pineapple chunk in his mouth and averted his eyes like Spock had said something far too prying.

“He is yours correct?” asked Spock, directed toward Carol as Leonard continued to scroll through the pictures.

Carol chewed on her pizza in thought.

“She adopted him,” said Jim through a mush of pineapple. “Cute right? Unwanted kid gets a loving mother.”

“He wasn’t unwanted,” snapped Carol in Jim’s direction.

Jim slowly turned his head toward her.

Carol’s cheeks were flushed red.
Leonard set the PADD down and began to eat bits of pizza like it was popcorn.

Spock rolled his eyes a little. Leonard lived for drama like this.

“He just…” Carol scowled. “Was dealt a bad hand. His… parent was in no position to care for a child.”

Jim maintained eye contact for a few seconds before he returned to his pineapple cup. “I rest my case.”

Leonard handed the PADD back. “He is cute.” His gaze landed directly on Jim. “I’m sure his gene donors are very… Attractive.”

Jim’s throat bobbed with a swallow.

Spock leaned against Leonard and smirked just a little bit.

The upcoming years would be quite entertaining.

Chapter End Notes

Hope the chapter was enjoyable!

Life has been a little hectic, we found out about my grandma being in the second stages of Alzheimer's and she isn't taking that much care of herself or my grandpa and it's just. a bunch of anxiety and frustration on my end :P That and I fell head first into Doom Patrol and fell in love with Larry Trainor like the gay disaster I am. Whoops!

Anyways! Happy Pride Month! Hope everyone who is LGBTQ+ has a wonderful month and that you all stay safe! :D

End Notes

This uh... won't have a constant update schedule, but uh... yeah.

I have a [Tumblr](https://example.tumblr.com)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://example.archive.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!