A Bouquet of Flours
by shiptoomuch

Summary

Jim is a baker. A new flower shop opens up next door and the owner is particularly attractive.

Notes

okay so i NEVER write spirk, as much as I read it. Please be kind.

See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

“So there’s a new florist next door.” Jim notes while he takes off his shirt to expose the little bit of skin that Bones is going to work on today.

“Yes, Jim.” Bones says absently. After six years of friendship, he really doesn’t listen much to Jim’s babbling anymore. “That’s a great observation.”

“Well, have you talked to him yet? Welcomed him to the neighborhood or whatever?”

“No, haven’t really had the time or desire.” Bones is getting suspicious by now, and narrows his eyes at Jim. “Why do you ask?”

Jim grins and leans on his elbow to get closer to Bones. “Cuz I saw him the other day and he’s super hot. Like, stupidly hot.”

Have you spoken to him yet? Or are you just creepily staring out your front window like usual?”

“Window staring.” Jim admits, looking very much like the kid who got caught stealing cookies. “What am I supposed to do? Just walk over there with a basket of heart shaped cookies and be like, ‘Hey neighbor I’m here cuz you’re hot and I’m hot and we should totally make out’?”

“Yes. Do exactly that.” Leonard says sarcastically as he inspects his tattoo gun. “Now, lay on your stomach and I swear if you giggle while I’m doing this, I will kill you.”

“But Bones we need to-“

“Do you want a tattoo of all your exes names? Cuz if you keep talking, I will do it.”

Jim does not bake the hot florist a basket full of heart cookies, as much as he seriously considers it.

What he does do is bake a ton of flower shaped cookies and put rosettes on cupcakes that Bones glares at even as he munches away on goods that Jim is making him taste-test. Jim insists that they’re because it’s March and Spring is coming. Bones tells him his heart eyes are unmistakable and his salted caramel frosting needs more salt.

So of course since Jim’s shop is covered in flowers, (Gaila’s even started making her pastel truffles for spring again, so it really works) he obviously needs real flowers to finish off all the decorations and really pull it together. And obviously he should get those flowers from the new shop next door. And obviously he should bring over some of his freshly baked vegan red velvet cupcakes because that’s just being a good neighbor.

Jim is nothing if not a good neighbor.

He’s wearing his favorite light blue shirt and has a skip in his step when he walks in the door of the flower shop. He faltered when he sees that his plan has been foiled and it is not the hot florist standing behind the counter. The guy who is there is hot, sure, but he’s not what Jim was hoping for.

“Hello, welcome to Fabulous Flowers! Can I help you?”

Jim grins and holds up the basket he’s holding. “I’m looking for the owner? I own the bakery next
“Oh yeah, Sweet Emotion, right? I have to ask isn’t that-”

“An Aerosmith song? Yeah. The girl who makes the chocolates over there, Gaila, and I met at a concert so we decided why not. I’m Jim Kirk, by the way.” Jim laughs and shrugs.

The guy nods enthusiastically. “Very cool. So, you’re looking for Spock, I’m guessing. I’m Hikaru Sulu, his number two.” He holds out a hand to shake but realizes that Jim’s hands are otherwise occupied and takes the basket from him. “Sorry about that. Here, let me call Spock for you.”

He sticks his head in the back of the shop and shouts “SPOCK!” At the top of his lungs, making Jim laugh to himself.

Sulu reappears, accompanied by the very same Hot Florist that Jim has been ogling for at least a week. His black hair is impeccably neat and he stands ramrod-straight in place, looking at Jim with intimidating interest. “Does this customer require extra assistance that you could not provide, Hikaru?”

Sulu shakes his head and gestures toward Jim broadly. “This is Jim Kirk. He owns the bakery next door.”

“I see.” Spock says with a nod. He holds out his hand for Jim to shake. Jim tries not to stumble over his own feet when he steps forward to take it. “I am Spock, owner of this establishment.”

“Nice to meet you.” Jim most certainly does not notice that Spock’s eyes are the precise shade of freshly made dark chocolate frosting. He most certainly does not shiver at the skin on skin contact from the handshake. He most certainly does not think about those long fingers wrapped around something else entirely.

“Do you require assistance, Mr. Kirk? Or did you simply come over for introductions?” Spock breaks Jim’s train of daydreaming right in its track.

Jim pulls his hand away quickly and coughs. “Oh, uh, yeah. I actually came over to buy some flowers for my shop. I’m doing a whole ‘welcoming back spring’ thing and I figured I should decorate a bit to go along with all the flower shaped cookies and the like.”

“A logical conclusion.”

“And I figured as long as I was going to get a bouquet of flowers, I should bring you a bouquet of flours.” Jim attempts a joke that falls on the unresponsive face of Spock. Hikaru laughs but Jim still cannot help but feel defeated. “Cuz, you know, cupcakes. Flour. And I even decorated them to look like roses, so...yeah.”

“They look great, Jim.” Hikaru chimes in and Jim gets the distinct impression that he’s just trying to shut him up. “Is that red velvet?”

Jim grins and nods enthusiastically. “Yeah! And they’re vegan, too. Sort of a house specialty, I guess.”

Definitely a house specialty. Jim has to make almost twice as many of those daily.

“Spock’s vegan, so that’s great.”

“Indeed.” Spock concurs, “I look forward to trying one.”
“Here, why don’t you try one now?” Jim says excitedly. (He always gets far too excited about cupcakes. It’s a character flaw.) He picks one of the cupcakes up and peels back the wrapper. He’s halfway to holding it up for Spock to take a bite before he realizes exactly what he’s doing. It’s too late to take it back, though, so he just goes with it. “Go on, try.”

Sulu is cracking up off to the side and Spock raises an eyebrow at Jim. He briefly worries that the other man will just walk away but Spock actually leans in and takes a sizeable bite from the cupcake. When he pulls away, he’s got white frosting and red sprinkles on his lips that Jim briefly entertains the idea of licking off for him.

A pink tongue darts out and cleans up the frosting before Jim can follow that train of thought and he deflates a smidgeon in disappointment. “Good?”

Spock nods and licks his lips again. “Very.”

“You should come over to the shop some time. You can taste test for me.” Jim suggests hopefully. Really, anything he can do to get more time with Spock, he would do in a heartbeat. “Or, if you have time right now, I could use some help picking out exactly what flowers I should get for the shop.”

Spock exchanges a look with Sulu (who gives an actual thumbs up) before turning to Jim and saying, “Yes, I have time to do that.”

“Cool. Very cool.” Jim grins broadly and he honestly wants to punch himself. He can practically hear Bones laughing at him.

They make it back to his shop without Jim jumping Spock on the way, which is a good thing and something that Jim will probably thank the stars for for days to come. He thinks he sees Bones lingering in the front window of his shop when they exit Fabulous Flowers, but it’s probably his imagination and a whole lot of anxiety at having Spock all to himself so quickly.

“I believe some lilies would be a good addition to the shop at this point. There is a lot of color in here and a white flower would accent it nicely.” Spock decides after walking around the shop for a few sweat-inducing moments.

Jim nods in agreement. Spock is right, of course. Jim feels sort of stupid for not figuring that bit out himself. “Yeah. That’ll look good.”

Spock, however, has moved on to look at the display of cookies and cupcakes. “These cookies bear significant resemblance to the displays in our windows.”

Jim blushes bright fuschia and rubs the back of his neck. “I may or may not have been inspired.”

“They are beautiful.” Spock rests and long fingered hand on the countertop. “This is where you stand while you work, I assume?”

“Yeah, when I’m out in the front and not back decorating. Otherwise I’m out talking to customers.”

Spock tilts his head to the side, looks at Jim, then back at the counter. “There should be blue flowers around this area. It will help to bring out the rather spectacular shade of blue of your eyes.”

If Jim was blushing before, it’s nothing compared to the heat of his face now. He stammers a bit before finally blurtting out. “Do you want to get coffee some time? Gaila makes a really great vegan mocha and we could have more of those red velvet or whatever. It doesn’t have to be here, of course, that might be weird since I own it. We could go to Starbucks or-“
Jim is silenced by a pair of slightly cool lips pressed to his own. He’s too stunned to even think about responding until after Spock has already pulled away. “Wow. Uh…okay. Is that a yes?”

“You babble when you are nervous, it would seem. I took the most logical course of action to stop that.” Spock says with a half smile that sends Jim’s stomach into cartwheels. “And to answer your question: Yes. I would like to ‘get coffee’ with you some time.”

“Cool. Very cool.”
“This is our new carrot cake.” Jim places a plate and a fork in front of Spock, who’s perched primly at the long counter. “It’s not perfect yet. I’m thinking it might need more cinnamon and maybe some cranberries during Christmas but I don’t really know.”

Spock has already started eating while Jim babbles on about spices and dried fruits. Once Jim is finished with his fretting, he watches the way Spock’s lips close around the fork almost carefully before pulling off slowly. It’s sensual in a way that eating carrot cake should not be.

“So, what do you think? More cinnamon?” Jim asks mostly to distract himself from the very tempting prospect of chasing the taste of the cake in Spock’s mouth.

Never one to beat around the bush, Spock starts off with, “Do you not think this could be improved with some of your caramel sauce?”

“Oh, shit, yeah!” Jim says excitedly. He nearly smacks himself in the face for not thinking of it himself, but manages to resist that particular urge. “Here, I just made some fresh last night.” He runs back to the kitchen to fill a small cup with caramel sauce for the cake.

When he comes back, Spock is still eating the cake and is almost finished with his slice. “You must have been a nightmare for your mother with that sweet tooth.” Jim teases and cuts another slice from the cake (it was a test cake, so he doesn’t really care how much they eat today.)

“I have never had a ‘sweet tooth’ until I met you.” Spock replies. “Your goods are particularly enticing.”

Jim grins lasciviously and leans across the counter. “Is that so?”

Spock swallows minutely and nods. “Indeed.”

Jim leans in close to Spock, whose breath catches, halfway closes his eyes halfway so that he can still see the way Spock leans in closer to him in anticipation, and pulls away at the last second to pour caramel on the slice of cake like that didn’t just happen. “Yeah, I think this’ll be great. Thanks for the suggestion, Spock!” He chirps.

An annoyed sigh is his response and it only makes Jim grin wider. “Something wrong? Oops.” He accidentally pours some caramel sauce on his finger. “Help me with this?”

He doesn’t think Spock will do it, but as always, he is surprised by the other man. Spock leans forward to suck the caramel off of his finger. Jim ogles at what is happening to him. It’s totally unsanitary, it’s unprofessional, it’s-

Completely and utterly fucking hot. Arguably one of the top ten hottest things that has ever
happened to Jim. Maybe top five. Top three, probably.

Spock pulls off his finger with a pop and a mischievous glint in his eyes. Jim leans in close with real intent this time and not just teasing.

“I better never see that happen in here again and I swear if you don’t wash your hands this instant, I will never come in here again.” Bones’ voice comes out of nowhere to interrupt what was probably going to be one of the better times Jim’s ever had in his little bakery.

“You never coming back in here? Very tempting right now.” Jim grumbles but walks over to the small sink to wash off his hands quickly. “Seriously, Bones, way to be a buzzkill.”

“Maybe if you didn’t get your ‘buzz’ on in your place of work, it wouldn’t be a problem.”

“It’s my store. I can get my buzz on wherever I want to.”

“Not in front of the sugar cookies, Jim. Not in front of the sugar cookies.”

“You could always leave.” Jim suggests. “Stay in your own shop. Avoid seeing me and my relations during my down time.”

“Please don’t go on about your relations.” Bones waves his hands between Spock and Jim. “It’s not proper.”

“We were just taste testing!”

Gaila walks in right before Bones has any chance to send some snappy remark Jim’s way. She bounces in, hips swaying and red curls flying around wildly. She stops dead in her tracks when she realizes how many people are in the shop. “Wait. It is Sunday, right?”

Jim frowns and nods slowly. “Yeah, why?”

“Because it’s ten and we open at noon on Sunday, which means you don’t get here until eleven usually. And Leonard’s here but his place isn’t even open on Sundays. And Spock...well, hi Spock.” She finishes with a wave in the direction of the florist.

Spock raises a hand to wave back (a movement that looks so weird on him, in Jim’s opinion) “Good morning, Gaila. It is nice to see you.”

“Oh you are just the cutest thing.” Gaila says and ruffles his hair, much to Spock’s displeasure and Jim’s jealousy. She walks (flounces) over to Leonard and plants a kiss on his cheek. “And what are you doing here? You said last night that you were going to sleep all day.”

“That was before you did that thing with the chocolate last night and ran away.” Leonard says and places a hand on her hip. “Came by to see you.”

Gaila giggles and they kiss, forcing Jim to make retching noises. “Seriously, Bones? ‘That thing with the chocolate?’ And you had the nerve to tell me to keep it clean?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Last time I checked, talking about my sex life was not as disgusting as sucking caramel off each other’s fingers in broad daylight.”

“We were just taste testing!”

“Is that what you kids are calling it these days?” Bones raises an eyebrow and folds his arms across his chest. Jim wants to punch him.
“I thought you were dating Carol now, anyways?” He decides to ask rather than pursue the very tempting prospect of beating Bones up.

“I am. And I’m dating Gaila. And Carol is dating Geoff.” Bones says simply. “This should not come as a surprise to you. It’s called dating, Jim.”

“Jim’s very into monogamy these days.” Gaila tells Spock like it’s some sort of secret. “He was so much more fun when we met.”

“I was nineteen when we met. I’ve changed just a little bit.”

“Yeah, but you’re boring now.” Gaila insists. “Not that I don’t love you, Spock. I really do. Jim is just…different.” She adds for good measure.

“I’m happy now, Gaila.” Jim counters. He glances over at Spock, who is watching him with an unreadable expression. “What?”

“I find learning about your past fascinating.”

“You do?”

“Yes. You are remarkably interesting, James. I should like to know more when we have time.” Spock says it like it’s nothing and Jim’s heart flip flops. “As for right now, I must be off to mind my own shop.” He stands to lean over the counter and peck Jim on the cheek. “Thank you for the cake. I shall see you later today.”


As soon as the door shuts behind Spock, Gaila and Bones says, “You two haven’t slept together yet, have you?”

“What?” Jim squawks. “How do you even know that?”

“Because, Jim, in between all your heart eyes and mooning, there are some of the most sexually frustrated glares I have ever seen.” Bones says like it is completely obvious. “I’ve known you long enough to recognize it.”

Jim opens his mouth to defend himself but all that comes out is a dejected sigh. He slumps against the counter. “We’ve been dating for three weeks. I know that’s not a long time but I have never been more frustrated in my life. I have literally been walked out on in the middle of sex, but walking away from Spock at the end of the night? Way worse.”

“Why haven’t you two done anything yet?” Gaila asks with a head cocked to the side.

Jim groans again and thumps his head on the counter. “He hasn’t given me any sign that he wants to. We’ve made out before and it’s always really really awesome, but he’s so closed off…I just don’t know what’s happening in his mind.”

“Well, it’s not because he doesn’t want you.” Bones assures Jim. “I’m pretty sure licking your fingers is a pretty good sign.”

Jim flushes and coughs into his arm to cover it. “Yeah, but that’s the first time he’s ever done something like that! I don’t really know what he actually wants.”

“What it sounds like he wants is something serious.” Bones says like it’s totally obvious and Jim’s
“You’ve never really done that before, I know, but I think you’re really going to have to settle down with this one.”

“Aw, wittle Jimmy is going to be in a real adult relationship!” Gaila coos in a baby voice. “And he matches his shirt right now!” She reaches over to tug at the collar of Jim’s pink shirt.

“She’s just like that. I sort of like it.” Jim says, trying to conceal the smile that threatens to break across his face just from talking about Spock. “Seriously, though, Bones. You have to help me figure out how to be serious with Spock.”

“Now, Jim, I want you to understand something.” Bones says seriously and Jim leans forward expectantly. “I am not here to be your therapist. I’m here to make out with Gaila while she pretends to do inventory.”

“Time to close up, Boss.” Gaila says fifteen minutes after Jim should have closed up. “Go on, I’ll lock up tonight. Go see your boyfriend.”

“He’s right. That is totally what’s going to happen.” Gaila concurs solemnly. “So…don’t bother us for a while.” She grabs Bones by the elbow and practically drags him into the back room.

“Do not get any body fluids on the merchandise!”

“Time to close up, Boss.” Gaila says fifteen minutes after Jim should have closed up. “Go on, I’ll lock up tonight. Go see your boyfriend.”

“Seeing a lot of each other without really seeing any of each other.” Gaila says with a shove at his back. “Go fix that.”

Gaila unties the offending article with a swift movement. “There! Now let me look at you real quick.”

Jim turns to her and holds his arms out from his body, palms forward, to present himself. “Do I look decent?”

“You have flour in your hair.” Gaila laughs as she reaches up to brush the offending powder from his hair. “There. You look gorgeous as always. Even hotter than you did when you were in that ‘Engineering students of Berkeley’ calendar.”

“He’s not my boyfriend.” Jim insists petulantly. “We’re just seeing each other.”

“Ugh, don’t remind me.” Jim groans and covers his face with his hand. “Just forget everything I
did before I was twenty.’”

“Everything and everyone?”

“I regret it all.” Jim shakes his head and shudders.

“I know you do, Baby. Now, Go! And take these peanut butter truffles for Sulu.”

Jim takes the sweets from Gaila with a roll of his eyes and a scoff at her very transparent antics.

“Alright. See you tomorrow.”

Jim walks all of ten steps over to Fabulous Flowers and pushes the door open without any of the hesitation he felt that first time. “Hey, Jim! Here to see Spock, I assume?” Sulu looks up front he computer he’s working on to wave at Jim.

“Well, and Gaila sent me over with these for you.” He throws the pastel blue and white box on the counter next to Sulu. “I think she likes you.”

Sulu looks up at Jim again with a dopey grin. “Really? You think so?”

Jim almost feels sorry for the guy. He’s seen person after person fall head over heels for Gaila. They gets what they want (physically) but they never walk away from it quite as satisfied as Gaila does.

So far, only Bones has been able to survive the force of nature that is Gaila Oriana.

“Well, Sulu, I think so.”

“Awesome.” Sulu nods and the grin does not falter. “Spock’s in the back doing some inventory, I think.”

Jim taps the counter twice and rounds it to go back into the large refrigerator room where they keep flowers to be used for arrangements. Spock is standing by a case full of tulips with a tablet in his hands and does not seem to notice Jim walk in.

Jim steels himself and walks toward the other man with a gait that is far more confident than he feels. He wraps his arms around Spock from behind and presses a warm kiss to the side of his neck.

“Jim.” Spock breathes out and his posture relaxes minutely. “You are early.”

“Gaila kicked me out.”

Spock turns around in Jim’s arms and stares directly into his eyes like he’s looking for something. “Do you always allow your employees to bully you?”

Jim scoffs and shakes his head. “Please, she’s basically an owner. And anyways, I wanted to see you.”

“I am glad.” Spock says before leaning forward and capturing Jim’s mouth in a kiss.

The way Spock kisses him has yet to fail to throw Jim off in the last three weeks. The passion of it is so incongruous with Spock’s reserved demeanor that it makes Jim feel like he doesn’t know exactly what is coming.

They break apart when Jim feels almost lightheaded from lack of air. Spock’s pupils are blown wide and Jim shivers under his intense gaze. He hardly has time to think about it before he’s
saying. “Spock, I want…I want this to last. I know it’s early, but I want this thing between us to be real.”

“Jim,” Spock’s voice is barely above a whisper. “I would like nothing more than to be yours for as long as you will have me.”

“Really?” Jim doesn’t say so much as squeak. “Well then, count on me being around for quite a while.”

Spock doesn’t respond except to lean forward and kiss Jim again.

“Spock, I have a request.” Jim’s heart hammers in his chest as he finally gets the courage to ask.

“Anything, Jim.” Spock says solemnly against Jim’s neck where he’s sucking kisses.

Jim gasps when Spock’s lips hit a particularly sensitive spot. “Come home with me tonight.”

Never in Jim’s life has he been so happy that he moved out of the small apartment above his shop into the home he currently occupies than when he actually takes Spock home for the first time.

“Well, this is home.” Is all Jim has time to say before Spock presses him against the wall by the door and attacks his mouth. The combination of his hands, mouth, and rolling hips is enough to make Jim forget whatever it was that he was going to say.

“I believe this would be better continued in your bedroom.” Spock concludes and steps away from Jim, who whimpers pathetically.

“Fuck, Spock. You expect me to be able to walk after that?”

Spock’s head tilts to the side. “I can carry you, if you so wish.”

Heat flashes all over Jim’s body at the prospect, but he shakes his head. “Maybe another time. Come on.” He grabs the collar of Spock’s shirt and walks backward toward his bedroom, taking his boyfriend with him. “I’ve wanted this since I first saw you, Spock. You have no idea.”

They enter his bedroom and Spock takes initiative to crowd him toward the edge of the bed until his knees hit and he falls backward onto the mattress. “You are so beautiful.” He says almost reverently.

He leans forward to slowly unbutton Jim’s shirt, pressing a kiss to each bit of newly exposed skin. Jim lifts up helpfully to help him get it off completely. “So beautiful.” He says again.

Jim is shaking under the intense ministrations but still manages somehow to pull himself up into a sitting position and grab the back of Spock’s neck to kiss him soundly.

His fingers are quick at the buttons of Spock’s shirt and the pants that follow it to the ground. Jim grips his hips tightly and looks up at Spock, who is regarding him with more desire than Jim thinks he has ever seen in his life. “Jim.” His voice is choked when he speaks.

“Sh.” Jim says and hooks his fingers under the waistband of Spock’s underwear and pulls them down swiftly. His cock springs free finally, standing proudly. Jim’s mouth waters at the sight of it but he pulls Spock down on the bed next to him instead of acting on that particular urge.

Spock jumps into action once he’s been pulled on top of Jim. He sets to work kissing down from
his mouth to his neck, where he sucks and bites what is sure to be a rather impressive hickey right above his collarbone.

Once he’s done soothing the affected skin with his tongue and relishing in Jim’s uncontrollable whimpering, he dips down to suck his right nipple into his mouth and worry it with his teeth and tongue until Jim is pulling at his head and begging him to stop before he goes from that alone.

Spock trails his lips down down down until finally he’s at the waistband of Jim’s jeans. He unbuttons them and Jim tilts his hips up so that he can pull them and his underwear down in one swift moment.

Spock licks once up Jim’s shaft and sets his blood absolutely on fire before he goes once again to attack his mouth. “So beautiful.” He repeats once more.

Jim grips his hips tightly and rolls them over so that he’s straddling Spock, who looks absolutely sinful spread out on his bed with his black hair utterly destroyed. His long fingered hands trace over Jim’s abs and pecs curiously like he’s trying to memorize exactly what Jim feels like.

Jim reaches down and takes one of those hands in both of his own. He regards it for a moment before leaning down and sucking two fingers into his mouth. The reaction from Spock is both surprising and one of the most enticing things Jim has ever seen. He arches up off of the bed and gasps loudly.

“Sensitive fingers?” Jim says teasingly. Spock nods.

Jim brings the hand up to his mouth again to nip at the tips of his index and middle fingers before sucking on them again and laving his tongue over every inch of Spock that he can reach. Spock moans loudly and rocks his hips up, looking for some sort of friction. Jim pulls off with a pop and a wicked grin. “That’s so fucking hot, Spock. You have no idea.”

Spock’s only response is a whimper that sends heat directly to Jim’s cock. He reaches for the tube and a condom that he keeps in his side table before leaning down to whisper in the other man’s ear, “I want you to fuck me. First, with those sensitive fingers of yours, and then with your cock. I want you to fuck me so hard I feel it for a week.”

Spock growls and rolls them over again, this time working more quickly to explore Jim before finally reaching his entrance and swiping over it once with his tongue, making the blond arch up and grip the bedsheets. He bites his lip to keep from shouting.

“I want to hear you, James.” Spock says huskily while he opens up the lube and pours some liberally on his fingers. “Please.”

The ‘please’ comes right as he circles Jim’s entrance and pushes one finger past the ring of muscle. Jim arches up and shouts roughly. He’s not entirely sure what he might even be saying, just that it comes out without his control.

Spock smirks at him and crooks his finger to brush against Jim’s prostate, making stars erupt in his vision.

He pulls out almost completely and Jim whines at the lost only to have two fingers pressed in slowly. Jim loses it and scrambles for purchase on the sheets.

The third finger comes sooner than the second and Jim is about ready to fall apart when he finally manages to get out, “Spock. Need you now.”
Spock is remarkably responsive and pulls out of Jim quickly to roll the condom over his hard cock and coat it in ever more lube. He lines up at Jim’s entrance and pauses only to kiss him deeply before pressing in slowly.

“Wait. Give me a moment.” Jim puts a hand on Spock’s shoulder once he’s fully seated inside of him. He breathes a few breathes before the fire bursts once more in his abdomen. “Alright. Move”

As much as Jim has dreamt of this moment, the actual thing is so much better. Spock is good, better than anyone else Jim has had. A voice in the back of his head tells him he’s never been quite so far gone for anyone else before, but Spock hits his sweet spot right at that moment and erases any thoughts from Jim’s mind except for more.

Spock speeds up, thrusting directly onto Jim’s prostate with each movement, and reaches down to wrap his hand around Jim’s cock and pull in time with his thrusts. It’s one, two, three more thrusts before he buries himself one last time and releases, with Jim following him swiftly over the edge.

Jim knows that he should get up and get a washcloth to wipe his cum off of the both of them, but Spock wraps himself around Jim tightly after he pulls out, and Jim cannot bring himself to extricate himself from the embrace.

“Stay here tonight?” He asks timidly.

Spock’s eyes flicker open once more so that brown meets blue in a warm gaze. “I do not think I could leave if you asked me to.”

Chapter End Notes

Feedback appreciated!

Tumblr: fabtrek
When Jim wakes up, Spock isn’t there. His bed is decidedly lacking in tall stoic florists and it feels bigger and emptier than ever before. First, he panics, then he feels embarrassed and angry with himself.

Finally, his brain catches up with the smell of someone cooking.

He sits bolt upright and scrambles out of his bed, practically tripping over himself in his rush to pull on a pair of sweatpants. He finally manages to pull the thin cotton over his legs and stumbles his way out to the kitchen.

Spock is standing at the stove with his back to Jim. He’s wearing his boxer briefs and one of Jim’s t-shirts, which hangs loose on his slightly narrower shoulders. He’s cooking what appears to be an omelet.

“I thought you were vegan.” Jim says finally and Spock starts slightly. He turns to face Jim, spatula in hand and half of a grin on his face. Jim swallows thickly.

“I am. You, however, are not. I made myself a fruit salad.” Spock waves with the utensil at the glass bowl sitting on the counter. “I hope it is alright that I have used your food.”

“Fine? This is great!” Jim cups Spock’s jaw in his hand and kisses him quickly. He glances over his shoulder and snatches the spatula from Spock. “Here, I’ll finish this.”

Spock attempts to take back control but a swat on the hand from Jim makes him back down with a pout. “I intended to make your breakfast for you.”

“Please, you should know better than to cook in a chef’s kitchen.”

“You are not a chef, but rather a baker.”

Jim slaps a hand over his heart and gasps in mock horror. “Spock! You wound me!”

“It was not my intention.” Spock assures him, even though he still has that damn smirk on his face.

“Yeah, yeah.” Jim shakes his head and laughs to himself. A month ago he never would have imagine finding himself here. He flips the omelet onto a plate and waves Spock over to the small kitchen table. “Come on, sit down.”

Spock walks halfway over and stops in his tracks to look at the frame above the table. Jim almost punches himself and briefly considers tackling Spock so that he won’t look at it.

“Jim is this your degree?”

“In aerospace engineering at Berkeley, yeah.” Jim answers with a dejected sigh. “Yeah.”

Spock turns to face him with a raised eyebrow and a frown. “Why do you have a degree like this if you are a baker?”

Jim groans and runs a hand through his hair. He puts his plate down on the table. “Come on, we’d
better sit down if we’re going to talk about this.”

Spock sits obediently and looks up at Jim, who briefly entertains the idea of running away from his problems. Instead, he throws himself into one of the chairs. “I come from a pretty wealthy family.”

He starts off. Spock says nothing, but his eyebrow does stay up by his hairline. “Lots of engineers, lots of lawyers, you get the idea. Lot’s of people who did a lot and made a lot of money doing it.”

He looks down at his hands and sees the fresh brun from the other day when he had an incident with a cookie sheet. “I know my house doesn’t really scream ‘I grew up in a huge manor with a full time service staff’ but…yeah.”

He trails off, wishing for Spock to say something, but the other man keeps his mouth shut tight. He doesn’t look angry but something about the way he listens so intently throws Jim off.

He takes a breath and presses on, “I used to spend all my time running around and causing trouble, so our personal chef, Lynda, sort of took me in. Used to make me bake things. Taught me more sophisticated techniques than most eleven year olds know. She always said that creating something—even if it’s small—was better than destroying anything big. I would do my homework there in high school while whatever was in the oven cooked.

“Then I graduated high school and my mom’s fiancé Chris, he knew my dad before he died and had all these big ideas about what he was like. And he encouraged me to go to Berkeley because it was the ‘best option’ and would be living up to his memory or something.” Jim laughs bitterly. “So I went. Studied Aerospace. Met Gaila and Bones at some party. Graduated at the top of my class. People talked about my ‘potential’ like it was some hot topic.”

Finally, Spock speaks up, “If you did all that, why are you-“

“Just a baker?” Jim cuts him off with a humorless chuckle. “I was supposed to start work at a firm a month after graduation. About a week before that…I woke up.”

“Woke up?” Spock asks with a head tilted to the side. “I do not understand.”

“Well, Gaila finished her apprenticeship or whatever at a chocolate shop in San Francisco and Bones just got through his…personal stuff and was looking for a change of scene. So they were planning to move out here to Sweetwater and open their own shops with money they had saved. Gaila mentioned that it’d be great to have my startup money and that a combined bakery and chocolate shop would be a good idea.

“And I know that she was joking, but something clicked when she said it. I knew I didn’t want to be an engineer, so I quit with the firm, called my mom up to get her to chip in with the shop, and just left. Best decision I ever made.” He finishes with a sigh and a small smile.

He’s never told anyone about that before. The only people who knew for the longest time are Bones, Gaila, and his mother, and they all lived it with him. Now that he’s got Spock too he feels…safe.

“You are remarkable, Jim.” Spock says and reaches out to take Jim’s hand in his own.

“Nah, just flighty.” Jim says and shakes his head. “And I apparently really like pissing off my mom.”

“Was she angry when you told her?”

“I don’t think angry is the right word…disappointed, maybe? Surprised? She had a lot of plans for
me and I didn’t exactly live up to them, is all.”

“You are remarkable.” Spock restates. “It must have taken an amazing amount of courage to pursue what would truly make you happy. I know that if I had been in your position, I never could have.”

Jim’s face goes hot and he looks down at their joined hands. He grins to himself. “I don’t think it was particularly brave, but it got me here and I’m happier now than I’ve ever been before. So, I guess that’s sort of remarkable.”

- 

“Heya, Spocko!” Gaila calls to him when he enters the shop. “Looking for Jim?”

“He is late for lunch.” Spock explains, ignoring the nickname with which he has been dubbed. “Do you know why?”

Gaila grins “Aw, are you worried?”

Spock resists the urge to sigh and rolls his eyes. He was not worried. He was merely wondering what could have kept Jim from meeting him even fifteen minutes after their designated time. He was merely concerned by this unprecedented behavior on the part of his partner. “I was not worried.”

“Sure.” Gaila draws the word out far longer than necessary. “I’m pretty sure Jim’s in the back working with his little baking protégé.”

“Protégé?”

“Yeah, this kid Chekov. He’s, like, seventeen and he’s almost as good as Jim. I’m pretty sure Jim is considering adopting him.”

“Do you think Jim will be upset if I interrupt?” Spock asks. When he first met Gaila about a month ago, he might have asked about the adoption comment but has since learned better than to take most of the comments made by Jim’s friends seriously.

Gaila barks out a short laugh. “Do I think Jim will mind his lover interrupting? Seriously?”

Spock nods at Gaila and all but disregards her sarcasm. Jim has always been serious about his business, any relationships aside. Still, Spock goes back into the kitchen.

“Hello, Jim.” He catches the attention of the blond, whose face is effectively covered in flour.

“Hey, Spock!” Jim chirps and waves, sending ever more puffs of flour into the air. “Why are you-oh shit I’m late, aren’t I?”

Spock nods. He is not annoyed and is even more accepting of the situation now that he sees that Jim is happy and busy and nothing is wrong. “If you are busy, Jim, I can leave.”

Jim grabs a washcloth and wipes down his face and hands. “No, I’m coming. Chekov here should probably go grab lunch too.”

The young man with curly hair who is also covered in flour grins and nods, his curls bouncing eagerly. “Hello! I have heard much about you, Spock.” His thick accent makes it quite difficult for Spock to understand him, but he manages.
“Geez, Chekov. Way to make it seem like I talk about him constantly.” Jim scoffs with a rather attractive pink flush to his cheeks. “He’s going to think I’m a fourteen year old girl with a crush.”

“An illogical conclusion, as I am already quite familiar with your antics.” Spock says in response. “Though I must admit, you never fail to surprise me.”

“I endeavor to, so thanks.” Jim says with a laugh in his voice and a grin that Spock will file away to consider later. He wraps an arm around Spock’s waist and rises slightly on his toes to kiss his cheek.

Before Jim, Spock absolutely loathed any form of physical affection in front of third parties. Had it been any of his previous partners kissing him in front of the young Chekov who he had just met, he might have pulled away or dodged it before it could happen. With Jim, he finds he is quite all right with the situation.

“Where would you like to eat?” Spock asks Jim.

“Um…Expressly Leslie?”

“That is a vegetarian restaurant.” Spock states and immediately regrets doing so. Of course Jim knows that.

“Yeah, and you make me omelets.” Jim acts like this is a valid explanation for his choice of venue. He catches onto Spock’s continued confusion, though, for he continues with, “It’s called giving and taking, Spock. Compromise. A healthy relationship.”

Spock considers this for a moment and tries very resolutely to ignore the strange way his heart beats in his chest. “It is…far more considerate than any other partner I have had.”

“I should go.” Chekov’s voice comes as a surprise when he speaks up. Despite his uncomfortable tone of voice, he has a smile on his face as he picks up his phone from the table and puts it in his back pocket. “Goodbye, Jim. Goodbye, Spock.”

“Bye, Chekov! You coming tomorrow morning to help me with the morning prep work?” Jim returns the wave given by Chekov but doesn’t remove his arm from around Spock’s waist.

“Da, of course.” Chekov nods again and exits the kitchen, leaving Jim and Spock alone.

Jim apparently takes note of this change in privacy, because he shifts immediately to rest both hands on Spock’s hips. He leans forward and kisses Spock on the mouth. He moves slowly but with enough insistence to make his intentions clear.

He walks them backwards so that Spock’s backside hits the counter behind him. Spock knows that they should not be doing this in the kitchen and has every intention to tell Jim this, but then his partner’s lips are firmly attached to his neck and Spock effectively forgets everything he was about to say.

Finally Jim takes his mouth off of his neck (and most likely leaves a sizeable bruise in his wake) and is about to dive in again when Spock manages to get out, “This is leading to something which will be most unsanitary.”

Jim looks just about ready to ignore him and continue with his course of action but instead collapses into a fit of giggles with his forehead resting on Spock’s shoulder. “I can’t believe we almost did that. One time, a girl asked if we could and I just told her to leave.”
“I have never even considered doing anything of this nature until now.” Spock admits. “The prospect was quite tempting once you proposed it in your unique way.”

“Unique, sure.” Jim says with a laugh he looks up at Spock again and pecks him on the lips. “Let me grab my wallet and we’ll go get food.”

“No need, I am paying this time.”

Jim grins at Spock but moves over to the small locker containing his belongings. “You are too good to me.”

Jim grabs his phone from the locker and frowns at the screen immediately upon turning it on. A few more taps and the expression only deepens.

“What is wrong?”

Jim looks up at Spock like’s he is surprised by his presence. “What? Oh, someone called me and I missed it.” He pauses for a moment before adding. “Actually…do you mind if I call them back? It might be important.”

Spock nods. “Of course, Jim. I will wait for you.”

“Thanks.” Jim says distractedly and disappears through the door to the bathroom. The door locks definitively behind him.

Spock is worried.

Chapter End Notes

ooo actual plot and dRAMA
“Hello? Jim?”

“Yeah, Sam, it’s me.” Jim breathes out a sigh of relief. His brother sounds okay, which means nobody can be seriously hurt or dead or dying. “You called? Like, three times?”

“You didn’t pick up.” Sam explains. “I really needed to talk to you.”

Jim groans in frustration. Any affection or worry he had for Sam is gone out the window and he’s mostly frustrated that he has to explain his life to him again. “I was working, Sam.”

“And you didn’t have your phone on you?”

“No, Sam, I didn’t. Because most of us have to be present and deal with people and it’s rude to have your cell ringing when you’re trying to take someone’s order.”

Sam sighs and Jim can practically hear him rolling his eyes. “I still don’t understand why you would choose that for yourself.”

“I was just trying to tell you that I think you should come to Mom’s birthday party. It would mean a lot to all of us.”

“What the hell, Sam?” Jim all but shouts into the phone. He clenches his jaw shut and breathes heavily through his nose. “No way am I going to fly all the way out to Iowa for Mom’s birthday!”

“Jim, come on.”

“No, you come on! You had to have known that I would say no before you called me.” Jim snaps. His fingers itch to hang up and grab lunch (quickly becoming dinner) with Spock but he keeps the device pressed to his face.

Sam sighs again, sounding like he’s dealing with a petulant four year old rather than his adult brother. “Don’t be unreasonable. At least think about it.”

Jim pauses for a moment just for effect before saying, “Thought about it, still no! Hell, this is the first time I’ve been invited anywhere near the family in almost five years!”

“No it’s not.”

“Yes, it is.” Jim answers in a mocking tone. “I graduated when I was twenty-one, Sam. I’m almost twenty-six now. You guys haven’t invited me to anything since I ditched out and started up my place. You haven’t even been out here to see it.”

“We’re very busy people, Jim.” Sam says lamely like that is some sort of excuse for the way they have been ignoring Jim and leaving him out of things.

“Well so am I! So sorry, but I can’t come to Mom’s birthday. Give her my best wishes.” Jim snarls more than says before hanging up forcefully.
He jams his phone into his pocket more forcefully than probably necessary and turns to leave the bathroom. He catches sight of himself in the mirror, though, and it makes him stop dead in his tracks. There are tears that he didn’t realize he shed, but that’s not what makes him stop and look at himself.

Two months ago, Bones and Gaila were getting on his back about having dark circles that looked like someone punched him in the face multiple times. Now, looking at himself for what feels like the first time in forever, Jim sees no swaths of purple and blue framing his eyes.

He sees no red-rimmed exhaustion. No too-pale skin from wearing himself thin. Jim doesn’t see any of the things that used to keep him from looking in the mirror previously.

When Jim looks at himself this time, he’s surprised to see exactly how different he looks. He knows that he’s been feeling much happier as of late, but to see a physical difference in himself? It almost knocks Jim off his feet.

He’d be stupid if he said he doesn’t know exactly who was responsible for that.

Once he’s got any stray tear tracks cleaned up off his face and a passably pleasant expression on, Jim leaves the bathroom to find a pacing Spock still occupying his kitchen. “Got a lot on your mind there, big guy?”

Spock’s head snaps comically over to Jim and he’s across the room startlingly quickly. He cradles Jim’s face in both of his hands and scans his eyes over Jim’s face almost hungrily. “You are troubled.”

“What?” Jim laughs nervously and tries to seem as casual as possible. “I’m totally fine!”

“You are not.” Spock argues. “You are unhappy after your phone call.” He doesn’t ask what or who it was and normally that would be a blessing for Jim, but he finds that he wants to tell Spock about it.

He finds that there might not be anything that he does not want to tell this man about. “It was my brother. He invited me to our mom’s birthday party.”

Spock’s eyebrows furrow together and he frowns. “And this troubles you?”

“I haven’t exactly been home to visit in about four years.” Jim explains with a grimace. “Haven’t been welcome.”

“Is it due to your denying their wishes to become an engineer and instead opening this bakery?” Spock asks, increasingly confused by Jim’s story. “You are successful in this field. There have been articles written about your goods. You have achieved an amount of national fame and to discount that would be illogical.”

Jim smiles softly up at Spock and takes one of his hands from his face to press a kiss to the palm. “Thank you. And I know all that, really, it’s just…they don’t really see fame in baking as a real achievement.”

“I am very sorry. They are mistaken, I promise. You have much to be proud about.” Spock twines their fingers together and presses a kiss to Jim’s forehead gently. “Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Accept the fact that I’ve already decided I’m not going and you can’t convince me otherwise?” Jim suggests.
Spock pauses for a moment before smirking and saying, “I think that can be arranged.”

Jim can practically hear Gaila calling him lame from the other room, but frankly? He can’t bring himself to care. “Come on, let’s go get some falafel into you.”

Pavel pulls the slip of paper out of his pocket that his father gave him before he left the house that morning and reads it over carefully. A dozen roses and all the fixings for his mother’s birthday dinner should not be a hard list to remember, but after last year, Pavel has learned not to put anything past himself.

“Welcome to Fabulous Flowers!” The young man behind the counter says without looking up from the novel he’s reading. Pavel stops dead in his tracks and gapes at him.

Sweetwater, Georgia is not a big town. Despite the fact that it is only an hour and a half away from Atlanta, it is in fact the very picture of ‘everyone in town knows each other’ American dream perfection.

Basically, Pavel hates it. Everyone in town knowing each other means that you have either been dating your significant other since kindergarten or you stay single for the rest of your life.

“Love at first sight” is definitely an overly dramatic term to use in relation to this flower shop employee that Pavel has never met before, but his heart definitely skips a few beats. The prospect of running out of the flower shop before he can further embarrass himself is very tempting.

“Uh, can I help you?” The man asks, looking increasingly concerned for Pavel, who wants to crawl through the floor. “You okay?”

He’s rounded the desk and come to stand in front of Pavel. He puts a hand on his arm and effectively jerks him out of his weird silence. “I need a dozen red roses?”

Sulu laughs. “For a special someone?” He asks with a conspiratorial wink.

Chekov giggles awkwardly and shakes his head. His curls bounce and he makes a mental note to get his hair cut before this style gets any more embarrassingly Shirley Temple-ish. “No, they are for my mother’s birthday. I am...single.”

“Woo, Pavel, real subtle.”

“Ah, well then, I guess I’ve got no one to be jealous of.” The guy winks again and sticks out a hand. “Hi, I’m Sulu. Hikaru Sulu. I sorta run this place when the owner’s off playing hooking with his boyfriend.”

“Yes, Spock is at the bakery a lot with Jim.” Pavel nods enthusiastically.

A flash of recognition crosses Hikaru’s face and he snaps excitedly. “Oh, you must be that high schooler that works over there! Cherpov or whatever!”

“Chekov.” Pavel mumbles embarrassedly. “And I graduated a week ago.”

“Oh, Chekov, sorry about that. Is that your first name, then?”

“No, my first name is Pavel.” This could not possibly get more embarrassing. “Can I get my flowers?”
Hikaru looks almost disappointed when he goes over to put together a bouquet, wrap it in paper, and hand it to Pavel. “Uh that’ll be $35.”

The cash is exchanged with only the lightest of brushes of their fingers and Pavel jerks his hand away. He attempts to make it out of the shop as quickly as possible, only to have Pavel call after him, “Hey, you should stop by sometime. We could hang or something.”

“Did Leonard do all of your tattoos?” Spock is lounging in bed while Jim gets up to get dressed and grab them both some food when he asks, head tilted to the side. Jim makes a mental comparison to a cat he had when he was a kid not for the first time.

Jim looks down at his torso and shakes his head. “I mean, most of them are his, yeah, but not all of them. Got the mermaid done in Chicago.” He points the purple haired beauty on his leg. “And the galaxy,” he strains to gesture to the large tattoo on the left side of his back, “Was done by a guy in Chattanooga, Montgomery Scott. He’s actually pretty famous, maybe you’ve heard of him?”

Spock has gone oddly stiff and Jim straightens up from putting on his jeans to narrow his eyes and put his hands on his hips. “What? What’s wrong?”

“I am…familiar with Mr. Scott’s work.” Spock says carefully, serving only to peak Jim’s interest further.

“And?” Jim waves his hands for Spock to elaborate. “Come on, there’s a story there.”

“I am also familiar with his current girlfriend.” Spock says with an infuriatingly flat face. He’s never been the most expressive guy in the world, but Jim’s never seen him quite so closed off.

“Ohura?” Spock nods. “You’re familiar with-ok! Were you two…” He trails off with a slight grimace. “Together?”

“For about two years, yes.” Never in his life has Jim ever seen someone look so reluctant to talk about their past relationships. And that’s saying a lot, considering how Jim dated his brother’s wife before Sam did. “We were very close. Then she met Montgomery and realized that we were more incompatible than she first thought.”

Jim frowns and runs a hand through his hair. He comes back over to sit on the bed next to Spock and links their fingers together loosely. “Shit, I had no idea. Ohura and I are actually pretty close and she never mentioned anything like that.”

Perhaps it is better.” Spock contemplates. “Had she spoke of me prior to our meeting, you might have had some preconceived notions which might have damaged my chances of pursuing anything with you.”

“Come on,” Spock receives a gentle slap on the chest and a kiss on the nose from Jim. “I know people like to talk shit about their exes but she couldn’t have had anything that bad to say about you.”

“I was rather…inattentive while I was with Nyota.”

Jim cannot do anything but outright gape at Spock at that particular confession. “Really? You, inattentive? Spock, you practically had a heart attack that day I tried to leave without eating breakfast. Excuse me if I don’t believe you when you say that.”
A dejected sigh from Spock. “Believe it or not, it is true. I allowed myself to become so distracted by my own personal problems that her problems fell to the wayside.” He looks up at Jim with wide brown eyes. “I do hope that does not make you think less of me.”

Jim pokes Spock’s cheek and giggles when his face squinches up in surprise. “Spock, if we’ve learned anything lately, it’s that we’ve both been less than great to people in our lives. However you treated her back then, it’s not who you are now. And who you are now is someone that I really care about. A lot.”

“James, I return the feeling quite deeply.”

“Very very cool.” Jim wraps both of his arms around Spock and rests his head on his chest. “You think food can wait for a bit? I don’t think I can pull myself out of bed again anytime soon.”

“Perhaps you could tell me more about your tattoos?”

Spock’s suggestions perks Jim right up and he pulls away just far enough to raise his arm and point at the cupcake on his bicep, “Well, this one I got after Sweet Emotion was open for a year. Bones almost killed me when I suggested it. Had to beg him for a week.”

“Most illogical of him.” Spock says as he reaches out to trace the tattoo with his forefinger. “Are you considering any more tattoos at the moment?”

Jim blushes and mutters, “Well, I saw these pictures of people with these bouquet tattoos and I was considering maybe getting one? With lilies? It’s stupid.” He rushes to amend.

“I do not think it is stupid.” Spock murmurs and kisses Jim so hard he thinks he might actually never need air again. “I think it is a wonderful idea.”
“Hey Sulu, random question.” Kirk’s obviously trying to remain as casual as humanly possibly while he leans up against the counter that seems to be the florist’s permanent place of residence. “What’s Spock’s favorite flower?”

Sulu fixes him with an incredulous glare. “You are not getting a florist flowers. Please promise me that you’re not considering get flowers for a florist.”

Kirk throws his hands up in exasperation and groans aloud. “Well, what am I supposed to do? He owns a flower shop, I own a bakery-slash-chocolate shop. The usual romantic gifts are, at this point, totally out of the question."

“You could try being—oh, I don’t know-original and actually romantic? Come on, Kirk, as another person who works selling their wares to desperate boyfriends, you should know that they’re not necessarily the best thing to give to one’s lover.”

Kirk makes a face and sticks his tongue out. “Lover? Can we please not use that word?”

Sulu shrugs and chuckles. “Sorry, the word ‘boyfriend’ in the context of Spock just doesn’t work for me.”

“Whatever, I just need something to give him that’s not super attached but also attached, you know?”

“No, I don’t.” Sulu deadpans back mostly just to see Kirk get infinitely more frustrated. “You two are basically attached at the hip, you should be able to figure out a present for him.”

Kirk sighs and leans over to sniff a display of carnations and daisies. He sneezes violently and wipes his nose while shooting a guilty smile over at Sulu. “Do not tell Spock about that.”

Sulu rolls his eyes and asks, “Jim Kirk, are you allergic to flowers?”

Kirk’s guilty expression is enough to give him away even without his admission of, “Only certain types, but yeah. Flowers like lilies and roses are fine, and I can do anything if I’m steadfast about taking my meds for it. But yeah…sorta allergic.”

“And you’re dating a florist.” Sulu isn’t even surprised at this point. “People are fucking weird.”

Kirk points at Sulu sternly and his face goes completely serious when he says, “You are not, under any circumstances, to tell Spock about this. If he found out, he’d probably flip out and never let me in here ever again.”

“My lips are sealed.” Sulu makes a locking motion over his lips and smiles.

Kirk, apparently desperate to change the topic, picks up the pale blue box on the counter and raises an eyebrow in a near perfect impersonation of Spock. “When did you come into the shop? I must have missed you.”

Sulu blushes and reaches out to snatch the box back but Kirk pulls it out of his reach. “I-uh-actually didn’t come in. They sort of appeared here when I got back from lunch. They’re probably from Gaila.”
“Saying ‘thank you’ for something?” Kirk waggles his eyebrows suggestively and cackles, darting out of the way when Sulu tries to smack him upside the head. “Hey!”

“They’re not for anything like that. Nothing like *that* has happened since the one time a few weeks ago.” Sulu shakes his head rapidly and wrinkles his nose in slight disgust. “We figured out really fast that we work a lot better as friends.”

Jim looks incredulous. He speaks slowly to Sulu like he does not believe him at all. “So what you’re saying is that sex with Gaila wasn’t good?”

“No! It was great! It just…wasn’t right, you know?” Sulu rubs the back of his neck awkwardly. It doesn’t make sense even to him when he phrases it like that. “We’re just good friends now.”

Kirk gapes at him and his brain seems to be having a hard time catching up with Sulu before he snaps his jaw shut and shakes his head with a laugh. “You know, I was actually worried for you when Gaila started pursuing you. *Nobody* walks away from Gaila just wanting to be friends.”

“You did.”

Jim waves a hand dismissively. “Yeah, but that’s different. Gaila decided really fast that she didn’t want to be with me and started setting me up on dates with her friends.” He seems to consider stopping there before he says, “Actually, that’s how I met Bones.”

Sulu coughs and looks at Jim with wide eyes. “Wait, you dated McCoy?”

“It was only for like a month and a half. And Bones had just gotten out of his divorce so it was mostly just rebound.”

Sulu frowns and shivers as though disgusted. “So weird. I can’t even imagine that.”

“It wasn’t *awful* but we definitely do not need to talk about it again.”

Sulu nods in agreement and mimes locking his lips shut. “Noted. So, you have no idea what to get Spock? I mean, are you even sure that you guys are getting each other something? It’s only two months, after all.”

Kirk groans again and shakes his head. “No, we’re not doing anything over the top or anything but I wanna give him something, you know? Just a little ‘hey I really like you a lot thanks for being with me’ sort of thing.”

Sulu gives Kirk a calculating once over before something clicks for him and he grins wolfishly. “Are you in *love* with Spock?”

Kirk flushes bright pink and shakes his wildly. “What? No! That would be way too fast to fall in love. We’ve only known each other for two months. Who falls in love that fast?”

“You, apparently.”

Kirk stumbles over his words and coughs a few times before finally getting out. “I’m not in love with him. That would be stupid and I’m not stupid.”

Sulu regards him curiously and frowns. “Why would that be stupid?”

“Because anyone who can fall that hard that fast is only going to get hurt.” Kirk snaps back, now looking at his feet to hide his very obvious blush. “And I wouldn’t do that to myself.”

“That’s adorable.” Sulu says with a grin and leans on his elbow. “You think Spock could ever stand to hurt you? Please, he would probably rather die.”

“Shut up. Just drop it.” Kirk mumbles as Spock himself walks through the door, carrying a bag of Chinese takeout. “Hey, babe!” Kirk chirps and Sulu chokes back his laughter at the endearment.

He’s known Spock for a few fair years and he has never once heard anyone call him anything but ‘Spock.’ The guy just is not the nickname or pet name type. Still, when Kirk calls him ‘babe’ or any other number of pet names as he has a tendency to do, Spock does not seem to mind.

On the contrary, it’s almost like he enjoys it.

“I brought you lunch, as I assumed that you would neglect to do so for yourself.” Spock hands him the bag with what looks like the beginnings of a smile.

“How was lunch with your mom?”

“It was pleasant.” Spock nods seriously. “She did express interest in meeting you.”

“You talked about me?”

“Of course. My mother and I often talk about the major events in my life. You have become quite important to me, James.” Spock says it like it’s nothing and Sulu watches as Jim flushes bright red. “Should I not have?”

“No, it’s fine.” Jim waves him off and laughs nervously. “I’m just surprised, I guess.”

Spock brushes Kirk’s hand with his own and Kirk twines their fingers together almost shyly. “Do not be. You are important to me, James. My mother and I are having dinner on Saturday before she goes back home. Would you like to join us?”

Kirk gnaws on his lower lips nervously and eyes Spock with widened eyes for a moment before finally answering. “Yeah. That sounds…fun.”

“Are you certain? You seem unsure.” Spock asks gently. “I will not be angry if you decline.”

“No, I’m sure. I want to meet your mom.” Kirk says, this time much more confident.

Sulu coughs to get their attention before they start making out or something equally as scarring, as he believes they might. “Still here, guys. In our place of business. Where a customer might walk in at any moment.”

Kirk blushes bright red and Spock simply raises an eyebrow. “We would not do anything to damage your oh so impeccable professionalism, Sulu.”

If Sulu had known how snarky Spock could be, he never would have opened a shop with him. “Wow thanks, Spock. That’s really thoughtful.”

“I should probably be going, anyway.” Kirk says, jerking a thumb over his shoulder. “I just stopped in to ask Sulu something.”

Before Kirk can make his great escape, Sulu pipes up to ask, “Hey, what’s up with that kid Chekov that works for you? Is he, you know, available?”

Kirk sighs and scrubs a hand over his face. “How old are you?”
“Just turned twenty one?”
“I’ll send him over later.”

- 

It was bright and warm out when Leonard left the house. A short drive over to Starbucks later, the sky has managed to open up and start raining cats and dogs. So much rain that the short walk from his car into the shop leaves him soaked to the bone.

“Jesus H Christ, could this day get any worse?” He grumbles to himself and wrings out the bottom of his t-shirt onto the fake wood floor.

The blond woman in front of him turns around and he wants to punch himself in the face. It’s Carol Marcus and she’s laughing at him. “What, can’t handle a little bit rain?” Her soft accent and smiling eyes make this whole thing all the more embarrassing for Leonard. “I thought you were tougher than that.”

Leonard stumbles over his words a few million times before finally managing to get out, “Ah yeah, I just…am having a rough start today.” He laughs and rubs the back of his neck. “How are you? Haven’t seen you in a while.”

Carol grins and shrugs. “Oh, you know, the usual. Research, grading papers, coffee addiction going strong.”

She reaches the front of the line and orders her grande skinny vanilla latte. “And whatever he’s getting, I’ll pay.”

Leonard attempts to protest but both she and the barista are looking at him expectantly, so he relents. “I’ll get a tall black coffee.”

“He’ll have a grande.” Carol corrects with a grin and pays before Leonard can say anything. “You need more coffee than that, I know.”

Leonard lets himself laugh and he rubs the back of his neck. “When you’re right, you’re right.”

“And I’m always right.” Carol says with a smarmy grin.

They get their drinks and end up sitting together at one of the little tables without discussing it. “Anything exciting going on in your life?” Leonard asks because he’s not sure what else to do at this juncture and he’s feeling unreasonably warm around the collar.

“Well, I’ve been seeing Geoff,” Carol says casually and Leonard flushes hot with what is most certainly not jealousy. “but it’s nothing serious. Just two friends, really.”

She smirks at him like she’s onto something that even he does not. “How about you, Leonard? How are things with you and Gaila, I think?”

“Oh, you know us. We’re just two friends messing around. You know, you and I should go out again some time.” He tries to sound casual but he sounds slightly desperate even to his own ears.

“Yeah, that sounds great!” Carol nods enthusiastically and Leonard’s chest loosens ever so slightly.

“Great. How does Saturday sound?”

Carol sips her coffee and narrows her eyes in thought. “I think I can swing that. Dinner? At that
“little French place?”

“Sounds great! I look forward to it.”

-  

“Gaila, what does being in love feel like?” Jim asks after cheerfully sending a customer off with a double chocolate birthday cake.

Gaila shoots him a withering look and sighs. “Jimmy, you know very well that the only thing I’ve ever felt particularly romantic about is your caramel cake.”

Jim groans and pouts at her, so she sighs and throws down the rag she was using to wipe down the counter. “Why do you ask, Jimmy?”

“Because Sulu said I’m in love with Spock and I don’t know?” Jim wrinkles his nose and pouts even more at her. “I don’t know if I’m in love, Gaila. How lame is that?”

“Pretty lame.” Gaila agrees with a serious nod. “But I say, knowing you, you’d only ask if you seriously thought it was a possibility.”

More groaning from Jim and he leans across the counter unattractively. “Gaila, help me! We’ve only been together for two months and that’s scary fast!”

“Maybe. But I don’t think there’s really anything you can do about it at this point.” Gaila ruffles his hair fondly and kisses him on top of the head. “Little Jimmy is in love.”

“And I’m meeting his mom on Saturday.” Jim grumbles. “Which, I’m super excited about but also super nervous, you know? Oh God, I’m going to fuck this up.”

Gaila laughs at Jim and ruffles his hair again softly. “No, you’re not. You’re going to charm Mrs. Spock into oblivion and she’ll be begging you to marry her son in no time.”

“Or she’ll hate me.”

“In which case you can just move into my place and sleep on the floor and be sad all the time.” Gaila says sarcastically. “It’s a win-win, Jim.”

“What if he breaks up with me?” Jim straightens up with wild eyes. “What if his mom hates me and he breaks up with me? Gaila, I don’t know what I’d do.”

Gaila puts her hands on his shoulders and stares him in the eyes seriously. “Jim, you need to breathe. Meeting his parents should not be that stressful. You love him, I’m willing to bet serious amounts of money that he loves you too.”

Jim opens his mouth to retort, but he snaps it shut quickly and turns instead to gnawing on his lip. “I need to bake.” He says absently.

“Gaila, do you have time?” Bones bursts into the shop. Apparently everyone and their mother needs something from Gaila this afternoon.

“Afternoon delight?” She asks.

“Gross.” Jim groans.

Bones, however, nods distractedly and she sighs. She loves him dearly (and mostly platonically)
but the man has serious issues with dealing with his feelings head on. Jim is emotional and throws fits. Bones is cantankerous and distracts himself when he’s upset. Most recently, by sleeping with Gaila. “Sure, I guess. But first, you have to tell me what’s got your goat.”

Bones purses his lips and sighs through his nose. “I saw Carol Marcus at Starbucks earlier.”

Gaila gasps and clutches her chest without an ounce of genuine concern. “Oh no, not the girl you’re in love with!”

“Not in love with her.” Bones says too quickly. “And we have a date on Saturday.”

Gaila furrows her eyebrows at him and shakes her head. “I’m sorry, I’m trying to figure out the problem here.” She honestly has no idea what it is with dramatic men being drawn to her. All she wants to do is make truffles and have good sex. Those are her two interests. Being a counselor is not what she’s into.

Bones shrugs and folds his heavily tattooed arms across his chest, muscles flexing impressively. “I’m nervous.”

“You’re nervous?” Jim asks with a squeak in his voice. “I have to meet Spock’s mom on Saturday.”

Bones waves him off and snorts. “Please. Like the great Jim Kirk has ever failed to charm anyone.”

“Why does everyone keep saying that?” Jim squawks and looks like he’s dangerously close to throwing himself across the counter again.

“Because it’s true.” Bones says flatly and turns to Gaila again with slightly wild eyes. “Gaila, what if I mess it up?”

“You won’t.” Gaila says firmly. “Neither of you. Now, Jim, go bake. Leonard, come with me. I swear, men are far more whiny than anyone gives you credit for.”
“You know what I heard is a lot of fun?” Jim asks Gaila and she flicks an eyebrow upward.
“Smallpox. Maybe I should try that tonight instead.”

She responds by sighing and running her fingers through his hair once more, frowning deeply while she attempts to get it to lay just so. “You’re just meeting his mom, it’s not the end of the world. Loser.” She tacks on at the end just for good measure.

“You have no way to be sure that I won’t die tonight. Do we really want to take that risk?”

“Pavel and I are counting on that, actually.” Gaila says absently and Jim can’t really tell if she’s joking or not. “We’re gunna take over the shop after you die. Stop putting so many flowers all over the place.”

Jim gasps in mock horror and shoves her away gently. “All our customers love the flowers! They liven everything up!”

Gaila finishes styling Jim’s hair and pats his cheek patronizingly. “No, that’d be your cheery attitude since you started getting laid.” She darts away before Jim can cuff her on the back of the head. “Hey! I only speak the truth. You’re much more pleasant now that you’re getting some!”

Jim squawks and folds his arms across his chest. “I was plenty pleasant before.”

“Sure, honey.”

“I was!” Jim protests while he fixes the way Gaila styled his hair (nobody’s hair should be that puffy) and buttons up the last button on his white shirt. “And so what if I’m happier now? Life is pretty good.”

“You’re adorable.” Gaila coos and fixes his hair again. She turns back to the bag that she barged into Jim’s house with a few hours ago, demanding that she help him get ready for tonight, and pulls out a blue tie. “Here, I got you this. It’ll bring out your eyes.”

Jim smiles halfway at her and lets her tie it around his neck. “Thanks, I guess. You really didn’t have to.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Gaila doesn’t look up and meet Jim’s eyes.

“Seriously, this is nice. I’ll pay you back for it.” Jim fiddles with the end of the tie and Gaila bats his hand away so that she can continue adjusting it.

“Don’t worry about it.” She says a bit too forcefully. “It didn’t cost me anything really.”

Jim grabs both of her wrists with one of his hands and stares down at her with narrowed eyes. “Gaila, why are you being so--shit, Gaila!” He exclaims suddenly and drops her hands. Her flip from seemingly guilty to defiant is quick and suddenly she’s meeting his eyes with fire behind her own and her hands on her hips. “Nobody’s hurting you, Jim Kirk.”

“Well, somebody’s been going behind my back and is in cahoots with my family, apparently!”

Gaila sighs and throws her hands up. “That’s because somebody cares about you because you’re pretty much her only actual friend!” She purses her lips and doesn’t budge from her position.
Jim groans and sits heavily on his bed, still glaring at Gaila. “You know, when she offered to give you a card, you laughed and I figured you wouldn’t actually take her up on it. I don’t need a babysitter.”

Gaila sits next to Jim and pats his back consolingly. “I know, Jimmy. But she does worry about you, and this makes her feel better about it. Plus, I get to buy myself whatever I want as long as I’m making sure that you don’t look like a bum and that you’re actually feeding yourself.”

“That explains your new designer jeans.” Jim laughs and smacks her leg teasingly. He slumps over again and puts his elbows on his knees, chin in his hands. “I don’t need to depend on them, G. They hate my life and my bakery, and I hate being tied to them like this.”

“I don’t think they hate it as much as you think.” Gaila suggests before slapping his back a bit too hard and laughing when he winces. “Come on, get up before you wrinkle your pants. You’ve got a big night ahead of you and I am not ironing those.”

“Once again, I would like to suggest smallpox.”

—

“No way is Raiders better than The Last Crusade.” Sulu shakes his head and Chekov has to keep himself from inhaling the spicy scent of his cologne. He is also trying to push down his hyper-awareness of how close to each other they are standing at the moment.

“Raiders is the best movie of the franchise. It was a true cinematic masterpiece. None of the other movies managed to match that level of quality.” He shrugs and quirks the left side of his mouth up in a smirk. “You can fight me on this one, but I will win.”

“No way, dude. Last Crusade was epic.” He laughs and checks his watch. Chekov tries not to be distracted by the crinkles by his eyes and to actually listen to him. “I have to go to the back and check on something. I trust that you’ll be okay out here alone for a bit?” Sulu says and gestures over his shoulder toward the back of the shop.

Pavel manages to actually hear that over his massive crush and nods rapidly. “Da, I will be fine.” He grins and winks. “Hurry back.”

Sulu briefly furrows his eyebrows but smiles nonetheless before leaving with a small salute.

“Hurry back?” Pavel mutters to himself. “Seriously, Pavel. Try to seem more desperate.”

Once he’s sure he’s alone, Pavel casts a cursory glance around himself and listens to make sure that Hikaru isn’t walking back. Heart pounding, he pulls a small pastel blue box out of his messenger bag. He rounds the small counter and stows it in one of the drawers underneath, closing it quietly.

He darts away from the space once he’s done it and tries to get his heart rate and breathing back to normal so that Hikaru won’t think he’s a total freak or something. He bites his lip and grins to himself, nonetheless.

It is completely childish and a little bit stupid, but leaving the boxes of sweets for Sulu at least makes Pavel feel like he’s actually doing something about his stupid crush rather than hopelessly pining after a guy who probably would never date a kid who just graduated high school.

Pavel’s grin turns quickly to an inwardly directed frown. What was he doing? He couldn’t even legally drink. What chance could he possibly have with Hikaru, who in all likelihood had hundreds
of people knocking down his door for a date?

None. No chance at all.

“You okay, man?” Sulu’s voice comes out of nowhere and suddenly the scent of cinnamon and who knows what else fills Pavel’s nostrils again.

“I am fine.” Pavel says halfheartedly and tries to plaster a grin across his face again. “I was just… thinking.”

Hikaru purses his lips adorably and observes Pavel closely, like he does not quite believe him. “Are you feeling sick? You look sort of sick.”

Pavel sees his out here and takes it wholeheartedly. “Yeah, you’re probably right. I was up late last night. I should probably go and get some sleep or something.” He jerks his thumb over his shoulder.

What really confuses him is the fact that Hikaru looks somewhat disappointed by this. He frowns deeper and nods. “Yeah, you probably should. Take care of yourself, we’ll hang out later.”

Leonard checks his tie in the window outside the restaurant and runs a hand through his hair nervously. He frowns and thinks that it probably looked better before he did that. He clenches his hands into fists to keep himself from messing with it any more and ending up looking awful.

“Leonard?” Carol’s voice comes from his left and he whirls to face her. “You’re early.”

Leonard swallows and takes in the sight of her dressed up in that blue dress that she has to know he loves with her hair swept up away from her face and a grin that he can hardly believe is actually directed at him. “You are too.” He somehow manages to croak out.

“Call me eager.” She responds with an easy shrug. She gestures toward the entrance to the restaurant grandly. “Shall we?”

With a quick nod, Leonard scrambles to open the door for her and let her in ahead of him. He takes a deep breath, rolls his shoulders, and follows.

“Do you have a reservation?” The imposing looking hostess looks down the end of her nose at Jim and he withers a bit under her gaze. “Sir?”

He clears his throat and nods. “Yes, I believe they’re waiting for me…the Grayson party?”

She narrows her eyes first at him and then at the reservation book before nodding once and stepping out from behind her podium. “If you would follow me.”

The sound of her clacking heels is impossibly loud in the crowded Italian restaurant and Jim follows her, small paper box clutched too tightly in his hand. They reach the correct table and the hostess has to clear her throat before Spock looks up from conversation with his mother.

Jim sees that small light in the back of Spock’s eyes light up and he stands, holding a hand out to Jim, who steps in close and lets it rest on the small of his back. “Hey, sorry I’m late.”

“It is of no consequence. We have not yet ordered.” Spock assures him.
Spock’s mother is still seated and stares up at them over her steepled fingers like she’s trying to figure something out. “I assume you’re the Jim Kirk who Spock has been talking about nonstop?”

“Mother,” Spock starts warningly.

“Yeah, that’s me.” Jim cuts him off and offers his hand, which she takes with a surprisingly firm grip and shakes just once. “Nice to meet you, Ms. Grayson.”

“And yourself.” She says with a hint of a smile. “Please, sit.”

Spock pulls out his chair and Jim follows the instruction with shaky knees and palms that are becoming increasingly sweaty. “Thanks, honey.” He says to Spock with a grin. His boyfriend flicks an eyebrow up at him.

“So, Jim, why don’t you tell me a little about yourself.” Amanda Grayson leans forward in her seat intently and it all feels an uncomfortable amount like a job interview.

Jim glances over at Spock, panicked. “Well, I own a bakery, which Spock probably already told you. I have a brother who has two kids…they’re great. I’m dating your son, obviously.” He laughs awkwardly and rubs the back of his neck. He suddenly remembers the box in his hand and thrusts it out in front of himself. “I-uh-actually brought you some handmade truffles from our store. I didn’t make them, I just bake, but the girl who does do them, Gaila, is seriously so awesome. People treat her chocolates like it’s a religion or-”

Jim is interrupted by Spock’s hand on his knee and en expression that clearly says, ‘Why are you acting so fucking weird?’

Amanda examines the box and looks inside of it. She smiles coolly at him. “Is that lavender?”

Jim nods enthusiastically. “Yeah, it’s sort of Gaila’s specialty. They seem sorta weird but I promise they’re good.”

It would all be okay if he had not gestured just a bit too broadly and ended up knocking over his water glass and sending the contents spilling all over the table. All three occupants jump up and away from the spreading wet spot.

Jim signals for a waiter to come help them clean up. Spock sighs beside him and Jim braces himself for some comment on his clumsiness but is utterly shocked when he instead says, “Mother, I do not understand why you insist upon going on in this matter.”

Spock’s mother, who had at first seemed somewhat distant and closed off, laughs and throws her head back. “How was I supposed to know that your boyfriend would react so badly to a little bit of pressure?” She turns to Jim and grins. “Seriously, dear, you looked like you were about to pee your pants or faint or something.”

Jim gapes at her and then at Spock. “I’m sorry…what’s going on?”

“I was just trying to scare you, Jim.” She explains with a grin. “And, please, call me Amanda. None of this ‘Ms. Grayson’ nonsense.”

Spock sighs again and places his hand on Jim’s hip. “I apologize for my mother’s erratic behavior.”

Jim smiles uneasily and lets himself laugh for the first time all night. The knot in his chest seems to loosen and he slips into a full grin. “Don’t worry about it. She’s just being protective, I guess.
You are her only son, after all.”

Amanda grins at Spock. “Oh, I like this one.”

- 

“What happened, Leonard?” Carol asks over a plate of something that Leonard most certainly cannot pronounce but that Carol of course ordered flawlessly. “One minute everything was good and fun and the next minute you didn’t call me again.”

Leonard bites his lip and laughs humorlessly. “You certainly have not changed one bit. Don’t mess around for a minute.”

“Leonard, you owe me an answer.” Carol says resolutely. “I liked you a lot, still do like you, but you sort of disappeared for a few months.”

“Carol, we weren’t.” Leonard starts, but is cut off by Carol waving her hands.

“I know, Leonard. I know that. I was seeing Geoff and you were with Gaila, but you cannot simply abandon me for months until we run into each other in a Starbucks.”

Leonard can see that she’s about two steps away from working herself up and possibly leaving if he doesn’t say something soon, so he catches her hand in his own and runs his thumb over the top of her hand. “I’m sorry.”

She stares at him with over-wide eyes and what looks like a possible smile. She inclines her head as if to say, ‘Go on’ and Leonard chuckles. “What I did was wrong, Carol. I ran away. I got scared and I ran away and it’s inexcusable. But I hope you can forgive that and maybe give me—give us—another chance.”

“Why were you scared?” Carol asks, eyes never leaving Leonard.

Leonard sighs and looks down at their hands. He twines their fingers together slowly. “I like you, Carol. I like you more than I’ve like anyone in…years. I got burned before and I didn’t want it to happen again. So I did what McCoy men for generations have been doing, and I ran.”

“Sounds like a McCoy man is a risky gamble.” Carol says with a crooked grin that crinkles up her blue and green eyes.

“A gamble that you might be willing to take?”

Carol bites her lip in mock consideration and tilts her head to the side. “I think I might be able to arrange it.”

- 

“So, Jim. Spock told me about how you two met, but you know how he is. I want to hear your side of the story.” Amanda asks with a light in her eyes and she leans forward with her elbows on the table once her plate’s been taken away.

Jim flushes deep red and laughs a nervous chuckle. “Well, the thing is, it sort of started before we actually met.”

Amanda grins, wide and almost predatory. “Oh?”

“I saw him when he was first moving into the shop. And well, I wanted to...get to know him.” His
face is getting hotter than he ever thought possible and he wants to run away.

Amanda just keeps on grinning and waves a hand to tell him to continue.

“So I may or may not have pined for a few weeks,” Jim admits. “And then I baked a bunch of stuff shaped like flowers because that’s what I do, and then I went to Spock’s shop under the pretense of decorating my shop.”

Spock’s eyebrow makes a valiant escape attempt. “You were not genuine?”

Jim furrows his eyebrows and tilts his head to the side slightly. “I baked you cupcakes and then I sort of force fed you one. I wasn’t being exactly subtle.”

Amanda laughs at Jim’s bewilderment and Spock’s very obvious pondering of the whole situation apparently being different from what he initially remembered. “Jim, honey, you should realize by now that Spock is sometimes lacking in the area of picking up subtext.”

“I’ve noticed that, but really? It was hardly subtext, mostly just me blatantly pining.” Jim says incredulously, but grinning all the while. “I mean, I fed you a cupcake within five minutes of meeting you.”

“That was admittedly strange, but I did not want to assume that you-”

Amanda aws and coos, “You had a crush, Spock! That’s adorable! You two are so cute.” She claps her hands together and looks at them over her fingertips. “I’ve never seen Spock like this, you know.” She says like a secret.

Jim looks at her in surprise. “Seen him like what?”

“So smitten.”

Spock sighs but his hand drops down to twine fingers with Jim. “Mother, I am not smitten. I care deeply for Jim, but I am not a pubescent child.”

Amanda raises an eyebrow in a way that totally illustrates the fact that she does not believe Spock for a minute. “A mother knows, Spock. A mother knows.”

Jim decides it is about time to save his boyfriend from embarrassment, so he says, “Just for the record, I care deeply for Spock too. You could call me pretty smitten.” He smiles softly at Spock and then looks over at Amanda, who looks like she knows exactly what Jim’s thinking.
I AM SO SORRY THAT IT HAS BEEN SO LONG!
I had finals and school stuff and then I went on vacation for three weeks and I just got back yesterday and yeah I am sososososos sorry about not updating in a million years.

I hope you enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Calm down, Pavel. You are a totally reasonable and chill adult. You are not a middle schooler.” Pavel whispers to himself as he approaches Sulu’s usual spot behind the desk, light blue box in hand. He pauses briefly and thinks about what he just said. “Except if you were actually an adult, you’d be telling Hikaru how you feel and not leave him secret admirer presents like you’re literally twelve years old.”

He only briefly entertains the idea of smacking his head against the wall before he scoots around the counter and goes to stow the box in the usual drawer.

“He had bangs? Oh, I definitely need pictures of this.” Jim’s voice cuts through the relative silence, accompanied by the jingle of the bell above the door and a familiar laugh.

“I honestly don’t if I still—“ Sulu cuts off quickly and he stops in his tracks when he sees Chekov behind the counter, looking guilty with the unmistakable box of chocolate in his hand. “Pavel?”

Pavel twiddles the fingers of his free hand in a half hearted wave with a sheepish grin. “Hey Hikaru.”

Jim, meanwhile, rocks back on his heels and looks between the two of them with his bottom lip between his teeth. Chekov strongly suspects that the baker is attempting to hide a grin.

“Alrighty then.” He says and the suspected grin breaks out slightly. “Let me just go grab Spock and…yeah.” He makes his escape past Pavel and into the back of the shop, leaving the young man cursing his boss’ very existence.

Hikaru walks over to the counter and a Pavel who feels like his heart is about to beat out of his chest. “Whatcha got there?” A slight smirk plays at the corner of his mouth and Pavel feels like an absolute idiot. “I sorta knew it was you.”

Pavel stares at his feet in embarrassment. Of course Hikaru must think of Pavel as nothing more than some kid who works next door. Sure, they’re only two and a half years apart but Pavel only just graduated and there’s no way Hikaru could ever-

“I’m glad I was right.”

Chekov’s head snaps up and he stares at Hikaru with wide eyes. “What?”

Gentle hands take the box away from Pavel and a real grin creases Hikaru’s face. “I said I’m glad I
“was right.” He reaches out and takes his hand. “I…do you want to go out or something sometime?”

Pavel nods furiously and he can feel the blush rising on his face. “Da, I would like that very much. You do not think I am…childish?”

Hikaru shakes his head and opens up the chocolate box. “Nah, I mean, it’s not like you’re fifteen and I’m thirty. The difference isn’t that much, Pav. And these chocolates are pretty bomb.”

“I made the caramel ones myself.” Pavel supplies, somewhat at a loss for words. He grabs one of the chocolates and eats half, holding the other half out to Hikaru, who eats it out of his hand.

“Amazing, as usual. Even better now that I get can do this.” Hikaru leans forward and pecks Chekov on the lips.

Pavel break out into a grin and pulls him close to kiss him deeper. “Even sweeter than caramel, yes?”

“Called it! Spock, I hate to say it but I totally told you so.” Jim bursts into the room and pauses for a minute before laughing and putting a hand on his hip. “Actually, I don’t hate to say it. It feels awesome being right.”

Spock follows more calmly and shakes his head. “I never doubted your predictions, James. I merely doubted that Sulu would be unprofessional enough to ‘totally make out’ with Pavel in the shop.”

Sulu blushes bright red and Jim hip checks Spock. “Oh please. Like you and I have never been unprofessional in either of our shops.”

“Did not need to hear that.” Sulu says and blushes even deeper. Chekov laughs, finally feeling his chest loosen as he brushes a strand of hair away from Hikaru’s forehead.

“Look at that! They’re so cute I swear I’m going to get a cavity or name a cake flavor after them or something.”

“…”

“This feels a bit like returning these but here.” Jim thrusts the bouquet of roses at a Spock who looks awfully confused. “I bought them earlier when you were out getting me coffee. It’s stupid, I know, but I was feeling sorta corny and romantic or whatever.”

Spock takes the bouquet from Jim with a small smile before kissing him and walking them into Jim’s house slowly. “Jim, there is no need to be embarrassed. The flowers are beautiful. Roses are my favorite.”

“I know. Sulu told me.” Jim laughs and rubs the back of his neck. “You’re pretty boring, you know?”

“You are interesting enough for the both of us, I assure you.” Spock says warmly and twines their fingers together.

Jim pulls him toward the dining room he almost never uses. “Come on, I made dinner.”

“This looks amazing, Jim. Is that soufflé?”

“Vegan spinach, yeah.” Jim says with a grin and pulls out Spock’s chair for him. “Now sit before it
gets cold.”

Spock chuckles and sits obediently. “Very well.”

Dinner goes quickly, Jim making sure to pace himself on the wine and not give into his nerves. Only a few times does he reach into his pocket and fiddle with the paper inside.

Once they finish their dessert, Spock takes Jim’s hand again with a significant look. “Are you going to explain why you’re so nervous? Or will I be forced to guess?”

Jim shakes his head and squeezes Spock’s hand three times, like his mother used to do. I love you. “No, you don’t have to guess.” He leans across the table to press his lips to Spock’s deeply.

“I will not be distracted.” Spock assures Jim with total seriousness and a hint of a smile on his face. “Jim, why are you afraid to tell me what is on your mind?”

“We’ve been together for two months, Spock.”

“I am aware.”

Jim takes a deep breath and pushes on. “The last two months have been the most amazing months of my life. You mean more to me than I ever thought possible. I wanted to get you something but I couldn’t think of anything.”

Spock shakes his head and smiles fondly. “You do not have to get me anything, Jim.”

“I couldn’t think of anything,” Jim continues, “But I talked to your mom and she said that you love poetry. So I sorta memorized one for you.” He pulls the paper out of his pocket and places it on the table. “Just in case I forget.”

Swallowing slowly, Jim begins, “I am offering this poem to you, since I have nothing else to give.
Keep it like a warm coat,
when winter comes to cover you,
or like a pair of thick socks
the cold cannot bite through,

I love you,

I have nothing else to give you,
so it is a pot full of yellow corn
to warm your belly in the winter,
it is a scarf for your head, to wear
over your hair, to tie up around your face,

I love you,

Keep it, treasure it as you would
if you were lost, needing direction,
in the wilderness life becomes when mature;
and in the corner of your drawer,
tucked away like a cabin or a hogan
in dense trees, come knocking,
and I will answer, give you directions,
and let you warm yourself by this fire,
rest by this fire, and make you feel safe,
I love you,

It's all I have to give,
and it's all anyone needs to live,
and to go on living inside,
when the world outside
no longer cares if you live or die;
remember,

I love you.”

Jim lets out a deep breath and opens the eyes he hadn’t realized he shut during the poem. “Yeah.
That’s it.”

Spock grips Jim’s hand ever more tightly and he kisses him hard. “Is that truly how you feel?”

Jim nods furiously and grins uncontrollably. “Yeah. Yes. I…love you, Spock. I’m sort of terrified
by it but that’s how I feel. And it’s fine if you don’t feel the same.”

“Fine as it may be, you need not worry. I love you as well, James. I love you more than I
previously thought possible.”

“That’s really cool.”

“Alrighty, let’s see the new tat!” Jim waves with a spatula at Carol, who’s sitting primly with a
croissant in front of her. “Come on!”

She grins and shakes her head bemusedly at Jim with a chuckle. “Oh you. I have missed you,
Jimothy.”

“And I you, Care-bear.” Jim pats her hand lovingly. “Now show me! I’ve been waiting and waiting
for it to heal or whatever.”

“Oh, fine.” Carol sighs out and pushes down the sleeve of her tee to show the skin just above her
left breast. “It’s the constellation Leo.”

“Oh?” Jim waggles eyebrows and leans forward on the counter. “Leo?”

“Please, Jim. I got it for my birthday, it’s my birth sign. Leonard had very little to do with the
decision.” Carol insists with a grin. She brushes her hair away from her face delicately and shakes
her head. Jim can’t help but notice the way she glows when she says Leonard’s name.

Gaila snorts out a laugh while she stocks the display cases with fresh truffles. “Oh yeah, because
you and Leonard totally aren’t going to get hitched. I mean really, Carol, you two have been all
over each other lately. Even more so than Jim and Spock these past few weeks.”

“Leonard McCoy? Married again?” Jim asks, holding a hand to his heart. “Do I get to be maid of
honor?”

“We are not engaged and I don’t know if we ever will be. I mean, we’ve talked about it briefly
but-“
“You’ve talked about it?” Gaila and Jim exclaim in unison.

“You’ll calm down? It doesn’t mean anything.”

“Oh it most certainly does.” Gaila insists. “Leonard is serious about that stuff. He wouldn’t talk about it if he didn’t genuinely want that.”

“I know but you know how it goes with Leonard. He gets scared and I don’t want to get my hopes up.” Carol says with a frown. “I like what we have now.”

Jim puts his hands up. “Fine, but all I’m saying is that I would not be that surprised if we saw a ring on that finger real soon.”

The bell above the door jingles, interrupting their conversation and Jim doesn’t look away from Carol as he says, “Welcome to Sweet Emotion, cupcakes are buy one get one half off.”

“You still got those lemon ones I taught you how to make?” Comes a deep voice that Jim most certainly recognizes.

“Pike?” Jim squawks and whips around to see his stepfather standing in his bakery with mirrored aviators and that same old smirk that he always seems to be sporting. “Dad, what are you doing here?”

Pike takes his sunglasses off and shrugs. “Can’t a guy come visit his stepson every now and again?”

“I-uh-wow. This is unexpected.” Jim rounds the counter and pulls him into a quick hug. “Why didn’t you call ahead?”

“After you yelled at your brother on the phone, I wasn’t sure if I would be welcome.” Pike explains with another shrug. “And this is sort of a last minute thing.”

Jim studies the older man for a moment, unable to read his expression but chalks it up to not having seen him in years. He waves toward the stool next to Carol. “Here, sit down. And as for the whole Sam thing, at least you’ve kept in touch with me. Sam just came out of nowhere and asked me like we were best buds or something.”

“You two used to be. Best buds, that is.” Pike reminds Jim.

The oh so mature tactic of pretending he didn’t really hear Pike while he pulls out a lemon cupcake is Jim’s method of coping with that particular blow. “Here. I haven’t changed your recipe even a little bit. But you should try some of my new stuff. I finally perfected my carrot cake with the help of Spock and it’s amazing.”

“Jim,”

“And the dark chocolate with sea salt caramel frosting is a masterpiece, if I say so myself.”

“Jim,”

“But of course red velvet is everyone’s favorite.”

“Jim, we need to talk about your mother.” Pike cuts through forcefully.

Jim cocks an eyebrow and shrugs. “What, is she upset that I didn’t come to her birthday?”
“She had a heart attack.” Pike breathes out. “It was minor and she’s totally stable now but that’s why I’m here.”

Jim gapes at him. He almost forgets that Carol is still sitting there until she clears her throat and waves goodbye to him before slipping out of the shop. “Why didn’t anyone call me?” He grits out between his teeth.

“It all happened so fast and it was so insane that we didn’t get a chance to.”

“Nobody got the chance to even send me a text? Not a simple “hey Jim your mom might die”? Jim exclaims and smacks the counter. “You didn’t have a spare moment? Or did you just forget that I am part of this family?”

“Oh so now you’re part of this family.” Pike says sarcastically. “That’s great to know, Jim, cuz I was seriously starting to wonder.”

“What does that even mean?”

“It means, James, that the least you could do is call every once in a while.” Pike spits out, sounding angry but looking mostly tired. “I know the others have their issues with your life, but I’ve tried, Jim. Your mother wanted you at her birthday and wants you home now.”

Jim sighs and puts his head in his hands. “Then why didn’t she ever call and tell me that herself?”

“She was scared, Jim. She knows she messed up and she didn’t want you to push her away even more because of it.”

The words hang in the air between them while Jim tries to process it all and Pike waits patiently, his hands folded in front of him.

“All she had to do was call, Dad.” Jim says quietly. “That’s all.”

“Come home, Jimmy. You were the first person she asked for when she woke up.” Pike says quietly. “Let me take you home.”

Jim nods quickly. “Yeah, just give me a day, alright? I need to pack and to get things tied up here.”

Pike nods and pulls out his phone. “I’ll book the flight. I’m glad you’re coming, Jimmy. It’s been too long.”

“I know.”

Chapter End Notes

The poem that Jim recites is “I Am Offering This Poem” by Jimmy Santiago Baca

as always, feedback appreciated!
Chapter 8

Packing his bags to go home is somewhat of a daze for Jim. The last time he did this, he was twenty one and nervous as hell about telling his mother that he was about to throw the last three years away. Now he’s still nervous but he knows he made the right decision back then.

He just hopes they can see that. His mother was so worried and upset back then, he’s not sure how facing her this time will go. From what Pike said, she changed her mind, but Jim is still filled with an unbearable uncertainty about the whole thing.

“I am having an arrangement shipped out to your home in Iowa.” Spock enters the room, holding a basket of clothes fresh from the dryer. “Christopher said that your mother loved carnations.”

“It’s not my home.” Jim says absently, taking the basket from Spock.

Spock pauses for a moment, seemingly taken aback. “I apologize if I overstepped my boundaries. I can cancel if you wish. They have not yet been shipped.”

Jim pauses in folding a pair of shorts and sighs deeply. His shoulders sag and he shakes his head. “No, don’t. It’s really thoughtful of you, Spock. I just…this whole thing is sort of freaking me out.”

“That is reasonable.” Spock acquiesces. He places a gentle hand on Jim’s shoulder, rubbing circles on his neck with his thumb. “I imagine it must be very frightening to be going to see your family after such a long separation.”

“It feels like I’m going into battle. Me against the Kirks.” Jim laughs humorlessly and shakes his head. “No, don’t. It’s really thoughtful of you, Spock. I just…this whole thing is sort of freaking me out.”

“Not a great situation to be walking into alone.”

Alone. The word bounces around his head and for a few moments of insanity, Jim considers asking Spock to come with him. Every atom of his body screams out that Spock should drop everything and come with Jim but the rational part of his brain says that he can’t just ask for something like that.

“Do not be afraid. You are remarkable and if they cannot see that, then they are fools.” Spock assures him, removing his hand from Jim’s neck and leaving him feeling desperate to have it back again. “As they are related to you, however, I find that to be highly unlikely.”

Jim snorts and shakes his head. He reaches out and brushes his fingers against Spock’s lightly. “You’d be surprised. It’s like I can’t do anything right with them.”

“‘You’d be surprised. It’s like I can’t do anything right with them.”

This makes Jim angry, for whatever reason. He tries to bite it down, but he can’t help it when he bursts out with, “‘Why don’t you get that this is just what they’re like? They act all supportive but then as soon as I do something that doesn’t fit into their perfect vision of what life is, they turn and act like I’m some idiotic kid.” Jim spits out harsher than he wants to, wishing he could pull it all back. “And I have to face them alone. Just like I always have had to. You don’t get it, with your super supportive family.”

“Jim I-“ Spock reaches out to touch Jim’s shoulder but he dodges, throwing his hands up and groaning.
“Just…don’t.” He says quietly. “Look, you probably have a lot of work to catch up with and Gaila’s coming to drive me to the airport soon. Maybe you should just go.”

“Jim.”

Jim holds up a hand to stop him and shakes his head. “Just go. I’ll text you when I land.”

- 

“You’re an idiot, I hope you know that.” Gaila says without taking her eyes off the road, both hands on the steering wheel in a white knuckled grip. “He was just trying to be supportive.”

Jim sighs and slumps down in his seat. “Gaila, can you let me handle my own problems for once?”

“Nope, no way am I gunna let you get away with this one.” Gaila states resolutely. “I’m not going to let you mess up the best thing you’ve got going right now. You don’t get to screw up your life because you get scared. You just don’t.”

“I’m not screwing up my life.”

“And it’s not just your life. You’re hurting Spock here too. Hikaru says he’s never seen Spock look so heartbroken before. Spock. Heartbroken.” Gaila glances over at Jim significantly. “That shouldn’t even be possible.”

“Gaila, I already feel bad about it. You don’t need to make it worse.”

“Oh I think I do. Cuz if you felt bad enough about it, you’d be fixing it.” Gaila turns into the airport drop off lane and glares at Jim again. “Which I recommend doing before your plane takes off.”

Jim doesn’t respond, just gets out of the car with a mumbled “goodbye” before grabbing his bag and walking over to meet Pike where he’s standing on the sidewalk waiting. “You know, I could have given you a ride to the airport.”

“Yeah, I know.” Jim says, walking past him and into the airport.

Pike sighs and follows, probably shaking his head at Jim’s utterly childish behavior. And it’s not like Jim doesn’t know that he’s acting ridiculous. He knows. He is perfectly aware of the fact that he’s one of the most immature people on the planet at this moment but he can’t quite bring himself to care. “Oh, Jim, it’s nice to see you again.”

“Whatever.” Is Jim’s oh so mature response. He then proceeds to act like an adult and not speak to Pike through all of security and boarding. Even once they’re comfortably seated on the plane (first class, of course, and how Pike managed to get seats together so last minute is beyond Jim.), Jim does not acknowledge him except to let him have the window seat.

With Gaila’s words echoing around his head, Jim pulls out his phone. This is his last chance for the next few hours, after all, and he can practically feel her disappointment from here.

His hands only shake slightly as he pulls up his conversation with Spock and tries to figure out what on Earth he could possibly say to make this right.

“I’m so sorry. I love you.” Will have to do for now.
“He’s an idiot.” Gaila says bluntly as she hands Spock whatever chocolatey coffee monstrosity she’s mixed up this time. “It’s just who he is.”

Spock smiles and sips the drink slowly. “He makes some questionable decisions, yes, but he is not an idiot.”

“God you two are gross.”

“I care deeply about him. And I am very worried about him out there.” Spock says solemnly. “His family makes him act rather…rash. He should not be going alone.”

Gaila pauses for a moment, eyes locked with Spock’s seriously. “Then why did you let him?”

The big white house with a too long driveway is painfully familiar as they pull up to it in Pike’s black Range Rover. Jim takes a deep breath and pauses with his hand on the door handle. He looks out across their wide property. Just past a patch of oak trees, he can see the English River and corn fields beyond that. He swallows thickly.

Home. For the first time in five years. As much as he denies it to anyone who says so, Riverside is an undeniable part of him.

“You just going to sit in here all day?” Pike asks with a raised eyebrow. He hops out of the driver’s seat and disappears into the garage, leaving Jim all alone.

He sighs and grabs his bag from the backseat. He considers going into the house through the garage like Pike, but it’s been so long that it doesn’t feel right being so familiar here. He tramps up the steps to the front porch and only pauses momentarily before knocking on the door.

“Well look who finally managed to remember that he’s part of this family.” Sam snorts, blocking Jim’s way into the house with his impressively broad frame in the doorway. Jim bristles and shakes his head at his older brother.

“Just let me in, Sam.”

“Wow, I’m surprised you still remember my name.” Is the response that Jim gets and he has to physically bite his tongue to keep from losing it.

“George Samuel Kirk, stop bullying your brother and let him in.” Aurelan’s voice commands before she peeks over Sam’s shoulder and grins at Jim. “Hello, Jim, it’s nice to see you.”

Sam steps aside finally and lets his little brother into the house. (And really, Jim isn’t that much smaller than him, it’s just those damn shoulders that Sam inherited from their father that Jim did not and no one will let him forget that.) “Aurelan, how are you?”

“Just grand. Come on in, you can meet the kids.” She guides him by the elbow, not letting him turn to pick up his bag and carry it into the house. “Don’t worry, Sam’ll get it, won’t you dear?”

A deep sigh. “Yes, honey.”

“Are you Uncle Jim?” Is a question that comes from somewhere around Jim’s knees. He looks down to find a head of red hair that is precisely the color of Aurelan’s and wide green eyes just like Sam’s.
“Yes, that’s me.” Jim grins and squats down to the child’s level. “And who are you? Cuz you’re too big to be Peter.”

“Silly! I’m Peter!” The little boy giggles and holds up four fingers. “And I’m this many! A big boy.”

“I see.” Jim says seriously. Something in his stomach pulls when he realizes that this is the first time he’s seen the little boy in person. He’d seen pictures on facebook, of course, but this is the first interaction he’s ever had with his nephew. Aurelan had just found out she was pregnant when Jim walked away and things were too tense between him and Sam for Jim to even think about coming to visit when the kid was born.

Four years later and Peter has to actually ask, “Are you Uncle Jim?”

“Jimmy?” The sound of sock clad feet padding down the hall accompanied by a voice that sounds weak but also so familiar. Jim looks up to see Winona Kirk looking paler and more vulnerable than Jim has ever seen her. “You’re here.” She whispers and holds her hand to her mouth as though she’s actually shocked.

Aurelan rushes over to her side and grabs Winona by the elbow. “Mom, you shouldn’t be up. You need to rest.”

“Oh please, don’t baby me, dear.” Winona bats away her hand. “I am a grown woman.”

“A grown woman who was just released from the hospital yesterday after having a heart attack.” Aurelan fires back without missing a beat. “The doctors told you to rest.”

Jim takes half a step forward but catches himself, hesitating. “Mom.”

“James.” Winona nods seriously before breaking out into a grin. “I’m glad you decided to come out here.”

“I almost didn’t.” Jim admits sheepishly. “And Aurelan’s right. You should rest.”

Winona waves her hand dismissively at both of them and shakes her head resolutely. “Well I think everyone needs to let me be. I’m a big girl and I know my limits, thank you very much.”

“You had a heart attack, Mom.”

“I know, Jimmy. But I’m still kicking.” Winona states. “And I don’t think a little walk around the house is going to take me down now. Where’s Sam?”

“Probably off being moody.” Aurelan sighs and shakes her head at the antics of her husband. “I don’t know what’s gotten into him today.”

Jim smiles tightly and shoves his hands in his pockets. “That’s probably me. I don’t think he’s that happy to have me here.”

He can feel it in the air. The thing that nobody wants to mention. Winona and Aurelan may be able to act like Jim’s just here for a visit and there’s nothing wrong with that but Jim knows that the way his last visit went is hanging in the air over all of their heads like a dark cloud. He knows that nobody wants to talk about where he’s been for the last five years. None of them want to bring up how much of a disappointment he really is.

“Yes, well, you two have always had that bit of rivalry between you.” Winona says slowly.
“Yeah, that’s it.” Jim nods slowly. He steps forward and takes his mother’s elbow. “Come on, let’s get you into a chair or something.”

“I’m glad you’re home, Jimmy.” Winona pats Jim’s hand and goes along with him willingly, to everyone’s surprise.

Jim swallows back the lump that rises in his throat at her words and tries to ignore the fact that he’s never felt more out of place.

- 

“Hey, Jim, we’re going to play scrabble if you want to join.” Aurelan sticks her head out of the door and smiles at Jim like she’s afraid of what he’ll say next.

Jim just shakes his head and tries to arrange his face into something pleasant. “I think I’m just gunna sit out here, if that’s alright. Been a long day.”

Aurelan nods. “That’s fine, Jim. If you want to join us later, feel free.”

She goes back into the house and Jim returns to sitting and staring out at the horizon. The landscape seems to stretch on to eternity and Jim can’t help but remember when he was a little kid and he thought that if he stood on the roof of the house he might actually be able to see all the way to Chicago.

That experiment ended about as well as could be expected. He fell off and broke his arm, leaving Sam to laugh at him while his mother chided him for climbing on the roof in the first place. Of course, he was too disappointed in not seeing the Sears Tower to really be chastised.

Looking back, it all seemed so easy. Being home and having a relationship with his brother. He messed up constantly, of course—that’s just who Jim is—but it was easy to be there. This place really felt like home.

Sixteen years later and Jim cannot seem to recall how that was possible. The way everything is now…it’s like he never really was part of this place. The evidence of it is all over the place—from the tire swing he insisted upon having to his graduation pictures on the piano—but it doesn’t seem quite real when everyone in the house tiptoes around him like he’s a time bomb that might be set off at any moment.

He would hate them except he knows that this is his fault. If he had not made the decision to break from The Plan, they wouldn’t be treating him like this. If he hadn’t run away to Georgia, he’d be in there playing scrabble with them.

Still, he can’t bring himself to regret it. It hurts to be excluded and alienated in his own family but what he has back home is good. It’s more than he probably deserves and nothing could make him give it up.

He checks his phone for about the millionth time that day and finds still no response from Spock. Maybe what he has isn’t so good anymore. Maybe he finally managed to mess up every thing in his life. Jim thinks dimly that he deserves a medal or something.

Jim’s thoughts are interrupted by the sound of a car coming down the long driveway. A cloud of light gray dust blows up around the unfamiliar black sedan and Jim stands up, straining his eyes to see who might be driving.

He pulls his jacket around him and shivers slightly in the chilled Iowa air. He can’t see who’s
driving so he waits until the car parks and he starts down the steps to meet whoever it is.

When the driver steps out of the car, he stops dead in his tracks. “What are you doing here?”

Aurelan crosses her arms and stares sternly across the bed at Sam, her posture almost combative. “You can’t treat Jim like he’s not supposed to be here. He’s your brother.”

“Yeah, well, I don’t know if you noticed, but he hasn’t exactly been part of the family for the last few years.” Sam retorts, shifting so that his posture mirrors Aurelan’s.

“That isn’t his fault alone and you know that.”

“What was I supposed to do, Aurie?” Sam asks, pulling the throw pillows off the large bed and piling them on the ground. “He walked out on us and made it pretty clear that he didn’t want to talk to us.”

Aurelan groans and shakes her head. “That might be because we told him that he was stupid for doing what he actual wanted to with his life!”

Sam pauses in piling the pillows and frowns deeply, looking down at the bedspread. Aurelan watches as his posture shifts through about five different emotions. “He threw everything that he’d worked for away.”

“It wasn’t right for him and you know that. We all know that.”

“I know but I just…I just don’t understand his life.” Sam admits, running a hand through his sandy blond hair. “I don’t understand him.”

“Maybe you should try.”

“I don’t know. I mean, I don’t know what there is to say at this point.” Sam shakes his head and turns away from her to stare out the window. “Hey, who’s that out there with Jim?”

“You should not be doing this alone, Jim.” Spock says calmly. “I should not have let you leave alone.”

Jim stares at his boyfriend, still not entirely convinced that he’s actually there. “Spock, I’m so sorry.”

“It should go without saying that you are forgiven.” Spock walks toward Jim, who is still glued in place halfway down the steps. He places his hand on the juncture between Jim’s shoulder and neck. “And I am sorry for not understanding what it is that you need.”

“Honestly, Spock, I don’t even really know what I need.”

Spock smiles softly. “Regardless, I am here to do whatever it is, when you figure that out. I am here, Jim. I hope that is enough.”

“Please, Spock. Like you could ever be anything but enough.”
beware that there is some homophobia in this chapter. basically, just skip over it if it's a section in italics and you're triggered by that stuff. it's nothing major, i promise, but i don't want any of you to be triggered.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

His name was Eli. He was in all advanced classes and played varsity baseball. He was, in fact, a year older than Jim but since Jim was in almost all of his classes with Juniors, it didn’t seem like it. Eli had dark brown hair, green eyes, and the sort of sense of humor and charm that made him seem like he’d been trained to make people love him.

Jim noticed him. Of course Jim noticed him. He ran beside Jim at baseball practice even though he was slower than everyone else especially Eli, who was the team captain. He even complimented Jim when he got his braces off, something that most people in their shared chemistry class failed to recognize. In short, Eli noticed Jim.

So it really was no surprise when Jim started to fall for him. Well, the him part of it might have come as a surprise to anyone who had not spent a good portion of his freshman year coming to terms with the fact that maybe he watched Pirates just as much for Orlando Bloom as for Keira Knightley. Perhaps even more.

“It’s nice to see you not in a uniform for once.” Eli said with a laugh when Jim wrenched open the door perhaps a little bit too quickly. He attempted to keep the fluttering in his stomach to a minimum when Eli’s eyes flicked over his frame.

“Same to you.” Jim said quickly and winked without thinking about it really. “Come on in.”

About a movie and a half into a Star Wars marathon, Eli turned to Jim and smiled softly, reaching out to touch his shoulder. “I’m glad you invited me over, Jim.”

Jim swallowed thickly and stared at the hand on his shoulder. “You are?”

“Well, yeah. I mean, for a while I thought you might not get it. But I’m pretty sure you do.”

“Get what?” Jim’s mind raced with possibilities of what Eli could possibly be talking about, his stomach twisting itself into knots.

Eli coughed and removed his hand. He actually looked shy, which was unthinkable to Jim, who had only ever seen the Junior as someone cool and collected.

“Well, I thought you might not get that I...like you.”

Jim could practically see himself flush bright red right to his roots. It was like he was outside of his body and looking down on himself in some sort of weird teenage cliché sort of way and part of Jim couldn’t believe he was actually sitting there with Eli, who was looking at Jim with all sorts of things that Jim couldn’t interpret at fifteen years old. “Why? Why me?”
Eli grinned like he was expecting that and shook his head at Jim. “Because, Jim, you’re smart and you’re funny and you’re pretty damn hot without your braces.”

With nothing else to do and a whole lot of courage that Jim had never before seen from himself, Jim leaned forward and kissed Eli. It’s quick and Jim’s heart was pounding the whole time, but it was a kiss with Eli and Jim felt like he could soar right off the brown leather sofa that his mom yelled at him for spilling orange juice on when he was thirteen.

Eli pulled away and put a hand on Jim’s chest before he could lean in and go again. “Wait, what about your family? Do they know about you? Being, you know?”

Jim bit his lip and frowned, suddenly uncertain about what he wanted here. “No, not yet, but they’re not home right now. My mom’s at work and Sam’s got track so they won’t be home for another few hours. I’m just…not ready to tell them yet.”

“But you will tell them eventually? I don’t wanna be your secret or anything.” Eli grabbed Jim’s hand and gave him such an earnest look that it made Jim’s heart flip flop about a million times. He squeezed back and nodded.

“Yeah, I will.”

This, apparently cleared up Eli’s worry quickly because he leaned forward and grabbed the front of Jim’s t-shirt, hauling him forward into another kiss, this time much deeper.

“What the hell?” Sam’s voice came cutting through the silence and sent Jim scrambling away from Jim faster than either of them thought possible.

“Sam, I-it’s not what it looks like.” Jim wracked through his mind, trying to figure out some way to make this go away.

The only thing on Sam’s face, and the only thing that Jim could see or process at the moment, was disgust at what he saw. His mouth was screwed shut and twisted downward and his eyes held more negativity than Jim could stand to look at.

“I always knew. I always knew you were…this.” Sam gestured sharply at Jim and looked away. “Disgusting.”

“No, Sam.” Jim said desperately, just wanting his older brother to look at him again. “I’m not gay. He kissed me.”

Eli’s sharp intake of breath was enough to make Jim feel like someone replaced his blood with ice. “What the hell, Jim?”

Sam strode forward and grabbed Eli by the back of the shirt. “Don’t say a fucking thing. Just get out of my house.”

Jim watched Eli scramble to leave, looking at Jim desperately. He disappeared out the door and all Jim could do was smile weakly at his brother.

-  

“Who’s this?” Sam stands on the front porch, arms folded in front of himself. He’s wearing an expression that makes Jim have to restrain himself from pushing Spock away.

“This is Spock.” Jim says with far more confidence in his voice than he feels. He reaches out to
grab Spock’s hand and takes a deep breath before continuing, “My boyfriend.”

Sam’s mouth pinches and he breathes out sharply through his nose. Jim grips Spock’s hand just slightly more tightly and the other man glances at him briefly before squeezing back. Sam watches all of this with an attitude that Jim can’t quite interpret.

“Boyfriend?”

“It’s not like you didn’t know that I like guys, Sam. And I know that you don’t like it but there’s nothing you can do about it. I love Spock.” Jim steels himself against anything Sam could possibly say to him that would have had the power to tear him down in the past.

Jim’s stronger now. At least, he hopes he is.

Sam just shakes his head. “Does Mom know that he’s here?”

Jim reels a little bit in surprise. He was expecting some remark on his sexuality but Sam seems to be utterly conflicted about what he actually wants to do here. He stares at Jim like he wants to say something more but won’t.

Jim glances over at Spock and smiles sheepishly. “Uh, no, she doesn’t. Honestly, I didn’t even know he was coming until he showed up just now.”

Sam nods once. “Okay. I assume you can make sure he gets in without my help?”

He doesn’t wait for a response before he goes back inside, closing the door behind himself with a bang. “Well that went better than expected.” Jim remarks with half of a laugh.

Spock raises an eyebrow at Jim. “Does your brother not approve of your sexuality?”

“No, it’s just-” Jim glares down at his shoes, feeling like that fifteen year old again. “He thinks there’s a certain way that Kirks should be. And I’m not it.”

“Does your mother share his views?”

Jim has to think about that one. Winona was his mother and Jim always thought that she loved him up until he quit engineering, but she had remained silent on this one matter. “I don’t know.”

Pavel should be baking that massive order of cupcakes that someone placed for a birthday tomorrow. He really should be, and he would be if Gaila hadn’t kicked him out of the store and commanded him to not come back until he had made out with his boyfriend a little.

Pavel isn’t complaining about that particular command. Not when he’s sitting on a table in the back of Fabulous Flowers with Sulu standing between his legs and kissing him so slowly and deeply, it’s like he wants to memorize everything about Pavel.

“You’re amazing, you know that?” Hikaru pulls away and grins at Pavel, resting their foreheads together. Pavel blushes and Hikaru laughs softly at him. “I’m serious, what am I going to do when you go to college in the fall?”

This earns him a sigh and an eye roll from Pavel. “I am going to Georgia Tech. It is an hour and a half train ride if you want to come see me.”

“And you’ll come home some weekends?” Hikaru asks hopefully, as if they haven’t talked about
this multiple times before.

“I don’t know...I mean, Jim would probably die without me to help out with some of the baking but would it be-?” Pavel muses teasingly before getting cut off by Sulu leaning in and capturing his lips again. This time, they dissolve into giggles before it can really go anywhere. “Of course I’ll visit you, idiot.”

The bell from the front of the shop chimes and they sigh in unison. The bell means a customer, which means that Sulu actually has work to do other than making out with Pavel all afternoon.

They walk out to the front together to find Leonard looking at a bouquet of chrysanthemums with interest. Sulu shakes his head and grips the older man by the shoulder, steering him away from the flowers. “No, you are not getting Carol Chrysanthemums.”

Pavel watches amusedly while Hikaru moves about quickly, assembling a bouquet of pink tulips and roses while Leonard looks on bemusedly. “What if they weren’t for Carol?”

Hikaru pauses and snorts at Leonard. “Please, who else would you be getting flowers for? No offense, but you’re not exactly the cuddliest guy around.”

Leonard says nothing in response and waves Hikaru to keep working. Pavel laughs under his breath and receives a scowl from the tattoo artist. He puts his hands up in defense but even someone as intimidating as Leonard McCoy cannot keep the smarmy grin off of his face.

“So, I assume you two have been canoodling to your heart’s content while your bosses are out of town?”

Hikaru laughs and shrugs. “They’ve only been gone for a day and a half. And we’re both pretty busy at work.”

“So, that’s not a hickey on the kid’s neck?” Leonard points at the offending purple mark with a raised eyebrow that clearly says they will not be getting anything past him.

“Things are getting really serious with Carol, huh?” Pavel chimes in, if only to distract Leonard from the fact that they were totally ‘canoodling’ just now. “Think you’re gonna take the next step?”

Hikaru waggles his eyebrows for effect and Leonard flushes just ever so slightly. He holds his card out for Sulu, who takes it and swipes it quickly, handing it back expectantly. “Oh shut up. I don’t know what you’ve heard but it’s none of your business.”

“Oh, we’ve just heard that you might want Carol a bit more permanently.” The florist teases casually. “Nothing big.”

“Remind me to kill Jim when he gets back.”

Jim walked quietly though the large house, hoping that he had woken up early enough to avoid Sam this morning when he went down to the kitchen for breakfast. He slipped past his older brother’s room without detection and considered himself home free to scurry into the kitchen.

Of course, Jim should have realized that since nothing had gone right so far in his almost sixteen years of existence, so why should it change now?
Sam was standing in the kitchen, eating breakfast. Except it was not just Sam, it was Sam and their Mother in the kitchen eating bowls of cereal together. Jim wasn’t sure if he had seen his mother before she left for work in years. She was usually out the door before he woke up and came home when he was doing homework or something.

“Where’s Chris?” Jim settled for a neutral question rather than breaching the fact that Sam hadn’t really talked to him in days and the same was probably true for him and his mother.

Winona smiled and nodded her head in the direction of the stairs. “Oh, he’s just upstairs taking a shower.”

And it was almost easy for Jim to forget that his mother was dating Chris Pike and that they were probably going to get married based on the way that everyone had been talking. “Oh.”

“Why are you up so early?” Winona said after a stretched out pause that none of them wanted to break. She eyed Jim curiously and he realized that he had been frozen in the entrance to the kitchen for probably too long. “You’re usually not up before eleven at least.”

Part of Jim, a big part, wanted to say something like ‘not that you’re ever here to know that’ but he bit it back with self restraint that he did not know he had. Instead, he settled for a shrug before going to the pantry. “Just wanted to bake some muffins or something before I went over to Eli’s.”

“Gunna spend all day with your boyfriend?” Sam finally spoke, if only to ask his question with a fair amount of malice in his voice.

Jim looks over to Winona, whose eyes are glued on her cereal bowl, and back over to Sam, hands shaking around the bag of chocolate chips he was currently holding. “Yeah, I am.”

“I thought that Eli dumped you a week ago. Are you just that pathetic that you begged for him back?”

Jim took a deep breath and shook his head. “I’m not pathetic. Eli and I broke up because of you, Sam. We’re back together now.”

Sam threw his bowl into the sink with a clatter and Jim was surprised it didn’t break. The older boy rolled his shoulders and flexed his hands in a way that had Jim scared that he was about to get hit. Winona continued to eat her cereal.

“I can’t believe I was trying to defend you against that guy. You lied to me about being a fa-“

“Mom!” Jim shrieked finally, desperate for some support from the woman who should have stopped this before it began. “Can you tell him to just shut up or something?”

Winona looked up from her bowl and looked almost surprised to see her two sons staring at her expectantly. She took a deep breath and Jim thought for one moment that she was about to tell Sam off before she simply said, “Boys, stop fighting. It’s too early.”

Jim gaped at her openly. He attempted to busy himself with mixing together the batter for chocolate chip muffins, but her reaction stung him to the core. It hurt him far more to be brushed off in such a manner than anything that Sam said could possibly affect him. Tears pricked at the back of Jim’s eyes and he kept his head down while he mixed ingredients to keep himself from letting on. When he looked up, he was alone.
Being back in that same kitchen is quite an experience for Jim. On one hand, he feels exactly the same way that he did when he was sixteen and constantly fighting with his older brother.

On the other, he knows that he’s not in the same place. He is not alone in his kitchen making chocolate chip muffins and wishing his mother would have said something different. He’s in the kitchen, making muffins, and he’s got Spock’s chocolate brown eyes on him. Spock’s eyes that say all sorts of things that make Jim feel like he could fly if he wanted to.

“…there is one particular restaurant in Copenhagen that I should take you to. It is by far one of my mother’s and my favorite places to eat. You would enjoy speaking with the owner.” Spock informs him matter-of-factly.

Jim laughs and offers a spoon for him to taste the batter. “Oh really?”

Spock takes the spoon and nods seriously. “Yes. She is a baker very well trained in Scandinavian specialties. My mother remains in contact with her still.” He licks the batter off of the spoon and raises an eyebrow. “This is rather good.”

Jim leans forward on the counter. “Are you sure? I couldn’t get the vegan substitutes that I use back at the shop usually all the way out here, so I had to make do with the very limited selection at the grocery store.”

“I cannot tell the difference. I am, however, much less experienced in these matters than you are.”

Jim just laughs and shakes his head. He feels happier here in this kitchen with Spock than he has the whole time he’s been home. “Well, as long as you like it, that’s all that matters.”

He sets about filling the muffin tins with batter before Spock can eat the remaining batter out of the bowl, moving easily around this kitchen that he has not properly baked in since he was eighteen.

“What are you doing in my kitchen?” Pike’s voice comes from the entrance to the kitchen and Jim whirls around with a grin to find Pike standing there with his hands on his hips and mock anger etched across his features.

“Just making muffins.” Jim holds up the tin he’s currently filling. “I would ask if you want to help, but I’m pretty much done.”

Pike shrugs, walks over, and swipes his finger through the batter, licking it off with a smirk while Jim squawks at him about being sanitary. “Chocolate chip?”

“Vegan.” Jim says proudly. Pike wrinkles his nose but does not say anything about Jim’s choice to make the food to fit a certain person’s dietary needs. “I don’t usually make them at the shop but I figured why not make some now?”

Pike pursed his lips and Jim can tell that he is remembering the last time he saw Jim making chocolate chip muffins, on that particular morning when he found a sixteen year old crying in the kitchen over something his brother said. Jim looks down again and hopes that Pike gets the message that he really does not want to talk about it.

He does. “Spock, did Jim ever tell you that it was me who taught him to bake?”

Jim sets down his spoon perhaps a little bit too hard. Both men jump slightly and look at him in surprise. “Sorry.” He mumbles, reaching for a rag to clean up the bit of batter he splattered on the countertop.
“Jim told me it was the chef that they employed at the time.” Spock states simply and Jim can practically feel that eyebrow asking all of the questions he had hoped would never come up.

“Yeah, that was me.” Pike says proudly. “Little monster used to hang around here all the time, so I gave him something to do in his abundance of free time.”

“How fortunate. He has a quite impressive gift.” Spock says in that almost-off way in which he speaks when he has something that he wants to say but is holding back. A near impossible feat for Spock, but somehow the man manages.

“Yeah.” Pike draws out the vowels, sounding like he is picking up on something altogether weird. Jim cannot really blame the man. “So, how long have the two of you been together?”

“It’s almost July, yeah?” Jim finally regains his voice and takes the opportunity for a subject change with relish. “So that’d be three and a half-almost four-months.”

He looks to Spock for confirmation, who nods and smiles at Jim.

Pike whistles lowly and looks impressed with Jim. “That’s the longest relationship I’ve ever seen from you, Jimmy. Good job.”

Jim swells a little bit with pride and is at the same time just a bit embarrassed by that fact. Four months is not that long and Spock really does not need to know that Jim has been rather commitment shy up until this point. Jim is not going to scare off this time and that’s all that matters.

“Well I’d better be going. I think your brother wants me to watch the wee demons.” Pike bows gracefully out of the kitchen and Jim breathes out a sigh of relief. He loves his stepfather, he really does, but being around his family never fails to set him on edge. And that most certainly includes stepfamily.

Spock clears his throat and Jim winces. He makes eye contact with his boyfriend and grimaces at him sheepishly. “Did I say it was an older woman who taught me to bake? Cuz I meant stepfather. Slip of the tongue.”

His uncomfortable laughter does nothing to sway the eyebrow that is slowly approaching Spock’s hairline. It would be almost comical if Jim did not feel so damn guilty about keeping this particular secret.

“Jim, I do not understand.”

There it is. There’s the knife in Jim’s gut, twisting more sharply than it probably should. He sighs and moves to shove the pans into the oven and sets a timer. “Look, I don’t know. It’s just…they make me crazy.”

“So you felt the need to deny the fact that Christopher Pike was your mentor when you were younger?” Spock’s eyebrow is beginning to lower but Jim’s stress level is stubbornly refusing to do the same.

That same stubborn anger that Jim let go back in Georgia is rising again in his throat like acid that burns and makes him want to throw up. The more likely situation is that he’ll lash out at Spock, which he really does not want to do, but there is something about being here and having everything about him layed out in the open for the other man to peruse that makes Jim sick.

He had managed to remain an extremely private person until Spock waltzed into his life. Very few
friends, quiet little bakery, nobody asking him to work through his problems.

Of course, Jim was still scared of his problems back then. Before Spock showed him that they wouldn’t make anyone leave him.

Or, at least, they wouldn’t make Spock leave him. “He was the first one to tell me the bakery thing was a stupid idea.” Jim admits finally.

“He was the first one to tell me the bakery thing was a stupid idea.” Spock sounds genuinely shocked at this revelation. “He did not support you?”

Jim shook his head bitterly, all anger now directed at his memories rather than the man sitting in front of him. “Nope. I told him first ‘cause I thought he would, you know? And what did he do? He laughed. He told me that I had a bright future and he laughed at me.”

That is rather shocking.” Spock reaches out and brushes his hand against Jim’s where it is pressed firmly into the granite countertop.

“Is it? I mean, he was the one who pressured me into going to Berkeley in the first place. He was the one who essentially chose my major for me. I should have known that he would not want me to stray from that path that he handpicked for me.” Jim spits his words out with a venom that he rarely lets himself feel, true bitterness welling up inside of him until it can do nothing more than spill out and wash over everything around him. He almost even jerks away from Spock’s light touch.

“That is in the past, James. From what I can see now, Christopher Pike is proud of you. He seems to be quite pleased with how you proved him wrong by choosing your own path. I know that you struggle with what they all said to you back then but this is a different time, Jim. I believe that if there ever was a time to start over, this is it.”

Jim lets out a soft sigh through his teeth and nods, looking once again at the countertop. He glances up through his eyelashes to smile at Spock softly. “You’re right. I’m bitter and I think they’re trying. At least, Pike is.”

Spock leans over the counter and hooks a finger under Jim’s chin, tilting his face up to kiss him soundly and softly.

The sound of a woman clearing her throat interrupts them and Jim is beginning to think that there will never be a moment of privacy as long as they are here. He glances over toward the source of the sound to find his mother, much to his great surprise.

“Uh…hi, Mom.” Jim waves awkwardly.

“Hi, boys. Sorry for interrupting.” She waves back with a warmer smile than Jim thinks he has seen since his first varsity baseball game. It’s the kind that reminds him of himself and those old holos of her and his father. The kind with her eyes crinkled up at the corner and soft lines that crease into her face only when she smiles but which are becoming increasingly permanent as the years go on.

“It’s no problem, Ma.” Jim waves her off and is surprised to find that he actually means it. Spock nods beside him.

“It was no major disturbance.”

Winona nods and her grin widens. “Good, minor disturbances are my specialty.”
Jim snorts and shakes his head. He’s read her diaries from high school. “Minor” is not the word he would use to describe the sort of disturbances she caused in her youth. “Do you need something?”

“To steal you for a minute, if that’s alright?” She seems to be asking Spock just as much as Jim, which makes him smile softly to himself. Spock nods as if to say that Jim can make his own decisions.

“Yeah, sure. Spock, can you take the muffins out when the thing beeps?”

Spock nods with that same twinkle in his eye that his mother had when they had dinner. “Yes, I do believe I can do that. Take your time.”

Jim laughs to himself the whole way while Winona guides them out to the steps off the back porch. Jim takes a deep breath of the humid Summer air and sits down on the step next to her, still not entirely sure what is going on here. They used to sit on these steps together every fourth of July and have a mother-son talk. It mostly involved drinking pop and talking about family members, but it had also ended after Jim was sixteen and ditched her on Independence day to spend the fireworks making out with Jason Tomlinson.

“Jimmy, we need to have a talk.” Winona starts, sounding half serious and half not.

Jim looks over at her to find her staring west toward the place where the sun will most likely be setting in a few hours time. “What is it? Is it about Spock? ‘Cause if it is, I don’t care-“

“It is and it isn’t.” Winona cuts him off with a raised hand. “Mostly, it’s about what I should have said to you eleven years ago when there was no Spock but there was an Eli.”

Chapter End Notes

feedback is a super cool thing!
tumblr: fabtrek
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

this chapter ended up pretty long oops

Of all the things that Jim was expecting Winona to want to talk about, Eli was not one of them. “Huh.” Jim says for lack of anything better coming to mind and stares out over the rolling lawn, hands on his knees. “Mom, what could you possibly have to say about Eli? That was eleven years ago.”

“And isn’t that the problem?” Winona sighs out. She twines her fingers together in her lap and directs her gaze in the same direction as Jim’s. “Jim, I should have said something eleven years ago. I’m a little late here.”

“You really don’t have to do this,” Jim tries to spare himself of a conversation that is most definitely going to be disappointing or awkward. Most likely both.

Winona holds up a hand to silence her son. Her lips are pursed into a slight grimace that removes any thought of resisting from Jim’s mind. “I do, I really do. Jim, when you needed me I wasn’t there, and I can honestly never forgive myself for that.”

Jim flicks his eyes back out over the lawn again. He honestly does not think he can look at Winona right now because seeing her say the words might actually make this whole situation real and he doesn’t want to deal with that. Getting his hopes up over stuff like this never works well for Jim.

“Sam was cruel to you, Jim. I saw that. I mean, how could I not have seen it right in front of my face?” Winona scoffs at herself and runs her hands through her hair. “Jim, I am so sorry for dealing with it—or not dealing with it—the way that I did. If I could go back, I would do it all differently.”

“I’m sure you would, Mom.” He can’t help but be a little bitter.

“Ohay I deserve that.” Winona concedes with a laugh. “Hell, I deserve a whole lot more than that.”

It’s supposed to lighten the mood between them and Jim thinks it might have worked a few years ago, but now all he is is angry. “Yeah, Mom, you do. Do you know what I went through back then? Sam told me that I was disgusting, that the fact that I had fallen in love was wrong. He terrorized me and bullied me, and what did you say?”

He pauses and looks over at Winona expectantly. She stares at her hands.

Jim snorts and nods sarcastically. “Yeah, that sounds about right. You never said anything to stop it. You were never there for me, Mom. And I don’t know if I can ever forgive that.”

He half expects Winona to leave. It would not be out of character for her at all if she stood up and walked away from him right now.

Winona, of course, would rather die than live up to what Jim expected from her. She stays sitting on the step next to him and even goes so far as to reach over and pat his knee carefully, like she’s
afraid that he might bolt if she makes a wrong move. “Jimmy, I know and I hate myself for it. Every night when I go to sleep, I look over at Chris and think about how he was the only one who was everywhere for you in any way.

“I was never the mother I should have been to you. Hell, I was hardly a mother at all. By the time you were leaving for college, I realized that I hardly knew you and it killed me.” She sighs again and looks to him desperately. Jim tries to keep his eyes off of her but he can’t. He looks down at her and lets her take his hand in both of hers.

“This is me trying to fix that, Jimmy. I know it’s probably too late and that you hate me in all likeliness by now, but Jim I almost died and I would be damned if I didn’t try to fix this thing between us.”

“I don’t know how to, Mom.”

Winona wraps an arm around Jim’s shoulders and tugs him close to her, a position which was most certainly more comfortable when he was fifteen and much scrawnier. “Well, first I should probably say that I love you. Then, I should probably tell you that I am so so proud of what you’ve made of yourself. I know that I told you it was a bad idea but you have certainly proved me wrong.”

Jim smiled cheekily up at her. “When I have ever tried to do anything else?”

“You’re a little shit like your father.” Winona takes her arm back from around Jim’s shoulder and mock scowls at him. Her expression softens after a moment and she adds, “He would have been proud of you, you know.”

Jim almost groans. All his life he has been told about his father, the hero who ran into a burning building and saved a family of three before a beam collapsed in his path and he was unable to save himself. People that he barely knows tell Jim that he would be proud of him and that Jim just looks so much like George that it sorta makes him sick.

Still, he can’t help but ask, “D’you think he would have liked Spock?”

Winona glances over her shoulder toward the large white house as though it was instinctual and looks back at Jim with a grin. “You know, I hardly know the guy but I’m sure George would have loved him.”

Jim shares a private little grin with Winona and she knocks her shoulder against his. “You really do love him, don’t you?” She asks like she already knows the answer.

“I do, I really do.” Jim says seriously. “Mom he’s just…he’s everything, you know? He’s so fucking smart and he seems all stoic but he’s actually hilarious and so sarcastic all the time and he’s so gorgeous that I can hardly believe he chose to be with me and—”

“I get it, Jimmy.” Winona cuts him off with a grin and a good-natured chuckle. “And for the record, I’m happy for you. There was a while there where I thought you might never settle down. I thought that everything that happened here might have scared you off of it forever.”

“He’s just…right. It feels right, being with him.”

“That is all I could ever want for you, Jimmy.”

Jim smiles at his mother and feels like things with her are going to be okay for the first time in a long time.
“Cool, calm, and collected.” Leonard repeats like a mantra that he’s trying to convince himself of while he ties his tie with shaking hands. After three tries at tying a Windsor, he finally gets something acceptable and sighs at his reflection in the mirror. “Cool, calm, and collected.”

Hey, if he repeats it enough, maybe it’ll be true one of these times.

He puts his suit jacket on and sighs again. He can practically hear his mother saying “Leonard, I can see your tattoos over your collar.” in his mind. He adjusts it so that most of them are hidden but hey, he’s a tattoo artist. He’s got a lot of tattoos and that is just part of the trade.

The ring box is sitting on the dresser, where it’s been for about a week (since the day that Jim left for his mother’s house, a thought which makes Leonard glad that this is his situation and not that). He picks it up and fiddles with the delicate blue velvet, opening and shutting it as though to check that the spring still works.

“Cool, calm, and collected.”

His phone rings and he jumps about a foot in the air before collecting himself and answering it with a shaking voice. “Hello?”

“Bones, I can practically feel your anxiety through the phone. You need to chill.”

Leonard sighs at Jim and shakes his head. “You know I can’t. I mean Jesus, Jim. What if she says no?”

“Well it’s a good thing you will never have to find out.” Jim replies snarkily. “Cuz she’s going to say yes.”

“Now, see, the problem with that is this: you cannot possibly know that.”

“I have my ways.”

“Your ways of being an ass.”

Leonard sighs again. “How’re things out there?”

A pause on Jim’s side before a deep breath. “Weird? I guess? My mom and I have actually been having pleasant conversation but Sam hasn’t really spoken to me since Spock showed up.”

“What an ass.”

“Yeah. Listen, Bones, I gotta go. Good luck tonight, not that you need it. You guys have known each other for three years and you seriously love each other. Don’t sweat it.” Leonard can practically hear Jim’s thumbs up through the phone and he shakes his head.

“Yeah, alright. Talk to you later.”

With that, he grabs his keys, shoves the ring box into his pocket, and heads out the door. He drives over to Carol’s with hands that only shake if he doesn’t hold the steering wheel tightly enough and hopes to god that they’re not too sweaty when he actually arrives.

Building up his resolve that he is going to do this and he will get through it no matter what happens from here, Leonard knocks on her door.
“I can’t believe Bones is actually proposing to Carol.” Jim says as he hangs up the phone. “I mean, I’m super happy for them but I didn’t think he’d ever do it, honestly.”

“Do you think he is aware of the fact that Carol is planning on proposing as well?” Spock inquires helpfully and it sends Jim into a fit of giggles.

“No, I didn’t clue him into that little bit of information. I wish I could be there to see the look on his face when it all goes down.”

Spock nods and rolls his eyes as Jim holds the door to the small restaurant open for him.

“This,” Jim waves his arm around in a broad sweeping gesture, “is the best pizza joint this side of the Mississippi. Possibly the world.”

“Jimmy!” Exclaims the woman behind the counter. She bustles out and immediately sets to taking Jim’s head in her hands and examining him thoroughly. Once she’s satisfied that he is in good condition, she pulls him in for a tight hug.

“Spock, this is Loretta. She owns this place.” Jim says in a pitch just slightly above his usual speaking register. “Loretta, this is Spock.”

Loretta lets go of Jim to pull Spock into an equally tight but blessedly more brief hug. “Oh, look at the two of you. I’ve been feeding this little one since before he could talk, you know? He had his first date just over in that booth.” She points to a booth in the far corner of the room. “They kissed and it was just about the cutest most awkward thing I have ever seen.”

Jim flushed a rather pleasing shade of pink and rubbed the back of his neck. “Thanks, Loretta.”

The woman clicks her tongue at him and shakes her head as she waves them into a booth. She promises to bring them ‘Little Jimmy’s favorite’ and goes off without a question, leaving Jim and Spock feeling rather like they had just experienced a tornado in the form of a person.

“She sure is something.” Jim laughs, mostly to himself, Spock assumes. “Can’t believe she still remembers me.”

Spock watches Jim’s face change from utter confusion to looking like he had just encountered a ghost in just a matter of seconds. His jaw hangs open and he appears to have nothing to contribute to the situation until he regained his voice to say, “…Eli?”

The man, seemingly unaware of Jim’s less-than-pleasant reaction, barrels on with that same grin plastered across his face. “In the flesh! Wow, I can’t believe you’re here. Last time I saw you, I
was seventeen.”

Jim pops out of his seat to give the man an awkward hug, which Eli returns with an enthusiasm that sparks a rather unattractive flare of jealousy in Spock’s gut.

“Wow, yeah, that’s—that’s crazy, man.” Jim pulls away from the hug and smiles a bit more loosely at the man who was somehow still unaware of Jim’s discomfort. “How are you?”

Eli grins and shrugs. “Can’t complain, can’t complain. How are you? I heard from Loretta that your mom had a heart attack?”

Jim tenses up once more and shoves his hands in his pockets. He does not look to Spock for help, so he stays seated, as much as he wants to stand up and help his partner. “Yeah, she did. She’s alright now, though, which is what’s important. We were actually just talking about you the other day, actually.”

This elicits a rather surprised response out of Eli. “Really? What’d she say?”

“She said sorry for, well, for everything.”

Eli’s surprise at Jim’s words only grows. “That sounds like an ordeal.”

“It sure was strange, that’s for sure.” Jim agrees with a slow nod. He chews on his lip awkwardly. “A lot has changed. It’s hard to get used to.”

If Spock was one to snort, he probably would have at that moment. He knows very well that the conversation between Jim and his mother was in no way as simple as just that. Jim had returned from their ‘little talk’ looking distraught and lost, immediately explaining the entire situation in detail to Spock. At the end of it he had not been displeased with the outcome of speaking to his mother but Jim was still experiencing a significant amount of emotional distress, Spock could tell.

Eli’s grin shifts to something that brought that same crop of jealousy up in Spock once more. “Including you. If I may say so, you look even better than you did in high school.”

Jim blushes. Spock grips his water glass in a fantastic display of control. “Wow…thanks? You look great, too.”

Eli steps closer to Jim, officially invading his personal space, and Jim takes half of a step back. “Hey, do you want to maybe go and grab drinks while you’re in town? Catch up and see what happens?”

Jim’s eyes go wide and Spock comes dangerously close to breaking the glass in his hand. “Like a date?”

Eli nods and winks flirtatiously. Spock takes this as his cue to stand up. He places a hand on Jim’s hip. The blond looks to Spock with a distinct note of gratitude in his eyes. “Jim, who is your friend?”

Jim relaxes, pressing himself to Spock’s side firmly and grinning. Spock can still sense a note of tension in his posture but for all intents and purposes, Spock’s presence seems to make the situation easier for him.

“Spock, this is Eli, we knew each other in high school. Eli, this is Spock. My boyfriend.” He gestures between the two of them and Spock extends his hand for Eli to shake. The other man takes it gingerly with a slight downturn to his mouth.
“Nice to meet you.”

“Likewise.”

Eli forces the grin back on his face, this time much more tight and Spock feels a surge of victory. It is childish and completely unfounded as Jim would not have accepted the proposition of a date. Nevertheless, he tightens his grip on Jim’s hip.

He claps his hands and rubs them awkwardly together. “Well, I guess I’ll leave you two to it.” Eli punctuates his words with what seems to be an aborted bow before stalking off back to his booth.

Jim lets out a deep breath that Spock guesses he had been holding for too long and slumps slightly. He sits in the booth again and runs both hands through his golden hair. “Well that was fucking weird.”

“‘You are a strong independent lady. You are going to go to this fancy-ass restaurant, you are going to look that man in the eye, and you are going to ask him to marry you.’ Carol spoke to her reflection firmly, not breaking eye contact with herself for even a second.

The bouquet of tulips and roses that Leo bought for her the other day sit on her bedside table and Carol grins at them nervously. “I’m ready for this, aren’t I? I mean, I’m almost thirty. Leonard is thirty-two. We’re old enough and I really do love him. We fit. This is right, right?”

The flowers do not respond because they are flowers and Carol is officially losing her mind.

She picks her handbag up off of her bed and checks for about the millionth time to make sure that the ring is still in there. Losing that at this point in the game would be quite unfortunate.

She’s regulating her breathing and trying to remain cool and not sweat so as to not mess up her makeup when a knock on the door makes her jump. She rushes to open it, smiling easily at the man on the other side. “Hello, Love.”

Leonard grins and holds out a hand to her. “Are you ready?”

“Yes, of course.”

The line of Jim’s back is tense as he sits on the end of the king bed, still in his clothes, with his chin in his hands. He is staring at the wall intently, as if it can unlock the secrets of the universe.

Spock strides over to the bed and sat beside him, surprising Jim, who did not seem to notice his return from the kitchen. “Oh, hey, Spock.”

He is clearly in a state of emotional distress and had been since their encounter with Eli at Loretta’s earlier that evening. Spock had chosen not to press the issue then. Now, he must intercede.

“James, what is troubling you?”

Jim looks at him with wide falsely innocent eyes. “Nothing.” He insists.

Spock does not roll his eyes. He does, however place a hand on Jim’s back and begin rubbing small circles, an act which has been proven to relax him in the past. “I know that to be untrue. Is this about your encounter with Eli?”
Jim nods and buries his face in his hands. “It’s so dumb.” Comes out muffled through his fingers.

“While I doubt that it is ‘dumb’, perhaps you could explain it to me?” Spock suggests. “Perhaps I can help.”

Jim removes his face from his hands and begins speaking as if it laborious for him to do so, “I told you about Eli, right? Well, we broke up the second-and final-time because of Sam and how awful he was to both of us. It was...really hard. Eli just sort of did it and then left and I didn’t see him again except in the hall at school sometimes. And that sucked but it always felt like something was unfinished between us, you know? Like there was a whole lot that we should have said.

“And I don’t regret breaking up with him at all. I love you, Spock, and I would not trade you for anything in the world. But seeing Eli tonight was like being sixteen and having him just walk away all over again. And then he asked me out and I didn’t want to go but all I could think was that that was exactly what I wanted back then.” Jim finished with a slightly desperate look to Spock.

“I love you. Don’t think that I don’t because my ex is making me upset.”

Spock shakes his head and spares Jim a small smile. He kisses Jim on the forehead and shook his head at him. “The thought did not cross my mind. And I was correct, your problem is not ‘dumb.’ Many things have been changing for you in the past few days and some distress over that is reasonable.”

“Some distress, yeah. But we both know that I passed ‘some’ somewhere between baking four cakes in one afternoon and almost crying in a pizza restaurant.” Jim argues petulantly. “I just feel so stupid.”

“I assure you, you are not stupid.” Spock continues rubbing circles in Jim’s back and can feel the younger man relaxing slightly under his touch. “Your emotions may seem scattered at this moment but that is not without justification.”

Jim stares at the floor and says nothing. Spock watches the back of his head, as if it could possibly give him some insight into what to say to Jim to make him realize that this is okay. That being upset over the way people in his life have treated him is perfectly acceptable.

“When I was ten years of age, I was the subject of much bullying at the hands of my schoolmates.” Spock begins, hoping at the very least to distract Jim. “I was much more serious in my academic pursuits than the others and they saw this as something strange to be ridiculed. I am ashamed to admit that I engaged in physical fights a few times. My mother was always disappointed when that happened.”

Spock pauses. Jim’s silence continues.

“My father, as I have told you, is the ambassador to Romania. Because of this, he was in possession of a rather ornate silver broach of their national seal. He often could be seen wearing it at official events and meetings with officials. The children at my school knew my identity as well as my father’s, of course.”

Jim does not speak but he is no longer looking at the floor. Spock counts this as success.

“They tasked me one day with stealing this pin and bringing it in so that they could see it. I was assured that if I did this, I would no longer be exiled to eating lunch alone in a teacher’s classroom. As I was ten years old, this was a most attractive prospect. I am ashamed to say that I accepted their challenge.
“I snuck into my father’s office on a day when I was sure he would not be home. I took hold of the box in which I knew the pin lay but just as I was leaving, I was surprised to find my father standing in the doorway of his office.”

“What’d he do?” Jim asks, granting Spock a pleasant surprise.

“He took the box from me and replaced it on the shelf. Then he told me to go to my room and wait until my mother returned home. I responded most maturely by stripping my bed of its covering and quite effectively destroying my bedroom in a fit of shame and embarrassment. When my mother returned home, she helped me restore order to the room and reprimanded me.”

“Was she mad about the room?”

“She was disappointed but she understood that my actions were due to my disappointment at once again losing the chance for acceptance than because my father had caught me in the act of borrowing his pin. I was grounded for two weeks and was put in charge with all aspects of care of our Tibetan mastiff, I-Chaya.”

Jim smiles and sits up finally. “That totally blows. Tibetan mastiffs are huge.”

“And they shed quite a bit.” Spock conceded. “All of which was my responsibility to clean up.”

Jim huffs a laugh that seems to surprise even him and he smiles quickly at Spock. He twines their fingers together and leans his head against his shoulder. “Thank you.”

“I assure you, my intentions were purely selfish.”

Jim laughs again. “Oh yeah, sure.” He clearly does not believe him, and Spock thinks that Jim might know him better than anyone with whom he has previously engaged in a romantic relationship.

It is not the first time he has thought this, but it does not fail to overwhelm him. Jim never fails to set him off balance.

They sit in companionable silence for a few moments and Spock listens to the way Jim’s breathing evens out, coming out in warm puffs against his shoulder. He thinks for a moment that Jim has fallen asleep until the blond breaks the silence.

“Hey Spock?”

“Yes?”

“I was just thinking…have I told you that it’s super hot when you get all possessive?” Jim smiles lasciviously at Spock and slides a hand along his thigh. Spock’s eyebrow hitches upward toward his hairline.

“No, I do not believe you have.” He responds, feeling himself begin to harden under Jim’s gaze and his ministrations on his upper thigh. “Perhaps you would like to show me?”

This is apparently all the encouragement Jim needs before he pushes Spock into a supine position on the bed and moves to straddle his hips. He grinds their groins together while he kisses Spock deep and slow. He pulls away slowly, practically panting into Spock’s mouth and smiles mischievously.

He gets off the bed and strips himself of his clothes while Spock watches and he talks.
“You should have been there when I was grocery shopping the other day. There was a group of guys who were eyeing my ass while I was getting things off the bottom shelf. I probably could have had any one of them right then and there. All I would have had to do was ask and—" 

Jim’s words are cut off by a noise akin to a growl that rips from Spock’s throat as he grabs him and pulls him down onto the bed so that Spock is pinning him down with his hands above his head. They are both clad only in boxers, though Spock is also wearing a t-shirt as well.

He ruts up against Jim roughly, sucking bruises into his neck while Jim groans and pants under him. “Mine.” He growls into the joining between his neck and shoulder.

“Yes, yours.” Jim pants back. “Need you now, Spock.”

Spock works quickly, stripping them both of their boxers and retrieving the lube an a condom from the drawer of the table.

_He preps Jim at a torturously slow pace that he almost breaks several times at the feeling of Jim’s muscles fluttering around him, but keeps it up if only to see and hear the way Jim writhes and begs for more._

When he thrusts in, Jim shouts out in pleasure, only to have Spock cover his mouth with his hand. Jim takes the initiative to suck two of Spock’s fingers into his mouth while his boyfriend thrusts deep and unevenly into him.

When they reach climax, it is with another low sound from Spock and a muffled cry from Jim.

“Spock.” Jim pants as Spock pulls out and ties off the condom, disposing of it in the wastebasket conveniently located nearby. Jim reaches out and pulled at his lover’s arms. “C’mere.”

Spock allows himself to be enveloped by Jim’s limbs, sighing contentedly in the ‘afterglow’ (as Jim was so wont to call it) and allowing himself to slip into a light sleep.

Jim’s warm breath across his torso as he speaks pulls him out just enough to feel a hand placed over his heart and to hear the words, “You’re too good for me. I hope you don’t figure that out.”

Chapter End Notes

comments are for cuties, likes are love <3

tumblr: fabtrek
"You look beautiful tonight, Carol." Leo reaches out and grabs Carol’s hands across the table. The waiter had just cleared their entrée plates and he wants to do this before dessert hit. “You take my breath away every time I see you.”

Carol grins and looks down at their hands in such a way that. She glances back up at him with a light blush and Leonard feels his heart hammer against his ribcage impossibly harder. “You too look amazing, dear. I almost cannot believe my luck in finding you.”

Leonard pulls one of his hands away and reaches into his pocket, trying to keep himself. He knows that he might start shaking if he does not contain himself. He is sure of this, he knows it, but the thought of what Carol might say or do scares him out of his mind. “Carol, I have something I need to ask you.”

“No, Leonard, there’s something I need to say first.” Carol cuts him off and he freezes for a moment before relaxing and nodding. She does not look unhappy or like she is about to dump him. At least, he can hope that she is not about to do so. “Leonard, I love you dearly. I hope you know that.”

“I do.” Leonard agrees.

“The time that I have spent with you has been the best of my life and I know that we’ve only been exclusive for a short while but I know that I know you better than I think I know anyone and what I know is that I want to be with you forever.”

Leonard grins and pulls the box from his pocket. “That actually has a lot to do with what I wanted to ask you, darlin’.”

“Will you marry me?”

Leonard would really like to say that his mouth does not hang open in shock at her proposal and materialization of a ring, but that would be a horrible lie. He can only stare in shock at the silver band in her hand and feel the weight of the velvet box clutched in his own.

Then he starts laughing. Which is probably not the best idea for him to do when the love of his life has just proposed but really, this would happen to him.

“What? Oh dear god have I just made a terrible blunder?” Carol gasps and puts a hand over her mouth. “Can we just pretend that I did not do that?”

Leonard shakes his head and finally holds out the ring box. “I’m not laughing at you, dear. I’m laughing at the fact that we were about to do this at the same time.”
Carol inhales sharply and clasps both hands to her chest. Leonard watches as her eyes quickly fill with tears and he reaches out with his free hand to brush a tear from her cheek.

“This is so embarrassing. This is so not how I pictured this happening when I was a little girl.” She attempts to hide her face but Leonard hooks a finger beneath her chin and tilts it upwards again. He leans forward to brush their lips together and grins against her mouth when she giggles softly.

“Can I take that as a yes?” He asks once they’ve parted.

Carol nods rapidly and fumbles to slide the ring on Leonard’s hand. “Yes, yes of course, Leonard.”

He takes his own ring and slips it onto her finger in return. “Well, then, I guess I must say yes as well.”

- 

The green truck is Peter’s. It does not take Jim long to learn that from the four year old who asked him to play and then promptly scolded him for playing with said green truck. Jim can only use the purple truck, which he thinks is some weird sort of irony considering the kid’s father.

“Peter, be nice.” Aurelan chides her son as he slams his truck into Jim’s knuckles, likely leaving a bruise the same color as the toy.

“It’s not my fault Uncle Jim is a big baby.” Peter whines, drawing out the syllables so that it sounds more like “Baayy-beee.”

Jim looks helplessly up at Aurelan, begging for her help. “Yeah, it’s not my fault.”

“Why don’t you come here and hold Janie.” Aurelan suggests and holds out the gurgling baby in her lap. Janie giggles and waves her arms jerkily. “I need a break.”

“Yeah, hold Janie. You’re just messing up my game anyways.”

Jim hands over the purple truck and holds his hands in the air in surrender. He would wonder how on Earth Peter ended up as such a wee devil, but Jim can remember himself at that age and with Sam as his father it really is not a surprise.

“Hello, Janie.” He coos as he takes the nine-month-old little girl into his arms. She wriggles about happily for a moment before settling in his lap and patting at his face with sticky hands. “Why thank you for that.”

He leans forward and gives her a kiss on the forehead. Janie giggles and blows out through her lips. Jim ends up covered in spit but cannot bring himself to really care about it.

Just as he is blowing raspberries on her stomach when he hears, “Aurelan, have you perchance seen Jim? I was hoping to go with him to get lunch.”

Jim lifts his head and grins up at Spock. “Hey babe! I was just playing with little Janie here. And if you want food, I made you some of that edamame and avocado salad that you like.” He waves his hand back toward the kitchen and goes back to tickling Janie, who burbles happily in response.

“I am not desperately hungry. I merely wished to spend some time with you.” Spock says with a smile and he sits down on the couch between Jim and Aurelan.

Jim grins at Spock and pecks him on the lips before turning back to his niece once more. “See?
Your Uncle Spock loves me. Yes he loves me so much.” He leans in and tickles her again, completely ignoring the way Spock is smiling down at the two of them.

“Uncle Spock.” Aurelan speaks lowly to Spock and elbows him in the ribcage gently. “Part of the family already, huh?”

“Yes, he totally is.” Jim chimes in and wraps an arm around Spock. “Isn’t he the best, A?”

“You are exaggerating, James.” Spock rolls his eyes and frowns.

“Not even a little bit.”

Aurelan groans. “Around the children, you two? Really?”

Just to rub it in, Jim leans in and smacks a big kiss on Spock’s lips. “Oh I just wuv you so much!”

The baby talk is something that Spock clearly finds annoying but he goes along with it because Jim somehow managed to hit the relationship jackpot. He smiles softly at Jim and kisses him once more. “I too love you, dearest.”

Aurelan makes fake retching noises. “I don’t think Sam and I were ever like that.” She muses. “And you were certainly not the type to do this when we were together, Jim.”

Jim rolls his eyes and flicks her in the side of the face playfully. “Oh, don’t be so jealous.”

“The two of you were in a relationship?” Spock asks. Jim realizes just then that his boyfriend was not aware of the fact that he was in a relationship with his brother’s wife before Sam was.

“Yeah, Aurie and I went to high school together and dated for a bit.” Jim tries to speak as casually as possible, knowing quite well that Spock might find the situation awkward. “That’s actually how she and Sam met.”

“Jim sort of walked in on Sam and me making out in the pantry.” Aurelan admits bashfully.

Spock looks alarmed by this, so Jim just laughs and squeezes him more tightly to his body. “And what did I say?”

“Thank God, now I don’t have to dump you.” Aurelan quotes cheerfully.

It’s a funny story that Winona almost fainted when she heard and which made Jim just a bit bitter in the beginning (not because he was in love with Aurelan, but because Sam was an ass) and which Spock seems surprised by. If Jim looks closely, he can see that hint of amusement there, though.

“The stories I hear of you as a youth are always quite fascinating.” Spock adds with a raised eyebrow.

Jim bounces Janie on his lap and shrugs. “I was sort of an idiot back then, honestly. Once, I tried to jump a motorcross bike off of the school roof onto a bus.”

“To be fair, you were successful.” Aurelan adds. She reaches over and pinches Jim’s cheek, sticking her elbow in Spock’s face in the effort. “But I’m proud of you now, Jimmy-boy. You’re all settled and you’re so crazy good with kids. You’re a completely different person, I swear.”

“If only the same could be said for your husband.”

It’s snarky and a bit rude and Jim really should not be talking like that but he cannot help it. He can
feel Aurelan and Spock’s surprised looks at him but he keeps his eyes glue on Janie while she giggles and burbles in his lap.

“He does care about you, Jim. He just has some prejudices he needs to get over.” Aurelan says softly. Jim has managed to shift the entire atmosphere of the room to something far more tense.

“I doubt that.” Jim still does not look at her, feels the weight of Spock’s hand on his shoulder.

“He’s your brother.”

“Look, these things happen.” Jim sighs out. “Sometimes it’s better to just let them lie, you know?”

Aurelan sighs and leans back against the couch. “No, I don’t.”

--

“Gaila Oriana has created a bit of heaven on Earth with her chocolate confections. It is the humble opinion of this journalist that what we have in this little bakery in Georgia is nothing short of the face of the new generation of Chocolatiers.” Sulu read grandly as he strolled into the shop.

“We also had a chance to sample some of Jim Kirk’s creations and we are glad to say that they more than live up to the hype. His protégé Pavel Chekov also shows remarkable promise.” Chekov quotes back with a grin.

Gaila blushes and waves them both off with a blush. “Oh will you two shush already?” She has already had about a million copies of the article sent to her by various friends and relatives. It is starting to get a little bit annoying, as proud as she is.

“Gaila, this is Sweet Stuff magazine! The biggest confection magazine in the US!” Chekov exclaimed suddenly. “And they called me remarkable!”

“The article was about me, babyface.” Gaila reminds him with an eye roll. She continues weighing her bags of cocoa beans and marking them down in the inventory.

Chekov ignores her and twirls, actually twirls, around the counter, rag in hand. “Remarkable potential!”

“You do realize you’re not going to be a baker forever, right?” Sulu asks with a grin. He grabs Pavel’s hand and pulls him close. “I mean, you’re going to Georgia Tech in a month.”

Pavel stiffens in his arms and pulls away suddenly. “Yeah…that.”

“What?” Sulu frowns and holds Pavel’s face gently in his hands. “What’s wrong?”

Pavel shakes his head carefully and turns away to go back to cleaning the counter. “It’s nothing.”

Sulu looks to Gaila with a bewildered expression. She can only grimace and shrug. Honestly, Chekov has been acting a tad bit off for the last week and no one can get a word out of him about it. She has accepted that the kid will tell them when he’s ready. If he’s ever ready.

--

“Oh I can’t believe my little baby is leaving again!” Winona gets surprisingly teary and she throws herself into Jim’s arms for the third time that day. Jim has to drop his duffel to support her weight and Spock picks it up in case this happens again, as is highly likely.
“Mom, please, I have to go.” Jim says with a laugh in his voice. “You got a week and a half of me already.”

“But a week and a half after five years?” She asks. “It’s not nearly enough.”

Jim rolls his eyes and looks to Spock desperately. Spock takes it upon himself to take Winona by the shoulders and pulls her away from Jim. “I will miss, you Winona.”

“Oh, just call me Mom!” She cries and throws her arms around Spock, who returns the gesture stiffly.

Spock feels warmth blossom in his chest unexpectedly at her exclamation and allows himself to relax into the hug. He holds her close and can feel her smile into his shoulder. “It has been nice meeting you…Mom.” He says at last.

Over Winona’s shoulder he can see Jim giving him a shit eating grin and snapping a picture of the two of them hugging. Spock glares at him but says nothing, allowing Jim his moment of sentimentality.

“Jim, we’re really going to miss you.” Chris offers a handshake that Jim turns into a hug, of course. It warms his heart to see the two of them so bonded.

Once Winona has finally pulled away and all goodbyes have been said between family members that love each other, the inevitable moment of awkwardness comes. Jim shoves his hands in his pocket.

“Jim, can I talk to you for a second?” Spock actually looks around himself to see who said that because the voice he thought he heard could not possibly be asking to speak to Jim.

Despite Spock’s misgivings, however, it does appear to be Sam who spoke. Jim takes Spock’s hand and nods to his brother, making it remarkably clear that he will not speak to Sam alone.

They step away from the group a few feet over to a large silver garbage can. Sam shifts his weight from one foot to the other. He is clearly uncomfortable with the situation. Whether that is because of Jim or himself is unclear.

Finally, Sam sticks out his hand in a jerky motion. Jim takes it and shakes it gently. Once their hands drop, Sam clears his throat and looks down at his scuffed tennis shoes. “Jim it’s been good to see you. You seem like you’re really happy.”

Spock looks over to Jim in surprise and the blond simply smiles softly and nods to his older brother. “I am, Sam. You know, you should bring the kids out to Georgia some time. I know Aurelan wants to come see the place.”

Spock notes that Sam looks like he does not quite find that prospect appealing but he nods nevertheless. “Thanks, I’ll think about it.”

With that, Jim offers one more smile before turning back to the group with a broad grin. “Alright, everyone! Get in your last hugs before I go!”

Much to Spock’s surprise, he finds himself included in the round of hugs that are given out by the family. They are finally able to extract themselves from the people and give one final wave before heading off into security.

Once they’re through and on their way to the gate, Jim catches Spock’s hand with his own and
swings them between their bodies lightly. “I’m really glad you came, Spock. I don’t things would have gone quite so well without you.”

Spock squeezes Jim’s hand three times in response. *I love you.*

- 

A woman who looks to be in her forties walks into Sweet Emotion on the day before Jim and Spock are set to come home, just as Gaila is cleaning the espresso machine. The woman’s dark hair streaked with silver is tied up into a bun and she looks painfully familiar.

“Hello, does Gaila Oriana work here?” The woman asks confidently.

Gaila grins and puts one hand on her hip, brushing her curls away from her face with the other. “Depends. What do you want from her?”

The woman grins and sits down on one of the stools by the counter. She looks poised but relaxed, a lot like Gaila’s mother back in Portland. “I read about your work in *Sweet Stuff* magazine. I thought I’d come see what it was all about.”

Gaila grins and feels a thrill of excitement run up her spine. She is used to people coming in and looking to try some of the legendary Jim Kirk’s work but rarely do people want to order something because of her/“Wow, awesome! Here, let me grab you a few truffles. Do you like dark chocolate?”

“I like chocolate in all of its many forms.” The woman replies easily and Gaila grins.

“Oh, I like you.”

The woman shakes her head with a grin but says nothing more, allowing Gaila to bustle about and gather a few select truffles. Finally, she places a small plate with four truffles in front of her.

“Alright, these are my favorite truffles that I make. There’s the fireball, which has chili powder and dark chocolate made with beans from Ecuador; this one has Lavender and milk chocolate with beans from all over the place; this one is salted caramel in super dark chocolate, which sounds boring but I think it’s the best damn caramel you’ll ever have; an this one is the favorite of the guy who owns this shop, Jim Kirk, it’s peanut butter and honey. He calls it the Honey Bear.” Gaila speaks excitedly and points at each of the truffles in turn.

When she finishes describing all of them, she can only cross her arms and wait as the woman samples each truffle. Gaila finds herself biting her lip nervously, for whatever reason. She is only a customer, which Gaila has certainly dealt with before, but it still makes her extremely nervous.

“Those were all excellent. I loved every single one.” The customer concludes once she has taken a bite out of each truffle and chewed painfully slowly. “Do you enjoy working here?”

Gaila raises an eyebrow, confused by the question. Why would someone wonder that? “Yeah. I mean, I originally wanted to work at my own store or at one of those big shops that everyone knows but working here with Jim is seriously amazing. He’s basically a legend in the baking world by now.”

The woman nods graciously. “Yes, I know of his fame. I was simply wondering if you would ever consider leaving Sweet Emotion?”
“Why do you ask?” Gaila is beginning to feel defensive and she tightens her crossed arms.

“My name is Miranda Place but most people call me Number One. I own—“

“Ethereal Confections!” Gaila finishes for her, switching from defensive to excited in a moment. “In Seattle. Basically the best chocolate and wine shop in the country!”

Number one chuckles softly and nods. “So you’ve heard of us?”

“Heard of you? Do you know how famous your chocolates are? I have dreamed of working there since I was fourteen.” Gaila bounces on her toes but stops abruptly when she sees the half eaten truffles on the plate. She puts her hands to her mouth and whispers like a prayer, “And you loved my chocolates.” Gaila begins to think that she might cry or faint.

Number One grins wide. “Well, I actually came out here to talk to you about that. I’ve been following your career for a while and I was wondering if you would like to leave Sweet Emotion and come out to Seattle to work for me.”

Chapter End Notes

feedback super appreciated!
tumblr: fabtrek

End Notes

Feedback TOTALLY appreciated!
tumblr: fabtrek

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!