Star Crossed

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Star Crossed

by That_One_Curly_Haired_Fangirl

Summary

Humans stop aging at 18 until they meet their soulmate, which causes them to age again. It's unique to their species, but it's arguably not the oddest thing in the Federation or the galaxy. The only problem arises if your soulmate isn't human. Or at least not completely human. Or maybe that's only a problem for Jim.

A Kirk/Spock soulmate AU

(Currently a work in progress so warnings, tags, and characters may change or be added)

Notes

So I didn't mean to take a nearly 1 year hiatus from here, but life got busy and inspiration got low, plus supernatural (which was my main writing fandom) wasn't really doing it for me anymore. But I've gotten into Star Trek in the past year or so and I've had this idea rattling around my head for nearly that long, so I decided that I'd finally try to write it and post it for the 50th.
The premise of this AU is from a post that was going around tumblr a while back. Humans age until they hit 18, and then they stop aging. Once they meet their soulmate, they start aging again so they can grow old together. If someone’s soulmate dies, they stop aging again.

In this world it's not mandatory to get together with your soulmate, but most people do and some (more old fashioned) might judge non-soulmate couples. (Because humans have a tendency to judge people for who they love, but I digress).

This fic is set in the reboot 'verse but will probably feature some elements and people from TOS (although if you haven't seen it you should be fine)

See the end of the work for more notes.
Prologue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Everyone knew that humans stopped aging until they met their soulmates. It seemed odd at first, but there were also multiple telepathic species in the Federation, a rumor that Orions were capable of mind control through pheromones, and some stories of species that could shapeshift. So really, it wasn’t necessarily the weirdest thing in the galaxy that many humans looked 18 but could be years or decades older, just waiting to meet the right person.

Less known was the fact that if your soulmate died after you met them, you would stop aging again. Jim knew that one first hand. His mom had looked the same age for his whole life. Supposedly she’d stopped aging the moment his dad crashed the Kelvin into the giant ship that attacked them the day Jim was born.

Despite all this, Jim was still somewhat skeptical. Sure, there was a part of him that was a bit of a romantic, but he’d buried it under layers of cynicism and one night stands. So even though that small part of him wanted to buy in to the whole idea of soulmates, for the most part he was ready to dismiss it as BS. He’d been physically 18 for a few years now and that didn’t seem to be changing anytime soon. Plus despite centuries of people studying it no one had found an explanation for how it worked. The not aging could be explained, but not why the aging started again after meeting someone. So Jim was skeptical.

But regardless of his views, he saw it happen. Not much went on in a small town like Riverside, so people starting to age would usually be the hot topic for the week unless Starfleet started building something new. But while others found people all around him, Jim’s life stayed the same. As soon as he hit the drinking age (or maybe a bit before, no one could tell anyway) he started going out. He’d get a drink, find someone for the night, and maybe get lucky. But it didn’t change anything. No matter who he went home with, he’d still look 18 when he looked into the mirror the next day, week, or month. It had been like that for a few years now.

Then his routine got disrupted by a fight with some Starfleet cadets and a challenge from a captain who was supposedly a big fan of his dad’s.

When he decided to ship out to San Francisco, he still looked 18.

Chapter End Notes

Happy 50th everyone!
First of all, I'm blown away by the amount of attention this has gotten. You guys are amazing. Thanks to everyone who read, commented, kudo'd, bookmarked, and subscribed! There are way more of you than I was expecting.

Anyway, we're gonna meet another major character this chapter. Who's excited?

When Jim boarded the shuttle, he saw a lot of other people who looked 18. Who knew how old they actually were. He smirked as he passed the cadets he’d fought with the night before, enjoying how annoyed they seemed to see him. He spared a moment to throw a flirty comment at Uhura, but it seemed like her interest level hadn’t changed much from the night before.

Jim settled into his seat only to be distracted a moment later by a shout of “I don’t need a doctor, I am a doctor!” from the end of the shuttle.

He looked down and saw someone else in regular clothes rather than a cadet uniform. The man also appeared 18, but had a layer of scruff and was having a heated conversation with an officer. He was saying something about fear of death while flying, but she quickly shut his complaints down. Defeated, the man shuffled over into the seat next to Jim. He begrudgingly sat down and strapped himself in before pulling a flask out of his pocket.

He glanced at Jim then said, “I might throw up on you.”

Jim felt his eyebrows scrunch together in confusion. “I think these are pretty safe-”

“Don’t pander to me kid.” The other man interrupted Jim and turned to face him, a wild look in his eyes. “One tiny crack in the hull and our blood boils in 13 seconds. Solar flare could crop and cook us in our seats. Just wait til you’re sitting pretty with a case of Andorian shingles, see if you’re still so relaxed when your eyeballs are bleeding. Space is disease and danger wrapped in darkness and silence.” His point made, the man turned back to his seat and took a sip from his flask.

Despite the somewhat terrifying content of the onslaught, Jim bristled. “I might look 18, but I’m not a kid. And I don’t know if you realize, but Starfleet operates in space.”

The man next to him snorted. “I’m not 18 either, kid. I’ve probably looked 18 since you were still hanging out on playgrounds. And don’t remind me.”

“I doubt it.” Jim glanced over at the man next to him. “I’m 22, you can’t be that much older than me. Why the hell are you joining Starfleet if you hate space so much?”

The man next to him snorted. “I’m not 18 either, kid. I’ve probably looked 18 since you were still hanging out on playgrounds. And don’t remind me.”

“I doubt it.” Jim glanced over at the man next to him. “I’m 22, you can’t be that much older than me. Why the hell are you joining Starfleet if you hate space so much?”

“Because I’m 28 and look 18.” He sighed bitterly and took a drink from his flask before continuing. “My now-ex-wife decided that not aging meant it just wasn’t meant to be. Hell, I thought we were happy. Had a kid and everything. But nope, not good enough. And since everyone else is as caught up as she is in this damn soulmate stuff, she got the whole damn planet in the divorce.” He took another sip. “All I’ve got left is my bones.”

“Well,” Jim hesitated, realizing he still hadn’t learned the other man’s name, “I’m not a big believer
in that stuff either. Mind sharing that?” He pointed to the flask.

The man glanced between his hand and the flask cautiously for a moment before passing it over. “Why not. The name’s Leonard McCoy.”

“Jim Kirk. Here’s hoping you manage to not throw up.” He raised the flask in a mock toast before taking a sip and wincing a bit at the strong taste.
Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! First off thanks to the people who commented and kudo'd and bookmarked and subscribed and read last chapter. You guys make my day! And your numbers continue to astound me.

Just a heads up (although it does mention it in the chapter) there's a bit of a time jump between the last chapter and this one. I'm roughly following the timeline of the reboot movies (although not everything will be the same), so they're now in their last year at the Academy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next three years at the academy were exciting if relatively uneventful. Bones, as Jim had nicknamed his friend from the shuttle ride, had stayed friends with him as they went through their courses. It occurred to Jim that that may have been in part due to how concerned Bones was when he saw the list of things Jim was allergic too. Given that and how reckless he could be at times, Jim figured it probably didn’t hurt to have a friend who was a doctor. Over the years Jim slept around a bit and Bones dated some, but neither of them showed any signs of aging. But that wasn’t really what was important to Jim; he’d come here for a reason and it wasn’t to get laid. And just as Jim had promised Captain Pike, it looked like he’d be done with the academy command track in three years instead of four. There was really only once obstacle that he couldn’t quite overcome: the infamous Kobayashi Maru test.

Jim had already taken it twice, but he’d failed both times. He knew that they said everyone failed it and it shouldn’t be a big deal, but it still bothered him. So he was gonna try it one more time, but this time he had a new plan.

He knew Bones could tell that something was up, but he’d dismissed his friend’s worries easily enough. Bones still seemed suspicious but he probably still had no idea what Jim was about to do.

The next step of his planned involved getting Gaila’s access code so he could slip his program into the test. Jim felt like a bit of a dick for using her like that, but she was the only person he knew who worked on the test so he decided that he’d have to set his feelings aside for a bit. He and Gaila had started off as a one-time hookup that just kept happening, but by now Jim considered her a friend. So he figured that it was better if she didn’t know what he was doing because if she didn’t know what he was up to she’d get into less trouble.

Of course there was the option to not use her access code at all and try to get into the program for the test another way, but that would be far more difficult. And with his test tomorrow, he didn’t have time to try to hack in to set up his subroutine. It would be easier to do with Gaila’s code. Plus, they’d both get some great sex out of it, which was hardly a downside.

Jim had to get his code in. It wasn’t just about him not liking to fail (which he admittedly wasn’t a big fan of). The test itself was bogus and someone needed to do something about it. What kind of message did it send that that was one of last things cadets did before graduation? Was the final message Starfleet wanted to send really “No matter what you do everyone will die, now go have fun in space”?
No. Jim was not going to let this go unchallenged. He’d find a way to get Gaila’s access code, get his subroutine into the program before it was his turn to go, and hopefully it would all go smoothly.

By this point he’d reached the door to Gaila’s room. He still felt a little nervous about doing this to her, but he tried to think of something else before he buzzed to let her know he was outside so she wouldn’t pick up on it. Even though it was her code he was using, if she didn’t know anything then she couldn’t get in trouble for it. He put on his best smirk as he heard her come to the door. He was ready.

Chapter End Notes

To be completely honest, what Jim says about the Kobayashi Maru test is basically my opinion. I don't know if they do any sort of set up or debriefing for it, because if they don't that's such a horrible way to send people off. My best friend and I have actually gotten into debates over this because apparently we're both that kind of nerd.
Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

Again, thanks to all the awesome people who are reading, commenting, kudoing, bookmarking, and subscribing. It blows my mind that this has almost 1000 hits already. You guys are the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Despite Uhura, who Jim had noticed also still looked as 18 as the last few times he’d seen her, interrupting him and Gaila, Jim had managed to get the access code he needed. He was now sitting in the captain’s chair of the simulation bridge. Uhura and Bones were there as well, but he didn’t know the other people there as well. He shifted in his chair as the signal for the simulation starting flashed. Time to show Starfleet that not everyone accepted their bs test. He tried to appear as calm as possible to not raise any suspicion.

Uhura’s station lit up and she listened to her earpiece for a moment before turning around. “We’re receiving a distress signal from the USS Kobayashi Maru. The ship has lost power and is stranded. Starfleet command has ordered us to rescue them.” She didn’t seem especially distressed by this news, but everyone knew how this test went. Or at least usually went.

Jim smirked at her. “Starfleet command has ordered us to rescue them, captain.” He could almost feel her eye roll as she turned away.

“Sensors are detecting ships approaching from the other side of the Neutral Zone.” Bones turned around expectantly.

Jim shrugged and didn’t let his smirk drop. “That’s ok.” He got confused looks from everyone but didn’t let it phase him. “Seriously, not a problem.”

Bones looked back at his console. “The ships are Klingon warbirds, and they’re now decloaking and preparing to fire on us.” He looked back and raised an eyebrow. “Is this enough of a problem yet?”

After making an exaggerated thinking face for a moment, Jim shrugged. “Nah.”

“They’re firing on us.” Jim swiveled his chair to see someone he didn’t recognize at a tactical console.

Jim turned back and addressed Uhura, making sure to stay calm enough to piss everyone else off. “Tell sickbay to get ready to receive everyone from the damaged ship.”

Uhura looked back at him, annoyance clearly outweighing any confusion she felt. “How do you expect us to rescue them when we’re being attacked by Klingons?”

“Alert Sickbay.” Jim said calmly, taking an apple out of his pocket as she turned back around.

“We’re getting hit.” Bone looked over his shoulder from his console. “Our shields are at sixty percent.”

“Alright.” Jim looked out at the mix of confusion and alarm around him.
Bone had now turned around to face him fully. “Should we at least fire back or something?”

“Nah.” Jim took a bite of his apple.

Just then all the screens flickered for a moment before returning to normal. Jim could practically feel the confusion and alarm, this time coming from the control booth overlooking the fake bridge. He spared a glance up there before looking back to his simulation crew. “Arm photon torpedoes and prepare to fire on all of the Klingon warbirds.”

The tactical officer nodded and turned to obey. Bones didn’t seem as convinced. “Jim, their shields are still up.”

“Are they?” Jim raised an eyebrow and looked toward Bones’ console.

Bones turned back to his console, speaking up with confusion a moment later. “They aren’t.”

Jim turned back to the tactical officer, who seemed to be just accepting and enjoying what was happening. “Fire on the enemy ships. One photon torpedo each should do it; we wouldn’t want to waste any ammo.”

“Yes sir.” The tactical officer turned to his station with a smile and fired, taking out the Klingon ships with one torpedo each.

Jim watched the explosions before getting up from his chair and walking around the bridge. “So. We managed to eliminate all enemy ships, save everyone aboard the Kobayashi Maru, and didn’t even lose any crew members.” He looked up at the control booth and took another bite from his apple. “Now what?”

He knew that no one knew how to answer this question. This was unprecedented. Jim was just glad that it had worked out. Someone had to stand up to the most bs test at Starfleet Academy.

Chapter End Notes

By the way, most of the accurate (or accurate-ish) dialogue in this is thanks to a version of the 2009 script I found online (I would put the link I’ve been using but it hasn't been working for me, but if you can find the script it's pretty great) as well as my roommate's dvd.

Also, guess who shows up next chapter?
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

First off, I know I say it every chapter but I swear that every time I look at this fic there are more hits, comments, kudos, subscriptions, or bookmarks. You guys are seriously awesome and I’m blown away by how much attention this is getting.

Anyways, I think you guys are gonna be excited about who finally shows up this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Turns out Starfleet didn’t like it when people stood up to their bs tests. Not long had passed since Jim’s Kobayashi Maru and now they’d gathered everyone into one of the big assembly halls. Jim doubted that he was about to get a commendation for original thinking.

“You’ve all been called here today to resolve a troubling matter.” Admiral Barnett, who was sitting in the middle of the academy council, looked around the room. “James T. Kirk, please step forward.” The room broke out in whispers and everyone started to look around.

Despite the conviction he’d been feeling earlier, Jim was a bit nervous as he got up and walked towards one of the podiums in the front of the room.

Admiral Barnett spoke up again. “Evidence has been submitted to this council that you have violated the ethical code of conduct pursuant to regulation 17.43 of the Starfleet code. Do you have anything you’d like to say before we begin?”

“Yes.” Jim swallowed to clear his throat. “I believe I have the right to face my accuser directly?”

The admiral nodded and Jim followed his gaze as he heard someone in the audience behind him stand up.

The first thing Jim noticed about the person who stood up was the bowl cut, then the pointed ears and slanted eyebrows. So the person who caught him was a Vulcan. Jim’s eyes moved over the rest of his face and he corrected his earlier thought. A young, attractive Vulcan. Jim felt himself unable to look away as the other man stood up, adjusted his well fitted gray uniform, and began walking forward. After taking a second to take in just how well fitted that uniform was, Jim’s glance returned to the other’s face, where a pair of deep brown eyes met his.

Time seemed to slow and then pause for a moment; somewhere deep inside of himself, Jim felt something click into place. It felt like something had just restarted, but also like the beginning of something new and important.

He returned his attention to the front of the room in time to hear Admiral Barnett’s introduction. “This is Commander Spock, one of our most distinguished graduates. He has programmed the Kobayashi Maru for the last four years.”

Jim stole another look as the admiral prompted Spock to speak. That weird feeling Jim had hadn’t fully faded away yet, and it definitely wasn’t just nerves now.
“Cadet Kirk,” the Vulcan’s smooth voice began, “You somehow managed to install and activate a subroutine in the program code, thereby changing the conditions of the test.”

“Your point being?” Kirk tried to remain externally calm despite the conflicting feelings inside him at the moment.

Admiral Barnett spoke up again. “In academic vernacular, you cheated.”

Trying to ignore the weird sensation inside as well as all the muttering in the room, Kirk leaned into the mic on his podium. He could fake confidence. God knows he’d done it before. “Let me ask you a question—even though I think we all already know the answer. The test itself is a cheat, right? You programmed it to be unwinnable.” He looked over at Spock expectantly.

“Your argument precludes the possibly of a no-win scenario.” Spock responded calmly.

“I don’t believe in no-win scenarios,” Jim replied without missing a beat.

“Then not only have you violated the rules of the test,” Spock looked over at him, “You’ve also failed to understand the principle lesson.”

“Enlighten me.” Jim returned his gaze, going for a challenging look but it felt like he was just staring.

Spock, however, somehow managed to look superior without changing his facial expression at all. “You of all people should know, Cadet Kirk, that a captain cannot cheat death.”

And things just got personal. Jim looked down at his podium, not wanting to make eye contact with the asshole who was definitely not his soulmate. “I of all people?”

Jim could feel Spock’s stare on the side of his face. “Your father, Lieutenant George Kirk, assumed command of his vessel before he was killed in action, did he not?”

He really didn’t want to go there right now. Or ever. Time to change the topic and bring back the bravado. “I don’t think you like the fact that I beat your test.”

“Furthermore,” Spock continued as if he hadn’t been interrupted, “you failed to divine the purpose of the test.”

Now Jim was just getting annoyed. He looked back at Spock and said, “Enlighten me again.”

“The purpose is to experience fear.” Spock looked at him with that continual calm of his that Jim was really starting to hate. “Fear in the face of certain death. To accept that fear and maintain command of oneself and one’s crew. This is a quality expected in every Starfleet captain.”

Before Jim could respond, a door on the side of the auditorium opened and someone brought a padd to Admiral Barnett.

The admiral quickly scanned it before looking up again. “We’ve received a distress call from Vulcan.” Jim felt Spock’s eyes leave him to snap to the front of the room. Admiral Barnett continued, “With our primary fleet engaged in the Laurentian system, we will need all cadets to respond. This hearing is on recess until further notice and all cadets are ordered to report to the hangars to receive assignments immediately. Dismissed.”

At the admiral’s words everyone stood up and began to move in an orderly but urgent manner. Jim, however, stood still and watched Spock’s retreating form. He only snapped out of it when Bones came up and stood next to him.
Without looking away from the doors Spock had just disappeared through, Jim asked, “Who was that pointy eared bastard?” It was a question that had been bouncing around his head since the two of them had first made eye contact and that weird feeling happened. If that meant what Jim thought it did, he’d just started aging over someone he didn’t even like.

“I don’t know,” Bones’ words drew him out of his thoughts. “But I like him. Now come on.” Bones led him out of the auditorium and towards the hangars.

Chapter End Notes

This one was giving me trouble to be honest. I wanted to get that moment juuust right. Hopefully you all think I pulled it off!
Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

I say this every chapter and I probably will continue to, but I'm seriously blown away by the amount of attention and support this fic has gotten. Seriously, I've never had a fic get to (almost) 100 kudos this fast. You're the best.

Anyway, Jim's bad day isn't getting any better soon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once in the hangar, Jim assembled with the other cadets and waited for his name and assignment to be called. Still waiting. That was odd, they’d passed the Ks without saying him. He heard “McCoy, USS Enterprise!” but still nothing for him. The officers in the front finished, welcomed them all to Starfleet, and started to walk away but his name hadn’t been called. It had to be some sort of mix up. Jim ran after one of them.

“Excuse me, commander!” He caught up to the officer. “You didn’t call my name. Kirk, James T?”

“Kirk.” The commander didn’t even turn around from the panel he was entering information into. “You’re on academic suspension, that means you’re grounded until the academy board rules.” He walked away without sparing a glance at Jim, who watched him leave.

“Jim.” Bones had followed him over without his noticing. “The board will rule in your favor. Most likely.”

He could tell that Bones was trying to help him feel better, but Jim wasn’t feeling all that cheered up. He glanced back at his friend before turning back to where all of the higher ranking officers were assembling. A shuttle passed over them.

“Look Jim, I gotta go.” Bones seemed hesitant, so Jim turned around to face him, trying to hide his disappointment.

“Yeah. You go.” Jim attempted a smile but it didn’t feel quite as convincing as he was going for. He shook hands with Bones. “Be safe.” He tried to smile again, hoping it came across a little more genuine.

It must have worked, because Bones turned and started to walk away. Jim watched him for a bit before turning around. He wasn’t really sure what he was supposed to do now. He’d just get in the way if he stayed here, but he really didn’t want to wander around the academy campus as it got steadily emptier either. God, this day was terrible. He got called in front of the school and couldn’t even really defend himself because of that asshole who was totally not his soulmate, one of the major Federation planets was in distress, he was stuck here while everyone else got to go into space and possibly into danger, and now there was nothing he could do about any of those situations. Seriously, not a good day. He watched another shuttle take off, really wishing he could be on it.

Suddenly there was a hand on his shoulder and Bones was back, saying “Come with me,” and pulling Jim off toward another part of the hangar.
“Bones, where are we going?” Jim followed his friend through the crowd, momentarily distracted by Uhura walking past looking pissed. Having been on the receiving end of that look before, Jim was not jealous of whoever she was trying to find.

“You’ll see.” His attention jerked forward again as Bones responded while continuing to drag Jim by his arm.

The finally slowed as they neared the hangar infirmary and went in. Bones had released Jim’s arm as soon as they were out of the crowd, and once they were inside Jim backed out of the way as Bones began to rummage around on one of the shelves.

“What are you doing?” Jim climbed onto the exam table nearby, watching his friend warily.

“Doing you a favor. I couldn’t just leave you there, looking all pathetic.” He seemed to finally find what he was looking for, so he filled a hypospray and turned back to Jim. “I’m gonna give you a vaccine against viral infection from Melvarian mud fleas.” He jabbed it into the side of Jim’s neck.

“Ow!” Jim winced at the pain in the side of his neck, but he was still confused. “What for?”

“Vaccine against viral infection from Melvarian mud fleas.” Bones had walked toward a different part of the infirmary and was doing something Jim couldn’t see. “You’re going to start to lose vision in your left eye.”

“Wait, it wasn’t just that Jim couldn’t see the area where Bones was. He couldn’t see out of one eye at all. “I think I already am.”

“Ow!” Jim winced at the pain in the side of his neck, but he was still confused. “What for?”

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“Vaccine against viral infection from Melvarian mud fleas.” Bones had walked toward a different part of the infirmary and was doing something Jim couldn’t see. “You’re going to start to lose vision in your left eye.”

“What happened next got a little blurry for Jim because his vision was horrible right now and Bones really wasn’t kidding about that headache. His focus became breathing to deal with the pain and trying to take in what he could see through one eye. He was aware of Bones arguing with an officer, maybe the one from earlier, but the next thing he knew they were getting strapped in in the shuttle and preparing to head to the spacedock.

As they took off and started to make their way out of Earth’s atmosphere, all Jim could focus on was how terrible he felt. He leaned over to Bones, hoping he wasn’t dripping flop sweat everywhere because Bones hadn’t been exaggerating that either. “I might throw up on you.”

Bones, however, didn’t seem all that alarmed by space flight for once. He was staring out the window and seemed as awed as his gruff demeanor would allow. “Jim, you gotta see this.” Without taking his eyes off the window, he slapped Jim’s arm. “Jim, look.”

Jim, despite the pain and the sweating and the one not working, leaned in to see what Bones was looking at. Just above the blue curve of the Earth, the space dock stood out against the black darkness of the sky. Smaller subsections sprawled out from the circular central section and each had a few starships attached.

As they got closer Jim tried to remember which ship Bones had been stationed on, but his question was soon answered as they came up on the spacedock. He could see that they were approaching one of the new constitution class ships that had caused so much talk in Riverside when they’d started to be built. The shuttle turned and went over the saucer section, making Jim glad for the artificial gravity on the shuttle otherwise he’d definitely have puked by now. Still, he appreciated the view as they passed over her, still far enough away that he could read what was written on the hull clearly:
**USS ENTERPRISE** NCC-1701. Figures Bones would make it onto the flagship. Still, Jim couldn’t help the “wow” that escaped him as they circled around her once more and finally headed to the shuttle bay in the back. She was a gorgeous ship, and he really wished he’d been assigned to her.

Goddamn pointy eared bastard getting him on academic suspension and definitely not being an attractive person who was maybe his soulmate.

Chapter End Notes

Also because I got a comment about it, this fic will mostly follow the movies through the 09 movie and Into Darkness, but there will be other parts to it of course. I'm not just rewritting the movies, although there are some things I will be changing. I'm not sure yet if I'll end up including Beyond (and not just because there are fewer things I'd change about that one).
Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

This story is officially tied for my highest kudo count, had my highest for subscriptions, and has over 1500 hits already. Seriously, you guys are awesome and you blow my mind.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once the shuttle landed in the hangar, they got off with the rest of the crew and started to make their way through engineering. Bones was rushing him along again, holding on his arm half to guide Jim and half to keep him from falling down. Bones leaned in to his ear to be heard over the sound of the other arrivals. “We need to get you changed.”

Of course. On an active starship cadet reds would stick out too much. Still, that wasn’t Jim’s highest concern at the moment. “I don’t feel right. I feel like I’m leaking.”

And that wasn’t Bones’ top priority at the moment. Since both of his eyes were actually working, he was on the lookout. So when Jim heard him say something about seeing “That pointy-eared bastard,” he was grateful that Bones pulled him out of the way. Despite his reputation and his time before Starfleet, there actually was a limit to the amount of trouble Jim wanted to get into in one day.

The headache and the half blindness made it a little unclear where they went next, but Bones led him down some corridors and in a turbolift. At one point they also ducked into a room where Bones replicated Jim a standard issue pair of black pants and an undershirt he could put on to get rid of his cadet reds. While Jim changed Bones got his own uniform. After that Bones put Jim’s arm over his shoulders and led him to what seemed to be their final stop. Jim had no idea how Bones actually knew where he was going.

Jim had no idea where they were now, actually. He decided to ask Bones. “Where are we?”

“Sickbay.” Bones continued to guide him through the room.

Sickbay made sense, because Jim felt so sick. Also Bones was a doctor. Right. Still, Jim felt terrible. “This wasn’t worth it.”

“A little suffering’s good for the soul.”

Jim wondered if this was how Bones treated all of his patients or if it was just him. Still, there was something new going on. “My mouth is itchy. Is that normal?”

“Those symptoms won’t last long.” Bones deposited him on a biobed and pulled a hypospray out of seemingly nowhere. “I’m going to give you a mild sedative.”

God, Jim forgot how much he hated being sick. He was sure whatever Bones had given him was giving him a weird reaction. “I wish I didn’t know you.”

“Don’t be such an infant.” For the second time that day, Bones jabbed him in the neck with a hypospray.
Once again, Jim cried out in pain. He really hated those things. Still, sleeping didn’t sound like a bad idea right now. “How long’s it supposed to ta-”

Before he could finish his sentence, Jim felt darkness overtake him, and it wasn’t just the partial blindness now. In what felt like a split second he went from being awake to being unconscious.

Jim wasn’t sure how long he was out, but it was the weird kind of state where you’re definitely not fully conscious, but snippets of what’s going on around you manage to make it through. He caught bits of someone with an accent giving a briefing and one phrase stuck out to him: “a lightning storm in space.” The voice continued on, providing other information, but that phrase stayed in Jim’s head. Why was it so familiar? It tugged at some half-forgotten memory, his mom telling him a story she clearly didn’t want to tell... And he’d also read it somewhere, some academic thing he’d read recently... Wait. The story, the paper, they were both about the destruction of the Kelvin on the day he was born. This could not be good. Jim had to warn them...

“Lightning storm!” He startled awake and shot upright, then became aware of the fact that he still felt horrible as all the pain and other symptoms came rushing back at once. Well, they were a bit better, but still there. Except the blindness, that seemed gone. Bones must have given him something. But still, he needed to remember this. He had to warn them...

“Ah, Jim. You’re awake.” Bones walked over casually, clearly not understanding the urgency of the situation. “How are you feeling?” Before Jim could answer, Bones let out a shocked, “Good God man!”

“What?” Jim was distracted from what he needed to remember and confused by what Bones said for a second until he looked down. His hands were huge. “What the hell is this?”

“A reaction to the vaccine, dammit!” Bones, now alarmed, ran off and started to give orders to a nurse, but Jim was too focused on the transmission to really notice. This was important. Here it was! The part that he needed to warn them about: a lightning storm in space. That’s what had happened right before the Kelvin was destroyed by something they’d never seen before and had been no match for. This was bad, this was so bad.

“Bones.” He slapped his giant hands on his best friend’s face. “We gotta stop the ship.”

Jim took off running out of sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

Also although these are probably mostly insignificant details, there are random things that I'm making more like TOS/most of trek than like the new movies. For example, in the new movies they say medbay, but in TOS and most other trek things it's sickbay. Does this really matter? Probably not. Am I doing it anyway? Yeah.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

First off, happy October and thanks to everyone reading, kudoing, bookmarking, subscribing, and commenting. I know I say this every time (and I do mean it every time), but you all astound me with the amount of support you give this fic. You're seriously great.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Bones, of course, had grabbed the nearest medkit and chased him. He was a good doctor after all and wouldn’t let Jim just go running through the ship. He hadn’t said anything about noticing Jim aging though, but maybe it was too early to tell. Or maybe it was just that other things were still more pressing at the moment. “Jim,” Bones shouted, still a bit behind, “I’m not kidding, you need to keep your heart rate down!”

Jim ignored him because this was more important, dammit. He slid to a stop at one of the computer terminals in the corridor. He activated it and quickly demanded, “Computer, give me the location for crewmember Uhura.” She was a genius, there was no way she’d end up on another ship. God, Jim hoped she was here…

While the computer loaded, Bones finally caught up with him and began going through his medkit and muttering something about Jim’s reaction to the vaccine. Still, this was bigger than Jim.

The computer finally finished processing his request and gave him the information he needed; she was on deck four. Jim repeated it to himself to help him remember and took off again, trying to remember how to navigate the ship from the schematics he’d seen at some point. He had to do this; they were flying into a trap.

Bones finally caught up again as they arrived at the communications monitoring stations. “Dammit man, stand still!” He jabbed another hypo into Jim’s neck as Jim looked around the room, trying to find Uhura.

“Ow! Stop that!” Jim glared at Bones momentarily before continuing to scan the room. Finally, he saw Uhura. He ran across the room and stopped at her station. “Uhura!”

“Kirk?” She stood up and seemed very surprised to see him, which wasn’t all that surprising considering he wasn’t supposed to be on the ship, let alone in this section. “What are you doing here?”

He didn’t have time to explain. “The transmission from the Klingon prison planet, what exactly did you-”

“Oh my god, what is wrong with your hands?” She looked down at his hands and seemed very alarmed.

“It-look-” There was no time to explain. He was faintly aware of Bones behind him scanning him again, but he needed confirmation. “The ship that attacked the Klingon p—who was responsible for the attack and was it Womwan.” Suddenly talking became difficult; his tongue didn’t want to
“What?” Uhura had been following most of what he was saying, but the ending just confused her.

Dammit, this wasn’t working. Jim turned back to Bones and tried to ask, “What’s happening to my mouth?” but he wasn’t sure how coherent he actually was.

Luckily, Bones seemed to understand. “You’ve got numb tongue?”

“How tong?” Jim really didn’t need this now.

“I can fix that.” Bones started digging through his medkit again.

“Was the ship what?” Despite everything going on, Uhura seemed to get that this was important. Jim was so glad she was so perceptive.

“Womwan.” She still didn’t seem to get it, so he tried again. “Womoowan.”

“Romulan?” She seemed confused, but at least she’d gotten it.

“Yes!” Jim’s excitement was interrupted as Bones shoved yet another hypospray into his neck, this time on the other side. “Ah! Shtap it!” He was lisping now, but at least that meant whatever Bones had given him was acting quickly. He turned back to Uhura. “Was it?”

She still seemed confused and now more alarmed, but she nodded. “It was. How did you—is that important?”

“Very important.” He started her down for a moment, glad that she grasped the urgency of the situation (and that he could talk again), before realizing that telling her wasn’t enough. “We have to get to the bridge. We have to stop the ship.”

Jim took off running again, this time with both Uhura and Bones chasing him. They both called out to him as he ran out of the room and through the corridors, trying to find a turbolift that could actually take them to the top deck where the bridge would be.

Finally he found one. He slammed the button to call it there, fidgeting and tapping the wall as he waited for it to arrive. He didn’t have time for this, dammit. None of them had the time. Uhura and Bones arrived just as the turbolift doors opened and he rushed inside. They followed him.

“Kirk!” Uhura’s voice snapped him out of his pacing. “What is going on? Why are you so riled up? Why do we need to get to the bridge and stop the ship?”

He paused and looked at her and Bones, who looked equally concerned but slightly less worried now that whatever he’d given Jim seemed to have effectively made him better. Jim took a deep breath to calm himself before speaking. “We need to stop the ship because we’re going into a trap. I gotta tell Pike; I know he’ll believe me. He has to listen.”

They still looked alarmed, but there was a certain solemnness there too. He must have been able to convey how serious this was.

Before either of them could respond, the turbolift doors opened on to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes
Also, if you're having trouble understating Jim's dialogue when he has numb tongue, try talking without moving your tongue. It's somewhat difficult, pretty hard to understand, a bit entertaining, and may or may not be what I did when trying to figure out how to properly write those lines.
“Captain! Captain Pike, sir, we have to stop the ship!” Jim ran onto the bridge towards the captain’s chair in the center.

“How the hell did you get on board the Enterprise?” Pike turned and stood up from the chair.

Bones stepped between them and held a hand out in front of Jim as if trying to tell him to stop. “Listen, Captain, this man is under the influence of a severe reaction to a vaccine-”

“I tried to cut off his friend, but Bones was still talking. Jim wasn’t reacting to anything anymore; Bones had made sure of that. He was back to as good of shape as he’d ever been in. And this was important; he had to warn Pike and get him to stop the ship. “Vulcan isn’t experiencing a natural disaster. It’s being attacked by Romulans.”

Pike didn’t seem convinced. “Cadet Kirk, I think you’ve had enough attention for one day. McCoy,” he turned to the doctor, “take him back to Sickbay. We’ll have words later.” He turned and started to go back to his chair.

Jim heard Bones say, “Aye captain,” and try to guide him off the bridge but this was important, dammit.

“Sir!” Jim pushed past Bones toward Pike again. “That same anomaly, the lightning storm in space-”

“Mr. Kirk!” As he was talking Jim saw someone come forward out of the corner of his eye and a now-familiar voice said, “Mr. Kirk is not cleared to be aboard-”

Not the pointy-eared not-soulmate. Jim didn’t even want to look at him now. “Look, I get it, you’re a great arguer-“

“-this vessel. By Starfleet regulations that makes him-“

“I’d love to do it again with you too-“

“-a stowaway. I can remove him from the bridge-“

“Try it!” Jim snapped, ignoring Pike’s warning “Kirk…” because he really needed this Spock guy to just let him talk. “This cadet is trying to save the bridge.”

Spock finally looked at him instead of Pike. “By recommending a full stop mid-warp on a rescue mission?”
Pike was who he needed to talk too, not Spock. Jim turned back to the Captain. “It’s not a rescue mission. Listen to me. It’s an attack.”

“Based on what facts?” Spock asked sharply. If Jim didn’t know any better, he’d say Spock was getting mad, or at least irritated.

The bridge went silent. Jim decided that it would be better to face Spock directly at this point since he wouldn’t stop interrupting. It definitely wasn’t because some part of Jim wanted to get a better look now that they were standing so close. “That same anomaly, the lightning storm in space, also occurred on the day of my birth. Before a Romulan ship attacked the USS Kelvin.” Jim turned back to Pike. “You know that, sir, I read your dissertation.” Jim looked back to the brown eyes he could feel staring at him still. “That ship, which had formidable and advanced weaponry, was never seen or heard from again.” Jim looked away before he was drawn into that solemn stare too much. Back to Pike. “The Kelvin attack took place on the edge of Klingon space, and around the same time as the recent lightning storm, there was an attack. 47 Klingon warbirds destroyed by Romulans, sir, and it was reported that the Romulans were in one ship, one massive ship.”

“And you know of this Klingon attack how?” Pike was taking him seriously, but he still seemed skeptical.

Jim looked around for Uhura, who was still on the bridge. Jim had to give her credit, she had guts.

“Sir, I intercepted and translated the message myself,” Uhura said solemnly. “Kirk’s report is accurate.”

“We’re warping into a trap, sir.” Jim knew that he almost had Pike convinced; he couldn’t give up now. “There will be Romulans there, I promise you that.”

Almost reluctantly, Spock spoke up after a short pause. “The cadet’s logic is sound. And Lieutenant Uhura is unmatched in xenolinguistics; we would be wise to accept her conclusion.”

Pike finally seemed convinced. “Scan Vulcan space. Check for any transmissions in Romulan.”

“Sir, I’m not sure I can distinguish the Romulan language from Vulcan.” The communications officer looked up from his station as Pike approached.

“What about you?” Pike stopped next to Uhura. “Can you speak Romulan, Cadet...” He trailed off, waiting for her to identify herself.

“Uhura. All three dialects, sir.” Despite the overwhelming situation, she was staying controlled.

“Relieve the lieutenant.” Pike waited for her “yessir” before turning to the rest of the bridge to continue giving orders. “Hannity, hail the USS Truman.”

“All the other ships are out of warp, sir, and have arrived at Vulcan, but we seem to have lost all contact.” She looked at Pike with confusion.

“Sir,” Uhura adjusted something on the communications console, earpiece already in place. “I’m picking up no transmissions in Romulan. No transmissions at all.”

Jim hoped he was wrong, but that probably meant the worst. “That’s because they’re being attacked.”

Pike’s look was still somewhat skeptical, but he paced back to the captain’s chair and sat down. “Shields up. Red alert.”
“Arrival at Vulcan in 5 seconds,” the helmsman called out. “Four, three, two!”

Jim found himself turning to Spock, who was still standing next to him and had turned toward him too. Their eyes met again.

The ship dropped out of warp and lurched to avoid the debris field that was formerly the other Starfleet ships. Pike began to shout orders as everyone on the bridge leapt into action.

Everyone except Jim, who had nothing to do and could just watch as they tried to avoid getting destroyed by the remains of the other ships. He didn’t even want to think about what the casualties would be. Sure, Starfleet had been very careful with ship design and placement of shuttles and escape pods post-Kelvin, but these ships were torn to pieces. The odds of everyone making it out unharmed weren’t great.

Jim really hated being right sometimes.

Chapter End Notes

Jim’s still in denial a bit. Don’t worry; it won't last too long.

Also, do you know how difficult it is to figure out how to convey people talking over each other in written form? Hopefully it came across well.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

It's hard to believe I've been posting this fic for a little over a month now. The response to this continues to blow my mind, especially when I actually look at the numbers for everything on this. So thanks to everyone reading, commenting, kudoing, subscribing, bookmarking, and generally supporting this fic. You're all awesome!

Also I haven't found a good place to mention it yet, but Pike has started aging again/met his soulmate, but all of the other major characters besides the main pairing haven't (well, Chekov is technically aging, but that's because he's 17 and hasn't hit the stop point yet). I've seen a lot of fics with Pike/Number One from TOS and I kinda like that ship now, so that'll probably be a thing here eventually. Number One is only in the original pilot from TOS, but she was Pike's first officer and a bit of a badass. I've seen some fics that really flesh out her character in cool ways (I don't remember the names or authors otherwise I'd put them here), so some of that will most likely work its way into this. TLDR Pike has found his soulmate, she's awesome and may or may not be in here at some point, and age-appearance wise he's younger than he is in the movie but still noticeably older than everyone else, who all look 18 still (except the non-humans because the soulmate aging thing doesn't exist for them).

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The *Enterprise* continued to turn and drop, trying to avoid as much debris as possible, while the controlled chaos on the bridge continued. Everyone was shouting readings and status reports, or trying to get in touch with other parts of the ship, or giving or following orders. Jim still had nothing to do but watch.

Finally, they cleared the bulk of the debris and were able to see Vulcan’s red orange surface clearly. But that wasn’t all they saw.

Floating above the surface of the planet was a giant, dark ship. It seemed to be made of hundreds of spindly black sections trailing off of one end of the main body of the ship like tentacles from a squid. It matched the few descriptions *Kelvin* survivors had been able to provide and was most likely what had destroyed the other ships today.

“Captain,” Spock called out from his station, “They are locking torpedoes on us.”

“Divert auxiliary power from port nacelle to forward shields.” It was hard to tell how anyone could make out specific people here, but Pike had clearly heard and responded to Spock.

They managed to avoid one volley though evasive maneuvers, but the ship rocked as the second round made contact. Jim knew the damage reports would be in soon and it probably wouldn’t be good.

Pike braced himself on the arms of his chair. “Mr. Sulu, status report.”

The helmsman clicked through the display on his console urgently. “Shields at 32%. Their weapons are powerful, sir, we can’t take another hit like that!”
Pike was somehow remaining at least externally calm amidst the chaos. “Get me Starfleet command.”

“Captain.” Spock turned from his station toward the center of the bridge. “The Romulans have lowered some sort of high energy pulse device into the Vulcan atmosphere. Its signal appears to be blocking our communication and transporter abilities.”

Pike turned back to the front of the bridge. “Full power to the shields; prepare to fire all weapons.”

As suddenly as they had started, the torpedo showers stopped.

Uhura stood up from her station. “Captain, we’re being hailed.” The danger seemingly stopped, the bridge fell back into uneasy calmness.

As soon as clearance was given, a face appeared on screen. He was bald, with slanted eyebrows, pointed ears, and odd tattoos on his face. “Hello.”

“I’m Captain Christopher Pike. To whom am I speaking?” Pike’s voice was calm and just authoritative enough.

“Hi Christopher, I’m Nero.” Nero. So Jim finally had a name for the person responsible for the destruction of the Kelvin and his father’s death.

“You’ve declared war on the Federation. Withdraw, and we’ll arrange a meeting with Romulan leadership at a neutral location—“

Pike was cut off by Nero. “I do not speak for the empire. We stand apart.” His eyes seemed to move over the bridge. “As does your Vulcan crewmember. Isn’t that right, Spock?”

Spock stood up and walked toward the center of the bridge. “Pardon me, I do not believe you and I are aquatinted.”

“No, we’re not.” Nero confirmed. “Not yet.” He paused. “Spock, there’s something I would like you to see.” His attention shifted once again. “Captain Pike, your transporter has been disabled. As you can see by the rest of your armada, you have no choice. You will man a shuttle and come aboard the Narada for negotiations. That is all.” Nero swiped his hand and the transmission cut out, revealing the ominous bulk of the Narada on the viewscreen once again.

All eyes turned to Pike. After a moment he slowly stood up.

Jim couldn’t believe this. Pike knew what happened on the Kelvin. “He’ll kill you, you know that.”

“Your survival is unlikely.” Spock finally seemed to be on the same page as Jim.

“Sir, we gain nothing by diplomacy. Going over to that ship is a mistake.”

“I, too, believe you should rethink your strategy.”

“I understand that,” Pike said gently, stopping them both. He turned to the rest of the bridge. “I need officers who’ve been trained in advanced hand-to-hand combat.”

“I have training sir.” Sulu, the helmsman, raised his hand cautiously.

Pike looked at him for a second. “Come with me.” He turned back toward Jim. “Kirk, you too. You’re not supposed to be here anyway.” He started walking toward the turbolift. “Chekov, you have the conn.”
Jim heard the navigation officer hesitantly reply “aye, Captain” as he followed Pike.

Chapter End Notes

Also I gotta say, there is less Kirk/Spock interaction in the new movies than I remembered. Or at least I haven’t hit the chunks of it as I’ve been going back through this movie to write this fic. But I know there should be at least some moments of it coming up.

It was weird while writing this to think that this might be the first time Jim met Chekov and Sulu, so their first impression of him was him charging onto the bridge and doing everything from last chapter. Although tbh something I enjoy about the 2009 movie is that everyone's first impressions of each other are so horrible. I feel it makes them closer in way. I mean, it's probably hard to idolize your captain if you remember the first time you met he hit on you and got into a bar fight. Jim and Uhura have probably moved past that by Beyond and maybe even by Into Darkness, but still. First impressions are hard to shake and everyone has horrible ones for each other here. I love it.
Hello again everyone! I just want to say that at this point it just feels like you're trying to spoil me for any other readers I may have. Commenters on every chapter, a seemingly endless stream of kudos, and the sheer numbers of everything? I hope I don't come across as bragging; I just can't believe the numbers here. You all astound me.

Also not this chapter but the next one there will be a fight scene. I generally try to keep things at an American PG-13 (so a bit of not-super graphic violence, some swearing, hints at sex), and I don't think it'll be too bad, but I might add a fic warning just in case. It won't be anything worse than what's already in the movie, but I still just figured I should give a heads up.

Pike talked as they walked through the corridors. “Without transporters, we can’t beam off the ship. We can’t assist Vulcan; we can’t do our job. Mr. Kirk, Mr. Sulu, and Engineer Olson will spacejump from the shuttle. You will land on that machine they’ve lowered into the atmosphere that’s scrambling our gear, you’ll get inside, you’ll disable it, and then you’ll beam back to the ship.”

During Pike’s briefing, Jim felt Spock’s eyes drift toward him again. Why did this keep happening?

Pike continued talking, oblivious to the way his first officer was staring at Jim. “Mr. Spock, I’m leaving you in command of the Enterprise. Once we have transport capability and communications back up, you’ll contact Starfleet and report what the hell is going on here. And if all else fails, fall back, rendezvous with the fleet in the Laurentian system.” Pike stopped at the turbolift they’d just reached and turned toward Jim. “Kirk, I’m promoting you to first officer.”

“What?” Had Jim heard right?

“Captain?” Even Spock looked confused, if only for a split second. “I apologize, the complexities of human pranks escape me.”

“It’s not a prank, Spock.” Pike looked at him seriously. “And I’m not the captain, you are.” He turned back to Jim and Sulu. “Let’s go.”

Jim couldn’t help a slightly smug look at Spock as they passed. Sure, he’d questioned Pike’s decision too. But he’d just been starting to get along with that pointy eared bastard and then Spock suggests that him being first officer could only be a joke? At least Pike had some faith in Jim. He and Spock were certainly going to make an interesting captain/first officer team.

Jim followed Sulu and Pike into the turbolift. “Sir, after we knock out that drill, what happens to you?”

“Well, I guess you’ll have to come and get me.” Pike looked back at Spock. “Careful with the ship Spock, she’s brand new.”

The last thing they saw as the doors closed was Spock’s eyebrow raise.
They rendezvoused with Olson on their way to the shuttle and Jim, Olson, and Sulu changed into the suits for the space jump. Once they arrived at the shuttle Pike got into the front to prepare for launch and the three of them got into the back.

Jim was sitting in the middle seat. He looked toward Olson. “You’ve got the charges, right?”

“Oh yeah.” Olson’s wild-eyed excitement was a bit excessive given the severity of the situation. “I can’t wait to kick some Romulan arse.”

“…yeah.” Jim wasn’t sure this was the kinda guy he wanted as backup. He didn’t feel like this was as exciting as Olson seemed to think it was.

“Oh yeah.” If Olson noticed Jim’s attitude shift, he wasn’t fazed by it.

Pike received clearance for takeoff and carefully piloted them out of the shuttlebay and then away from the Enterprise.

Jim turned toward Sulu. This guy had seemed pretty confident and in control on the bridge, so hopefully he was better off than Olson. “What kind of combat training do you have?”

“Fencing.” Sulu, at least, wasn’t overly excited about this; he’d remained as calm as he’d been on the bridge.

Still, Jim hoped the incredulous look on his face wasn’t too obvious, but he felt like it was. He was doing this dangerous mission with one person overly excited for what could be a suicide run and one person whose combat experience was an ancient style of sword fighting. Looks like Jim might not have to worry about aging after all.

Once they were about halfway between the Enterprise and the Narada, Pike gave the order for them to get ready and sealed off the cockpit of the shuttle in preparation for opening the back for them to jump out of. “Gentlemen, we’re approaching the drop zone. You have one shot to land on that platform.” As he spoke they put on their helmets, got up from their seats, and approached the back of the shuttle, where handles dropped from the ceiling. They held on as Pike continued. “They may have defenses, so pull your chute as late as possible.” He began to count down as he continued to prepare to drop them. “Three.” They could hear Pike moving around the front section. “Two.” Jim adjusted his grip on the handle above him. “One.” The section they were in depressurized and lost artificial gravity, sending all three of them against the ceiling. “Remember the Enterprise won’t be able to get you back until you turn off that drill.” Pike paused for a moment, probably reaching for the final release. “Good luck.”

With that, the floor of their section of the shuttle dropped out and folded to the sides, creating an opening. They launched themselves out of the shuttle and began to descend along the giant black chain that connected the Narada to the platform below.

Chapter End Notes

Staring seems to be just about the only Spirk interaction they give us for most of this movie, but boy do they give us a lot it. I’d say ”staring and snark” puts them at the ”may not like as a person but definitely physically attracted to them” point on the relationship.
developing from a bad start scale.

Also, bonus points to whoever guesses which sentence I really enjoyed throwing in there.
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, thanks again for all the response this fic is getting. Every notification makes me smile and honestly at this point if you're a regular commenter I probably know your username and think of you fondly. But really, all of you are awesome!

Anyway, I added a warning for violence. It's not super graphic, but it is a fight scene so I figured better safe than sorry. Don't worry, it should be no worse than anything in the movies. Also, there is a non-graphic death of a minor characters here. If you've seen the movie you'll know what to expect.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Although he knew they were probably traveling at ridiculously high speeds, the descent felt somewhat slow to Jim in the way that things always feel slow when it was quiet and the scenery around you isn’t changing much. There was the red orange of Vulcan below them, the blackness of space around them, the bright point of a sun off to the side, and the constant presence of the dark chain linking the drill platform to the Narada above. It was hard to determine how fast they were going with reference points that general.

Jim focused on breathing and staying in the proper falling position as the atmosphere began to thicken. It was still very thin (it was Vulcan after all), but the difference was still noticeable.

They began to get closer to the platform. Still thousands of meters away, but closer. Plus, despite what it seemed like before, they were going very fast; they’d definitely accelerated more as they fell thanks to Vulcan’s high gravity. The meters were going by too quickly to count except in intervals of hundreds or thousands now.

Around 2000 meters Sulu shouted to pull the chutes. He did his own and Jim followed a moment later, but Olson didn’t.

“Olson!” Jim yelled while trying to stay stable and on target with his own open chute. “Pull your chute!” He heard Sulu shout something similar.

“Not yet!” Dear god, Olson was still enjoying this too much. He shouted, “One thousand meters!” and still made no move to open his chute.

When Olson finally did pull his chute, it looked like he was less than 100 meters from the platform. It was far too late for him to make a proper controlled decent.

Jim could only watch as Olson’s chute got caught in a gust of wind oddly, causing him to go horizontal and making his body slam against the drill platform in a way that had to hurt. Before Olson could recover and grab on to anything, his chute got caught in another current of air generated by the exhaust coming off of the drill platform and pulled him off of it completely. He disappeared under the platform.

Jim shouted “Olson!” but he kinda knew to assume the worst at this point. Olson had had no control.
over his descent before, and the giant flame or plasma stream or whatever it was that was doing the actual drilling into Vulcan had probably already caught him. There was no way Olson had survived that.

Jim landed on the platform seconds later and was almost blown off by the same currents that got Olson. He got knocked off his feet and onto his stomach by the jerking of his chute and he slid along the platform, trying desperately to grab on to one of the vents or pieces of metal in the surface as his chute pulled him along. Finally, once it felt like his feet were nearly over the edge, he was able to get a good grip on a vent. While still holding on with one hand he hit the button to retract his chute with the other. Once he was no longer in danger of getting blown over the edge, he pulled off his helmet and the hood of the suit underneath. Those things made it almost impossible to hear or see. They’d had the targeting program that had helped him get on the platform, but he didn’t need that now.

Before he could even get up, he saw that one of the raised pieces of metal he’d tried to grab earlier was actually a trapdoor and it was now opening to let out a Romulan. Great.

Jim stood up as fast as he could and charged at the Romulan, who was starting to pull some sort of weapon out of a holster on his back. Jim tried to grab it and they struggled with it over both of their heads, causing it to start to fire wildly. Jim really hoped he didn’t just accidentally hit Sulu.

He didn’t have time to think about that though. He managed to wrestle the weapon out of the Romulan’s hands and throw it aside. He backed up to get space between them and tried to throw a punch, which got blocked. He pulled out his phaser only to have it knocked out of his hand before he could fire. While it flew over the edge he scrambled back to where his helmet had landed and grabbed it and began using it to hit the Romulan in the head repeatedly.

That seemed like enough to temporarily throw the Romulan off because he stumbled to the side. However, that just enabled Jim to see that the trapdoor had opened up again and a second Romulan was now climbing out. He really hoped Sulu would land soon and safely, because there was no way he could beat two Romulans on his own. He started swinging his helmet again, but then one of them looked away and went to another section of the platform. Hopefully that meant Sulu had arrived.

Still, the Romulan he was fighting had finally managed to knock away Jim’s helmet and now the two of them had each other by the arms and were trying to throw each other. When that didn’t work Jim threw a punch that barely seemed to faze the Romulan, who threw one that knocked him down but not out, luckily. Damn Romulan strength.

Before Jim could get up on his own the Romulan grabbed him by the back of his suit and pulled him up to start hitting him again. He landed one punch before Jim started to dodge, but still managed to grab Jim and throw him a moment later.

Jim landed on his stomach and didn’t have time to dodge the kick from the Romulan. It sent him flying toward then off the edge of the drill platform when he couldn’t stop his momentum. Jim somehow managed to grab and hold on to the edge, but with the Romulan leering down at him that didn’t seem like it would last long.

Sure enough, the Romulan began to stomp on the edge of the platform, making Jim have to move his hands constantly to avoid having them crushed.

Until he didn’t move fast enough and his left hand got stomped on by a Romulan boot. Now he was only hanging on with his right hand and the Romulan was still above him.

Chapter End Notes
Sorry (maybe not sorry) for the near literal cliffhanger. Don't worry, it's unlikely that I'll kill off a major character this early. Besides, it's not like Star Trek has a history of killing off major characters (except that they totally do, or maybe I'm just bitter about Tasha Yar).

Anyway, you only have to wait til Thursday. That shouldn't be too long, right?
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

To be honest I don't have much experience writing fight scenes so I'm always a little nervous to do them, but you you all seemed to like it so thanks for all of your positive feedback! It must not have been terrible hahaha

Now, back to Jim hanging on for dear life.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sulu must have been having more luck than Jim was, because before the Romulan standing over Jim could raise his foot again a slender sword coated in green blood poked out of his chest. Sulu pulled his sword back out and the Romulan’s body tipped over the edge, narrowly missing Jim. If his life wasn't still on the line Jim might have laughed. Turned out fencing wasn’t so useless after all.

Jim was still hanging onto the edge by one hand, but at least there wasn’t a Romulan trying to kill him anymore.

Instead there was Sulu, shouting over the wind for Jim to give him his hand so he could pull him up. For a moment Jim hesitated, because if they messed this up he was gonna fall to his death. But still, this could also end up with him relatively safe on the platform instead of hanging onto it for dear life.

Jim reached up his left hand, which had been dangling by his side since the Romulan stepped on it. Sulu managed to grab his hand and began pulling him back up over the edge. Once Jim was up enough, he swung a leg up onto the platform surface and Sulu helped him get all the way up.

They’d managed to survive the fight, but they were here for a reason and it wasn’t just to fight some Romulans. But there was one problem with part two of their plan now.

“Olson had the charges!” Sulu shouted over the gusts from the drill.

“I know!” Jim shouted back. Time to improvise since plan A probably literally went down in flames with Olson.

“What do we do?”

Jim looked around quickly, searching for anything they could use. Finally, he saw something. “This!” He grabbed one of the disruptors that the Romulans had dropped during the fight and saw Sulu follow his lead by grabbing the other. Together, they started firing on the main body of the drill until sparks flew and they heard the plasma below them shut down.

They had a minute to try to figure out what to do next before something came flying along the chain that connected the drill to the Narada.

They didn’t seem to be its target, though, because before they could even get a good look at the projectile, let alone try to stop it, it flew past them, toward the planet’s surface, and into the hole the drill had made.

That couldn’t be good. But with the drill down, communications had to be back up. Didn’t hurt to
try. Jim went for the communicator in the gauntlet of his suit. “Kirk to Enterprise. They just launched something to the planet, in the hole they just drilled. Do you copy Enterprise?”

There was no initial response. The line seemed clear, so maybe they just weren't sure how to respond. Jim waited a moment. Still nothing. He hoped that their message had gotten through, or at least that with the jamming gone the sensors had picked up whatever just got launched into the core of Vulcan.

But still, this was probably going to be an even more dangerous place to be in a few minutes than it was now. He and Sulu needed to get off of this platform, and hopefully with the drill gone they could use the transporters again. No time for pleasantries now. “Kirk to Enterprise, beam us out of here!” Pike making him acting first officer meant he could give orders, right?

Finally, they seemed to have heard him. A calm voice said, “Stand by, locking on your signal.” It might have been the best thing Jim had heard all day.

But of course today couldn’t go well. What seemed like mere seconds after they’d successfully reached the Enterprise, the drill platform lurched violently. Jim and Sulu both stumbled, unable to maintain their balances on the wildly moving platform.

Jim fell onto his stomach for what felt like the hundredth time in the past hour, but he still got off easier than Sulu, who went tumbling over the edge of the platform.

Sulu’s shout of “Kirk!” suddenly seemed so much more important than the faint voice from his comm telling him to stay still because they were having trouble locking on to him. Sulu’s chute was on the platform, clearly not attached to him anymore, which meant that he was gonna plummet to his death. Like hell was Jim gonna let the death count today grow if he could help it. It was already way too high. He got up, ran to the edge, and jumped off after Sulu.

Jim kept his arms by his side and his legs straight, trying to be as aerodynamic as possible to catch up to Sulu, who was spread eagle to resist the fall as much as possible. Jim finally caught up to him and tackled him mid-air, causing them both to go tumbling uncontrollably without slowing down much at all.

“I got you!” Jim held on as tightly as possible to Sulu, who was doing the same. “Pull my chute!”

Sulu did as he was told, but the chute expanded for a mere moment before snapping off because it was meant to handle one person, not two.

It fluttered off above them uselessly as they continued to fall farther from it and closer to the planet. With his arms still around Sulu, Jim started shouting into his comm again. “Kirk to Enterprise! Beam us up! Beam us up!” He continued shouting, probably drowning out any response from the ship, but they hadn’t dematerialized yet so it wasn’t the response he wanted anyway.

“Beam us up! Enterprise where are you?” Jim honestly didn’t care what they had to say at this point. All he cared about was the red orange of the ground that was getting steadily closer and would kill him and Sulu on impact if they didn’t get beamed up now. “Now, now, now, do it now!”

They had to be less than one hundred meters from the surface when he gave up on the comm and just started screaming along with Sulu. Right as it seemed like they would be added to the casualty count, the bright light of the transporter surrounded them. Instead of hitting the planet’s surface at terminal velocity in a way that would definitely be terminal, they hit they hit the transporter pad with enough force to hurt, but nothing a trip to Sickbay wouldn’t fix.

Distantly, Jim was aware of the Russian kid from the bridge shouting in celebratory Russian, but he
was more focused on making sure he could actually move.

“Thanks.” Sulu seemed a bit slower at getting up than he had been, but it looked like he was still moving. Plus, Jim had landed on top of him.

“No problem.” Jim ached all over, but hey, he saved someone. Few hundred more and maybe people would finally shut up about his dad. Shaking off that thought, Jim looked up to the transporter technicians accusingly as he got up. He knew this probably wasn’t their fault, but he had adrenaline to spare right now and he’d nearly died. “What the hell took you guys so long?”

The lieutenant in a red dress spoke up first. “If you’d stayed still like you’d been told, we wouldn’t have had to calculate the lock to beam you up. Also, Commander—Acting Captain Spock ordered us to beam him down to the surface before you asked to be beamed up and we had to do that first.”

Before Jim could snap at her for telling him to stay still on a drill platform that was being retracted in lurches, let alone how staying still would mean letting Sulu die, the last part of her statement went through. “Wait, the surface of the planet? Is he mad?”

“He said something about needing to save people who protected the culture of his planet before leaving the bridge,” Jim remembered that Chekov had been the name of the Russian at navigation when the kid spoke up again. “It must have been important for him to leave since we’d just found out they were creating a singularity at the center of the planet.”

“Wait.” Jim needed a moment to process this. “The planet is about to implode because they made a black hole in the center, and he still beamed down?”

When all anyone in the room could do was shrug or nod, Jim ran a hand down his face in disbelief. Figures he would get the one Vulcan that was as batshit as him as a soulmate instead of one of all the ones who were calm and rational.

Chapter End Notes

So I know that in the movie Spock beams down after they beam up, but he left the bridge before Chekov did and it doesn't seem like he'd take a leisurely stroll to get down there given the situation. So unless Chekov can teleport, it would make more sense for Spock to get to the transporter room and leave first.

Also this chapter is a bit longer than usual, but this seemed like a better cutoff point than doing a second cliffhanger right after the other one.

One more thing: I didn't write it here because I wasn't quite sure how to put it, but when Jim's getting back on the drill and swings his leg up onto it, Sulu grabs the back of his thigh to help pull him up. I'm still not quite sure what to make of that moment.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

This just passed 3000 hits last chapter and honestly I still can't believe how many of you there are. It honestly blows my mind. So again, thanks to all of you for reading and for all of your awesome feedback!

Also this chapter is a little different. It's from Spock’s pov. This chapter starts while the previous chapter was still happening, so there's a bit of timeline overlap, but not much.

And just a heads up, this might be expected but this is not a happy chapter. It is a bit longer than average though.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As soon as he had understood what was happening to his planet, Spock knew he would have to transport down and rescue the Elders. No transporter could penetrate the thick rock around the Katric Arc, and they would not know the danger they were truly in.

The sight that greeted him upon his arrival to the surface would most likely be described in terms like “horrifying” or “terrible” if described by a human. The air was thick with smoke and the ground still seemed unstable. Fires could be seen in some places. In others, the rocks that stood out from the ground were crumbling. The destruction of the planet was already beginning.

But Spock could not allow himself to be distracted. There was no time. He still had to climb the crumbling rock up to the entrance to the Katric Arc, reach the inner chamber, warn the Elders of the need to escape, and get them to a position where it would be possible to be transported out. With no time to waste, he began to climb.

Finally, he reached the entrance, went inside, and navigated the corridors to the central chamber. As he expected the Elders were congregated there. Before all of them could even break out of their meditation, Spock spoke. “The planet has only seconds left. We must evacuate.” He felt something like urgency leak into his voice, but he could not be faulted for a slight loss of control under the circumstances.

They looked between themselves for a moment before seemingly deciding to believe him and leaving their meditation. There was already evidence of calamity in the chamber; the statues around the perimeter were shaking and there were loose rocks on the floor that must have fallen from the ceiling or walls.

Spock began to lead the Elders out of chamber, but he was aware of the statues that lined it starting to fall. He heard someone behind them get crushed, but there was no time to go back. They needed to get out. Attempting to prevent one loss could cause the loss of all.

They raced through the carved corridors. Spock was aware that his father seemed to be closest behind him, but the two of them had not acknowledged each other. This was no time to settle old disagreements. The rock of the corridors was already showing signs of stress and cave-ins could be imminent, resulting in them getting crushed or trapped. They had to continue moving.
They only stopped when they were on the ledge outside of the entrance. The falling rocks from higher on the mountain would have impeded their progress, so they would have to be transported from here. Spock pulled out his communicator. “Spock to Enterprise. Transport us up now.” He was aware of the command in his voice as he spoke, but the situation was urgent and he was acting captain, so it was allowed.

“Locking onto you, stay where you are, do not move.” Ensign Chekov’s voice responded from the other end of the comm. Spock wondered why he had left the bridge but was more focused on the crumbling rock of the mountains around him and the Elders and their precarious situation.

Spock heard Ensign Chekov counting down as the light of the transporter began to surround them, but he remained focused on the edge of the ledge in front of him, which was beginning to crumble. With that rate of erosion, he could be over the edge if the transporter took too long.

However, they transported off of the surface successfully before the edge could reach them. Spock saw the gleaming white of the transporter room instead of the continued death of his planet. In the transporter room were the usual technicians for this shift as well as Ensign Chekov, Lieutenant Sulu, and Cadet Kirk, the latter two having only recently returned from the drill.

Spock felt his gaze turn to his father, possibly from the surprise of seeing him. He did not know that Sarek would be with the Elders during a crisis, he would have thought that his father would prefer to be with-

His mother was still on the planet. Spock could do nothing to stop the fear and panic that ran through him at that moment. His mother would most likely be at their home or somewhere else in Shi’Kahr. There would be no time to search for and save her; the planet likely only had moments left before it would implode. Spock felt himself unable to calculate the precise time or even fully concentrate against the intense grief he felt knowing that his mother was about to die and that there was nothing he could do to prevent it. His only hope was that she could have gotten on one of the ships that had been around Vulcan or one of the ships that were held in reserve on the planet in case of an emergency. However, it was also possible that Nero had destroyed all such ships. The chances of his mother’s survival were infinitesimal, and Spock found himself unwilling to calculate them. For the moment he could draw reassurance from the psychic link he had to her that did not seem to be gone yet, but he did not know how long that reassurance would last.

The transporter room was silent. No; it was not, he had been too internally absorbed to notice that Chekov had been calling out to him. “Sir, the planet’s collapse is imminent. We need to leave immediately to avoid destruction.”

“Yes.” Spock looked up, but felt unable to completely shake off the emotion that had taken hold of him. “Tell the bridge to take us away from the planet immediately.”

He stepped off of the transporter pad and began to leave the room. He heard Chekov call the bridge and relay his orders. Spock knew he did not have time for regret or grief now. Pike had made him acting captain, and he needed to fulfill that role. He could not allow himself to be emotionally compromised.

Still, he could not help the stumble that followed only moments later in one of the ship’s corridors. One hand braced himself against the wall of the corridor and the other went to his head. There was intense psychic pain as billions of Vulcans died, causing a sudden severance of mental bonds that was nearly overwhelming the collective psyche of the remaining Vulcans. Spock saw the Elders seem similarly affected; many of them had stumbled and put their hands to their heads and Spock even seemed to hear slight momentary groaning. He was surprised that none of them had collapsed completely; he was finding it difficult to remain upright himself.
As the intense pain began to subside somewhat, possibly due to the survivors beginning to shield more intensely, Spock became aware that he could no longer feel his connection to his mother. It was hard to focus around the still immense pain, but the comforting presence he had felt all his life did not seem to be there. His mother was gone.

They were nearly at Sickbay. Although Pike’s CMO had been killed in Nero’s initial attack, the Dr. McCoy who had responded to his earlier call to Sickbay from the bridge should prove adequate to check the remaining Elders for injuries and treat any they might have. However, it was unlikely that the doctor would be able to do anything for the psychic pain.

As they reached Sickbay, Spock paused and allowed the Elders to enter. He hesitated as his father was about to enter. “Father...” Sarek was fully Vulcan, unlike him. Perhaps he would be more able to distinguish...

“What is it, my son?” Sarek stopped close enough to the doors that they remained open, and although he looked calm, Spock could tell that his father was struggling to maintain his composure.

“My mother.”

“Amanda had planned to spend her day working at the house. I did not have contact with her after the planetary communications were blocked.” Sarek seemed to hesitate, and when he spoke next his voice seemed slightly quieter, weaker. “I cannot feel her either. The collective psychic pain of the broken bonds and loss is strong, but I am unable to sense her as I normally can.” He stepped closer as if to offer comfort, but stopped at the last moment.

Spock nodded and tried to fight the wave of complex and indescribable emotion that threatened to overtake him. He could not give in to emotion, especially not now. He straightened his posture, not realizing he had begun to curl in on himself. “I am needed on the bridge. You should report to Sickbay.”

Again his father seemed to hesitate, but then nodded and entered Sickbay. After a moment Spock turned and began to walk in the direction of the turbolift that would take him to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like as much as I'm more comfortable writing from Jim's pov, this chapter had to be from Spock's pov. If the common fanon (or is it canon, who knows with Trek) idea that all Vulcans share some basic level of psychic connection or that some form of collective psyche that they're all tapped into exists, the moment that Vulcan was destroyed and so many people died must have been excruciating. Like unimaginably, unbearably horrible.

As much as I love Amanda, there was really no reason for her to be in the Katric Arc. So although this means that we miss the major Spock angst of him seeing Amanda die, this is just one of the things I'm changing from the movie because it makes more sense this way.

Another thing in the movies that makes no sense is that they're all in the same class at the Academy and that they all graduated with the ranks they would have on TOS, but honestly I don't want to have to figure out the promotion schedule for all of them so that one is staying as is.
First of all, this fic just crossed 200 kudos, which blows my freaking mind. This fic is slowly but surely topping all my other fics for basically every stat out there and honestly, you guys are the greatest.

This chapter is about twice as long as a lot of the others, but there really was no good spot to break it up. We're back to Jim's pov.

Also I feel like it helps for the effect of this scene here if you remember that they all look 18, since the only soulmate pair that's met met within about 24 hours of this.

Jim and Sulu had still been in the transporter room when Spock and the Vulcan Elders had beamed up. He saw the way Spock looked around the room before pausing as his face seemed to go blanker than usual. He didn’t know if it was because they were supposedly soulmates or what, but Jim just knew that something had happened. He could practically feel it.

His suspicions were confirmed not much later. He’d gone to Sickbay to get patched up since between falling on the drill multiple times, fighting Romulans, and nearly falling to his death Bones would probably kill him if he didn’t get a check up. Jim’s biobed was close enough to the door that he’d been able to overhear Spock’s conversation with the older Vulcan who was apparently his father.

So Spock’s mother had died along with the planet. Jim couldn’t imagine how that felt. Sure, he also had the half-orphan thing going on, but it was probably different if you actually knew your dead parent. Some people out there could probably debate whether losing someone before you could know them or after you already did was worse, but Jim was pretty sure that they both sucked in different ways. It wasn’t about who had it worse; both were shitty situations.

Still, Spock definitely had it worse than Jim here. Losing a parent and your planet all at once had to be indescribably difficult. Although Jim hadn’t always liked the guy in the day or so they’d known each other, he wouldn’t wish what had happened to Spock on anyone.

Even though his injuries were pretty simple, it still took a little while for Jim to get out of Sickbay. As soon as the transporters had been back online, every transporter room had started beaming up as many Vulcans as possible to save who they could. Because most of them were injured or at least in pain, Sickbay was flooded. And because it had been hit when they’d been attacked, Sickbay was understaffed. Some of the Vulcans who had beamed up and were less injured had started to help the severely injured, but the situation was still not looking good.

Eventually, Jim heard an announcement for all senior officers to report to the bridge. Since Pike had made him first officer, Jim realized that that included him now. And since Spock was the one making the announcement, that meant that Pike probably wasn’t back yet. Jim got up since they’d already finished patching him up. He was surprised to see Bones starting to leave too.

Once they were in the turbolift, Jim turned to him and raised his eyebrows. “What are you going to
“They called for senior officers.” Bones’ voice and posture were tense. “Pike’s CMO didn’t survive the attack on the ship and somehow I got a field promotion.”

“Oh. Wow.” Jim turned back to the front of the turbolift. “I would say congrats, but it seems like you’re not very happy about this.”

“You know I’d rather be in Sickbay than in a meeting now, Jim.” Bones snapped, clearly annoyed with the situation. “What are you doing going to the bridge?”

Jim hesitated, not sure if he should tell him about Pike’s last minute promotion, but before he could answer the doors opened to the bridge and they saw Spock looking at them.

“Everyone has arrived; we should begin.” Spock walked over to Uhura. Jim, taking advantage of the opportunity while Spock was pacing, decided to test out the captain’s chair. Despite Pike’s faith in him, ending his academy career with a cheating scandal meant that it could be a long time before he got to sit in one of these, if he ever did at all. Better get comfortable while he could.

Spock, meanwhile, was focused. “Lieutenant, have you confirmed that Nero is headed for Earth?”

Uhura seemed to shrug slightly, but it seemed more like exhaustion than uncertainty. “Their trajectory suggests no other destination, Captain.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant.” Spock paced to the front of the bridge.

This situation didn’t seem so simple to Jim. Nero gave off that ‘angry and unbalanced’ vibe that he’d seen in too many people before bar fights. Like the kinda aggressive asshole who wouldn’t stop fighting after the initial person who pissed them off was down. “Earth may be his next stop, but we have to assume every Federation planet is a target.”

Spock turned and paced back toward him, muttering, “Out of the chair,” in the kind of calm but annoyed voice that reminded Jim of someone telling their dog to get off the couch.

This guy would never let Jim have his moment, would he? Jim rolled his eyes and stood up.

“Well if the Federation is a target,” Chekov spoke up from the navigation console, “why didn’t they destroy us?”

“Why would they?” Across the console Sulu seemed both irritated and exhausted. “Why waste a weapon? We obviously weren’t a threat.”

“That is not it.” Spock’s pacing had now taken him around the navigation console and between it and the viewscreen. “He said he wanted me to see something: the destruction of my home planet.”

“How the hell did they do that, by the way?” Bones had on that particularly annoyed face he got when the solution to a problem was eluding him. “Where did the Romulans get that kind of weaponry?”

“The engineering comprehension necessary to artificially create a black hole may suggest an answer.” Spock had finally stopped his pacing; He turned from the viewscreen to face the bridge. “Such technology could theoretically be manipulated to create a tunnel in spacetime.”

“Dammit man I’m a doctor not a physicist.” Yep, Bones was annoyed. “Are you actually suggesting they’re from the future?”
“If you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.” Spock did an eyebrow raise that Jim wasn't quite able to decipher.

“How poetic.” That Jim could decipher. Bones was annoyed. Time to cut this off before it went all day.

“Then what would an angry, future Romulan want with Captain Pike?” Jim didn’t want to think that Pike was dead just yet. He knew they’d killed the Kelvin’s captain pretty quickly, but there had to be some reason they’d wanted Pike to come over besides murder, right?

“As captain, he knows details of Starfleet’s defenses.” Sulu looked around from his station before finally settling on Spock.

And that could be very bad. Jim pushed off of the rail he’d been leaning against since Spock kicked him out of the chair and started walking to the center of the bridge. “What we need to do is catch up to that ship. Disable it, take it over, and get Pike back.”

“We are technologically outmatched in every way; a rescue attempt would be illogical.” Spock turned and looked directly at Kirk.

“Nero’s ship would have to drop out of warp for us to overtake it.” Just when Jim was starting to like Chekov, the kid starts poking holes in his plans. Damn.

“Then what about assigning engineering crews to try to boost our warp yield?” Jim was nothing if not able to come up with new plans constantly. Nero’s ship was huge, there was no way that thing could go that fast. They’d be able to catch it if they tried, probably.

“Remaining power and crews are being used to repair radiation leaks on the lower decks-” Spock really seemed to specialize in stopping Jim’s plans.

“Okay, okay-” Jim tried talking over Spock, who was now going on about contacting Starfleet. Jim walked to the front of the bridge where Spock was. “Alright! There has to be some way-“

“-We must gather with the rest of Starfleet, to balance the terms of the next engagement-“ Spock almost seemed to be getting angry.

“There won’t be a next engagement!” Jim was definitely getting angry. “By the time we’ve gathered, it will be too late.” Jim made eye contact with Spock again, but he looked away. “You say he’s from the future, knows what’s going to happen, then the logical thing is to be unpredictable.”

Spock paced into Jim’s personal space as he talked. “You are assuming that Nero knows how events are predicted to unfold.” He paused and stopped within arm’s distance of Jim. “The contrary, Nero’s very presence has altered the flow of history, starting with the attack on the USS Kelvin, cumulating with the events of today, thereby creating an entire new chain of incidents that cannot be anticipated by either party.”

“An alternate reality.” Uhura had gotten up from her station and walked to the center of the bridge as she seemed to process what Spock just said.

“Precisely.” Spock looked from her back to Jim with something that Jim couldn’t quite define but definitely didn’t like in his eyes. Spock walked back to the center of the bridge “Whatever our lives might have been if the time continuum was not disrupted, our destinies have changed.” He paused again and began to sit down in the captain’s chair. “Mr. Sulu, plot a course for the Laurentian system, warp factor three.”
That was definitely not what Jim thought they should be doing. “Spock, don’t do that.” He walked from the viewscreen back toward the captain’s chair. “Running back to the rest of the fleet for a-a confab is a massive waste of time-“

“These are the orders issued by Captain Pike when he left the ship-“

“He also ordered us to go back and get him. Spock, you are captain now, you have to make-“

“I am aware of my responsibilities, Mr. Kirk-“

“Every second we waste Nero’s getting closer to his next target!”

“That is correct and why I am instructing you to accept the fact that I alone-“

“I will not allow us to go backwards,” Jim could feel himself starting to should louder.

“I, alone,-“ Spock was also raising his voice.

“-Instead of hunting Nero down!” Jim’s hands were in fists at his sides.

At that Spock finally stood up and made eye contact. “Security, escort him out.”

Jim glared right back at him as he heard the security officers approach and didn’t break eye contact as they grabbed him. As they started to lead him off of the bridge, each holding an arm, Jim decided that he really didn’t need this today. He struck one officer in the stomach, successfully getting him to release Jim’s arm, which he used to punch the other officer in the face. He’d managed to grab the phaser from the officer he’d hit first and was struggling to get it from the officer, who didn’t want to let go, all while trying to fend off the other officer with his other hand.

Suddenly, Jim felt a strong pinching feeling in his shoulder near his neck. He felt himself go limp as everything went dark.

Chapter End Notes

I swear those two spend like 90% of their interactions in this movie arguing and talking over each other. They’ve got a ways to go before they’re ready to not murder each other.

Also, guess who’ll be showing up next week? You can probably all guess because it’s a very memorable point in the movie but I’m excited. A lot of your questions are going to answered.
Happy Halloween everyone! First off a thanks to all the people who are continuing to give feedback on this fic! Even things like kudos and bookmarks that usually drop off after a few chapters just haven’t and honestly that suggests staggering numbers of you, which frankly blows my mind. In the best possible way though.

Honestly, this chapter is mostly Jim Kirk, Drama Queen, being bitter and sarcastic. But there is a certain someone who pops up at the very end.

Also, this chapter is a good illustration of Jim Kirk luck; he keeps getting into situations where he very nearly dies, but then he ultimately survives.

When Jim came to, he definitely wasn’t still on the bridge. His brain was a little foggy, so he was having trouble figuring out exactly where he was. Whatever had knocked him out had been worse than one of Bones’ hypos.

Taking in the space around him, Jim saw that it was small. Not small like a cell in the brig would be though. Dammit, had that pointy eared bastard actually shoved him in an escape pod and thrown him off the ship? So uncool. And definitely not how you were supposed to settle disagreements between captains and first officers. Jim had to admit that he was probably a bit out of line for starting a shouting match on the bridge, but still, marooning him? This was Starfleet, not a freaking pirate ship.

Jim realized that he should probably figure out where he’d actually been marooned. All he could see out of the window on the escape pod was different shades of white, which really wasn’t helpful.

He activated the console in the pod. “Computer, where am I?”

“Location: Delta Vega. Class M planet, unsafe. There is a Starfleet outpost 14 kilometers to the northwest. Remain in your pod until retrieved by Starfleet authorities.” The computer’s voice seemed like it was meant to be soothing, but it really wasn’t helping Jim now.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me.” Jim knew that the computer wouldn’t respond, but still. Of all the places he could have been marooned, that pointy eared bastard couldn’t even pick a fully habitable planet? Jim should probably be grateful that it was Class M instead of something completely uninhabitable, but still, they hadn’t been near any safe Class M planets? Or they couldn’t have just thrown him in the brig or sedated him?

Jim opened the doors of the pod and was met by cold that would easily put Iowa winters to shame. And thanks to the crash landing of his pod, he had a several meter deep hole to climb out of with sheer ice for the sides. He grabbed the emergency supplies in the pod and started climbing.

When he finally got out, he was greeted by an endless white expanse of snow and ice. Somehow he was supposed to travel 14 kilometers in this and keep his sense of direction. Great. Freaking pointy eared bastard. Jim opened up the emergency pack to get out the parka that should be there and picked a direction to walk that he hoped was northwest.
Because this day just kept getting better for Jim, he hadn’t been walking on the uneven icy terrain long when a blizzard hit. He pulled out the communicator they’d helpfully given him even though it would be useless in weather like this and decided to start making a log so that if Starfleet found his frozen corpse they would know who to blame.

“Stardate 2258.42.” Jim realized that he’d been out cold and he didn’t know how long he’d spent in that pod. “Or, uh, 4… whatever.” Probably didn’t matter anyway; the Enterprise would have a record of throwing him out. “Acting Captain Spock has marooned me on Delta Vega in what I believe to be a violation of Security Protocol 49.09, governing the treatment of prisoners aboard a starship…” Jim paused. He’d heard a howling noise that didn’t sound like it was just the wind.

He turned around to look behind him. Between the wind and all the ice it was hard to tell where the sound was coming from, but maybe if he turned around from the wall of ice in front of him he’d be able to pick it up better instead of getting thrown off by echoes.

It was hard to tell because of the blizzard, but it looked like something was coming toward him. He couldn’t tell if it was far away or just really small, but it seemed like it was getting closer either way. And it was also starting to seem like it was really big. Not good.

Despite what most people would say, Jim actually did have some sense of self preservation, which kicked in as the beast got closer and made him start to run. He didn’t care if he was going northwest anymore; he just had to get away from that thing. Jim ran as fast as he could, but the thing was still gaining on him. He stumbled a bit where the ice was uneven and saw that it had to be nearly two meters behind him now. Freaking pointy eared bastard marooning him on a seriously unsafe and questionably Class M planet.

Before the first beast could get to him, though, the ice behind Jim cracked from beneath and an even bigger monstrosity broke through and caught the first thing in its giant red mouth. The force of it breaking the ice had caused Jim to fall back on his ass and he saw as it tossed the other thing aside like it was nothing.

He’d just gotten back on his feet when it turned to him and opened its giant mouth again, this time close enough for him to see that it opened in a star shape with jagged teeth on each arm of the star. It roared and that was enough to terrify him into running again because he really didn’t want to find out if those things ate humans.

It started chasing him because apparently nothing wanted Jim to survive to the end of this day. If Jim survived this, he was so petitioning for Delta Vega to have its status changed. Nothing about this planet was remotely safe for humanoid life.

He continued to run, screaming now because there was no point in pretending to not be scared when he was about to die anyway. He looked behind him, seeing that it was alarmingly close because it was apparently faster than beast number one had been, and he missed the slope in front of him where the ice shifted from being flat to being at around 45 degrees. Or at least that’s what it seemed to be at as he went tumbling down it.

In the direction that must have been the top of the ice sheet, but again, hard to tell when tumbling down an uneven ice slope and bouncing around, he heard the monster beast number two roar again before hearing a sound that must have been it starting to fall and taking half of the ice sheet with it. Jim now had the option of getting crushed to death by an avalanche, great.

Jim finally slid to a stop on the ice somewhere at the base of the hill. He was completely disorientated and maybe a little stunned, like he’d just been hit by a phaser on its lowest setting. Or hit by a whole
hillside of ice. Like that time he’d tried to go sledding as a kid and Sam had pushed him down the icy hill before he was ready. No, this was way worse than either of those.

Jim barely had time to for the world to stop spinning around him when he heard the roaring again. He lifted his head to see that monster creature number two had indeed fallen down the hill too and was about to start sliding to where he was. Time to get up and start running and screaming again.

Monster beast number two managed to get up and running again a lot quicker than Jim had. He looked behind him and saw that it was gaining on him again. Luckily, when he looked forward he saw a small opening in the ice, possibly the entrance to a cave. It looked like the opening would be too small for the creature to get through, so hopefully Jim would be able to hide in there until it lost interest and gave up.

Jim ran inside and he was wrong, god he was so wrong. Not only could the creature fit through the entrance to the ice cave, it followed him in and seemed to be gaining on him despite all of the obstacles around them. Jim dodged around the giant pillars of ice but he could hear it gaining on him—

Jim felt what must have been the creature’s tongue wrap around his ankle and knock him down, this time on his stomach again. God, he was gonna have so many bruises if he woke up tomorrow.

That seemed increasingly less likely though. The creature was dragging him in toward its mouth and no flailing, kicking, or screaming Jim could do could dislodge its tongue from his ankle.

Just when it seemed like he was finally done for, someone bearing an actual flaming torch stepped between Jim and the creature and began waving the fire in the thing’s face, successfully making it back away. The beast released Jim and the other person pressed forward, waving the fire at it until it turned and ran from the cave.

Now that Jim seemed like he wasn’t about to die, he took a moment to catch his breath and take in his savior. The other person’s back was turned and they were wearing a parka, but from where the hood was down, Jim could make out dark hair and…pointed ears?

The other person turned around, revealing a Vulcan who looked early-middle-aged at the oldest. Jim figured it must be a survivor of Vulcan’s destruction who didn’t make it out of the solar system, but then the Vulcan almost seemed to smile and softly said, “James T. Kirk,” in a smooth voice that was somehow familiar.

Chapter End Notes

So the end of this chapter might have answered a question that some of you have asked in the comments. You’ll get the full story in a few chapters, but for visual reference Spock Prime looks about the age that he was in The Motion Picture (which is the lesser-known first ever Star Trek movie from the late 70s which isn’t the best movie, but it [or its novelization more accurately] is where we get the concept of t’hy’la straight from Roddenberry himself, so there’s that).
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, this fic has just passed 4000 hits, which is so unbelievable (in a great way). Also there were a ton of bookmarks since last chapter, so I'm just gonna say again that you all are awesome and I really appreciate all the support this fic is getting. Thanks everybody!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim had no idea what was going on. “Excuse me?” How did this random Vulcan know Jim’s name? “How did you find me?” The Vulcan seemed unfazed, or maybe didn’t even notice Jim’s question. “Woah, woah, woah.” Jim finally stood up, putting a little more distance between him and this stranger. “How do you know my name?”

The stranger paused for a second as if they were surprised Jim didn’t recognize them. “I have been and always shall be your friend.”

This was too much. First the most intense and ridiculous day of Jim’s life, starting with maybe meeting his soulmate, a whole load of every variety of horrible in the middle, now a random Vulcan claiming to know him? This was too much. “Wait, wait. Ah—look. I don’t know you.”

This made the Vulcan stranger look even more confused. They spoke slowly and clearly, as if concerned Jim had a head injury, which was entirely possible really. “I am Spock.”

That just didn’t make any sense. This guy had to be at least 20 years older than Spock, plus there was no way Spock would be claiming they were bffs. Nope, Jim was not gonna believe this. Had to draw the line on what he’d buy today somewhere, and he was drawing it here. “Bullshit.”

The Vulcan claiming to be Spock sighed. “You were always stubborn. Let us make a fire to keep warm; it will take some time to explain.” He turned and walked away before looking back at Jim. “Follow me.”

After cautiously hesitating a moment, Jim shrugged. This guy had saved his life, Jim could at least repay him by listening to his explanation. Plus, he was curious now. He was still super wary about this guy and the situation in general, but he was curious.

Once they’d gotten a fire started and settled around it, Jim sitting opposite the stranger, the Vulcan began to speak.

“It is remarkably pleasing to see you again, especially after the events of today.” He didn’t look up from the fire as he spoke.

“Uh,” Jim still wasn’t sure what to call this guy; Spock just didn’t seem like the right name. “Sir, I appreciate what you did for me today, but if you were Spock you’d know we weren’t friends. At all.” Jim hoped he didn’t sound as bitter as he felt. “You hate me, you marooned me here for mutiny.”
“Mutiny?” The Vulcan seemed surprised. Was Jim getting better at reading Vulcans or did this guy show more emotion than usual for Vulcans?

“Yes.” Jim pushed the thought aside to focus on the conversation at hand.

“You are not the captain?” The Vulcan still seemed surprised.

Was he taunting Jim? God, the universe was really out to get him today. Jim couldn’t help the slight bitter laugh that escaped him. “No.” He looked down, unable to look at this stranger who evidently thought a lot of him. “No, um.” He looked back up and decided to roll with what this guy said about being Spock. This guy seemed to trust him, so why not return the favor? “You’re the captain.” Jim stood up. “Pike was taken hostage.” Jim walked away from the fire.

“By Nero?” Maybe-Spock’s question caught him by surprise.

Jim turned around. Maybe-Spock knowing his name was weird enough, but they only found out Nero’s name hours ago. Unless he’d been in that pod for longer than he’d thought and that name was known throughout the Federation now. But that seemed unlikely, so he was back to square one, which was knowing nothing. But Maybe-Spock seemed to know something. “What do you know about him?”

Maybe-Spock turned from him to the fire. “He is a particularly troubled Romulan.” Well, he got that much right at least. Maybe-Spock stood up from his seat by the fire, walked over to Jim, and held a hand out near Jim’s face. “Please, allow me. It will be easier.”

Jim leaned away. He was starting to trust this guy because something about him put Jim at ease, but that didn’t mean that he could do whatever he wanted. “Woah, woah. What are you doing?”

“It is a way to connect minds and convey information.” Maybe-Spock held out his hand again. “May I?”

Well, it wasn’t like Jim had a lot to lose anyway. Plus, he wanted to know what this guy knew. “Go ahead.”

Maybe-Spock started speaking some chant that Jim didn’t recognize. “Our minds, one and together.” He put his hand on Jim’s face in an odd way, not cupping it like Jim would expect but instead with each finger poking him in a different spot on his face. “One hundred and twenty nine years from now, a star will explode and threaten to destroy the galaxy.” Something in the Vulcan’s expression shifted, and suddenly Jim wasn’t in the ice cave anymore.

Instead he was racing through the stars, but it didn’t seem like he was in a starship. Maybe-Spock’s voice narrated the experience. “That is where I’m from, Jim.” His voice seemed to echo as they continued to fly along. “The future.” They closed in on a solar system, passing through an asteroid belt to focus on a large star that was glowing brightly. “The star went supernova.” The next words he said were distorted as the star exploded and began to suck in and destroy the asteroid belt they’d seen before as the shockwave went flying out. “I promised the Romulans that I would save their planet.” The picture shifted to several Vulcans in a warmly-lit room with geometric architecture, then to an odd-looking ship in a dark hangar. “We outfitted our fastest ship.” Now they were in the ship, where in a circular room there were several people performing inspections and a large clear cylinder with a glossy red sphere inside it. “Using red matter, I would create a black hole that would absorb the energy of the star.” There were more vocal distortions and echoes as the view changed to the ship from before hurtling through space in a way that was completely unfamiliar to Jim. “I was en route when the unthinkable happened.” Now they saw Maybe-Spock inside the ship, piloting it. “The supernova destroyed Romulus.” A dark brown planet appeared, momentarily intact before a wave of
glowing energy and matter from the star approached, causing it to disintegrate and then get completely destroyed. Now they saw Maybe-Spock working desperately in the room from before with the glossy red sphere in the clear cylinder. “I had little time.” In a strange suit, he prepared a canister before using a needle at the end of it to get a small drop off of the glossy red sphere. “I had to extract the red matter and shoot it into the supernova.” He was loading the canister into a metal cylinder. They saw the ship from outside again as they skirted the edge of the wave of energy and matter from the supernova before turning and launching the canister from before back into it. The canister flew back before detonating, creating a black hole in the middle of the wave. The ship seemed to getting safely away. “As I began my return trip, I was intercepted.” Again they saw Maybe-Spock piloting the ship, but this time he turned toward a console by his side. “He called himself Nero, the last of the Romulan Empire.” The name echoed as the face of the Romulan from the Narada appeared. “In my attempt to escape, both of us were pulled into the black hole.” They saw the view of the massive black hole from Maybe-Spock’s ship, then the Narada getting pulled in. “Nero went through first. He was the first to arrive.” Here Jim felt his own thoughts guide them to the destruction of the Kelvin as he’d pictured it so many times, now shaped by what he’d actually seen of the Narada and its weapons. The view shifted from the Kelvin getting rocked by explosions to Nero’s angry face once more. “Nero and his crew spent the next twenty-five years awaiting my arrival.” Nero seemed to be in some sort of labor camp. “But what was years for Nero,” now Nero faded and they saw the odd ship from before futilely resisting getting pulled into the black hole, “was only seconds for me.” They saw Maybe-Spock at the conn, bracing himself. “I went through the black hole; Nero was waiting for me.” The view was looking out from the controls of the ship; the only thing visible through the viewscreen was the black bulk of the Narada. Then they saw Maybe-Spock walking off of his ship to the waiting Romulans in what must have been a bay in the Narada. “He held me responsible for the loss of his world.” One Romulan, Nero, broke from the group and approached Maybe-Spock, who seemed to surrender. “He captured my vessel and spared my life for one reason.” Nero was now looming over Maybe-Spock, who had fallen to his knees. “So that I would know his pain.” The rage was clear on Nero’s face. “He beamed me here.” Now they saw Maybe-Spock on the icy surface of Delta Vega. “So that I could observe his vengeance.” Now Maybe-Spock was looking up at the sky, seeing in the distance Vulcan crumbling in on itself and imploding into nothingness. “As he was helpless to save his planet, I would be helpless to save mine.” Maybe-Spock’s voice broke here at the memory of watching Vulcan’s destruction, as if he was going to cry. Now the focus was on Maybe-Spock’s devastated face. “Billions of lives lost, because of me, Jim. Because I failed.”

At that the connection broke off and Jim found himself back in the ice cave. He gasped; there were tears running down his face.

Chapter End Notes

Mindmelds are a very odd thing to try to write.
Hello everyone! First off, I can't believe it's been almost two months since I started posting this fic. The amount of attention and support this has gotten has exceeded any expectations I had. It just passed 100 comments, and although half of those are me responding to comments that's still an astounding number. Seriously, you are all awesome. Thank you all so much!

Also, you're going to get some more answers about Spock in this chapter.

“Forgive me.” Maybe-Spock’s voice seemed a bit rougher than before, as if he too was affected by seeing the story of him and Nero in the mental connection. “Emotional transference is an effect of the meld.”

Jim stumbled away, feeling like he could collapse from the roiling emotions inside him and still struggling to breathe regularly. This was completely different than what he was expecting. “So you do feel.”

“Yes.” The way he said it was so matter of fact, as if Vulcans feeling was common knowledge.

“Going back in time,” Jim felt more complicated emotions, maybe anger now. “You changed all of our lives.” There was still so much there, so many emotions he didn’t know how to handle it.

“Jim.” Maybe-Spock said his name, and Jim was reminded of the feelings of warmth and affection and maybe even overpowering love cut with overwhelming sorrow and new joy that he had felt in the meld whenever Maybe-Spock had said his name, as well as the brief flashes of a face that was different than his but that he somehow knew was also Jim Kirk, a face that had looked the same age as Maybe-Spock.

Unaware of everything Jim was remembering, Maybe-Spock continued. “We must go. There is a Starfleet outpost not far from here.”

“No.” Jim turned around and planted his feet and tried to school his features into something besides the mess of emotion he was feeling inside.

Maybe-Spock turned around, seeming confused. “No?”

“No.” Jim tried to fight all the emotion and questions inside of him but he couldn’t. “I’m not going anywhere with you until you answer some questions for me.”

Maybe-Spock seemed to sigh. “Jim I know you can be stubborn but we must go; there is not much time.”

“No.” Jim gritted his teeth; he wanted to scream and cry and collapse all at once but he needed answers, dammit. “Your story doesn’t add up. If you really are Spock—and that’s still an if for me, by the way,” Jim saw Maybe-Spock’s face fall a bit at that but continued on because he had too, “how the hell could you be from over a century in the future but only look a few decades older than
Spock does now? And why did I feel,” Jim hesitated, still unsure how to describe what he had felt whenever Maybe-Spock had said his name when they were mentally connected or whatever that was. “Why did I feel so much whenever you said my name in that whatever it was? And who was that face that would flash whenever you said my name and why does it feel like it was me and not me at the same time?”

Maybe-Spock sighed and seemed to deflate at the questions. “I had hoped that not all of that would be conveyed to you when we melded; however it seems that our minds are too compatible for me to hide anything from you.” He returned to the fire but seemed reluctant to do so. “Please, come sit with me. This explanation will not be simple, but it is what you deserve.”

Jim eyed him warily. “I’ll stand for now.” He tried to ignore how he felt when Maybe-Spock’s face seemed slightly hurt at that.

“Very well.” Maybe-Spock seated himself on the same block of ice he had been seated on earlier. “Before I begin, what do you know of the Spock of this universe? I presume you have met?”

“Yeah, just recently though, so I don’t know much.” Jim ran his hand over his face and exhaled loudly. “He caught me cheating on the Kobyashi Maru and called me out over it in front of the whole school, when we made eye contact at that hearing I felt… something… so I’m pretty sure I’m aging now, but I can’t really tell because I’m pretty sure it’s been less than a day and in that day he’s gotten me in trouble, my best friend had to smuggle me aboard the Enterprise by giving me allergic reactions, Pike put the two of us in charge of the Enterprise, I fought some Romulans and nearly died, his planet was destroyed and his mom died, Pike, who I thought was actually important to us both, got captured but that pointy-eared bastard—no offense—refused to go back to save him, we fought over it, he marooned me, I nearly died a few more times, and then I met you. Besides my general impression that he’s smart but an asshole, all I have to go off of are rumors.”

“Amanda has died? Spock’s mother?” Maybe-Spock seemed to be experiencing a new wave of grief at the news.

Jim hesitated because suddenly seeing this grief made his eavesdropping earlier feel a lot more like intruding on something personal. “…I mean I can’t say for sure, but I overheard a conversation between him and his dad and his dad mentioned not being able to feel her, whatever that meant, so I think so?”

“Then that is a death that weighs particularly heavy on my head.” Maybe-Spock looked down and although he didn’t show much externally, Jim could tell that the news really seemed to be affecting him. After a moment, Maybe-Spock looked up at Jim. “Amanda was my—Spock’s mother, and she was human. I am—he is half human and half Vulcan.”

“Huh.” Jim took a second to process that. “I’d heard about that, but I didn’t really connect it. He just seemed Vulcan, not human at all.”

“To explain the reasons for that would take much time.” Maybe-Spock took a deep breath. “What you need to know is that Spock, both myself and presumably the Spock of this universe, is mainly Vulcan in physiology, but that I—and most likely him as well—have inherited the human trait of soulmate based aging. Although I am physically only forty-six years old, I am actually one hundred and fifty-seven.”

Chapter End Notes
I'm going to save you the angst of going through it all, but I looked up the dates for
everything to figure out exactly how old Spock would be and dear god that's a lot of
emotions. I get into it more next chapter, but in the prime timeline he and Jim had less
than 30 years together. Why do I always go for the pairings that make me want to cry in
a corner from the missed potential?

Also, the whole ice cave sequence was really hard to spit up. I wrote the two chapters
from last week and the two for this week all at once then had to figure out how to split
them up, which was not easy. The next chapter is the most emotional though in my
opinion.
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! If you’re in the US like me (or even outside the US) it’s a little hard to be cheery this week, but sometimes a little escapism and some hope for a better future can help. Which to be honest is part of why I personally like Star Trek so much, and I think given how dystopian the world is getting it’s time we switched back to optimistic futuristic sci-fi. Anyway, you all are awesome, even in a world that doesn’t seem so bright right now. Don’t let the hate in the world defeat you. If it’s getting to you, find someone to help pick you up or do something you love. We gotta beat all this bullshit together.

General heads up for not-super-specific spoilers for things from TOS through Generations-ish. Also, this chapter gets emotional.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

At that revelation Jim did sit down, sinking down on a chunk of ice still slightly out of arm’s reach from Spock. “So that means… you had a hundred years without…”

Maybe-Spock sighed. “My soulmate was the Jim Kirk of my universe. Perhaps it would be easier to show than tell, if you will permit me again.” He cautiously held out his hand again.

Despite not feeling fully over the effects of the first time, Jim wanted to, no he needed to know. He scooted closer until Maybe-Spock was within arm’s reach. He nodded. “Do it.”

Maybe-Spock reached out and gently placed his hand on Jim’s face, muttering the words to initiate the connection.

This time Jim was prepared so it was less jarring. He felt himself guided past many memories until he was standing in what he somehow knew to be an Enterprise transporter room even though it looked so different from what he knew. “This was where we met. He had just been promoted to Captain of the Enterprise, and thanks to Captain Pike’s recommendation I was to be his first officer.” Jim saw through Spock’s eyes as an eighteen year old he knew was actually older than that and also himself but not materialized on the transporter pad. As hazel eyes different than his own blue ones surveyed the room they landed on Spock, and when their eyes met that captain smiled at Spock and there was the feeling of something important beginning. “That was the day we both began to age, although we did not yet know it.” Then there were just flashes; warm smiles over chess games, serious or affectionate looks across the bridge, protecting each other on strange planets, waiting for the other to wake up in Sickbay. “We grew close over the years of our mission, but ultimately nothing came of it then. When he approached me at the end of the mission and offered, I became overwhelmed by the emotion I felt and in fear of it I rejected him.” They saw that smile fade and some of the light leave those twinkling hazel eyes. “It is something I deeply regret. He took an assignment on Earth and I went to Vulcan to purge myself of emotions.” A harsh landscape of endless desert and even harsher conditions, like the monks of old who attempted to deprive themselves of all worldly pleasures. “Still, I felt him call to me.” The moment of the test, failing because of the voice, the presence reaching out to him and the realization of how much he missed it. “I returned to the Enterprise and found he had taken command of her once more; again I treated him far too harshly.” The bright smile
and hope and love in those hazel eyes at the moment of their reunion once again fading at Spock’s
cold response. “This too, I regret, but I would soon accept that the path I had been on was not
sufficient.” Here it was harder for Jim to tell what was going on because it seemed like Spock was
trying to hide the secrets of the future from him, but he felt that Spock had experienced pure logic
without emotion and found it wanting; he felt the completeness Spock had found later when they
switched to a memory of what must have been Spock in some sort of Sickbay taking his Jim’s hand
and the simple gesture feeling far more intimate and more emotional than any encounter Jim had
experienced. “After that we did get together.” The joyful responses when they told their families and
friends the news, flashes of quiet moments in an apartment together, reading paper books while
holding hands, smiling at each other while planning work, glimpses of more intimate encounters
where bodies and minds connected. “But there were difficult times; I was lost then found again and
all the while he was what guided me back.” This Spock seemed especially reluctant for Jim to see;
there was darkness and pain and confusion until a moment of clarity amid it all: a burning red
landscape and looking at that familiar face with sudden recognition as the wariness on it melted into
relief and the light in those hazel eyes and the smile returned. “Once we had survived that, there were
more good times doing what we both loved to do.” Moments flew past, some trying and others
triumphant, nearly kissing on a Klingon ship and sweet reunions on transporter pads; peaceful
moments of staring at stars flying by through the windows in quarters; supporting each other through
grief from parents’ deaths and others lost; bodies changing but love only growing; finally holding
hands and looking out the viewscreen of an Enterprise for what was the last time. “We retired
together, but we did not realize how limited our time truly was.” A parting kiss and a longing look as
they separated for what neither of them knew would be the last time; Spock dropping to the ground,
alone in an apartment meant for two, as sudden pain ripped through him. “He had not truly died, but
been taken into what could best be described as another dimension. While mentally I could still
faintly feel him, physically it was as if he was truly gone.” Nearly a century of wondering if he had
gone mad because of the faint presence in his head that was not gone even if he felt gone and aging
had stopped; the pain and confusion of it all. Losing others in that time and mourning but drawing on
the faint connection for comfort; finding new work to focus on to remove himself from the constant
reminder of what was steadily growing farther from him. “One day, even the faint connection I had
left was taken from me.” Dropping to the ground as the final connection he’d had was ripped away
and being surrounded by others who could not truly understand because no one could or ever would;
returning to those he knew even though there were so few left. Attempts at comfort that did not fill
the hollowness he now felt because nothing ever would again. “For nearly two decades, I had to live
with this new, complete loss. I tried to distract myself and knew that nothing would truly make me
feel complete again.” Working, of the same people Jim had seen in the previous mind meld.
“Then came the incident with Nero, and I was pulled into your universe.” The destruction of Vulcan
and the crushing grief that accompanied it because it was his fault; looking to an amulet that he
carried with a hologram of the hazel-eyed Jim Kirk for comfort but only summoning that grief anew
because that man was gone just like his planet. Finally feeling completely overwhelmed and empty
and retreating to the ice cave only to see a stranger in distress and rushing to help. Ensuring that the
beast was gone before turning to see who he had saved. The instant recognition despite the slightly
unfamiliar face and the surprise and joy that came with that realization of who he had found. An old
hollowness deep inside finally starting to fill.

“Oh god.” Jim was glad that he was sitting for this time, because if he had been standing he
definitely would have collapsed. His face was flooded with tears that he had to quickly wipe away
before the cold air of the ice cave made them freeze to his face. Inside of him, an ache that he’d tried
to ignore made itself known again. Deep down he knew he’d always wanted to have some sort of
happy ending, but damn he’d never expected to have all that. That was… that was an epic love story
for the ages and he just hoped he could have a fraction of what his other self and this Spock had had.
It seemed to go beyond the average human stories of soulmates; it had to be more…
“He was my t’hy’la.” Older Spock’s voice seemed solemn. He was looking down at a familiar amulet that he held in his hand. “It is a very old Vulcan term that means friend, brother, lover, and represents a very deep and very rare connection.”

Unsure of what to say, Jim just nodded and continued to wipe his face. He felt as if everything he knew had just changed. All he could think of now was that he craved something like that with just about everything he had, but he felt like with how this universe was he could never have it. Not with an Enterprise that would never be his and not with a supposed soulmate who seemed to hate him. Jim could never have that life, but god did he want it. Plus, there had been a moment there where Jim was pretty sure he’d seen the happy couple talking to a man who must have been his dad. That other Jim Kirk seemed have had everything.

Jim ran his hands down his face and took a deep breath. “We should… we should get moving. Nero and all that.”

Older Spock seemed to be watching him warily, as if aware of the raging storm of emotions inside of Jim. “Are you sure you are alright?”

“Fine.” It probably came out harsher than Jim intended. He felt bad, but he really didn’t want to sit and talk about everything he could have had. “Time crunch, remember?”

“Very well.” Older Spock seemed to hesitate for a moment, but nodded and stood up from the block of ice he was sitting on. “I will lead us to the base. It is not far.”

Jim nodded, took a deep breath, and wiped his face once last time before standing up and following.

Chapter End Notes

I seriously wish we knew what happened between the end of the five year mission and The Motion Picture in the prime timeline. It’s really all speculation at this point to my knowledge. Although the two of them in the movies set in that timeline are pretty great.

Also I have no idea whether Spock carrying around an amulet with a hologram of Jim in it is fanon, canon, or somewhere in between, but dear god it makes an emotional pairing more sad.

Sorry if I made you sad this week. I promise that at least this story will have a happy ending eventually, and hopefully the real world will have more to be happy about eventually too.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Last week may have been rough, but it seems like people are starting to get back up, which is good. I’m not gonna start talking about the US political situation regularly here (although I make no promises that this will be the last time), but I feel like when things seem seriously off like that we need to stick together and remind each other to keep going, even if you need to take some time first.

Anyway, thank you all for your continued support of this fic. The amount of response I’m getting through comments, kudos, subscriptions, bookmarks, and hits just continues to blow me away. You all are awesome.

Also, more new people!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a long trek from the ice cave to the outpost, but not as bad as Jim was expecting because it turns out his running from murderous beasts one and two had been mostly in the right direction. Jim was a little glad for how long it took though, because as he followed Older Spock across the ice it gave him time to regain his composure some. Plus, it reminded him that there was something bigger at stake here; preventing Nero from destroying the Federation was more important than Jim ruminating about the life he could have had.

Finally, they reached the top of a hill and the base was in sight. Luckily they hadn’t encountered any murderous beasts this time. They went down the hill and crossed the valley until they reached the doors, which had surprisingly little security to get through before they were inside.

They opened the doors to a long, poorly-lit hallway that was damp, probably from all the snow that got tracked or blown inside and melted. Jim struggled against the wind but finally managed to close the door behind them. He pulled off his hood since it was actually warmer in here, but still cold. Between the dampness, the flickering lights, and everything else it seemed like Starfleet didn’t care a whole lot about this outpost.

A voice echoed from the end of the hallway, but Jim couldn’t hear what was said. He called out to get their attention. “Hello?”

Someone stepped into the end of the hallway. It was hard to make them out at first, but they approached and got clearer. They were a little over half Jim’s height and seemed to be Roylan.

The Roylan took them in for a second before turning around and gesturing for Jim and Spock to come with them. The three of them walked down the hallway and turned the corner at the end into a larger room that looked like it was mostly used for storage. Again, it seemed like most of the lights weren’t working, or that this place was just meant to be dimly lit.

Finally, they reached what seemed to be a workstation. There were multiple monitors on desks and several lights seemed like they’d been dragged over so it was actually possible to see clearly. Sitting with their feet up in on one of the desks was a person in a heavy coat who had a hat over their eyes and seemed like they were trying to sleep.
The Roylan poked them in the side, causing the person to move the hat. “What?” They looked at the Roylan, who just directed their attention to Jim and Spock. The person at the desk looked at them and seemed annoyed. “You do realize how unacceptable this is.”

“Fascinating.” Older Spock must have seen something Jim missed, because he seemed oddly interested in the individual before them.

“What?” Jim looked at Spock, hoping he’d be willing to share what was so fascinating.

“I know you’re just doing your job, but could you not come a wee bit sooner?” The feet came off the desk. “Six months I’ve been here, living off of,” the person disdainfully grabbed a handful of packages sitting on the desk and threw them in the air, “Starfleet protein nibs and the promise of a good meal.” The person pointed at them accusingly. “And I know exactly what’s going on here, okay? Punishment, isn’t it? Ongoing. For something that was clearly an accident.” The person spoke emphatically, hands waving wildly.

“You are Montgomery Scott.” Older Spock seemed slightly excited but overall still calm, and Jim wondered again if this Spock just showed a lot of emotion for a Vulcan or if Jim was just really good at reading him for some reason.

“You know him?” Jim decided to focus on the question at hand rather than thinking about him and Spock, which really wasn’t his ideal topic at the moment.

“Aye, that’s me. You’re in the right place.” Montgomery Scott still seemed a bit annoyed. “Unless there’s another hardworking, equally-starved Starfleet officer around.”

The Roylan made an annoyed sound, causing Scott to turn around to face them.

“Get it! Shut up! You don’t eat anything.” Scott still seemed annoyed, but not genuinely angry. “You can eat like, a bean, and you’re done.” He turned back to face Jim and Spock. “I’m talking about food.” He threw up his hands in frustration. “Real food.” He got up from his chair and walked toward the other desk with monitors. “But, you’re here now, so thank you. Where is it?

“You are, in fact,” Older Spock walked toward Scott and Jim followed, “the Mr. Scott who postulated the theory of transwarp beaming?” It didn’t sound like a question; it sounded like a statement.

“That’s what I’m talking about.” Scott threw his hands up in frustration again. “How’d you think I wound up here? I had a little debate with my instructor on the issue of relativistic physics and how it pertains to subspace travel. He seemed to think that the range of transporting something, like a grapefruit,” Scott began to talk with his hands again, “was limited to about a hundred miles. I told him that I could not only beam a grapefruit from one planet to the adjacent planet in the same system—which is easy, by the way—I could do it with a lifeform.” Jim looked skeptically at the Roylan, who shook their head. Scott continued, “So, I tested it on Admiral Archer’s prized beagle.”

Jim remembered that dog; he’d seen the admiral walk it around campus in his first and second years at the academy, but then not recently. “I know that dog; what happened to it?

Scott looked a bit sheepish. “I’ll tell you when it reappears. I don’t know. I do feel a bit guilty about that.”

“What if I told you that your transwarp theory was correct, that it is indeed possible to beam aboard a ship that is travelling at warp speed?” Older Spock still had that note of excitement under the calm.

“I think that if that were possible it would have been discovered and I’d have heard about it.” Scott
sounded confused and maybe a little annoyed.

“The reason you haven’t heard about it, Mr. Scott, is because you haven’t discovered it yet.”

Scott’s face shifted to disbelief and he looked between them distrustfully. “Ah—ts—wha—it—are you from the future?”

Jim felt the need to jump in and clarify at this point. “Yeah. He is, I’m not.”

Scott seemed a bit impressed. “Well that’s brilliant. Do they still have sandwiches there?”

Chapter End Notes

I’m just gonna say again that the (terrible) first impressions are one of the things I love about the 09 movie. It’s just so great.

Also thanks to rosemannon pointing me in the right direction I was able to find the scripted scene that didn't make it into the '09 movie with the amulet that Spock Prime has of Jim. I haven't finished reading over the scene and I'm already emotional.

And finally sorry this chapter is a bit later than usual. I got the opportunity to see an advanced screening of Fantastic Beasts and it ate up a good chunk of my day between getting there early to get a spot and the movie itself, which was awesome by the way. There are a few things I'm not happy with but overall I really liked it.
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, this fic just passed 5000 hits, which is so incredible. You guys really make my day with all the support you give this fic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After doing a full round of introductions and Jim and Older Spock explaining their situation, Scotty lead them to the outpost’s transporter room. “She’s a little old and not in the best shape, but she’ll do.” He opened the door and gestured for them to go inside. “On you go.” As they walked in, he continued talking. “So the Enterprise has had her maiden voyage, has she? She is one well-endowed lady. I’d love to get my hands on her ample nacelles if you’ll pardon the engineering parlance.”

Once they were inside, Older Spock began to enter something into the computer on the console. Scotty leaned next to him and continued talking.

“Except, even if I believed you, right? Where you’re from, what I’ve done. Which—I don’t, by the way—you’re still talking about beaming aboard the Enterprise while she’s traveling faster than light without a proper receiving pad.” He paced the room, stopping when he saw Keenser climbing on a shelf. “Get off there! It’s not a climbing frame.” He grabbed some parts from a different shelf and switched back to talking about their current project. “The notion of transwarp beaming is like trying to hit a bullet with a smaller bullet, whilst wearing a blindfold, riding a horse.” He began tinkering with the transporter control panel, but paused as he got to Older Spock and the computer console. “What’s that?”

Older Spock seemed to be about done entering it into the computer. “Your equation for achieving transwarp beaming.” He finished entering it and stepped away from the console.

Scotty skeptically looked at him walk away before stepping in front of the console and looking at the computer screen closely. After a moment happy surprise spread across his face. “Ah! Imagine that. It never occurred to me to think of space as the thing that was moving.”

Jim had been pretty quiet so far since Scotty had been talking so much, but there was one thing he wanted to know. He walked over to Older Spock and spoke softly so they wouldn’t be overheard. “You’re coming with us, right?”

Older Spock turned to face him. “No, Jim. It is not my destiny.”

That was not the answer Jim wanted. He wanted Older Spock to come with him. “Your dest—he—the other Spock is not gonna believe me. Only you can explain—”

“Under no circumstances can he be made aware of my existence.” Older Spock seemed very serious. “You must promise me this.”

That was really not what Jim wanted to hear. “You’re telling me I can’t tell you that I’m following your orders?” That was gonna make this so much harder for Jim. “Why not? What happens?”

“Jim this is one rule you cannot break.” Older Spock seemed even more serious now. “To stop Nero,
you alone must take command of your ship.”

Again with the talk of the Enterprise like she was his. Jim was getting frustrated, almost angry now. “How, over your dead body?”

“Preferably not.” Older Spock remained calm despite Jim’s anger, unlike his modern counterpart. “However, there is Starfleet Regulation 619. 619 states that any command officer who is emotionally compromised by the mission at hand must resign said command.” He looked at Jim expectantly.

It took Jim a moment to process what he said. His anger faded somewhat. “So you’re saying that I need to emotionally compromise you?” From his little experience with current Spock, that didn’t seem like it would be easy. Sure, he’d seemed annoyed, maybe even mad earlier, but that was a far cry from emotionally compromised.

Older Spock spoke softly. “Jim, I just lost my planet and my mother.” He looked Jim in the eyes to make sure he understood. “I can tell you, I am emotionally compromised. What you must do is get me to show it.”

“Aye then laddie, let’s get this over with.” Jim heard Scotty speak up from behind him before he could respond. Jim found himself reluctant to look away from the man standing in front of him. It occurred to him that this could be his last time seeing this Spock, or that if this transwarp thing wasn’t as proven as Older Spock said this could be his last time doing anything. But he doubted that he was really in danger now; he trusted Older Spock for reasons he couldn’t fully explain. Somehow he felt that it wouldn’t be their last time seeing each other either.

Jim walked onto the transporter pad, keeping his eyes on Older Spock for a moment. Scotty was already there and was pushing Keenser off, telling them that they couldn’t come with them. Spock was going to the controls, but Jim reached out to stop him while Scotty was distracted. “You know, coming back in time, changing history?” He looked Older Spock in the eyes. “That’s cheating.”

Older Spock did that little smile again. “A trick I learned from an old friend.”

Without really thinking of it, Jim held out his pointer and middle finger to Older Spock in a way he remembered seeing in the mind meld. After a moment of hesitation, Older Spock touched his pointer and middle fingers to Jim’s gently, but quickly pulled back his hand. “You must go.”

Older Spock went to the controls and prepared to operate them, but then he paused. He raised his hand and held it in what Jim recognized as the Vulcan salute. “Live long and prosper.” After a moment he began to operate the controls; Jim smiled at him and Scotty waved goodbye to Keenser, then everything faded as the light of the transporter surrounded them.

Chapter End Notes

That moment between Jim and Older Spock just kinda happened while I was writing. Jim just kinda hijacked the narrative and I guess he just wanted to kiss Spock.

Also this came up in a comment, but I'm going to be using they/them pronouns for Keenser because I don't think every alien species would have the same gender rules as us. I probably won't be changing gender for any other major characters, but very few of
them will be straight.
Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I gotta say again, thank you for all the support for this fic. I keep expecting stuff like kudos to drop off but it's staying pretty steady, which is astounding. Seriously, this fic is now my top for just about everything, so thank you to all of you amazing people!

And now for a chapter that marks the beginning of a love story for the ages, what I know you've all been waiting for, the first meeting of Scotty and the Enterprise.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next thing Jim knew, the light of the transporter was clearing and he was in what looked somewhere in a mechanical area of the Enterprise. His initial thought was Holy shit, it actually worked. Jim smiled; he hadn’t really doubted Older Spock, but it was still nice to actually be alive and not scattered in particles in the great void of space.

Then he remembered Scotty, who didn’t seem to be standing next to him. If the transport had worked for Jim, it must have worked for Scotty, right? “Scotty!”

Jim’s smile dropped completely when he heard a banging noise from behind him. Behind him in one of the giant tanks that filled this room.

He turned around and pressed his ear to the tank. “Scotty, can you hear me?” Jim was vaguely aware that he was shouting, but it wasn’t his main concern right now.

Before Jim could get an answer, there was the humming and hissing of something mechanical starting up.

Connected to the tank was a giant clear pipe, and as the water started flowing along Scotty appeared in the pipe. Jim rushed over, trying to see if there was anything he could do. Scotty looked like he was trying to say something, but also couldn’t because his mouth was closed to hold his breath. Jim had to help him. “Hold on a second!” Jim started to scan the room, noticing out of the corner of his eye when the water’s flow moved Scotty farther along. “Oh no.”

Jim ran along the pipe, trying to keep Scotty calm while looking for a way to get him out. He really hoped that whatever he was shouting was reassuring; Jim remembered some old tv show saying that it took longer to drown if you were calm or something.

Jim followed the pipes as they twisted and turned, shedding his parka as he ran because he certainly didn’t need it now. Suddenly the pipe took a turn and Scotty was carried up vertically. That couldn’t be good. Jim heard himself shouting but dammit, he needed to focus.

He stopped running for a moment because it’s not like he could run up the pipe anyway. Well, he could if they shifted the artificial gravity, but that’s not important now.

Jim followed the pipe that Scotty was in with his eyes, trying to see where it led. What he saw was not good.
The pipe Scotty was in connected to a giant turbine. He still had a little bit, but the blades were spinning to help propel the water and Jim really did not like Scotty’s odds of making it through there unharmed. Dammit, there were only like 3 people in Starfleet that liked him; Jim couldn’t let this guy die.

Luckily, right before the spinning turbine of doom was an emergency hatch. If Jim opened it at just the right time, Scotty would be safe. Jim just had to time it right and do it before Scotty could get past it.

Jim ran to the nearest computer console, hoping that it wouldn’t be too difficult to enter the right commands. It was an emergency hatch, it was probably designed to be done quickly with no questions asked, right?

Jim may have never been more grateful to be right in his life. He only had to enter a few commands before he heard the computer announce that the emergency hatch was opening, followed by the sound of falling water and Scotty’s shout as he dropped to the floor.

Jim ran over, not caring about the slippery floor because between that fall and holding his breath so long something could have gone very wrong for Scotty. He hadn’t moved yet. Jim dropped the floor and grabbed Scotty’s arm. “You alright?” He shook Scotty’s arm a bit, then asked again, louder, “You alright?”

Finally, Scotty sat up and coughed out a mouthful of water. “My head’s buzzin and I’m soaked, but otherwise I’m fine.”

Jim nearly sighed in relief. He wondered absently if it still counted as saving someone’s life if you were the reason they were in danger. He was still hundreds behind his dad either way. Still, not the focus of the day. He clapped Scotty on the back. “Glad to hear it. We’ve got a murderous Romulan to stop; we gotta get to the bridge.”

“Right.” Scotty nodded and they both started to stand. “Which way is that exactly?”

Jim paused; he’d seen this ship get built in Riverside and he’d studied her schematics, but the only time he’d really been through her was when he’d been affected by whatever Bones had given him to smuggle him aboard. Plus, he had no idea what their exact location on the ship was. “Let’s start by finding our way of here and into a turbolift. We can go from there.”

“Sounds good.” Scotty followed him as he began to navigate through the room.

Once they were past the water spill, Jim started running. They had limited time and Earth was in danger, so it wasn’t really the time for a leisurely stroll. He heard Scotty trailing behind him as he tried to find a turbolift, a way out, or both. They ran over catwalks and up and down stairs in the catwalks. Jim ran past some redshirt only to round the corner and see a whole team of them armed with phasers. Not good.

Jim was vaguely aware of them shouting at him as he turned around and started running back the way he came, nearly running into Scotty on the limited space of the catwalk. However, he didn’t get far.

Blocking his path was an especially stocky redshirt, this time with his phaser at the ready and an angry face that was somehow familiar. Angry Redshirt shouted, “Come with me, Cupcake!” and it clicked. This was one of the cadets Jim got into the barfight with the night Pike recruited him.

Had he really not let that go yet? It’d been like 3 years. Jim decided to drop the thought and put his
hands up. Better not to piss off the guy with the phaser any more than he should. Or at least, any more than he apparently did just by existing. As the security guys grabbed Jim (and by the sound of it, Scotty as well) and began to take them away, Jim decided since they didn’t actually shoot him he could risk asking a question. “Where are you taking us?” He really hoped the answer wouldn’t be an escape pod this time.

Cupcake was the one who answered. “To the bridge. Captain Spock’s orders; I’d rather throw you in the brig myself.”

Jim decided not to answer because again, don’t piss off the guy who has a phaser when you’re unarmed. He’d learned that on Tarsus. But he really didn’t need to go down that particular memory lane now. Jim had to focus on the present and his mission; he and Scotty got caught but at least they were getting to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: I only vaguely remember this because I watched it as a kid, but there was a Mythbusters episode where they tested survival techniques for if/when your car goes underwater, and they found that one of the effective strategies was calmly waiting for your car to fill with water so the pressure inside and outside would be equal, then opening the door and swimming to the surface. I think a couple of other strategies worked, but most of the others involved breaking a window, which caused an influx of water and broken glass, so waiting might have actually been one of the best strategies. So good to know, even if most of us probably can’t summon up Vulcan-level calmness in life threatening situations. So yeah, that is the explanation that you may or may not have wanted for the allusion Jim makes early in this chapter. Clearly author's notes are reserved for things of the utmost importance.
Hello everyone! Happy Thanksgiving to all my American readers. To all my readers, I'm thankful for you.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

To say that it had been a difficult day for Spock would be an understatement. The thought seemed like something his mother would say, so Spock quickly directed his thoughts away from that entirely. In an effort to maintain control he had been avoiding any thoughts that could provoke any emotion; it was a challenging task, but Captain Pike had given him the duty of running the ship and he had to maintain control to fulfill that duty. He would not disappoint Pike.

There had been some moments that were more trying than others; immediately after the destruction of his planet Nyota had followed him into the turbolift and kissed him in what he knew was an attempt to comfort him despite their relationship being so new; they had only begun a romantic relationship recently because although she had impressed him intellectually when she was his student, it was against both Starfleet protocols and his own ethical codes to date a student.

Still, even though her actions were intended to have a positive effect on his emotional state, after the day’s events he could not allow himself to even consider his emotional state. He must remain in control.

Another difficult moment had been his conversation with Dr. McCoy after he had ordered Cadet Kirk be sent off the ship; the doctor was clearly upset by Spock’s decision regarding his friend and was rather rude after given permission to speak freely. However, Spock had again managed to retain his control over his emotions. He had had to expel Cadet Kirk from the ship; the cadet tested his control in ways that no one else seemed to and Spock needed to maintain his control.

After his conversation with the doctor, Spock had called his father to the bridge. While he and his father did not always get along well, when he was younger Spock had looked to his father as an example of Vulcan control and had sought to emulate him. It seemed logical to seek his counsel now; his father had seemed to still be in control earlier despite the loss they had suffered.

However, before he could speak with his father Spock’s attention was once more drawn to ship’s matters as Ensign Chekov alerted him to a security breach in the water turbine controls. He had instructed Ensign Chekov to show the visual recordings of the incident.

If he allowed himself to experience emotion, Spock might say he was shocked. But he could not lose his control, so all he could focus on was that Cadet Kirk had somehow gotten aboard the Enterprise at warp with another person, who appeared to be another human around 18 years of age, although with humans appearance was not necessarily an indicator of actual age. Regardless, this person and Kirk had gotten aboard the Enterprise at warp. This could not go uninvestigated, so he had sent security teams to find and capture Cadet Kirk and his companion.

The teams were efficient and soon delivered Kirk and the other to the bridge. Spock needed answers; he walked away from where he had been still standing near his father to where the security team stood with Kirk and the other.
Due to Kirk’s general effect on him, Spock found it logical to focus on the other first. “Who are you?”

Kirk answered, “He’s with me,” and the other simultaneously said, “I’m with him.” Neither were satisfactory answers.

Kirk could not be avoided. Spock looked directly at him, attempting to control his emotions. “We are traveling at warp speed; how did you manage to beam aboard this ship?”

“You’re the genius, you figure it out.” Kirk’s response and tone were flippant.

“As acting captain of this vessel I order you to answer the question.” Spock looked Kirk in the eyes; Kirk met his stare with a challenge.

“Well I’m not telling, Acting Captain.” The defiance was clear in his voice and how he said Spock’s title. “What, now that doesn’t frustrate you, does it?” His expression shifted to a smirk that grew to a taunting smile. “My lack of,” he hesitated for a moment, either thinking or pausing for dramatic effect, “cooperation. That doesn’t make you angry?” Kirk did not break eye contact.

Focusing on Kirk was futile. Spock switched his focus to the other; he was wearing heavy winter clothes that did not appear to be Starfleet regulation. He was also drenched, most likely related to the incident with the water controls. “Are you a member of Starfleet?”

“Uh, yes.” He had glanced nervously at Kirk while answering; fascinating. Spock would need to find out the implications of that. Before he could the person spoke again. “Can I get a towel please?”

Spock would not allow this investigation to be delayed while a towel was retrieved. He needed—they all needed to focus. “Under penalty of court martial I order you to explain to me how you were able to beam aboard this ship while it was moving at warp.” Spock could feel Kirk still staring at him, but he could not focus on Kirk now. He had to maintain control.

The still unnamed Starfleet officer seemed nervous. “Well-”

“Don’t answer him.” For once Kirk seemed uncharacteristically emotionless. Or perhaps focused in a way that made him lose his usual careless air.

“You will answer me.” Spock was aware of his voice slowing down to make the command clear; he had not intended it but most of his mental resources were currently devoted to controlling his emotions. He could still feel Kirk’s gaze boring into the side of his face like the drill had—he could not think of that. He must maintain control.

There was tension in the room now and officer seemed to be responding to it; he seemed to physically back away and said, “I’d rather not pick sides.”

Kirk, however, was not backing down. “What is with you, Spock?” He stepped into what Spock knew was less than an acceptable range of personal space. Spock turned his gaze from the officer to Kirk. “Hmm?” This close Spock could see clearly the damage done to Kirk’s face in his earlier fight against the Romulans; Spock found himself almost wanting to add to it but suppressed the urge.

“Your planet was just destroyed, your mother murdered, and yet…” Kirk’s expression was an unreadable mix of interest, calm, and something like superiority. He shook his head and spoke again, his voice soft due to the close distance but still challenging. “You’re not even upset.”

This was a clear taunt, but Spock could not lose his control. “You are presuming that these experiences in any way impede my ability to command this ship; you are mistaken.” He was distantly aware of the silence that had fallen over the bridge, but he could only focus on the face less
than a foot from his.

“And yet you were the one who said that fear was necessary for command.” Kirk’s eyes did not leave his face, even as he gestured to the viewscreen. “Did you see his ship, did you see what he did?”

“Yes, of course I did.” Spock felt that his voice was not as level as he would have wished.

“So are you afraid or aren’t you?” The challenge was still present in Kirk’s stare.

“I will not allow you to lecture me about the merits of emotion.”

“Then why don’t you stop me?” Kirk remained frustratingly calm.

“Step away from me, Mr. Kirk.” Spock was not sure if it was a command or a warning.

“What is it like not to feel anger, or heatbreak?” Kirk’s stare was unwavering and unnerving; his voice was level. “Or the need to stop at nothing to avenge the death of the woman who gave birth to you?”

“Back away from me.” Spock could feel his voice getting lower, almost like the growl of a cornered animal.

“You feel nothing!” Kirk was screaming now, and still so close to Spock’s face. “It must not even compute for you!” He almost seemed to get closer before shouting again. “You never loved her!”

Spock felt his control snap.

His fist swung toward Kirk’s face; he was distantly aware of shouting but unsure if it came from him or elsewhere. Kirk went tumbling backwards from the blow but before he could fall Spock grabbed him, threw him toward the center of the bridge. Kirk made some feeble attempts at hitting Spock but he blocked all of them; Kirk’s strength was no match for him. He shoved Kirk back once more, the force of it causing Kirk to double over. Spock took advantage of this by swinging his hands above his head and striking Kirk once more; each of Kirk’s reactions simply became a new opportunity to hit where he was vulnerable. Kirk fell back against the navigation console in the center of the bridge, winded from the hits Spock had just landed on his ribcage. He gasped and attempted to get up and fight once more, but again Spock easily deflected his attacks and struck back. A new hit sent Kirk rolling across the navigation console once more. Spock was distantly aware of the sounds of something breaking, but that did not concern him; he was solely focused on Kirk. While Kirk was still sprawled across the navigation console Spock leaned in and grabbed him by the throat, cutting off his air supply. Kirk began to gasp and his hands went to Spock’s at his throat, but his efforts were useless. An uncertain amount of time was passing; Kirk’s gasps turned into weak coughs and still Spock did not let up pressure.

Spock heard someone behind him call his name; it took a moment to realize it was his father. It was as if the control he had lost was very suddenly regained, as if how he had been in the past…he could not say the precise time, which illustrated his lack of control. He looked down at his arm and his hand which was still on Kirk’s throat as if that arm did not belong to him. He quickly removed his hand; he had not lashed out violently since the childhood incident with his classmates.

He backed away as Kirk coughed and began to take gasping breaths, as if desperate to regain the air in his lungs. Spock found himself breathing deeply as well, agitated by the fight and what he had just nearly done. He had nearly killed Kirk. The bridge was silent except for his and Kirk’s breathing and the equipment that was still running. Spock turned around and saw Nyota looking shocked and
perhaps slightly afraid; she was standing next to his father, who looked shocked and slightly disappointed. Spock could not remain on the bridge.

He glanced back at Kirk, who seemed to be recovering, even if his stare toward Spock was unreadably emotionally charged and he was still breathing heavily. Spock approached Dr. McCoy but found himself unable to meet his eyes; He stared at some point above the floor as he spoke. “Doctor, I am unfit for duty.” He was still breathing heavily, as if he had been the one attacked. “I hereby relinquish my command based on the fact that I have been emotionally compromised.” Spock could feel the eyes of everyone on the bridge on him, but he could not meet them. “Please note the time in the ships log.” With a nod, he left the bridge. Nyota attempted to follow him, but he stopped her with a look.

He could not be around others at this moment. He had lost his control, with dire consequences. He still did not have full control of his emotions. Spock felt ready to collapse.

Chapter End Notes

Spock was choking Kirk for a long time. When I watched the scene in the movie they had time to cut to everyone while it was happening. I'm a little surprised Jim didn't pass out but I'm guessing it's a suspend disbelief situation.

Anyway raise your hand if you want to give Spock a hug but are also lowkey terrified of him when he's pissed off. Cuz that's where I am.

Also general story things in case you missed them in all the excitement of the latter half of the chapter: Spock and Uhura are together here, but that didn't happen til after she was out of his class, and Scotty has not met his soulmate yet, although I have no idea if/when that will happen at this point. I'm open to suggestions because I have people for most of the bridge crew except him and Chekov, but I might make Scotty's a platonic soulmate cuz I kinda headcanon him as aroace. He seems to enjoy/be interested in friendships, scotch, and ships more than romantic relationships.
Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I know I've said it before but I can't believe how much response this fic is still getting. I keep expecting things like kudos and bookmarks and that kind of stuff to drop off, but they haven't. You guys amaze me and I thank you for being such awesome readers!

Some day I'll probably write a chapter from Spock's pov that isn't totally sad and an emotional gut punch. Today does not seem to be that day.

I hope it's clear when you get there, but the italicized scene in the chapter is a flashback. I'm picturing Spock at about 5 years old.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock walked through the corridors of the ship, not acknowledging the crew who passed him. They did not acknowledge him either. He was aware of Kirk making an announcement over the ship’s intercom, but he did not pay attention to it. He could not.

Without intending to, he ended up at the very transporter room that he had used when he had rescued the Elders. It was the same room where he had realized he would be unable to save his mother and that she would surely perish. It was here that he realized he was helpless to stop her death and would never see her again, and that he had never told her he loved her, despite her telling him numerous times.

He was alone in the room because the technicians did not stay in the room when the transporter was inactive while they were at warp. Spock found himself grateful for the solitude; he could not imagine facing others at this moment.

His solitude was interrupted only moments later. While his focus was on the transporter pad in front of him, Spock was aware of footsteps behind him. Familiar footsteps. Spock did not turn around; he was unready to face anyone, especially the person he was expecting.

A moment later the footsteps stopped, still several meters behind Spock, and his father spoke. “Speak your mind, Spock.”

There was too much on his mind. Thoughts of his mother and his planet and the uncontainable grief and anger because of what was done to them, thoughts of Kirk and the rage he had felt and the shame for what he had nearly done. There were too many thoughts in his mind, and they were all too tied to the emotions he had just lost control of. Spock could not share those thoughts with his father. “That would be unwise.”

“What is necessary is never unwise.” Sarek still sounded so in control, so calm, despite what he had told Spock as a child about emotions running deep in Vulcans.

“I am as conflicted as I once was as a child.” It was true; Spock was not sure if it was a human or Vulcan failing that had caused his outburst, just as he had been unsure before. Or perhaps it was merely a personal failing.
“You will always be a child of two worlds.” His father paused; if Spock did not know better he would think his father was hesitating. “I am grateful for this.” Sarek paused once more, but when he spoke there was no waver in his voice. “And for you.”

The revelation surprised Spock, but it did not defeat the other emotions inside him. Spock turned to face his father. “I feel anger for the one who took Mother’s life. An anger I cannot control.”

Sarek began to advance towards the transporter pad where Spock was standing. “I believe,” he reached the transporter pad and stopped alongside Spock, “that she would say, do not try to.” Sarek paused once more, observing Spock. “You asked me once, why I married your mother.” He paused once more, and when he spoke next there was a vulnerability and openness that Spock was not very familiar with. “I married her because I loved her.”

Sarek began to leave the room, but Spock was still frozen on the transporter pad. This was a more personal conversation than he had had with his father in many years, yet he still had so many questions. “Father?”

“Yes, my son?” Sarek paused and turned back towards the transporter pad.

“Do you believe in the human concept of soulmates?” Again, Spock could not turn and fully face his father.

“I know that there is scientific evidence of a phenomenon in the human race related to their idea of soulmates.” Sarek paused. “Many cultures, including our own, have had concepts similar to the mythological idea humans attach to that scientific phenomenon.”

Spock paused; his father’s answer was related to his question but still not fully satisfactory. He could almost hear his mother making a joke about Sarek always remaining diplomatic. When Spock spoke again his voice was quieter. “Did you believe that you and Mother were soulmates?”

Sarek seemed to pause for longer this time, as if genuinely unsure of how to respond. It seemed unlike everything Spock knew of his father. “I know that she believed we were. All I can truly know is my own feelings towards and thoughts of her, which ran so deep within me that they were often nearly overwhelming.” Here Sarek’s voice did seem to waiver; after a moment he took a breath and spoke again. His voice was soft. “I must go meditate. Do you have any more questions, my son?”

Spock wanted to ask his last question, Do you think I have a soulmate, but he feared seeing his father breakdown would render him completely unable to regain his control. So he did not ask. “No, thank you Father.”

Out of the corner of his eye Spock saw Sarek nod and leave the room. Once the doors closed it was only him and the quiet of the transporter room once more.

He felt his mind wander to what had happened on the bridge. He was beginning to be able to process it without being overwhelmed by emotions now that he was away from the scene of it and all of the other people. Many things had happened, many things that Spock had not wanted to ever experience or for others to ever see.

But most peculiar had been what had happened while he was—while he was strangling Kirk. One of his fingers had strayed from the cadet’s throat and ended up on one of the psi-points low on Kirk’s face. He had only been able to get fragments of what Kirk had been thinking and feeling, but it was still nearly overwhelming.

The emotions Kirk had been experiencing were confusing to Spock. There had been fear, yes, but
also an odd sense of determination. And perhaps a note of regret or apology. Spock had also gotten trace fragments of thought, barely any words. There was the expected swearing and calls to a deity that Spock doubted that Kirk actually believed in, but also “mission” and Spock’s name and, without context Spock was able to get through the limited contact, the phrase “my soulmate.”

Spock wondered who Kirk’s soulmate could be. Kirk did not appear to be past age 18 physically, so it would have had to have been someone Kirk had met recently. Perhaps it was someone who had perished on one of the other ships during Nero’s attack and that was why Kirk was so desperate to go after Nero. Or perhaps it was someone on Earth that Kirk was trying to save before Nero could reach the planet and destroy it.

Most of Spock’s memories of Earth had come from his time at Starfleet, but there were some earlier ones, mostly with his mother. A few times they had slipped away while his father was on diplomatic missions on the planet, other times she had just taken him to show him her home planet.

Spock remembered his mother telling him about the human concept of soulmates on one of those visits when he was very young. She’d taken him to a park while his father was in a meeting and they’d been doing what she called "peoplewatching." He had asked her why there were so many teenaged people on Earth, and she had smiled and told him that not all of them were actually that young.

“Some of them may actually be much older, but they just haven’t met their soulmates yet.” Spock remembered her gentle smile as easily as he remembered the greenery of the park they were sitting in.

“What’s a soulmate?” He had been so young at the time; a child not even old enough to be bonded or tested in the desert yet. It was far before Vulcan schools taught about other species as well.

His mother had paused, thinking. “It’s a person who will be very special to you. A person you love very much.”

Spock had nodded solemnly. “Do you have a soulmate, Mother? Will I?”

She had smiled widely again, much freer with her emotions when they were on Earth than when they would return to Vulcan. “I believe I do, my dear.” She stroked the top of his head. “And as for you I can’t say for certain, but I believe and hope that one day you will too.” With the open emotional expression of the other humans all around her, she was bold enough to lean in and press a quick kiss to the top of his head even though they were in public. He could feel her affection and love for him through the contact as well as through the bond they shared. “C’mon,” she smiled at him and leaned back, starting to get up from the bench they were sitting on, “your father must be done with his work by now. Let’s see if we can all go out to dinner together.”

Spock realized that rather than just being an early memory of his mother, this could soon become one of his only memories of his mother because he would not have the chance to form new ones. The thought of all that he had lost caused a new wave of emotion to rise in him.

His father had told him to not try to control his anger. Spock believed that his mother would agree, that she would tell him to use his anger. He would.

Spock would use his anger, and he would not channel it improperly like he had on the bridge. He would use it to protect the planet his mother had called home, the place that she had shared with him along with her culture and heritage, the place his time at Starfleet had made even more familiar for him. He would preserve that place before it too could only exist in memories. He would preserve it for everyone who still had a soulmate who might be on that planet, even if he did not know if he
would have one.

Spock would preserve his mother’s home; it might be the only home he would have left after today.

Chapter End Notes

Seriously, I just want to hug Spock so bad. I feel like he needs it tbh.


Also a general note on soulmates in this fic: soulmates are generally romantic, but not always. There are instances of platonic soulmates, but they’re more rare.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! With that last chapter this fic passed 300 kudos and 50 bookmarks, both of which are mind-blowing numbers to me. Seriously, how many of you are there? Anyway, I just want you all to know that I think each and every one of you are amazing. Thanks for reading and all the support you give this fic!

Also, this chapter is a little heavier (we are getting thick into the plot of this movie) but I'd just like us all to take a moment to appreciate Montgomery Scott, ray of sunshine, who has no idea what he's doing here but is just glad to have something to do, actual people to be around, and probably real food. Seriously, rewatching this scene Scotty was probably the best part, but I do tend to love comedy so idk.

Also, to avoid any confusion I'm letting you know that there is a time overlap between this chapter and the previous one; they're basically happening simultaneously on different parts of the ship.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock’s departure from the bridge was met with silence. Jim was sure that the loudest thing in the room was his own breathing. He really hadn’t expected Spock to nearly kill him; Jim really didn’t know what he was expecting when he’d agreed to follow through with Older Spock’s orders to emotionally compromise him or get him to show it, but maybe a little less violence. Still, saying the guy never loved his recently murdered mother was probably crossing a line. If Jim ever saw Spock again, he would apologize and maybe try to explain. Except somehow without mentioning Older Spock, which would be hard. Jim really wondered if anyone else had a relationship this difficult with their soulmate; for a moment there he thought his last thought would be that he’d failed the mission from Older Spock and that he was going to get killed by his soulmate.

The bridge continued to be silent and tense for a few moments. Then Scotty spoke up.

“I like this ship!” He still had his hands raised even though the security guards had stood down. “You know, it’s exciting.” He continued, either oblivious to the tension on the bridge or trying to break it. “And she’s a real beaut too. Just walkin through her I think I’ve started aging.”

Despite Scotty’s comments, the tension on the bridge was still thick. It had loosened just enough, however, for people to feel like they could speak.

“Well congratulations, Jim.” Bones was uncharacteristically solemn but as grouchy as ever. “Now we’ve got no captain and no goddamn first officer to replace him.”

Well, now or never. Jim may as well claim his destiny or whatever Older Spock had said he should do. “Yeah, we do.” He got up from where he was still half leaning on the navigation console and began to walk toward the center seat.

“What?” Bones sounded incredulous but still a little annoyed.

“Pike made him first officer.” Sulu himself sounded a little stunned, but he was the only one on this
ship besides Jim or Spock who was there for Pike field promoting Jim.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me.” Bones’ tone seemed to have shifted to just annoyed in the time it took Jim to settle into the captain’s chair.

Well that was a vote of confidence. “Thanks for the support, Bones.”

Uhura was next. As everyone began to take their places again, she walked past his chair on the way to her station, pausing when she was next to him to look down at him. “I sure hope you know what you’re doing.” Her tone was cold, almost menacing. “Captain.”

In most other situations, Jim would respond with snark, but that just didn’t feel right after what had happened and what was at stake. He’d become captain and he needed to act like it. He should probably start by being serious and honest with his crew. He looked up, not quite able to meet Uhura’s eyes but making sure he wasn’t staring at her chest either. “So do I.”

She walked away from the chair to her station, and he hit the button on the arm of his chair to address the crew. He should let them know what was going on. As soon as it signaled it was ready, he began to speak. “Attention crew of the Enterprise, this is James Kirk. Mr. Spock has resigned commission and advanced me to acting captain. I know you were all expecting to regroup with the fleet, but I’m ordering a pursuit course of the enemy ship to Earth. I want all departments at battle stations and ready in ten minutes.” Jim paused, unsure how to finish now that he’d started but knowing that he had to finish strong. “Either they’re going down, or we are.” He paused again, unsure how to sign off, but decided simple was best. “Kirk out.”

Jim looked around the quiet of the bridge for a moment. He knew that all the humans here could be any age, but just about everyone still looked 18 or close to it. Even the non-human crewmembers looked young; most were probably cadets recruited into the rescue mission as well. He wondered if everyone else felt as young and lost as he did. But someone had to take charge and figure out what they were doing, and apparently that someone was him. He was the Acting Captain after all.

Jim realized that he didn’t really know that many people here. Sure, there was Bones, who still looked like he couldn’t believe what had happened and was pissed at the universe for making his life like this, Uhura, who still didn’t seem to respect him, not that he could really blame her for it, Sulu, who he only knew from diving into danger with and saving each other’s lives, but that had to count for something, Chekov, who seemed like he might be smarter than the rest of them combined in certain areas, and Scotty, who he’d just met but seemed like he’d have wild ideas and just enough recklessness to try them and just enough genius to make them work. Everyone else Jim vaguely recognized from seeing around the Academy or maybe having a class or two with; he wondered how many of them had even spent real time on a ship outside of simulators and practice runs. But if they were on the bridge of the Enterprise it had to mean something. Pike had a reputation as a good captain, and he wouldn’t have picked subpar crew. Jim just had to get their support; with a good crew even a mediocre captain could do great things.

“So.” Jim looked around again, not wanting to get out of the chair just yet in case this was all actually a mistake and someone else had more of a right to it. Hell, if he got up now he might chicken out and never sit back down. “We’ve gotta stop that ship, save Pike, save Earth and maybe the Federation as well. First things first, Chekov, Sulu, plot a course for Earth and go as fast as we safely can, maybe a little faster. Time is not on our side here; Nero already got a head start. Once we’re going the right direction, we’ve gotta come up with ideas for how to stop Nero and save the day. This isn’t a training simulation and we aren’t at the Academy anymore; this is real. A lot is at stake. But you wouldn’t be here if you didn’t earn it,” Jim paused, wondering if saying that made him a hypocrite since he definitely didn’t earn his way to this chair, but he continued anyway, hoping
everyone else just thought that he’d paused for effect, “so let’s prove our worth here. I told the crew battle stations in 10 and we’ve gotta have at least part of a plan by then. Clock’s ticking, so start thinking.”

Chapter End Notes

When I said I'd be bringing in things from TOS, I didn't necessarily mean Jim's insecurity about his command. But here we are. I think it's something that still exists for him in this timeline, even if it isn't something explored as easily in movies compared to TV.

Also, in case anyone is wondering, Scotty's soulmate is not the Enterprise. Your soulmate has to be a person, and as much as I love the ship she doesn't quite count for the rules of this.
Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

So there were like, a ton of new bookmarks last chapter. I'm glad you're enjoying this fic enough to want to bookmark it! All the support for this fic is part of why I'm trying to keep updates timely even as the chaos of the last week of classes and finals descends on me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Something that he’d said must have had the desired effect, because sure enough brainstorming broke out. Most people split into small groups to work together and a few people worked on their own. Jim wandered between groups, trying to act captainly and in charge and encouraging. It got a little awkward at times when people would ask him questions that were way beyond what he knew, but usually someone else nearby would overhear and chime in. Jim’s specialty was strategy, not physics or whatever form of advanced calculations some of these people were doing. He liked to consider himself smart, but that didn’t mean he knew everything.

The group he was currently at consisted of Uhura, Bones, and Sulu. Hopefully the mix of skills there would lead to something great because god knows they all had the brains in their areas of expertise. But currently they were trying to change his plan, and that was the one thing he knew he knew best here. While Jim was usually a fan of a bold approach or a dramatic entrance, it was a bad idea to go in guns blazing when you were seriously outgunned. “Whatever the case, we need to get aboard Nero’s ship undetected.”

“We can’t just go in there guns blazing.” Bones seemed to be agreeing with him and started to talk with Sulu again while Uhura looked over what they had on the console so far. Jim was about to ask her what she was doing when he heard a voice behind him.

“Keptin Kirk, Keptin Kirk!” Chekov started to tap his shoulder repeatedly; he must have found something if he’d left where he’d been doing calculations toward the back of the bridge.

“Yes, Mr. Chekov, what is it?” Jim turned around and put his hands on his hips, hoping he looked authoritative and not like an annoyed parent. Not that he really knew what that looked like.

“Based on the Narada’s course from Vulcan, I have projected that Nero will travel past Saturn.” Kirk looked over as the others began talking at that, but turned his attention back to Chekov when he continued. “Like you said, we need to stay invisible to Nero or he’ll destroy us. If Mr. Scott can get us to warp 4 and if we drop out of warp behind one of Saturn’s moons, say Titan, the magnetic distortion from the planet’s rings will make us invisible to Nero’s sensors. From there, as long as the drill is not activated we can beam aboard the enemy ship.”

“Aye, that might work.” Scotty had come back aboard the bridge without any of them noticing; he was now in a regular uniform and seemed to have finally gotten the towel he’d asked for earlier. As if to emphasize his support he nodded encouragingly.

Bones was less convinced; he looked at Chekov skeptically. “Wait a minute kid, how old are you?”

“Seventeen, sir.” Chekov’s little bounce when he spoke really didn’t help with how young he
“Oh good, he’s seventeen.” Bones looked back at Jim, the slight edge of why-did-the-universe-do-this-to-me-this-is-probably-your-fault creeping in.

Before Bones could fully go off though, an unexpected (although not entirely unwelcome if Jim was being honest) voice came from the back of the bridge, where Chekov had been working. “Doctor.” Everyone turned and saw Spock, who seemed to have a slight edge of awkwardness around him as if he was unsure if he was welcome on the bridge, but still seemed to be masking the feeling well. He’d somehow gotten to the bridge without them noticing and must have looked over Chekov’s work while they talked. “Mr. Chekov’s calculations are correct. I can confirm his telemetry.” He began to walk towards the rest of them and Uhura stepped toward him. “If Mr. Sulu can maneuver us into position I can beam aboard the ship, steal back the black hole device, and, if possible, bring back Captain Pike.”

Jim didn’t like this plan. He didn’t want anyone under his command, soulmate or no, doing something as risky as beaming onto a ship full of Romulans alone. “I won’t allow you to do that, Mr. Spock.”

Spock’s mostly emotionless façade was back but Jim thought he saw a flash of something like irritation. “Romulans and Vulcans share a common ancestry. Our cultural similarities will make it easier for me to access the ship’s computer to locate the device.” He paused a moment and something vulnerable flashed across his face before it was quickly contained. “Also, my mother was human, which makes Earth the only home I have left.”

No one spoke for a moment at that; Jim was going to speak but Uhura beat him to it. “You shouldn’t be going alone. I can speak Romulan and read it; I could probably access the computers faster than you could just because of some cultural similarities. Besides, Earth is home for the rest of us too.”

“Your accompanying me would be unwise.” Spock focused on Uhura and Jim thought he saw Spock’s gaze soften in a way that Jim definitely didn’t wish was directed at him. “This mission will be highly dangerous and you do not have the requisite combat training. These Romulans have shown hostile intent and a pronounced lack of mercy toward Federation personnel, and speaking their language would most likely not be enough for them to spare your life.” They maintained eye contact for a moment and seemed to be communicating silently or maybe just having a battle of wills. After a moment her shoulders seemed to drop slightly.

She still looked like she was about to protest, though, so Jim spoke up. “Spock’s right. This will be extremely dangerous and there’s a chance that it could be a one-way trip. Your skills would be better served here, coordinating things on the bridge and finding a way to get through their jamming signal because I know that if anyone can do it, it’s you. If things go south we’re going to need someone to warn Earth and every other Federation planet about what’s coming.” She still didn’t look convinced, so he figured he’d pull the card he’d rather not play. “I will order you to stay if necessary. I’d rather not have to because I want all of you here on the bridge working out backup plans rather than trying to sneak into danger, but I don’t want anyone risking their lives when it isn’t necessary.” That seemed to settle her and the other members of the bridge crew more, so he turned back to Spock. “Still, she does have a point. This will be dangerous and you’ll need backup who can fight, which is why I’m coming with you.”

Somehow Spock seemed slightly surprised at that, as if he wouldn’t expect Jim to risk his life for him after what had happened earlier. Jim really needed to find a way to explain that and apologize. Still, after a moment Spock’s face settled. “I would cite regulation, but I know you will simply ignore it.”
Jim couldn’t help but smile at that because this time Spock’s tone had seemed almost playfully exasperated rather than just annoyed. If Jim didn’t know any better he’d have thought Spock was attempting a joke. “See, we are getting to know each other.” He walked past Spock, giving him what he hoped was considered a friendly slap on the arm rather than another hostile act. While he still doubted that he could have what Older Spock had shown him, it seemed like with more time and work he might at least have a friendship with his Spock. Who knows, maybe they were just platonic soulmates after all. That wasn’t exactly what Jim wanted after seeing all he could have had, but he’d still prefer it over hating each other.

Still, his soulmate drama was not what he should be focusing on now. Earth was in danger and they might just be the only ship that could save her in time.

Chapter End Notes

I've decided against writing in Chekov's accent (or anyone's really) for the most part, but I decided to write "captain" as "keptin" for him still because I couldn't do away with it entirely. His accent is just too adorable.

To everyone else entering end of semester chaos and sleeplessness, good luck and may whatever deities exist have mercy on us all.
This fic is officially 3 months old! I'm not gonna list the stats about how much support this has gotten because that feels too much like bragging to me, but as I say and mean almost every chapter you all are the best. I have no idea if any of you read this section of the author's notes but hey, I just want to say I'm grateful for all of you.

Also this scene almost didn't happen, but I watched the movie with my friends last weekend and it seemed odd to me that they basically went right from "ready to murder each other" to "working perfectly as a team," so get ready for some emotional stuff from some people that really don't like emotions.

Because they’d been heading in the wrong way for a bit, they still had some time until they’d reach Earth. Jim hoped they’d get there soon enough. While not all of his memories on Earth were all that great and there were certainly some bad ones, it was still far from the planet with his worst memories. But that planet was uninhabited now, so Jim should really think about something else. Like saving his home planet. He didn’t need to fill his head with negative thoughts right before the mission.

And right. The mission he was going to go on with Spock. His soulmate, who he’d hated less than a day ago because they had a terrible start until an older version of that same soulmate showed him everything they could have together. Jim wasn’t quite sure how he felt about the Spock of this timeline at the moment; he still liked Older Spock more because that guy was great and had been nice to him from the start to the extent that it was almost overwhelming, but also understandable given everything he’d been through. But this Spock… Jim looked over to where he was doing something at one of the computer terminals. Spock had stayed on the bridge, which Jim had to admit took guts, but he’d been avoiding Jim in a way that had to be intentional. Ever since the brainstorming session finished he hadn’t so much as made eye contact with Jim. He’d also been staying toward the edges of the bridge, staying as far as possible from the captain’s chair where Jim had been sitting.

Jim really wasn’t sure how he felt about this Spock. Yeah, he’d been annoyed with him for catching him changing the code on the Kobayashi Maru, bringing him up on charges in front of everyone, and landing him on academic probation, but after the encounter with Older Spock all that had changed. While with the timeline change there was no guarantee that Spock would turn out like that (and Jim was certainly different than his counterpart seemed), it still gave Jim something like hope for the future. And while during their time on the ship Spock had mostly been a dick to him, given the events of the day it was pretty understandable. Plus, he’d been a lot better once he came back to the bridge after getting time to cool off. And Jim had to admit, he was impressed by the fact that Spock did come back to the bridge. So, so far the mental soulmate pro/con list was this:

**Pros:**
- Smart
- Attractive
- Doesn’t give up easily
- Really strong (although like hell was Jim going to admit to anyone that that was a turn-on for him.

**Notes:**

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Well, it’s not like there weren’t people who already knew…)

Cons:
A bit of a dick
Likes rules too much
Doesn’t seem to like me very much
Did try to murder me (although was seriously provoked)

And that reminded Jim that he was about to go on a mission with Spock when the last really one-on-one moment they’d had had been him telling Spock that he didn’t love his own mother. Not that it was really one-on-one, they’d just been so focused on each other that everything else kind of faded away… Still, might be good to clear the air there. Jim didn’t think Spock would try to kill him again, but he also would understand if Spock left him to die somewhere. Were the positions reversed, Jim wasn’t sure how merciful he’d be.

So yeah. Clearing the air might be good. Jim looked over to where Spock was now bent over looking at the readings from the science station. After sternly reminding himself that this was not the time to admire the view (as much as he wanted to), Jim cleared his throat. Time to act captainly again. “Mr. Spock, can I have a word with you? Alone?”

All eyes on the bridge went to him as Spock slowly rose from the station and turned around. He seemed to hesitate a moment before speaking. “…Of course, captain.”

Jim could practically feel Bones worrying from where he was still lingering on the bridge, but he waved him off. He didn’t think Spock was going to hurt him. Or at least, he hoped not. Jim supposed he could have security officers wait outside the door of wherever they ended up just in case, but he wanted to build trust and that didn’t seem like the way to do it. He looked back at Spock. “Come with me then.” Jim got out of the captain’s chair and made his way to the turbolift, glancing behind him to make sure Spock was following.

Once in the turbolift Jim realized he didn’t know where to go. He briefly considered going to his quarters, but then he realized that since he wasn’t supposed to be there he didn’t have assigned quarters. Plus, having an emotional, apologetic conversation was not really how Jim pictured his first time alone in his quarters with his soulmate going. So not quarters then. Jim briefly considered staying in the turbolift, but it was already starting to get claustrophobic and they were very likely to get interrupted. Finally it occurred to Jim to use one of the briefing rooms. That could work. A neutral, professional environment that was still pretty private. Jim gave the deck number and activated the turbolift.

Jim could practically feel the tension rolling off of Spock. Not sure whether it would help or hurt, Jim decided to tell him what they were talking about at least. “I just want to talk about what happened on the bridge earlier. When…” Jim trailed off, unsure how to finish the sentence. A lot had happened on the bridge today. “After I beamed back aboard the Enterprise.”

Spock seemed to get slightly tenser at that, but thankfully then the turbolift doors opened. It wasn’t far to a briefing room, and once they were inside and the doors were closed Jim turned to face Spock.

“Look, I’m really sorry about-“

“Captain, I wish to apologize for-“

Jim had to smile a bit at them talking simultaneously yet again. “I’ll let you say your piece, but I really feel like I need to get this off my chest, especially before we go on the mission together. I’m
really sorry about what I said earlier; I was way out of line. I never should have said that about you or your planet or especially your mom. I’m sure you cared a great deal about her.”

The tension in Spock didn’t seem to decrease that much and his hands stayed firmly clasped behind his back, but he still seemed to sag a bit at that. “I do—I did.” He looked down for a moment before meeting Jim’s eyes. “I too wish to apologize for what happened on the bridge. While your comments were harsh I should not have violently lashed out at you like that. It was a highly regrettable loss of control and I am… I am glad I was stopped before it went irreversibly far.” Spock’s eyes were avoiding Jim’s again and Jim really didn’t want that.

“Hey.” Jim reached out to touch Spock’s shoulder but stopped himself at the last minute. “Don’t beat yourself up too much; I’m still alive and I’ve had far worse for lesser reasons. I just wanted to let you know that I didn’t really mean any of it and I that I’m sorry for saying it.”

Spock’s eyes finally met his again and there was a certain curiosity there now. “If you did not mean what you said and you regret saying it, why did you say it initially?”

Jim sighed and ran a hand through his hair, unable to meet Spock’s eyes this time. He spun around one of the chairs from the conference table and plopped down. “It’s probably a longer story than I have time for, but basically on Delta Vega I met…” Jim trailed off, Older Spock’s warning echoing in his head, “…a friend, who convinced me that the only way to save Earth and stop Nero was to take command by getting you to show you were emotionally compromised. And since staring fights with my big mouth is one thing I definitely know how to do, I guess I just went with that approach.” He looked up at Spock, who was still standing with his hands behind his back but seemed to be a bit less tense now. “I just wanted to clear the air before we went on the mission together. I have no idea if we’ll survive going over there or if we’ll ever see each other again after this, but I just wanted you to know that.” The thought of never seeing Spock again and not being able to have even a small portion of what he’d seen was painful, but if it was what Spock wanted he would understand. He wouldn’t be happy, but he’d do it.

Spock seemed to be dealing with some internal conflict but after a moment he met Jim’s eyes. “Your apology is accepted. Do you accept my apology as well?”

Jim felt like there was still a bit unresolved in between them, but what they’d done was still enough that he felt some tension he wasn’t aware of drain from his shoulders. “Yeah, I do. Like I said, I shouldn’t have provoked you like that; your reaction was understandable given the circumstances.”

Spock looked like he wanted to speak again, but he was interrupted by a whistle from the comm system. Uhura’s voice followed a moment later. “Bridge to Kirk and Spock.”

Kirk hit the button on the table console. “Kirk here, what’s up?”

“Sulu wanted me to tell you that we’re approaching the Sol System in case you wanted to return to the bridge. Are you and Spock done… talking?” Her voice sounded wary on the last bit, like she was unsure that they would just talk and not try to kill each other again. Given all their interactions that day, it was a reasonable concern.

“Thanks for the heads up. Also, you can just ask if we’re ok if you’re worried, but don’t be, we’re both still alive and no fighting happened this time.” He looked up at Spock and thought about adding that things seemed better between them, but he didn’t want to presume anything. “We’ll report back to the bridge; Kirk out.” He shut off the comm line and got out of the chair. “Well Spock, you ready to face the crew?”

Spock hesitantly nodded. “Are you certain you wish for me to return to the bridge with you? At the
moment I am not actively holding a position on this starship so I have no place on the bridge.”

“You’ll always have a place on the bridge.” Jim said it without really thinking of it, possibly influenced by what he’d seen with Older Spock and possibly just wanting to be reassuring. Either way, he wasn’t going to take it back. “C’mon, let’s go.” He led the way out of the room and back to the turbolift that would take them to the bridge, glancing back to make sure that Spock was following him.

Chapter End Notes

Someday I'll get to actual plot instead of just emotional scenes, but today is not that day.

Also please note that Jim's opinions on deserving to get beat up for what he said are reflective of his own negative experiences and poor self-esteem, not necessarily what I think.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

Guess who's finally (mostly) done with finals? It's me. I still have a short paper and a non-cumulative test, but I'm through the worst of it. This author note is wholly unrelated to any of you or this fic, I'm just happy I survived. Although less school time could translate into more writing time, so there's that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once they got back to the bridge Uhura got up from her seat and looked at Spock with concern and something else Jim couldn’t quite read on her face as she walked over to the two of them. She and Spock got into the turbolift together while Jim went back to the captain’s chair. He made a mental note to figure out what was going on there; despite being pretty close with Gaila and her being roommates with Uhura, Jim felt that he didn’t really know her. Admittedly most of the time he was in Gaila’s room Uhura wasn’t there because what they were doing wasn’t something they wanted her there for, but still. There were times they weren’t doing that, even if those times they were usually elsewhere.

But again, not what Jim should be focusing on right now. Especially if he didn’t want himself distracted by the fact that he didn’t know what Gaila’s fate was but that it probably wasn’t an assume the best situation. Which was why he should focus on what was going on now; Sulu and Chekov were about to do something a bit risky that could just be what they needed to help them save Earth.

Jim decided to hang back and let them handle getting the ship within transporter range; it was their area of expertise anyway. Chekov would know the course to plot since it was his plan and Sulu now had the most experience of anyone at the Enterprise’s helm, even if that did only mean less than a day’s worth of total hours spent at his station. Still, Kirk was trusting them.

“All stop,” Sulu’s hands flew across the panel in front of him but his eyes were focused on the viewscreen, “in three, two, … one.”

They dropped out of warp and seemed to be in a giant dust cloud that made it impossible to really tell where they were; for a moment Jim felt himself worry that they’d somehow messed up and were now inside one of the gas giants, ready to be pulled into the core by the planet’s gravity. It was impossible to see anything besides swirling brown around them.

“Give me one quarter impulse burst for five seconds; I’ll do the rest with thrusters. On my mark.”

Sulu was remarkably composed given the stakes; Jim was impressed.

“Aye.” Chekov nodded slightly but remained as laser focused as Sulu.

With a little more urgency to his voice but no less calm, Sulu gave the command. “Fire.”

Slowly but surely the ship began to rise and the dust swirled around them until it was gone. Despite having faith in their plan, Jim felt like he wasn’t the only one who breathed a small sigh of relief when he was able to see with his own eyes that they were in the right place.

Still, that meant it was time for Jim to do his part. He left the bridge, confident that Sulu and Chekov
would find a way to get them close enough that Scotty could beam them aboard the *Narada* easily. Sure, he and Scotty had probably gone much farther than the distance from Saturn to Earth when Older Spock sent them to the Enterprise, but Jim still felt a little safer when they were close range.

Jim made a quick stop on his way to the transporter room to pick up a belt to hold the communicator and phaser he’d be taking. While there he ran into Spock and Uhura and the three of them walked to the transporter room together, Jim still with no idea what was going on between them.

The three of them reached the transporter room together, where Scotty seemed to be just finishing talking to the bridge. Jim walked over to the transporter console while Uhura and Spock walked to the transporter pad. “How are we, Scotty?”

“Unbelievable, sir. The ship is in position.” Despite his words there didn’t seem to be much disbelief in Scotty’s voice, just excitement.

There was one more thing Jim had to take care of before he could leave the ship. He leaned over the transporter console and hit the comm button. “Whatever happens Mr. Sulu, if you think you have the tactical advantage, you fire on that ship even if we’re still on board. That’s an order.” Jim doubted that their weapons would be much more effective than they had been before, but if it would get the *Narada* distracted long enough for Earth to evacuate or retaliate he’d have to count that as a victory in the long run. And if the *Narada* did get destroyed with him aboard, he’d hardly be the first Kirk to die of self-sacrifice.

Still, there was a moment of hesitation before Sulu spoke. “Yes, sir.”

“Otherwise we’ll contact the *Enterprise* when we’re ready to be beamed back.” Jim hoped they’d make it back, but still, there was more at stake here.

Sulu’s voice was solemn when he responded, but it still seemed a bit hopeful rather than completely grim. “Good luck.”

Jim ended the comm link and stepped onto the transporter padd. He was still caught up in his own thoughts, but out of the corner of his eye he noticed that Uhura was still there and she was standing awfully close to Spock. Wait, his hands were on her waist and hers were on his face. Were they kissing?

Well that answered his question from earlier. Jim felt like he might be staring with a weird look on his face, but it seemed like they were too absorbed to notice anyway. Besides, it was surprise and not judgement he was feeling. Sure, she was technically kissing his soulmate, but it’s not like Jim had any real claim to Spock since they’d only just moved past being completely antagonistic. It did sting a little bit to see it right in front of him so blatantly, but if Spock and Uhura were a thing he figured he didn’t want to interrupt their goodbye.

Although still, he was right there, less than a meter away, and this was getting awkward, soulmate or no. He could probably order them to stop, but then he’d seem like a dick and probably a hypocrite since god knows Uhura had probably come in on him and Gaila doing worse…

Still, his probably dead friend-with-occasional-benefits was not what he needed to be thinking of now. There was a mission at hand.

Luckily at that point Uhura and Spock separated. Jim tried not to eavesdrop, but he was close enough that he could hear what they were saying even though they were whispering.

“I will be back.” Spock’s voice was low and solemn but still seemed to have that openness that Jim
couldn’t help but wish would be directed at him.

“You better be.” Uhura’s whispered voice was a little unsteady, but it seemed like she was trying to keep it together. “I’ll be monitoring your frequency.”

“Thank you Nyota.” Spock’s voice was soft in both volume and tone, but Jim still noticed that he definitely hadn’t called her Uhura. So either Vulcans did pet names, which seemed unlikely, or that was the elusive first name Jim had never managed to get from Uhura.

She went in for another kiss, much shorter this time, before turning and leaving the padd. She made eye contact with him briefly and all Jim could do was nod, both because he had no idea how to respond to what he’d just seen and because her stare was a bit challenging and he really hoped she wasn’t still mad at him for telling her she shouldn’t come with them.

Still, Jim was curious now and he was always in favor of breaking the tension before a mission. Once Uhura was on the other side of the room he glanced at Spock. “So her first name’s Nyota?”

“I have no comment on the matter.” Spock’s response was quick, the way he always seemed to be when Jim was starting to annoy him.

So much for breaking the tension that was starting to mount as that pre-mission mix of anticipation and anxiety filled Jim. Thankfully, Scotty was still there. “O-kay then, if there’s any common sense in the design of the enemy ship, I should be putting you somewhere in the middle of a cargo bay. Shouldn’t be a soul in sight.”

Jim nodded in acknowledgement. It was time to get this over with once and for all. “Energize.”

He saw Scotty work the controls, and then everything was surrounded by light as the transport began.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone is curious about Gaila, the way it is in this au is that she and Jim were actually good friends who occasionally slept together; they weren’t just a hookup but they also weren’t really romantically involved. This doesn't have much of an effect on the story at this point, but I enjoy letting female characters be more than just love interests, so you're getting random background anyway.
Hello everyone! I'm finally free of finals! Now that I have time to think I've looked over the stats for this fic and once again got amazed by all the support you all are giving this fic! Seriously, you're the best. Also free time has become writing time and I've gotten all sorts of ideas for this fic, some that I'm really looking forward to sharing with you all...

Also this isn't a thing at all in the movies (or any of the other movies or shows really as far as I can tell), but if different species are used to the different gravity and air of their home planets, wouldn't it make sense for their ships to replicate those conditions just like the mostly-human Starfleet ships have Earthlike gravity and air? I don't know if it's a thing but I'm making it one now. So really all that means now is that navigating the Narada will be a bit difficult for Jim, but Spock would adjust more easily because Romulans being closely related to Vulcans would presumably mean that the air and gravity on the ship would be similar to what Spock grew up with on Vulcan.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Despite what Scotty said, they definitely did not materialize in a cargo bay. Jim had a few seconds to take in that they were in the middle of some sort of control center as he got overwhelmed by the higher gravity and thinner air, making him glad that he'd stopped in to Sickbay to get a hypo to prepare him for the conditions of the Romulan ship. They hadn't known exactly what to expect, but since Romulans were apparently closely related to Vulcans Jim had gotten the type of hypo they would normally give humans preparing to go to Vulcan.

He really was glad for it as he had to spring into action right away, running out of the range of disruptor blasts and firing his phaser at any Romulan who still seemed standing. This would have been a really bad time to get winded and have to stop. Jim glanced back quickly to check that Spock was following him and hadn't gotten hit and was relieved to see that he was also still running and shooting.

There didn't seem to be any method or logic to the layout of the room; Jim ran along consoles and over random raised areas to try to find somewhere that would be somewhat protected, all the while dodging shots, firing back, and occasionally glancing back to make sure Spock hadn't been taken out.

Finally, he saw some sort of giant pipe or something running horizontally along the ground that looked like it would be big enough to hide behind. He jumped behind it and was relieved to see Spock next to him a second later. Once they were covered they both came up and started firing over the top of it, aiming for any Romulan within sight.

Above the chaos and noise of the fight and all the machinery in the room, Jim thought he heard one of the Romulans call Nero, but he didn't have time to think about that since it seemed like they were actually making a dent in the amount of disruptor fire headed their way, which meant that they must have gotten most of the Romulans already. Looks like mandatory Starfleet target practice for command and security tracks paid off.

With most of the threat gone, Jim ducked down behind the pipe and slapped Spock's shoulder to get
him to do the same. Spock fired one last shot and then joined him ducking behind the pipe.

“So what was your plan for finding Pike and the black hole device?” Jim really hoped that Spock did have a plan, but if not it would hardly be the first time he had to come up with a last minute plan.

“What were you going to use one of the computers or something?”

“That had been my initial plan, however due to my lack of proficiency in Romulan that does not seem possible. There is, however, another option.” Spock seemed to hesitate a moment. “If you stun one of the Romulans, I could initiate telepathic contact with them and obtain the information.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded. “Let’s do plan mind meld.” Ignoring the flash of confusion on Spock’s face, Jim climbed up and over the pipe, quickly checking that his phaser was on stun before shooting the next Romulan he saw. He heard Spock fire as well from behind him, but then the room seemed quiet.

Spock ran up next to him and Jim didn’t hear any shots, but he didn’t trust that no more Romulans would show up. He nodded to the Romulan he’d stunned to indicate to Spock where to go. Spock seemed to hesitate a second longer, so Jim whispered “I’ll cover you,” hoping that Spock wasn’t actually doubting that Jim would have his back.

“Are you certain?” If Jim didn’t know any better, he would say Spock sounded slightly nervous under all his Vulcan calmness.

“Yeah, I’ve got you.” Jim had really hoped that their talk earlier had actually cleared things up. He wanted Spock to be able to trust him, but it looked like there was still some work to be done. Considering the impression Jim had made since they’d met, he figured he shouldn’t be too surprised.

Spock cautiously advanced on the Romulan Jim had stunned. Jim stayed behind a moment, listening for anyone. Right after Spock reached the stunned Romulan and put his hand on their face to initiate the meld, Jim saw another Romulan sneak up and pull out a disruptor, ready to aim it at Spock. Jim quickly ran out of where he had been hiding and shot the Romulan before they could get Spock.

Jim kept his phaser at the ready and crouched down next to Spock, who still seemed to be in the meld by the way he was concentrating with his eyes closed. When he seemed to be coming out of it a moment later, Jim asked, “Do you know where it is? The black hole device?”

“And Captain Pike.” Spock did not look back at him to confirm but instead got up and began moving toward what had to be an exit from the room.

Jim followed him through what seemed like the lower decks of the ship. He had no idea what the room they’d been in had been, but after a few twists and turns through a dimly lit and damp corridor they entered what actually seemed to be a cargo bay.

Spock stopped short and Jim ran up behind him, finally catching up. When he saw what made Spock stop, he almost grinned.

It was the ship from Older Spock’s first mind meld. Unless Nero’s crew had found a way to move the red matter, he and Spock had found it. And if it was still on the ship, he and Spock had a way to get it away from Nero too. All they had to do was fly it out. And with no red matter, there was no way the Narada could destroy any other planets, including Earth.

“Is it on there?” Jim looked over to Spock. He would have seen in the Romulan’s mind if it had been moved, right?

“I believe it is.” Spock eyed the ship warily.
“Then let’s move. We don’t know how much time we’ve got.” Jim began to jog toward the ship and glanced back to make sure Spock was following him.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I'm adding a lot of dialogue to this that wasn't in the movie, but not necessarily story related, just adjusting stuff that didn't seem to make sense. Like they never actually make a plan for when they're on the *Narada* while they're onscreen, which is a bit odd. But fixing canon's mistakes will always be a purpose of fanfiction I guess. Even though this is less of a mistake than an oversight. Or maybe it was explained in a scene that got cut. I don't know, I think I'm lapsing into post-finals tired rambling. But hey, I'm post-finals at last. For anyone still in finals, good luck. For anyone who doesn't have finals, good luck luck with your mid-December.
Hello everyone! I can't believe this is already 30 chapters long! Also it just passed 200 comments, which is mind blowing. You are all incredible!

The run up to the ship was short. Jim periodically turned around to make sure they weren’t being followed, but it looked like they were in the clear. Luckily the door to the ship was open, creating a ramp that allowed them to just walk into it.

Inside it was bright and white in sharp contrast to the dirty dimness of the Narada around it. Since the interior space was pretty small, it wasn’t long before they were in the room with the red matter.

“I foresee a complication.” Spock was clearly studying everything as he looked around the room, trying to understand it. “The design of this ship is far more advanced than I’d anticipated.”

Before Jim could say anything, the ship’s computer spoke in a calm, feminine voice. “Voice print and facial recognition analysis enabled. Welcome back, Ambassador Spock.”

Crap. How was Jim going to hide the existence of Older Spock now? He just had to say something to dismiss it. “Wow, that’s weird.” Jim mentally berated himself. He was supposed to be good at thinking on his feet.

Jim walked to the front of the ship, but Spock remained where he had been since the computer had spoken. Clearly Jim’s attempt at brushing it off hadn’t stopped his curiosity. “Computer, what is you manufacturing origin?”

“Stardate 2387. Commissioned by the Vulcan Science Academy.” Jim just heard the reply before the doors to the cockpit closed behind him. This was not good.

He went into the cockpit to start looking at the controls and it wasn’t long before Spock followed him, seeming irritated again. “It appears that you have been keeping important information from me.”

Why did Spock assume Jim knew about this? He totally did, but why did Spock suspect that? Had his acting been that bad in the red matter room? Still, not what they needed to focus on now. “Since it seemed to recognize you for some reason, you get this ship out of here and I’ll get Pike and beam back to the Enterprise. You’ll be able to fly this thing, right?”

In the narrow space of the cockpit, he and Spock were within an arm’s reach of each other. Spock still seemed slightly irritated when he responded but with more acceptance this time. “Something tells me I already have.”

Jim nodded, hoping it didn’t seem like he was confirming that Spock had flown it before. “Good luck.” He started to turn and leave the cockpit, but was stopped when Spock called out to him.

“Kirk.” Spock waited until Jim had turned around to face him once more. “The statistical likelihood that our plan will succeed is less than 4.3%.”
That sort of defeatism was not what they needed right now. “It'll work.”

Spock began to walk toward him. “In the event that I do not return, please tell Lieutenant Uhura-“

“Spock.” Like hell was Jim letting either of them die or carrying his soulmate’s last love message back to someone else. Well, he would take the message if it came to that, but it wouldn’t come to that. “It’ll work.” He looked him in the eye, hoping to convey his confidence in the plan and definitely not just to get one last good look at his soulmate just in case. Definitely not. “Now, which way to where Pike is?”

Spock didn’t seem all that convinced, but he at least still seemed willing to go along with the plan. “Follow the corridor we were in past the control room we arrived in. Eventually you will encounter a large open room that extends for multiple levels and has one entire wall occupied by a fan. You must cross it to find a room slightly smaller than the one we were transported into. There they have Captain Pike secured to some form of table. I am unsure of the state he will be in; you may need to provide medical assistance.”

“Got it.” Jim was never more glad for his good memory than now; at least the directions were simple enough.

He left the ship the way they’d come in and stayed in the cargo bay long enough to make sure that Spock figured out the controls and started to fly the ship. Jim got clear of it and looked up to the transparent cockpit to see Spock starting to work the controls as the ship slowly but surely began to power up completely. After a moment the ship began to rise and turn around to face the other way, presumably towards whatever way it had come in. The odd spinning motion started in the back half of the ship; Jim still wasn’t sure how the ship propelled itself. Still, it looked like it had in Older Spock’s mind so that must have meant that Spock was doing something right. Sure enough a moment later the ship began to move toward the cavernous expanse beyond the ledge it had been sitting on. He watched it fly away, dodging the oddly laid out structural elements to hopefully get out of the Narada.

Once it seemed like Spock would be able to get the ship clear, Jim turned and began to go back to the tunnel-like hallway they’d been in.

The directions had been simple enough. Follow the corridor past where they’d beamed in until he found a large open room that extended for multiple levels with a fan on one wall, then cross that room to find the interrogation room. Still, this ship was ginormous and Jim felt like he’d been running forever before he even passed the room they’d beamed into.

From there he had to keep running, thanking Bones again for suggesting that he take the hypospray to help him with the reduced oxygen and increased gravity of the stimulated Romulan environment. He really hoped his time aboard the Narada wouldn’t outlast the hypospray’s effects since he hadn’t thought to ask to take one with him.

Finally, Jim rounded a bend in the corridor and the space opened up. He saw that he was now in a giant room and sure enough there was an equally giant fan taking up one wall. Silhouetted against the light coming through the fan was a lone figure in a long coat.

Jim wasn’t sure how he knew, but he felt like he was finally coming face to face with the person responsible for the attack on the Kelvin and the destruction of Vulcan. The person who could be blamed for the loss of billions of lives, including Jim's dad and most of the population of Vulcan.

Nero.
In the movie when Spock is trying to get Jim's attention he calls him Jim, which tbh seems far too familiar far too soon given that they barely knew each other and didn't really like each other at this point. I mean I can get Spock not calling him Captain in that situation, but still I feel like he'd default to last name instead of first name.

Also I don't quite get why Spock is so annoyed about the ship. He was the one who predicted that the *Narada* came from the future, so it shouldn't surprise him that the ship with the black hole device was also from the future. Maybe he's annoyed about the involvement of the future Vulcans or his future self? Still doesn't explain why he gets mad at Jim, unless he's just generally mad at Jim at this point, which does seem to be fairly true.
Hello everyone! I'm currently enjoying life on break and all the awesome support all of you are giving this fic. Seriously, positive feedback is always a great motivation for writing and you all are giving me plenty of it.

Just a heads up in case it's unclear, the first section of this chapter is Jim's perspective and the second section (after the dashes) is Spock's POV. It was a little weird to do a perspective switch mid chapter since writing them is so different, but I feel like they're both doing important things here.

Jim immediately raised his phaser. He wasn’t sure if it was set high enough to kill at this point, but he found he really didn’t care if it was. This person was responsible for so many lives, including his father’s and an entire planet and most of its population. Jim didn’t really consider it a situation for mercy.

Nero just stood there, watching him without moving.

Jim kept his phaser pointed at him, but he couldn’t fire just yet. There was more at stake than just Nero’s life. Earth was still in danger. “Nero, order your men to disable the drill or I will-“

Jim had been too focused on Nero to notice the Romulan sneaking up next to him, so the hit to his head took him by surprise. Thanks to Romulan strength he went tumbling to the ground and dropped his phaser, which slid out of his reach and off the ledge he was on.

Before Jim could get up, the other Romulan backed away and Nero ran over to them. He stood over Jim where he was sprawled on the ground and looked down at him. “I know your face from Earth’s history.” Nero leaned down and grabbed the front of Jim’s shirt and picked him up only to throw him farther down the platform. Nero grabbed him again and began to punch Jim in the stomach repeatedly.

Between the environment, the pain, and the difference in their strengths, there was really nothing Jim could do to fight back. He shouted in pain as Nero threw him once more and he landed roughly on the metal platform again. This time he was able to get up before Nero got to him. Jim threw a few punches, hitting Nero in the face and side, but Nero seemed completely unaffected and just hit Jim across the face, causing him to go sprawling onto the ground once more.

Jim had been in bad fights before, but not one with the conditions so against him. Before he could get up, Nero was looming over him again. “James T. Kirk was considered to be a great man.” He wrapped his hands around Jim’s throat and Jim absently wondered how many times a person could get strangled in one day without getting brain damage. Nero started to tighten his grip. “He went on to captain the USS Enterprise, but that was another life.” Now both of Nero’s hands were around his neck and starting to grip harder; Jim struggled against him but it didn’t seem to be doing anything. “A life I will deprive you of just like I did your father.”

God, couldn’t Jim go a day without someone mentioning his dad? Now Jim was gonna die with the
thought that his death would be meaningless; he’d never save anyone or live up to his father’s legacy. Jim knew he didn’t have much time now; between the thin air and tight grip that was crushing his windpipe it wouldn’t be long before he blacked out and then died. Jim could already see darkness creeping in at the edges of his vision…

He just hoped that Spock would already be able to save Earth.

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Spock found piloting the ship to be strangely intuitive. Although it was designed to be piloted by a single person and thus different from any space vessel he was familiar with short of a shuttlecraft, he did not find himself struggling with the controls. Everything was where he would expect it to be, almost as if he himself had had a hand in designing it…

Spock dismissed the notion. Kirk had seemed to know something of the craft based on his reactions to it and Spock’s confusion about it, so Spock would question him about it after the mission was over. Presuming they would both survive.

The odds of both of them surviving were quite low. Spock had told Kirk the chances of both of the plan succeeding were only 4.3%, but that was only the odds of the plan succeeding completely and Kirk, Pike, himself, and the Earth all surviving. The odds were overwhelmingly in favor of some or all of them dying.

Spock knew he did not wish for Pike to die due to the fact that he held the man in high regard, and he knew that he did not wish for the Earth to be destroyed because it was his mother’s home planet as well as the planet that he had lived on for nearly the past Earth decade, but he was surprised to find that he did not wish for Kirk to die either. The cadet had irritated him when he had cheated on the Kobayashi Maru test Spock had designed and infuriated and later enraged him while Spock had been acting captain. At every turn he challenged Spock’s emotional control in ways Spock did not wish to experience. However, once Kirk became acting captain he showed a competence, intelligence, and control that Spock found impressive. Despite his young age, Kirk showed strong potential to be a truly great starship captain someday. His insight about going after the Narada rather than meeting with the rest of the fleet as Pike had ordered may have been what would save Earth. Additionally, Kirk had seemed to show genuine regret over what he had said to provoke Spock into attacking him. Spock may have misjudged him when he initially dismissed Kirk as brash, arrogant, and unsuitable for command.

It was, after all, Kirk’s plan that had him currently transporting the black hole device away from the Romulans who intended to destroy Earth just as they had destroyed Vulcan. Spock only needed to remove the device from the Narada; after he had powered up the ship and watched Kirk watch him take off, illogically wishing he could return the sentiment of the “good luck” that Kirk had said to him, Spock had begun to pilot the ship through the cavernous expanse of the cargo hold of the Narada, which had given him time to think and mentally prepare for what he must do.

Finally, Spock reached what appeared to be a massive cargo bay door. Because there were no controls to be found and Spock did not truly care if he caused damage to the Narada, he activated the weapons systems of the ship he was on and fired at the cargo bay door until there was a hole of sufficient size for him to escape.

Once he was free of the trailing mechanical arms of the Narada, Spock turned the ship to target the drill that had been activated and was currently boring into the Earth’s crust. The drill had been damaged on Vulcan, but evidently the damage had been insufficient to fully deactivate the drill. In order to prevent the loss of future planets should Spock fail his mission and Nero regain control of the black hole device, Spock decided that he must destroy the drill beyond repair.
With this goal in mind, Spock aimed not for the drill itself but for the chain that connected it to the Narada instead. If that link was severed, assuming there was only one drill the Narada would be unable to reach the depth necessary to destroy any other planets. Spock readied the weapons systems and fired, watching as the bottom portion of the chain and the drill itself plummeted towards Earth before turning his vessel and leaving the atmosphere.

Chapter End Notes

Don't worry, I probably won't kill off a major character this early...

Anyways, since this will be the last update before a couple of major holidays, Merry Christmas, Happy Chanukah, have a good whatever you celebrate or a good late December if you don't celebrate anything this time of year.
Chapter 32

Hello everyone! While I have no real way of gauging how many of you there are, sometimes it seems like the number of you is increasing. Anyway, if there are new people, welcome to the fic and I hope you enjoy it! If you've been here from the start, thanks for sticking around! If you've been here for some intermediate amount of time, know that you are also awesome.

None of you seemed too concerned about Jim. Or at least if you were, you didn't express it to me. Don't worry, you'll find out his fate soon enough...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Before Jim could fully pass out, an announcement on the ship’s intercom reached him. “Captain Nero: the Vulcan ship has been taken and the drill has been destroyed.”

Jim gasped as Nero’s hands suddenly left his neck and he was able to breathe again. He tried to process what he’d just heard as he struggled to regain his breath, grateful for the renewed air supply. If the ship was really away from the Narada and the drill was destroyed, that must mean-

“Spock!” Nero screamed, clearly having reached the same conclusion as Jim. “Spooooock!”

Despite still being half stunned on the ground below him, Jim could see the crazed look in Nero’s eyes. Even though his own odds of making it out didn’t look great right now, Jim hoped that Spock would get away ok. Maybe he’d stay with Uhura and be happy with her even though they wouldn’t make each other age. They could stay in Starfleet or live on Earth now that Spock had saved it.

Jim watched as Nero got up and leapt to another platform below the one they were on. He had to follow him to make sure he couldn’t get Spock or destroy Earth somehow. Jim rolled over to attempt to get up and saw that the other Romulan, the one that initially attacked him, was still there.

Despite the sneer on their face and the giant disruptor rifle they were holding the Romulan didn’t shoot at him. They seemed perfectly willing to take their time before attacking. Jim decided to take advantage of it.

As quickly as he could, Jim pushed himself to his feet and ran and jumped to the platform Nero had gone to. However, he forgot to factor in the fact that he did not have the same strength as the Romulans and that he was fighting against stronger gravity than he was used to. So instead of landing on his feet on the platform, he awkwardly caught his torso on it and nearly fell off, clinging to the edge with all his might and trying not to look at the immense abyss below that he could fall into.

A moment later the other Romulan landed on the platform, on their feet with a sort of ease that Jim envied. Jim’s worries about falling into the abyss being the cause of his death were soon gone as the Romulan grabbed him by the throat and held him up with one hand, effectively restricting Jim’s air supply once more. Jim was really getting tired of getting choked at this point. Couldn’t they end it in a quicker way?
But then, just like the villains in all the holomovies Jim watched as a kid, the Romulan decided to start monologuing instead of just killing Jim. Definitely not going for a quick death. Instead the Romulan eyed Jim with a level of disdain that made Jim feel like a bug about to be squashed as they began to speak. “Your species is even weaker than I expected.”

One of Jim’s hands had gone to the hand on his throat out of instinct to fight the grip on his neck, but he knew he needed to find a better way to get out of this. With the other hand he started trying to feel along the Romulan’s belt for anything he could use to help himself.

He must have been making noises, because the Romulan narrowed their eyes. “You can’t even speak.” They looked unbearably smug.

Well if they wanted a show Jim was certainly ready to give them one. His hand hit what seemed to be the handle of a disruptor, but he wasn’t quite close enough to grab it. “I- I-” it was hard to talk with someone’s hand crushing your windpipe.

Thankfully the Romulan actually seemed interested in what he had to say. They pulled him closer and leaned in, the smugness still present. “What?”

That was all Jim needed. His hand closed on the handle of the disruptor and he started to slide it out of the holster. “I’ve got your gun.” He pulled the disruptor out of the holster and fired it into the middle of the Romulan’s torso, hoping he was hitting something vital.

He must have, because the Romulan froze, their grip on Jim’s throat breaking and causing him to drop again as they fell into the abyss below. Jim dropped the disruptor in favor of clinging to the platform with everything he had and trying to pull himself up onto it.

He managed to pull himself up onto the platform and paused for a moment to regain his breath. He’d been strangled three times today by three different people who were all stronger than him. It really was not as fun as it sounded. He hoped the repeated loss of oxygen to his brain hadn’t caused permanent damage. He’d have to get Bones to look him over if—when he got back to the Enterprise. He’d get off this ship, even if it was only because Nero wanted him dead and he wanted to spite that murderous bastard.

It took Jim a second to feel like he was ready to get up again. He was definitely ready to be back in the familiar environment and comfortable environmental settings of the Enterprise instead of on this nightmare of a ship with its murderous crew, near-unbreathable air, and almost unbearable gravity.

But still, Jim had to rescue Pike before he could leave. He really hoped Pike was still alive; he couldn’t afford to lose both his actual dad and the man that was like a father to him to the same person. Not without some sort of payback at least.

Wherever he was, Pike probably wasn’t in great condition, which meant that Jim needed to get up and keep moving now. The sooner he got to Pike and got out of here the sooner he could somewhere where he could receive medical treatment. The sooner Pike got treatment the better his odds of survival were. God knows what Nero and his crew had done to Pike to get the information they needed out of him; Jim needed to get going now so he could help Pike.

Despite the pain he was still in, Jim grabbed the disruptor where it was lying on the platform and forced himself to his feet. He had to save Pike. If it was the last thing he was going to do, he was going to do it.

He was probably in the right place now that he’d crossed the room just like Spock had told him he needed to; he just had to find the right room. But still, he was armed and had his goal; Jim could do
what he needed to do.

Chapter End Notes

I guess most of you guessed that it was unlikely I'd kill off a main character at this point in the fic. You'd be right, unless you consider villains (i.e. Nero and his crew) main characters. Like in the movie, their odds of survival are really not great at this point.
Chapter 33

Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! I was tempted to make a "this is the last chapter of the year" or "there won't be any new chapters til next year" joke, but I decided against it because you all are awesome and I don't want to unnecessarily worry any of you. So instead I'm just gonna say a preemptive happy new year to all of you.

Also please note that I am not any sort of physicist so any black hole/red matter related science is wholly made up. (Ayyy accidental pun)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once Spock had ensured the drill would be disabled beyond repair and had shut down Nero’s attempt to call and intimidate him, Spock’s priority was getting the ship clear of Earth in case Nero did manage to find him and destroy both the ship Spock had taken from the Narada and the unknown substance it contained that seemed to be what was used to generate the black holes. The evidence that the ship was from the future was compounded by the speeds it was able to generate; the warp speeds it was capable of were beyond what even the fastest contemporary ships could attain.

Spock was able to safely distance himself 2 lightyears from Earth and 1.3 from any known habitable planet. While the unknown substance did not seem to generate a permanent black hole, the singularity created by igniting the entire quantity of the substance would be sufficiently large to cause gravitational distortions and possibly endanger other planets should they be within a range of .9 lightyears. That was a situation Spock aimed to avoid.

Spock was unsurprised when the Narada appeared only moments after he himself dropped out of warp. Nero had seemed fixated on him and Spock planned to use it to his advantage to save his mother’s home planet even if it would only be in her memory.

Spock also planned to use the unknown black hole substance to destroy Nero’s ship and the crew aboard it. They posed a danger to the Federation and galaxy at large and needed to be eliminated. His father had told him to use his rage and Spock would use it to rid the galaxy of the murderers who had destroyed his planet and killed his mother.

Kirk had proven himself clever; Spock found himself confident that the acting captain would find a way to transport himself and Captain Pike off of the ship before it was destroyed. Spock would likely not survive the impact, but he would not be the only life lost that day. Many from Starfleet and billions from Vulcan had already perished, not to mention his mother. Spock’s death would serve a purpose; by eliminating the threat Nero presented no more lives would be endangered or lost. The continued survival of the many outweighed the survival of the one.

He turned the ship around and aimed it at Nero’s vessel. Even if Nero fired upon the ship and killed him, the destruction of the ship would create an inescapable black hole that would consume Nero and his crew, preventing them from causing more harm. Spock’s sacrifice would not be in vain.

Nero’s ship did fire, but Spock knew that it no longer mattered; he had done his calculations. Nero’s ship would be unable to avoid the black hole generated by the destruction of the vessel Spock had
taken. Spock himself would also be unable to escape, but his sacrifice would save other lives.

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Jim had finally found the room where they were holding Pike. While initially it looked like just another cluttered and dingy room, Jim realized he was in the right place when he saw a gold shirt out of the corner of his eye. With the disruptor he’d taken at the ready, Jim quickly but cautiously advanced into the room. It looked mostly clear; Pike was strapped down to the table and there was a Romulan standing over him but otherwise the room looked empty.

Any chance at stealth that Jim would have had was ruined by all the water on the floor that made every step he took slosh and splash, so Jim shot the Romulan as soon as he was within range. It wouldn’t do to come this far only to get shot down because he wasn’t stealthy enough.

With the threat neutralized, Jim tucked the disruptor into his belt and ran forward to undo the straps holding Pike down. Thankfully Pike looked mostly intact, but Jim still needed to get him out as soon as possible; who knows what sort of internal damage there could be.

As soon as Jim reached the table he was strapped down to, Pike noticed him. “What’re you doing here?” He seemed a little dazed or confused, but his voice still had a certain authoritative edge to it suggesting he was still in captain mode.

The *Enterprise* could probably use her real captain again, as much as Jim had enjoyed his stint in the chair. “Just following orders.” He quickly started undoing the straps holding Pike down, grateful that they didn’t have some sort of complicated locking mechanism.

Although he’d seemed a bit out of it, Pike must have been paying more attention than Jim, because while Jim was still focused on the restraints Pike grabbed the disruptor off of his belt and fired it a few times, taking out the Romulans who had started to rush into the room. Jim looked over just in time to see them drop to the ground before turning back to the last of the restraints, which were over Pike’s shins.

Once he had Pike free, Jim helped pull him off the table and draped Pike’s arm over his own shoulders to help support the other man’s weight. Jim had no idea where they were anymore; he thought he’d felt something that could have been the ship going in and out of warp but since he didn’t know the ship it was hard to tell. No matter what, Jim really hoped that the *Enterprise* had found them.

Holding Pike’s arm on his shoulder with one hand, Jim reached for the communicator from his belt. He flipped it open and hoped the ship was standing by and within range. “*Enterprise*, now!”

He’d gotten Pike and Spock had gotten the red matter away from Nero; all they had to do was safely return and the mission would be done.

After a moment the light of the transporter began to surround them and Jim swore he was going to thank every member of the *Enterprise* crew individually after this. Could an acting captain put people up for commendations? He could always tell Pike to do it.

That was his thought as he finally reappeared in the bright white of the transporter room. He glanced over to see Spock on the spot next to him, looking slightly surprised.

The sight of his soulmate in one piece made Jim grin. All of them had made it back to safety.
Also I decided to give you all a slight break from cliffhangers. I can't promise that there will be no more for the fic, but for now you get a slight break. 2016 doesn't need any more stress. It just needs to end. And not take any more awesome celebrities.
Chapter 34

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year everyone! May this one be better than the last. On a fic note, this just passed 400 kudos, which is an absolutely mindblowing number. All of you are just so awesome. Thanks for all the support you give this fic!

Also Ao3 was being weird with me this chapter, so let me know if the formatting seems off.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim couldn’t contain his grin as he watched Spock, who looked like he might be in the best shape of all of them, rush off of the transporter pad. Jim looked up to the transporter console and saw a familiar face. “Nice timing Scotty.”

Scotty just laughed and looked about as exhilarated as Jim felt, gesticulating wildly as he spoke. “I’ve never beamed three people from two targets onto one pad before!”

Jim started to help Pike off of the transporter pad. Before he could respond to Scotty the transporter room doors opened.

“Jim!” Bones rushed into the room, followed by two of the Sickbay staff.

“Bones!” Jim knew that he should probably get checked out, but Pike was in way worse shape.

Bones seemed to pick up on that as well, because without even breaking stride he went to take Pike’s other side to help support his weight since it seemed like Pike was struggling to move his legs. “I’ve got him.”

One of the other people from Sickbay moved to take Pike’s other side, so Jim carefully passed him over as a nurse began to scan Pike with a tricorder as that group rushed out towards Sickbay.

Jim looked over to Spock, who was speaking quietly with Uhura. They were holding each other loosely and were close enough that they could probably start kissing again.

Jim really didn’t want to see that again. “Spock.” Once his soulmate’s eyes were on him, Jim continued. “What did you do with the ship and the black hole device?” He’d seen Spock get away, but from there the windowless interior of the Narada prevented him from seeing what Spock did after that.

Spock moved away from Uhura slightly, letting go of her and holding his hands behind his back. “After removing the vessel from the Narada, I set it on a collision course with the ship. I was transported off the vessel before I could make contact but the complete destruction of both ships due to the black hole generating matter is inevitable.”

Despite himself Jim grinned a bit. “Well done. We should get to the bridge; I bet Nero will want to talk to us.” Jim nodded at Spock and Uhura. “Let’s go.” He led the way out the door, sure that the others were following him.
Once they got to the turbolift it was a little awkward; Jim signaled for them to go to the bridge but then it got quiet. There was definite pent up energy from wanting to see the Narada destroyed, but it was also clear that Uhura wanted to check in with Spock and would rather be alone than have Jim there, and Jim was feeling less confident he wanted to be there.

Thankfully, at that moment the turbolift doors opened on the bridge. Uhura went to the side to return to the communications station while Kirk tried to act confident, like he hadn’t just had an awkward turbolift ride with his soulmate who he still wasn’t completely sure he liked but was definitely warming up to and his soulmate’s girlfriend who didn’t seem to like him. All that after Jim possibly interrupting or preventing a reunion kiss between said soulmate and girlfriend. Yep. Awkward.

But the bridge crew didn’t seem to notice, meaning that Jim must have been better at the faking confident thing than he thought. He could tell that Spock was still behind him, probably looking as unreadable as ever.

“Keptin!” Chekov almost seemed to perk up at the sight of him and Jim tried to keep his serious captain expression in place instead of smiling. “Enemy ship is losing power; their shields are down sir.”

“Hail them now.” Jim was still trying to figure out what to do as he and Spock walked in front of the navigation console; from there he had a good view of the Narada getting consumed by a black hole on the bridge’s viewscreen. Jim knew he wanted Nero dead and that Nero probably deserved it for all the destruction and death he’d caused, but Jim felt that maybe he should try to be diplomatic and find a way to spare Nero’s crew. Weren’t captains supposed to think about long term consequences and things like that?

Chekov acknowledged the order and after a moment the sight of the Narada getting destroyed was replaced by Nero’s enraged face. The signal seemed to flicker in and out, probably because the Narada’s systems wouldn’t last long with the damage it was taking on.

Time for captain mode. “This is Captain James T. Kirk of the USS Enterprise. Your ship is compromised. You’re too close to the singularity to survive without assistance, which we are willing to provide.”

Next to him, an odd look passed over Spock’s face for a moment before he turned his back to the viewscreen and spoke quietly. “Captain, what are you doing?”

Jim turned around so he was facing Spock more than the viewscreen and responded equally quietly. “We show them compassion; it might be the only way to earn peace with Romulus.” While Jim didn’t really want to do it, it seemed like it might be one of those situations where you put your issues aside for the greater good or whatever. “It’s logic Spock, I thought you’d like that.”

Spock’s lips actually downturned briefly. “No, not really.” He looked Jim in the eye and shook his head. “Not this time.”

Before Jim could respond, Nero spoke up again. “I would rather suffer the end of Romulus a thousand times—I would rather die in agony than accept assistance from you.”

Spock was right; Jim decided that this was the kind of situation to screw diplomacy. Nero had been trying to kill him less than a half hour ago and the Narada’s body count was already in the billions. Jim faced the viewscreen with a smirk. “You got it.” Jim turned back to the crew. “Arm phasers, fire everything we’ve got.” Jim knew it probably wouldn’t do much and that the black hole would probably be what actually did Nero and his crew in, but if Nero wanted to die in agony Jim was willing to try blasting a hole in his ship to help him out.
Sulu acknowledged his order with a bit of a smile as Jim made his way to the captain’s chair in the middle of the bridge. From there he was able to watch as the combined forces of their weapons and the black hole made the *Narada* start to come apart and collapse in on itself. Finally, it finished crumpling in on itself and then there was nothing left but the black hole. Jim breathed a sigh of relief that Nero and his crew were finally gone.

But a moment later a warning began to flash on the viewscreen, reminding Jim that there were still other threats. Like the massive black hole they’d created that was now starting to draw them in.

Chapter End Notes

Well it didn't take me long to do another cliffhanger. They're a cheap writer trick to keep the audience engaged but I'm not above cheap writer tricks. Although to be honest, I don't know if there are many writers above the occasional cliffhanger.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We're almost done with the 2009 movie. Since I've been getting a few comments related to this, this fic is going to be continuing past this movie. We're also going to divert from canon more from here on out. I'll still be touching on Into Darkness (and maybe Beyond, I'm not sure yet), but it will be more different from canon than this was. I'll be interested to see how you respond, since I've gotten mixed responses about what I've had so far, which has been mostly following canon...

Also, this scene was difficult to capture dramatically without the movie score to add to it. If it helps, play dramatic music in your head (or on your phone/laptop/etc.) while reading this.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Sulu, let’s go home!” Jim really hoped that they were still far enough away from the black hole that they could escape. They needed to start moving now.

“Yes sir!” Sulu was rapidly working the console in front of him, as was Chekov next to him. The Enterprise began to turn, the scene out the viewscreen shifting from the massive black hole that had just swallowed the Narada to the open space that was now in front of them.

Still, their view didn’t change beyond that. None of the characteristic visual distortions of the ship jumping to warp showed up. This was not good. Jim tried not to let the alarm into his voice but he felt like it was still there. “Why aren’t we at warp?”

“We are, sir.” Chekov was also sounding a little alarmed as he began to look over the console in front of him frantically.

Yeah, this was not good. Jim opened the comm line on the arm of the captain’s chair. “Kirk to Engineering, get us out of here Scotty.”

“You bet your ass captain!” Scotty sounded frantic and the noises of the engineering section were loud behind him. Really not good.

Despite all the artificial gravity and other controls of the ship, Jim almost thought he could feel the black hole pulling them in.

Scotty confirmed his concern a moment later, shouting to be heard over the cacophony behind him. “We’re caught in the gravity well Captain!”

Maybe sticking around to fire at Nero had been a bad idea. But like hell was Jim becoming captain only to lead the whole ship to death. “Go to maximum warp! Push it!”

Still, nothing happened.

“I’m giving ‘er all she’s got, captain!” Scotty’s voice was laced with panic and frustration.

Cracks were starting to appear on the bridge and the ship was groaning audibly. This was seriously
not good. “All she’s got isn’t good enough. What else you got?” Despite the sudden urge to start pacing Jim stayed seated in the captain’s chair, white knuckling the armrests. If he freaked out the crew would probably freak out more. He had to keep them calm. They’d get out of this. They’d have to.

“Ok.” The edge of desperation in Scotty’s voice was almost drowned out by the sounds of the engine room all around him. “If we eject the warp core and detonate, the blast could be enough to push us away but I cannae promise anything though!”

The viewscreen was staring to crack. If that broke everyone on the bridge would be sucked into space. It was time to test any possible ideas, no matter how implausible. “Do it! Do it now!”

“Yes sir!” Scotty shouted and then the comm line went quiet. Jim really hoped this would work.

For a moment nothing happened and Jim hoped that Scotty was working as quickly as possible. They wouldn’t have any time to spare.

Then there was the warning for the warp core being ejected. It flashed for a moment then they were surrounded by a cloud of blue-white light. The warp cores had exploded.

It felt like hours ticked by with nothing around them but the exploded warp cores. Deep down Jim knew it was probably closer to seconds, but it felt like it dragged on and on as they waited to see if they’d broken free.

Finally they saw the great dark expanse of space once more, dotted with stars in a way that reassured Jim that it was actually space this time and not the inside of the black hole.

The relief on the bridge was palpable. Jim felt himself breathing heavily, not even aware that he’d been holding his breath during the explosion. For some reason he couldn’t really name he felt like he must have been relieved too. They’d made it. They’d survived.

Jim turned back forward and couldn’t help his grin. He made eye contact with Sulu, who was also smiling. He smiled back at his friend, then paused. Were they friends now? He vaguely remembered being in the same command class as Sulu a few times. But they’d saved each other’s lives and been in multiple near death situations together now, so that probably made them friends, right?

Jim couldn’t help but laugh a little as the last of the relief flowed through him and the reality began to set it. Yes, they’d just cheated death, but now they were on a starship that had been through a battle (or would it be considered multiple battles at this point?) with a ship from the future and now they had no warp core. They needed to figure out what to do now. Jim looked around the bridge, wondering when the last time anyone here had rested was. Had it really only been a day or so since they’d been at his hearing? Jim ran a head down his face. Everyone else on the bridge seemed to be realizing their situation as well. Time to do the captain thing again.

“So.” Jim looked around the bridge; everyone was looking at him now. “How far are we from Earth? Or even the closest Federation planet or starbase?”

Spock spoke up first and Jim spun in the chair to look at him. “When I was piloting the ship taken from the Narada, I achieved a distance of 2 lightyears from Earth and 1.3 lightyears from any known habitable planet. With our movement away from the singularity that formed at that location, we are now,” he paused and reviewed information from the display in front of him, “2.1 lightyears from
Earth, 1.1 lightyears from any known habitable planet, and 1.43 lightyears from any established Federation location.

Jim attempted to do mental math in his head. If the best the impulse engines could do was ¼ light speed, the impulse engines could be damaged from everything that had happened that day, meaning they might not get that speed, and they were that far away from everyone, that meant that they had a long trip ahead of them. Hopefully someone would come give them a hand before then. “Uhura.” He shifted the chair to look at her station directly. “Send out a message on all Federation channels with our location. Contact engineering to see what parts we need and include that in your message. They’ve gotta be looking for us, so we may as well help them out.” Jim turned back to face the front of the bridge. “Chekov, Sulu, figure out a course that will get us to wherever we can get repairs and talk with engineering to see how fast we can get there.”

Everyone made sounds of acknowledgement and went to work. Jim got up from the chair and walked over to Spock’s station. His maybe-soulmate was looking at him expectantly. “Yes, captain?”

Jim paused a second. Had Spock actually called him captain? Never mind, there were other things to do. “I know that everything here was super last minute because it was an emergency situation, but do you know if Pike had any sort of duty roster? I think it’s about time for the next shift to start.”

“I am uncertain.” Spock turned to begin going through the computer at the console. “I do not believe Pike had the time to complete one.”

“Great.” Jim ran a hand down his face. “We’ve gotta do that then, these people need rest.”

“I concur.” Spock nodded and began to stand from his seat. “We should visit Pike to assess his condition and see if he had anything prepared.”

“Good idea.” Jim backed off as Spock stood up. “I think I’m about ready to hand command back over.”

Spock raised an eyebrow at that but otherwise didn’t respond as they made their way to the turbolift to go to Sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

By the way, I tried looking up how fast impulse (i.e. full impulse, half impulse, etc.) was and was unable to find a real answer. Apparently in 6 tv shows and 13 movies no one has bothered to clarify whether "impulse" refers to a certain speed (the way warp 1, 2, etc. does) or if saying 1/2 impulse just means half the power of the impulse engines on board, which could then vary greatly from ship to ship. Anyway, 1/4 light speed was one of the concrete numbers given (even if it said it was from Voyager), so I'm just kinda rolling with that. This wasn't super important for the story, but it's very easy to get distracted while writing.
Chapter 36

Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! As of yesterday we’re 3 months into this fic, which to be honest is a little weird. Still, I know I keep saying this but I want to thank all of you for your response to this fic. I was honestly expecting maybe like 3 people to read this, and while it's difficult to really accurately gauge numbers of readers on here there still seems to be an astounding number of you. So again, thanks for reading, commenting, kudoing, bookmarking, and subscribing. You're all awesome.

Anyways, we're continuing to go off script. In this chapter, Jim is experiencing that moment when you're out of the dangerous situation and your brain starts to process what you went through, if processing means your brain going "what the f just happened?" or "oh god what now?"

The ride in the turbolift and the walk to Sickbay afterwards was quiet. Jim still wasn’t quite sure where he stood with Spock. It had been an emotionally turbulent…however long it had been since they’d met. First he’d hated Spock for calling him out in front of the whole academy, then on the ship together Spock seemed to constantly be trying to tear him down, then Jim had met Older Spock, who showed him that he and Spock could have so much together, then he’d provoked Spock into nearly killing him, but then after they talked things out they’d worked together really well while taking down Nero. Still, tentatively having an ok working relationship and an uncertain personal relationship wasn’t exactly what most people wanted with their soulmates, Jim included. He wanted something like what he’d seen in Older Spock’s mind meld. It would probably take more than a day to get that.

They’d finally arrived at Sickbay. Jim looked around for a moment, unsure where Pike would be. Would he even be done getting treatment? He’d seemed like he was in pretty bad shape when Jim had found him, and who knew what kind of injuries he may have had that Jim wouldn’t have been able to see. Still, Jim was ready to hand control back to Pike. Now that the adrenaline was out of his system he was starting to panic a bit about the fact that he was technically captain still. Hell, he hadn’t even actually graduated from the academy yet. Was someone who was technically still a cadet even allowed to serve as a captain? Before Jim could freak out too much more, Bones appeared.

“Well look who finally decided to show up. Are you two here for physicals? Because you’ll both probably need full workups after going over to that nightmare of a ship.” He looked between Jim and Spock expectantly. “Well, what are you waiting for? Get to biobeds, both of you.”

Jim mentally froze up at that. While he might need some medical attention, what with getting attacked and strangled by two separate Romulans, a full physical might reveal more than he wanted. Would Bones be able to tell that he’d started aging? Jim knew that in some places they had equipment specially designed to figure out exactly when a person started aging to best determine if two people had started aging started at the same time and were actually soulmates. He knew the Enterprise Sickbay was supposed to be state of the art, but would they have that? There was no way Jim was doing that physical now. Jim put on his best charming grin, knowing that Bones would probably see through it anyway. “Sorry Bones, but that’s actually not why we’re here. We came to
“Really Jim?” Bones crossed his arms over his chest. “God knows how many people with how many times your strength have used you as a punching bag today,” his eyes flicked to Spock momentarily and Jim noticed that Spock looked away to avoid eye contact, “and you’re still avoiding your physical?” He glanced back at Spock. “And you don’t get to avoid it either, commander.”

“C’mon Bones, we’re here on ship business.” Jim really hoped he sounded less petulant than he felt. “We’ve got to talk to Pike about official things, right Spock?” Jim looked over at Spock hopefully.

“He is correct.” Spock was back to standing with perfect posture and his hands behind his back. “We need to speak with Captain Pike about important official matters. Is he in a condition to receive us?”

Bones deflated a bit at that. “He’s stable now, and I think he just woke up after we had to knock him out for surgery, which by the way would have been a lot easier if you two had kept the ship steady rather than making her jerk around wildly.” Bones glared at them both for a moment before relenting somewhat. “If he is awake and if I do let you see him, you have to promise that you’ll keep it short and that you’ll report back to me or other members of the medical staff afterward to get checked out, alright?” He looked at them expectantly.

Jim sighed and looked at Spock. “Does that work for you?” When Spock nodded he turned back to Bones. “Alright then, you’ve got a deal.”

“Ok.” Bones started to turn and jerked his head for them to follow him. “He’s this way.”

They followed Bones over to an area of Sickbay that had been partially curtained off for privacy. Bones ducked in first after signaling for them to wait while he made sure Pike was in good enough condition to see them.

Jim awkwardly glanced over to Spock while they waited. If Pike took over as captain again, would Spock be back to first officer? What would Jim do then? He wasn’t even really supposed to be here; they’d have to rearrange some to find a job for him on the ship. Of course, it was also possible that since he was technically acting captain, Jim could end up being first officer when Pike took over as captain again. That could work. Spock would just go back to being a science officer for the time being, so he’d still have something to do. Jim could make being first officer for Pike work probably. It could be good; Pike could show him the metaphorical ropes and Jim would get to observe what being captain was like without actually being responsible for hundreds of people. That could probably work out pretty well. Really, Jim hadn’t even finished at the Academy. He did well enough in an emergency with a clear goal to focus on but was he really ready to command a whole starship and run everything? With the reality of it setting in he was starting to panic a little. That probably meant he wasn’t ready yet, right?

Once again Bones was the one to interrupt Jim’s thoughts. The doctor stepped back out from the curtain and looked at Jim and Spock sternly. “Alright, he says he’s good to see you two and his vitals seem steady enough, but remember that you have to keep it short and report for physicals as soon as you’re done, right?”

“Affirmative.” Spock nodded.

“Jim?” Bones raised an eyebrow expectantly. He was getting that look like he was mentally running through all the hypos he could stab Jim with.

“Yeah, of course.” Jim tried to project his usual confidence but hoped he didn’t come up short.
“Okay then.” Bones looked between the two of them skeptically. “I reserve the right to cut this short at any point if it seems like you’re stressing him or if his stats start to do weird things because he does need to rest. But you can see him now.”

“Thanks Bones.” Jim smiled and clapped Bones on the shoulder as he and Spock walked past him to where Pike lay.

Chapter End Notes

Emotional crises about his ability to command are a thing that I’m bringing in from TOS, although I feel like we get occasional small moments of it in the new movies. I think it’s just easier to really explore characters and their emotional states in TV shows rather than in action-y sci fi movies. That isn’t meant to be a slight against the new movies (although I do have some issues), just an observation.
Chapter 37

Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! Sorry this chapter is a little later than usual (although it is still Thursday where I am, so I think that counts). This chapter was fighting me a bit because it didn't want have a neat ending. But have no fear, updates may be late (although that should be a rare instance) but they won't stop until the story is done. I don't abandon my fics once I start posting them.

Also for reference Pike's actual age is early 50s.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Pike didn’t look too great, but he looked better than before. Still, surrounded by so many people who looked 18 his 30-something face stood out and looked old, more like his actual age. Some food and rest would most likely help and Bones could probably lay out best how much Pike would recover, but at least Jim had managed to get him back in one piece and he was still alive. Jim honestly wasn’t sure how he would have dealt with it had Pike died.

But he didn’t have to think about that now, because Pike was still alive. He was propped up on the biobed and looking over Jim and Spock. “Well gentlemen,” Pike looked between them, “It seems like the ship is still in one piece and running.” He looked at Spock with a smile. “Good job captain. I knew you had it in you.”

“Actually captain, I am no longer in command.” Spock seemed to straighten up slightly more, something Jim hadn’t thought was possible. “It was not my plan that led to your successful rescue and the destruction of the enemy vessel.”

Pike’s eyebrows rose in surprise before he grinned at Jim. “Well then congratulations Captain Kirk. I always believed it would happen, although it looks like you’ve surpassed even my expectations on how soon it would be. Good job son.”

“Thank you sir.” Jim couldn’t help but smile back a little bit, glad that he’d made Pike proud. He hadn’t actually said those exact words, but Jim could tell. “Although as great as this has been, I’m ready to turn command back over to you.”

“That’s not happening.” Pike actually seemed to deflate slightly for a second before looking back at the two of them and returning to his usual posture. “According to our grumpy new CMO, I need to stay in Sickbay for a while for recovery and monitoring. You’d have to get the full report from him, but I think the short story is that medically I’m in no shape to command. So as much as I’d love to get back on that bridge, it looks like she’ll be in your hands a while longer, Kirk.”

“Are you sure about that?” Jim didn’t feel ready. He was only 25; that was way younger than anyone else who’d made captain. Never mind that some of them had been physically 18 at the time and he was now getting past that; he still felt too young. “I haven’t even technically graduated from the Academy yet. Can a cadet be an acting captain?”

Pike paused for a moment. “I’m actually not sure. Spock, you probably know the regulations better than I do. Is there anything?”
Spock hesitated before answering. “I am uncertain as to what regulations may apply and which may be superseded by exemptions in these circumstances. Captain Kirk was acting first officer and thus in the chain of command and in position to become acting captain should the acting captain, myself in these circumstances, prove unable, which did happen.”

“He has a point.” Pike nodded thoughtfully. “Our chain of command was a bit shorter than usual since my typical first officer got her own ship to respond to the emergency. Plus, it’s not like we had many people on this ship who weren’t cadets.”

Spock nodded in agreement before continuing. “Additionally, Captain Kirk is responsible for preventing the destruction of Earth, which means that Starfleet will likely be willing to allow his being acting captain.”

Jim was beginning to feel like they were talking about him like he wasn’t there. “That’s not really true.” He turned to Spock. “You were the one who got the black hole device away from Nero and destroyed his ship. You saved Earth, not me.”

“I may have performed the actions that prevented the destruction of the planet, but I was merely following your plan while under your command.” Spock met his gaze and held it. “It is still you who deserves credit for saving Earth, as if I had still been in command and my plan had been followed the Enterprise would not have been in the Sol system to intercept the Narada, leading to the destruction of the planet.”

“How exactly did you end up relinquishing command, Spock?” Pike looked between the two of them curiously. “You didn’t mention that earlier.”

Jim sighed. “It’s a bit of a long story.”

Pike glanced down at the biobed he was sitting on then back at Jim and Spock. “I think I’ve got nothing but time at the moment.”

“Alright then.” Jim ran a hand down his face then looked over at Spock. “Do you want to start or should I?”

“I can begin.” Spock nodded at Jim then turned to Pike. “After you were captured, we witnessed the destruction of Vulcan. I was able to save the Elders to preserve the culture of my planet, but I realized that my mother had most likely perished along with billions of others on the planet. After leaving Vulc—the place where my planet had been, Kirk and I expressed disagreement about the next course of action the ship should take. This led to me ejecting him from the ship.”

“You marooned him because of a disagreement?” Pike seemed incredulous.

“In all fairness, I was disagreeing rather aggressively.” Jim rubbed the back of his neck sheepishly.

“As acting first officer it was your duty to challenge decisions that you deemed unwise.” Spock clasped his hands behind his back more tightly. “I should not have reacted so aggressively.”

“Alright, we can discuss blame later.” Pike looked between them. “How did this lead to Kirk gaining command? Seems like it would be awfully hard from off the ship.”

“Well, I ended up on the planet Delta Vega. There I met…” Jim really wasn’t sure how he was supposed to explain Older Spock since he couldn’t mention him in front of Spock. Time to cover things up a bit. “I met a friend. He pointed out that Spock’s actions and the events of the day most likely meant that Spock was emotionally compromised, which meant that I should take command. So we went to the Starfleet outpost on Delta Vega and beamed back aboard the ship from there.”
“What he fails to mention was that the ship was at warp at that time.” Spock looked back at Jim, his
gaze sharp. “You failed to answer my earlier questions about how you were able to beam aboard the
Enterprise while she was at warp.”

Pike’s surprised expression had Jim rubbing the back of his neck again. “So I’m probably not the
best person to explain the physics of it, but my friend on Delta Vega was able to help Scotty work
out his theory of transwarp beaming. So that’s possible now.”

“Wait a second.” Pike held up his hand. “This is all a lot to take in, but who’s Scotty?”

“Right.” Jim straightened up. “Lieutenant Commander Montgomery Scott. He’s an engineer who
was posted to Delta Vega, but I think now he’s helping make repairs to the ship. It was his idea that
actually got us out of that black hole.” Jim hesitated at Pike’s confused expression. “But I think you
were in surgery then. We almost got sucked into the black hole that destroyed the Narada, but Scotty
was able to get us out of it. We just don’t have a warp core now.”

Pike sighed and closed his eyes for a moment before opening them again. “It seems like I have a lot
to catch up on. But for now, let’s get back to how you ended up in command, Captain Kirk. What
happened next?”

“Well, once back on the ship, Scotty and I were taken to the bridge. There I…” Jim hesitated, not
sure what was the best way to say that he ran his mouth until Spock nearly killed him.

“He provoked me in order to make me realize and reveal that I was emotionally compromised by this
mission, leading to my resigning command and his assuming command.” Again Spock seemed
almost ashamed, but still in a subtle way. “Again, I believe I was too aggressive in my actions.”

“What happened?” Pike looked between them, clearly curious and confused.

“We fought on the bridge.” Even though he’d never really experienced it, Jim kinda felt like this is
what telling a parent you’d done something wrong must be like.

“Captain Kirk’s report is incorrect.” Spock shifted slightly; he seemed uncomfortable. “While he did
attempt to fight back, I maintained the upper hand and nearly killed him.”

Pike’s eyebrows really rose at that. “Mr. Spock, you know that you could be court martialed for
that.”

“He was emotionally compromised. I’m not going to do anything about it.” Both of them looked at
Jim, surprise evident on both of their faces. “Besides, he didn’t actually kill me, and without his help
we never would have been able to stop Nero and save Earth or you, sir.” Jim felt himself
straightening up a bit. He really didn’t like being the center of attention in situations like this. “Plus, I
fought back, which would mean that I should be court martialed too. And if both of get court
martialed, who’d run the ship?”

Disbelief was still pretty clear on Pike’s face, but eventually he shook his head and made a sound
that was somewhere between a laugh and sigh. “Well I guess you’ve got a point. No court martials
for now.” He looked between them. “Anything else to report?”

“Probably.” Jim looked over at Spock, who made eye contact but didn’t say anything. “But we were
told to keep it short, so we’ll have to give you a full report later.” He looked back at Pike. “Everyone
who’s on duty now is probably about ready to be relieved, but we don’t know who the next shift is
supposed to be. Did you happen to start a duty roster or anything like that?”

“Well, it was an emergency situation, so duty rosters weren’t my priority.” Pike looked at Jim sternly
for a moment before his expression broke into a small smile. “But since we were supposed to launch
soon anyway, I’d already started. You’ll probably need to make some modifications, but if you get
me a padd I’ll send it your way.”

“Thank you sir.” Jim smiled at him. “Spock and I will get on that right away.”

“Not right away.” Jim turned to see Bones at the entrance to the curtained off area around Pike’s bed.
“You two both need physicals. After that I’ll let you get him a padd, but only because I want to get
off duty and crash as much as everyone else. Still, you two need to get checked out before any of
that can happen.” Bones pulled open the curtain enough to let them through. “No excuses. Let’s go.”

“Alright then.” Jim turned back to Pike. “I guess we’ll be getting back to you later.” He turned back
to Bones and followed him to a different part of Sickbay, hoping that it was still too early for his
friend to detect his aging.

Chapter End Notes

And in your random author notes for today, Jim (and briefly Spock) gets referred to as
captain throughout this chapter because apparently that's protocol. I was a little unsure if
he would be Cadet Kirk or Captain Kirk, since by rank he's a cadet but his current
position on the ship is captain, but I just happened to be watching a DS9 episode where
they mentioned that anyone commanding a ship, regardless of rank, is referred to as
Captain due to an old naval tradition. So here's to random coincidences solving writer
dilemmas. Also if you've seen TOS and liked it (and if you haven't, I'd recommend it,
especially if you like the AOS crew enough to read fic), I'd recommend DS9 (and
Voyager tbh). DS9 is like TOS without just blatantly ripping it off like early Next Gen
does (although eventually next gen found it's stride, although it's still my least favorite
for multiple reasons). I'm gonna stop this before it gets too long, but basically Deep
Space 9 is great and if you like TOS you'd probably like it too. And you'd probably also
like Voyager too, although Voyager takes a little longer to find itself so you'll need to
have a little patience for the first season or so.
Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! If the record number of comments are any indication, you're all a bit anxious to see if Bones will find out. Well, you'll see soon! Also thanks again to all the people commenting, bookmarking, subscribing, kudoing, and reading. You all make my day.

Please note that I have limited medical knowledge and this may not be 100% accurate. I'll try not to make it glaringly inaccurate, but this isn't my area of expertise.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim looked around Sickbay. It was pretty empty. He wasn’t sure if there were any other doctors he could go to to avoid Bones; Jim knew the doctor that was supposed to be the CMO got taken out in one of the hits to the ship, but he wasn’t sure how many doctors there were total and if there was anyone else on duty now. It could end up being pretty difficult to avoid Bones.

“Alright then.” Bones walked in front of Jim and Spock and looked them over. “Spock, you get one of the nurses to start you off. I’m the only doctor on duty now so you’ll have to be a little patient. And as for you, Jim,” Bones looked at him seriously for a moment, “I’ll just handle your examination myself. You’re allergic to too many things. I don’t want one of the nurses to accidentally send you into anaphylactic shock or worse just because they were trying to give you pain medication or something.” He surveyed Sickbay for a moment before heading to an open biobed. “Jim, follow me. Spock, find an open biobed and a nurse.”

Jim spared one last glance at Spock, who was headed towards a nurse who was checking in with an injured crewmember. He wondered if Spock would show any signs of aging. While Spock was half human, physically at least he seemed to take after his Vulcan half. Older Spock was affected by the aging thing, but who knew if that was true in this universe. Spock still looked young, but Jim knew that Vulcans could live to be around 200 or more, so it would make sense if they just aged slowly. Jim kept staring at Spock even though his back was turned. This Spock did look younger than Older Spock, but Older Spock said that physically he was in his 40s so that made sense. Still, for being physically in his 40s Older Spock didn’t look that old. Especially considering he was really in his 150-somethings.

“Dammit Jim, stop staring at that pointy eared bastard and get on the biobed. The sooner we finish here the sooner I can finish with Spock, and then after you make duty rosters you two can stare all you want while I finally get to rest because my damn replacement knows to show up.” Bones was standing next to the biobed with his arms crossed and a tricorder in one hand.

“Right. Sorry Bones.” Jim walked over and hopped onto the biobed, sitting with his legs over the side. “I think I was zoning out. Maybe I do need some rest.”

“That or one of the people who beat you up gave you head trauma.” Bones pulled the small scanner out of the tricorder and began to wave it in front of Jim’s face. “You already got checked out after Pike had you go down to the drill on Vulcan, right? No need for me to treat any of that?”

“Yeah, that got taken care of.” Jim fought the urge to slap the scanner out of his face. The buzzing
sound was reminding him of a fly. “So now you just have to worry about me getting marooned on an ice planet where I got attacked by monsters, the fight with Spock, getting attacked and strangled again on the Narada by two separate Romulans, and any potential lingering side effects of all the hypos you got me with when trying to smuggle me onto the ship.” Jim hoped that that would be enough to distract Bones from noticing his aging.

“Lie down on the biobed, it gets better readings that way.” Bones seemed entirely focused on the tricorder but spared a moment to glare at Jim. “I hope that’s the full list of stupid things you’ve done today and you’re not trying to hide anything that I’d need to know.”

Jim grinned as he laid down on the biobed. “I think that’s it for today, but no promises for the future. Maybe I’ll challenge a Klingon to a fistfight.”

“I will be the only 18-looking person to get gray hair and it will all be because of you,” Bones muttered absently as he looked between the tricorder and the biobed readings.

“I’m touched you think that we’ve got enough of a connection to make each other age, but you’d think we’d have noticed by now if that were the case.” Jim was relieved that it was still easy to slip into banter with Bones; also he hoped that if he acted natural enough he could cover up the fact that he was trying to hide that he’d started aging.

“You’re dense enough that you would have missed it, but I would have noticed.” Bones set the tricorder down and looked at Jim. “Well the good news is that you seem to have avoided any major trauma, so I’m confident enough to let what’s left heal on its own, even if you will end up with some bruises most likely. Still, come in if it feels like there’s something I missed.” Then he picked up a hypo before stabbing it into Jim’s neck. “That should fight off anything you could have contacted on Delta Vega,” he picked up another one and repeated the motion, managing to get Jim in what felt like the same spot. “God knows what you could have come across on that Romulan ship, but that should help regardless.” He picked up a third hypo and looked at Jim. “You’re wincing in that way where you’re in pain but not telling me. I could give you this painkiller, but only if you need it.”

All the hits he’d taken that day were starting to catch up to Jim now that the adrenaline was wearing off. “Yeah, that could be good. Nothing strong enough to make me loopy though.”

“Alright then.” Bones pressed another hypo to Jim’s neck but stopped him when he moved to get up. “One more thing Jim.” Bones turned to a computer console and started tapping through it.

“What is it?” Jim stayed on the biobed, hoping Bones wasn’t picking up on the aging. It’d been maybe a day; there was no way he’d be able to tell so soon.

“Some of your readings are a bit off.” He glanced down at Jim in a way that was probably supposed to be reassuring. “Not enough that I’m concerned, but enough that I’m curious.”

“What’s off?” Jim tried his best for nonchalant; he hoped that if he missed the mark he would just seem worried.

“Nothing too major, just some hormonal changes from your previous baselines.” Bones looked back at the biobed for a moment. “And now your heart rate’s beginning to pick up, but I’d assume that’s just you getting stressed by this conversation.” Bones looked down at Jim. “Are you feeling stressed?”

“Well I just realized I have to run a ship when I’ve never even technically served on one as an officer, so I’d say maybe a little.” Jim hoped the sarcasm came across. He was stressed about that, but he didn’t want Bones to think he was getting overwhelmed by it and declare him unfit for duty or
something. Jim could probably handle this with a little help from Spock and Pike. And maybe a call to Older Spock if he could manage it.

“All right then, I’ll let you get to captain things.” Bones backed off enough to let Jim start to get up but made him stop when he was sitting up with his legs hanging off the side. “But I am curious about those readings. I’m not going to make you come in daily or anything, but I would like to monitor you from here on out. Check in at least every two weeks, preferably weekly. And definitely come in if you feel off in any way. I don’t want you collapsing on the bridge or anywhere else because of some delayed reaction I missed because you were being stubborn.”

“Got it. Anything else or can I go talk to Pike now?” Jim tried not to seem impatient, but it seemed like he might be getting away without Bones realizing he was aging. He didn’t want to get called in for last minute further tests.

“You can go. Just don’t overwork yourself and make sure to come back in for those other appointments I mentioned.” Bones looked at him sternly for a moment. “And of course, get some food and rest. I’ll know if you haven’t.”

“Of course Bones.” Jim waved him off. “Now go deal with your other patient so I can get him to help me with duty rosters so we can all rest.”

“Don’t tell me how to do my job; you’re not my boss.” Despite the words there was no actual heat to Bones’ tone.

“Actually I am, acting captain remember?” Jim grinned just to see Bones roll his eyes.

“I don’t care. Now stop pestering me and do whatever it is acting captains do.” Bones walked off towards the biobed where a nurse had started tending to Spock.

Jim laughed as he walked back over to Pike.

Chapter End Notes

Jim and Bones’ dynamic is shamelessly stolen from me and my best friend, but we’ve realized that personality wise I’m very similar to Jim and she’s very like Bones so I think it works. Either way, writing banter is fun.
Chapter 39

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Raise your hand if the semester just started for you too and now you have to deal with the renewed workload. That’s where I’m at now. But don't worry, the fic will carry on.

This wasn't entirely how I intended this chapter to turn out, but have ~1k of paternal!Pike.

Also a maybe unnecessary trigger warning in the end note.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim paused to snag a padd before he got to Pike. He knew that Pike could have probably used one of the consoles, but Jim wasn’t sure how mobile Pike would be after he’d been struggling to stand when Jim rescued him. A padd would probably be easier. Less moving around to access the console, plus if Bones thought Pike needed rest he could take it away and wouldn’t complain that Jim was interfering with his patient’s recovery.

Jim poked his head around the curtains to make sure that Pike was still awake. If Pike had been asleep, Jim wasn’t sure what he would have done. He probably could have hacked Pike’s account to get the information he needed, but Jim really didn’t want to get in trouble for hacking again. True, his academic trial got shoved aside for graver matters, but Jim still wasn’t sure if he’d get in trouble for that or not.

Thankfully, Pike was awake and Jim didn’t have to enter any new moral dilemmas. Pike smiled when he saw Jim. “That was fast. Did the doctor give you a clean bill of health?”

“More or less.” Jim stopped and stood next to Pike’s bed. “I’ve got some minor things, but nothing that will keep me confined to Sickbay.” He held out the padd. “Here’s this. I figured you could pass the duty rosters along and Spock and I can work on them so everyone can get some rest.”

“Thanks son.” Pike took the padd and began to connect to his account, keeping his focus on the padd with a nonchalance that felt a little forced. “So you’re going to keep working with Spock?”

“Yes sir.” Jim felt himself tense up a little bit. “He’s a great officer, and his experience will definitely help me out when it comes to running this ship.”

“You don’t foresee any problems working with him?” Pike’s eyes flicked up to Jim briefly. Jim could see where this was going. “No sir. I think we’ll work well together.”

“Jim, drop the formality. It’s me and I’m worried about you.” Pike dropped the padd to his lap and looked at Jim seriously with concern evident on his face. “You and Spock both admitted that he tried to kill you earlier. You really think you can get past that so easily? If you were scared to press charges earlier with him there I understand, but it’s just us now. Do you want him court martialed?”

Jim dropped into the chair next to Pike’s bed with a sigh and ran a hand down his face. “No, I don’t.” He looked at Pike through his fingers. “I mean it when I say that he wasn’t in full control of
his actions and shouldn’t be held responsible for them. I provoked him.”

Pike’s expression turned wary. “Jim this sounds like…”

“It’s not like that.” Jim dropped his hands to his lap and looked at Pike seriously. “If it was that kind of situation, I wouldn’t hesitate to report him and throw him in the brig before he could even blink.”

“Look Jim, I know your history.” Pike looked extra tired now. “I know about your stepfather and what he did to you. And it’s not uncommon for people who have experienced that sort of thing to end up in those situations again.” He sighed. “I’m just trying to help. This is an out if you need one.”

Jim sat up straight. “I don’t need an out. I need you to trust me when I say that this isn’t that kind of situation, and you know that I’d know it when I saw—or experienced—it.”

Pike held up his hands in a placating gesture. “Alright. I’ll back off, but I’m here if you need me.” He picked up the padd again. “I’ll get back to sending you the duty rosters.”

“Thank you.” Jim felt some of the tension leaking out of his shoulders as he slumped back into the chair again. “It really isn’t like that, you know. We talked it out; cleared the air. We actually worked really well together as a team once we got past that.”

Pike eyed him warily for a moment before returning to the padd. “If you say this was a one-time thing, not going to get repeated in any way, shape, or form, I’ll believe you. But if it ends up being not like that, know that I’m here for you.” Pike looked up again and handed him the padd again with a small smile. “Here’s the duty roster drafts.”

“Thanks.” Jim took the padd and hesitated for a minute. “I’m sorry for getting so short with you. I think I just need some rest.”

“Rest would probably be good, but I also understand that this is a sensitive subject and I may have been pushing a bit.” Pike smiled at him softly again, maybe a bit regretful.

“It’s ok.” Jim sat up a little straighter again, holding the padd in one hand. “Spock and I will finish these up and then everyone can get some rest. It’s been a long day.”

“That it has.” An odd look crossed Pike’s face for a moment. “Jim, you weren’t officially registered to this ship, were you?”

Jim winced. Looks like he was getting in trouble after all. “No, I was not.”

“Relax, I’m not mad at you.” Pike waited until Jim met his eyes before continuing. “I was only asking because I realized that that might mean you never got assigned quarters.”

Jim paused for a second to think. They’d been a bit too busy with the crisis situation to handle all the bureaucratic things, but it would be nice to know where he could crash. “I don’t think I did. I bet someone would let me bunk with them though.” He wondered what kind of room Bones had; they were roommates back at the academy (however long ago that felt), so Bones would probably be ok with Jim sharing his room for the night.

“That won’t be necessary.” Pike looked at him with a slight smile again. “You can take the captain’s quarters. It’s not like I’ll be using them anytime soon.”

“Are you sure?” Jim sat up a little straighter. “I wouldn’t want to disturb your stuff.”

“Moving in wasn’t really a priority, so I doubt I have much stuff in there for you to disturb.” Jim
couldn’t really believe it but Pike continued. “You’re acting captain, might as well get the full experience.”

Jim couldn’t help the grin that broke across his face. “Thank you. Thank you so much.”

“Don’t worry about it.” Pike smiled about him but then he looked to the entrance to the curtained off area and his expression shifted to warm but professional. “Mr. Spock, what can I help you with?”

Jim tried to hide his wince. Spock and Pike had seemed pretty close before; he hoped he hadn’t damaged their relationship with what happened today.

“I have been cleared for duty and was wondering if you had passed the duty rosters to Captain Kirk.” If Spock noticed the shift in Pike’s behavior, he didn’t seem to respond to it.

“Yeah, I got them.” Jim stood up, sparing one last glance at Pike before turning to face Spock fully. “Let’s get these done so everyone can rest, alright?”

Spock merely nodded. “We can work in one of the conference rooms.”

“Sounds good.” Jim turned back to Pike. “Goodnight, or good whatever part of the ship’s day it is.”

Pike laughed softly. “Goodnight to you too Jim. And you as well Spock.”

Jim waved one last time before he and Spock walked out of Sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

Just a warning for a brief discussion of abusive dynamics and allusions to past abuse. Nothing is said or described that explicitly, but I figured better safe than sorry so here's your heads up. It starts around the line ”Jim, drop the formality.” and basically ends by “Jim took the padd”. It's mostly just Pike being concerned about Jim working with Spock given the events of the day, but Pike does reference Jim being abused by his stepfather.

This makes the chapter sound more serious than it is I think, but I just wanted to give people a heads up.
Hello everyone! As mindblowing as it is, I just saw that this fic passed 10,000 hits! You're all awesome and I thank you all for coming with me on this long haul of a fic, because when I say slow burn in the tags I mean it. Feel free to ditch or keep reading as your tastes dictate. But rest assured, there will be no queerbaiting here. It's gonna take a little, but it's gonna get gay (or bi/pan more specifically, given that many of the characters here experience attraction to multiple genders)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once they were out in the hallway, Jim hesitated. Sure, they had the stuff to work on the duty rosters now, but where would they work? His first thought was a rec room, but that would probably have too many distractions. They'd need somewhere more private. Jim looked over to Spock. “So where do you want to do this? Pike offered me his quarters while he’s recovering, so we could go there…” Jim trailed off. Did he really want his first time in his quarters with his soulmate to be filling out duty rosters? Not really. Sure, it seemed like his chances with Spock weren’t great at the moment, but still, a little work/life separation could be good. “Actually how about a briefing or conference room? It might be a better place to work.”

“That would be adequate.” Spock nodded. “Additionally, we could use the computer console there to see which crewmembers are currently working as well as who is unable to serve currently.”

“Good point.” For a moment Jim let his mind wander to everything the latter half of Spock’s sentence could mean. Sure, some people could be unfit for duties because of injuries that had them in Sickbay or confined to quarters to rest, but there still would be people who died in one of the attacks. Would Jim have to write the notification letters to their families? He really hoped not. He was acting captain, but he wasn’t ready for that. Maybe Pike could handle it. Jim just really didn’t want to have to deal with them. It’s not like he was unfamiliar with the format; he’d seen the (highly unnecessary) letter his family had gotten about his dad during one of the few times he’d gone to his Grandpa Tiberius’ house before the old man kicked the bucket. He’d only seen the letter briefly, but that was the kind of thing that stuck with him.

“Captain?” Spock’s voice jarred Jim out of his thoughts. It sounded like he’d been trying to get Jim’s attention for a little while.

“Sorry Spock, I guess I’m more tired than I realized.” Jim smiled weakly at Spock to try to cover it up, but he wasn’t sure how much of an effect it had because Spock’s face remained impassive. “But I guess if I’m tired, everyone else must be too. So let’s get to work so everyone can rest.” Jim turned and began to walk to the nearest turbolift, trying to remember what deck all the briefing rooms were on.

Thankfully once they were in the turbolift Spock gave the deck number and the turbolift began to move. Silence fell over them, but it wasn’t really uncomfortable. It just seemed like Spock wasn’t the talkative sort and Jim had too much on his mind to make small talk.

As soon as they reached the correct deck the turbolift stopped and they both walked to the nearest briefing room. Inside Jim sat down and put the padd from Pike on the table. He unlocked it and
started going through it while Spock logged into the console on the table and began to pull up the relevant information.

“Well, the good news is that it looks like Pike got pretty far in setting up a duty roster.” Jim looked up at Spock from where he’d been skimming the shift lists on the padd. “Bad news is that I have no idea how accurate this is compared to who’s actually working or even onboard now, but I get the feeling it’s less than 100%.”

Spock just nodded and gestured to the console screen. “I have brought up the lists of personnel who are currently working as well as the list of who boarded the ship. We can cross reference the lists to make accurate duty rosters.”

Jim grimaced at how long that would probably take. “Better look up the casualty lists too; we’re gonna have to know who to exclude from the duty rosters.”

Spock nodded and searched on the console for a moment. “I have that as well. Shall we begin?”

“May as well.” Jim dragged a hand down his face. “The sooner we start, the sooner we finish.”

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After what felt like hours but was probably less, it finally seemed like they were finishing with the duty rosters. Jim rolled his head to stretch his neck before resting his cheek on his fist. He’d found that he and Spock seemed to work well together and it was nice to know that they could still get along after everything, but duty rosters were painfully monotonous. “Next time around, we’re delegating this to the department heads. They probably know who should be working when better than we would anyway.”

Beside him, Spock stilled. “We, captain?”

Jim straightened up when he realized what he’d said, letting his hands fall onto the tabletop. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to presume that I’d be captain or that we’d be working together again anytime soon. Not that I’d mind it though.” He looked over to Spock cautiously, but Spock was avoiding eye contact.

“I did not think you would wish to work together after my earlier conduct toward you.” Spock’s eyes were fixed on the tabletop. “I was not expecting you to assign me more duties after we returned from the Narada.”

Jim’s mind flashed back to the transporter room. Spock had looked like he wasn’t expecting to make it back from their mission at all, but that wasn’t what Jim to needed focus on now. He’d want to come back to that at some point, but not now. “Yeah, I was a little wary at first, but I think we’d both agree that given the circumstances you weren’t really at your peak today. It’s understandable.” Spock was still focusing on the table. “Besides, I kindof like working with you. I feel like we balance each other out well. It’s why I decided to make you acting first officer again once you came back on the bridge during our planning session to take down Nero.”

For a moment Jim thought he saw confusion cross Spock’s face, but then it was gone. “I am acting first officer?”

“Yeah.” Jim thought back over the day. He’d been mentally referring to Spock as his first officer and including him in things that a captain and first officer would do together, but had he ever made it official? Jim tried to think back over the time since he took command. Maybe he hadn’t officially done it. “Ok so I can’t remember officially reinstating you, but we can add it to the duty rosters now. If you’re interested, I’d like to have you as my acting first officer.” He paused and glanced at Spock.
“Do you want to be acting first officer? I would understand if you say no.”

There seemed to be something like surprise on Spock’s face for a moment before he regained his composure. “I will be your acting first officer. I was just…”

“Not expecting this?” Jim couldn’t help but smile a bit at Spock. “Well why else would I have you helping me out with all the ship’s business like this?” Jim gestured to the duty rosters in front of them. “Besides, I meant it when I told you that you’ll always have a place on the bridge.” Jim stopped himself before he almost added a ‘with me’ to the end of his sentence. He didn’t want to overwhelm Spock. Instead he cleared his throat and changed the topic. “Alright then, let’s get to the bridge to make an announcement and post these. I think everyone on this ship could use some rest.” After a quick glance over to Spock, who still was not making eye contact, but now in a deep-in-his-own-thoughts way rather than an avoiding Jim way, Jim got up and started to head to the bridge. After a quick glance to confirm that Spock was actually following him, Jim led him back to the turbolift for what felt like the hundredth time that day.

Chapter End Notes

I'm sure there will come a point where I can write a chapter that has zero angst or drama, but I don't know if that will be coming soon. But hey, stories need a little conflict (internal or external), right?

Also in my experience, both suddenly being in leadership positions and pining involve angst and self doubt, so that's what Jim's in for.
Chapter 41

Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! This fic has just reached 300 comments! I'm super excited about that, even if half of them are me responding to comments. Still, I seriously love all the feedback this fic gets as well as everyone who leaves it, whether it's in the form of comments, bookmarks, kudos, subscriptions, or just hits from people coming back each chapter. You're all excellent!

We're back to Spock's POV this chapter, and just a heads up the section in italics is a flashback.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock followed the captain out of the turbolift and onto the bridge. He still could not comprehend why Kirk had made him acting first officer. Spock had nearly killed him, but Kirk seemed to have no difficulty trusting Spock or harbor any ill will toward him. Kirk was even behaving in a way that could be considered friendly. It was odd behavior indeed.

Kirk had paused in front of Spock and looked at the padd holding the duty roster. “So what’s the best way to put this out so everyone can access it? Is there a specific server we should upload it to?”

“Yes.” Spock nodded and held out a hand. “I can upload the new roster while you make a shipwide announcement.”

Kirk smiled at him. “Thanks Spock. I’ll get on that.” He handed over the padd.

Spock noticed that while most humans did not pay attention to such small details, Kirk seemed careful not to accidentally make contact when handing over the padd. He had even shifted his grip to ensure that there would be no touching. Spock added it to his mental list of odd things Kirk had done that he would have to consider in depth later.

As he went to his station and began to upload the duty roster from the padd, Spock observed Kirk as he made his way to Nyota’s station, presumably to request that she open the proper shipwide channel for him to make an announcement.

Nyota had spoken with him about Kirk prior to Spock meeting the cadet in person. After Spock had found the subroutine that allowed Kirk to succeed in the Kobyashi Maru, he had met with Nyota for dinner as they had agreed to go on a date the previous week. When he had told her that he had found that a cadet had hacked into the test he’d designed, she was quickly able to correctly guess what it was.

“It was Kirk, wasn’t it?” She looked at him expectantly as she took a sip of her wine. They’d finished their meals and were now just talking, but her relaxed mood had taken on a note of interest when he’d told her the news about the test.

Spock took a sip of his own drink. “Why do you suspect him?”

She laughed slightly, an incredulous look on her face. “For starters, I was there and I saw it
happen. The simulation definitely wasn’t supposed to go like that and he was way too cocky at the end."

“Do you believe he would do such a thing?” Spock was curious now; he had looked into Kirk’s Starfleet and other records when the cadet requested a third attempt at the test because that was unusual behavior; 78.4% of command track students accepted the first failure and 21.5% attempted it a second time, leaving only 0.1% of students to ask for a third test date. Kirk was a high achieving student, although Spock had also found arrest records from his time in Iowa prior to attending Starfleet. Spock had also found a recommendation letter from Captain Christopher Pike that had been attached to Kirk’s admission files. It was a fascinating mix of information.

Nyota seemed to be thinking seriously about Spock’s question. “I’m not sure if he would. He’s smart, but he’s also a bit of an idiot. The night I met him was when we stopped in Iowa on the way here. He started flirting with me and was coming on a bit too strong for my tastes. But then he showed me that he had a bit of brain under that hick exterior and it changed the game a bit. Pair a smart mind with a pretty face and suddenly I’m interested.” She smiled at Spock at that, a bit ruefully.

Spock had not heard this story before. “What transpired next?”

She sighed and took a sip of her drink. “A couple of security track cadets decided they needed to come defend my honor like I was some medieval maiden.” Nyota rolled her eyes. “That sort of white knight stuff should have died out centuries ago; I’m perfectly capable of handling some guy at a bar and so are most other women.”

Spock nodded, both in agreement and to prompt her to continue.

“Long story short, Kirk ended up getting into a fight with them even though they outnumbered him. He also got shoved toward me during the fight and briefly groped me, but shockingly,” the sarcasm was clear in her voice, “I was able to knock him away myself without any help from the others.” She took another sip of her drink. “They seemed to be getting a little too intense with the beat down, but then Pike came in and broke up the fight. I thought that’d be the last I’d see of Kirk, but the next morning he was on the Starfleet shuttle, still wearing his clothes from the night before.”

“Had he shown any interest in Starfleet the previous night?” Spock was interested in this new information; it was helping him create a better profile of the cadet.

“I’m not sure; he was able to recognize my cadet uniform but that doesn’t mean much.” Uhura seemed to think for a second. “Rumor has it that Captain Pike talked him into it. Everyone knows the Captain has a thing for George Kirk; I bet he was excited to find the guy’s son.”

Spock recalled what he knew of George Kirk; the man had been young when he’d been forced to take command of the USS Kelvin and fend off an attack from an unknown ship that had never been seen again. Kirk had died but nearly the entire crew, excepting those killed in the initial attacks on the ship, had managed to survive, including Kirk’s pregnant wife who gave birth in a shuttle. “He was the child born while escaping the Kelvin?”

“The very one.” Nyota nodded. “So since then I’ve seen him around campus now and then and it seems like he’s pretty much thrown himself into school and maybe a few other cadets, but first impressions are hard to shake. On a certain level he’ll always be that arrogant if somewhat charming guy at the bar I guess. My friend Gaila knows him and says he’s a good guy though.”

“Interesting.” A profile of the cadet was forming in Spock’s head. James Kirk was intelligent yet reckless, a combination that could result in both the skills necessary to hack into the test and the
desire to do it. He seemed to have strong interpersonal skills and came from a Starfleet family, both of which would have less bearing on the situation at hand. Still, Spock was awaiting seeing how Kirk would behave when his academic dishonesty was exposed.

The mental profile Spock had compiled did not fully compare to the real James T. Kirk, although he supposed that records and rumors could rarely present a fully accurate account of a person. Spock looked to his console to see the duty roster upload completed; a survey of the bridge revealed that Nyota had returned to her station while Kirk was now sitting in the captain’s chair, the announcement to the crew presumably already made.

Perhaps Spock needed be relieved more than he had anticipated; while Vulcans could go without sleep longer than humans could, the events of the day seemed to have fatigued him enough to cause him to lose mental control enough to let his thoughts leave the bridge despite the fact that he was still on duty. He would need meditation soon.

Spock spent the remainder of the time until his relief arrived focusing on the sensor readings at his console, not allowing his thoughts to drift back to their previous topic. He would further examine the day and its revelations during his meditation prior to sleeping.

Chapter End Notes

This was not the direction I expected this chapter to take, which means the Spock chapter I planned with probably be your first chapter for next week. Unless the story picks its own direction again. Hopefully it will pick a direction though and not leave me with the kind of writer's block that led to me getting this chapter up much later than intended.
Hello everyone! In this chapter, one of the questions that a lot of you have been asking me will get answered in my typical vague fashion. Feel free to hit me up in the comments with your response.

Still Spock's POV, and probably will be for another chapter or so since the initial idea I had for a Spock chapter isn't done yet. Also, we get a little bit of Uhura and Spock since they are still together here and probably will be for a little bit. Like I've said, when I say slow burn I mean it.

In other news, hooray for passing 50k posted! I've got more than that written, but most of that will come later in a section of the fic that I'm really looking forward to getting to...

When Lieutenant Crosby came to relieve him at the science station, Spock allowed her to take the station and walked over to the turbolift. Nyota was waiting there for him and they entered it together.

Once the turbolift was moving she began to speak. “It has been a long day.”

“Indeed.” Spock held his hands tightly behind his back.

“How’re you holding up?” She looked at him, concern evident in her eyes.

Spock was unsure how to respond. He knew in these situations most humans would make a dismissive and likely untrue statement about their emotional state, but he did not wish to lie to Nyota. “I require meditation.”

She nodded sympathetically and then hesitated for a moment. “Look, I know it’s not exactly the Vulcan way, but I’m here if you ever want to talk about anything. Or even if you just need someone to sit there and be with you.” Nyota looked him in the eyes to show him she was serious. “I care about you Spock, and whatever you need I’ll do my best to do it for you.”

“Thank you.” Spock had been told that gratitude was not the Vulcan way, but it was the appropriate human response to the offer and Spock did wish to convey how much he appreciated Nyota. “However, at the moment I believe solitary meditation will serve me best.”

“Ok then.” Nyota eyed him warily as the turbolift slowed a stop at the deck with her quarters. She bit her lip and it was clear that she was still worried about him. “Just know that that’s a standing offer, so whatever you need, whenever you need it, let me know.”

“I will.” Spock returned her gaze. “Additionally, you should know that the reciprocal is true. I shall also be there for you.”

Nyota smiled at him, his seemingly normal behavior causing some of the nervousness to leak out of her only for exhaustion to begin to seep in. “I know. And I appreciate it.” She started to step out of the turbolift doors as they opened but paused in the doorway. She turned back and held out a hand...
with her pointer and middle fingers extended.

Spock returned the gesture, touching his fingertips to hers but taking it no further. “Rest well, Nyota.”

Without disconnecting their fingers she leaned in and gave him a soft kiss on the cheek. “I will. Make sure you get some rest too.” She looked him in the eyes again for a moment before dropping her hand. “Meet in the mess hall for lunch tomorrow? Maybe 1200 hours?”

Spock nodded and held his hands behind his back again. “That would be most satisfactory. I shall meet you then.”

“Good.” She smiled again, but her concern was not fully gone. “I’ll see you then.”

He watched Nyota turn and walk down the corridor until the closing turbolift doors obscured her.

Once he was fully alone in the turbolift, Spock began to plan the rest of his evening. It was currently 2027 hours and he would require food before meditating. He did not wish to be around any large groups of people, so Spock decided to use the replicator in his quarters. He would allow himself until 2100 hours for his meal, then he would meditate. Given the numerous impactful events of the day, his usual hour of meditation would be insufficient. He would allot himself two hours of meditation and add additional time as necessary. Once he had completed his meditation, Spock would perform his nightly preparations for sleep then sleep by no later than 2330 unless he required additional meditation time. Spock would allow himself to sleep for longer than usual because he too was experiencing the exhaustion affecting his human crewmates. Still, he would have sufficient time the next morning to inspect the science labs prior to meeting with Nyota.

By this time the turbolift had stopped on the proper deck for his quarters and Spock had exited and proceeded to them. Once he arrived at his quarters, he entered the necessary combination to unlock the doors and entered.

The quarters themselves were large, with a work station with a desk on one half and a sleeping section on the other half with a partition between them. The quarters were bare as most of Spock’s personal effects were still in his apartment in San Francisco. Spock walked to the replicator adjacent to the desk, but found himself hesitating about what to request.

He considered ordering a Vulcan dish as he normally would, but the thought of anything related to his home planet would challenge the tenuous control Spock currently had. The next logical option was an Earth dish, but most Earth dishes that Spock knew he had been exposed to by his mother, and thoughts connected to her were equally compromising.

Spock found he did not have much of an appetite. He had consumed sufficient nutrition throughout the day, so a meal now was not necessary.

Meditation was more necessary. Spock moved to the other half of his quarters and assumed a meditation pose on the bed before closing his eyes.

He was uncertain where to begin his meditation. The events of the day rendered his usual practices of examining his thoughts insufficient. His mental landscape was a disordered jumble of thoughts tainted by strong emotion; they did not readily form an order. To attempt to extract a single thought would be akin to pulling on a lose end of tangled thread; it would either cause it to unravel or cause it to knot together even more tightly.

Perhaps another approach was necessary. Spock considered going through the events of the day.
chronologically. It would provide some order.

The day had been as a typical day until the academic hearing concerning then-Cadet Kirk’s behavior during the Kobayashi Maru examination. He had not expected Kirk to ask to see his accuser, but Spock was prepared to face the cadet.

Spock mentally brought himself back to the hearing. As he had first looked at Kirk and the two of them made eye contact, there had been an odd sensation that Spock had mentally filed away to examine at a later time. Now would be that later time, but his recollection of the sensation was now buried under his experiences with the more traumatic experiences of the day. The sensation was most likely no more than what the sort of odd sensations humans often reported upon facing a situation they had been mentally preparing for. His experiencing that would suggest a loss of control, but perhaps that had been an early indication of the psychic stress developing in the collective Vulcan psyche as the attack on their planet began. It was only minutes later, still during the academic trial, that the news of the distress call came through.

That was the likely cause of the sensation. Spock decided to move on from that incident, although he would perhaps return to his mental exploration of Kirk with the addition of the later encounters he had with the human.

After the distress call, Spock had assisted with the assigning and transporting of cadets to postings. He had shown favoritism towards Nyota in changing her posting, but given that it had aided the mission and quite possibly assured her safety from the destruction of Starfleet ships around Vulcan, Spock found that he did not regret his actions.

More encounters with Kirk had followed once they were on the ship and it was proceeding to Vulcan. He would also process those later.

That brought him to the moment of realization that his planet was doomed. That word seemed melodramatic compared to the rest of his thoughts, but given the fate Vulcan met it seemed accurate as well. The planet had been doomed.

Spock had managed to save the Elders. In them much of Vulcan’s history and culture would be preserved. He had accomplished something for his people.

But his mother… His mother was likely dead. Despite that that was the logical and likely outcome of the situation, Spock could not accept that his mother was dead.

Perhaps he should try to sense her again. He had been shielding strongly all day, so much so that he could not feel any mental connections, even the one with his father that he knew to be strained but intact. Cautiously, Spock began to lower his mental shields. Due to her psi-null status, his bond with his mother had never been exceptionally strong, even if it was still a constant and comforting presence. Spock lowered his shields completely to have the best chance of sensing her.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I'm being really mean to Spock here, but I'm really just exploring the implications of the 2009 movie, which was what destroyed his planet and killed his mom, so I guess it's not on me? Well I suppose I could change things...
Hello everyone! Sorry this is a bit later than usual, but school had to come first, which in this case meant finishing an assignment with a nighttime due date. Despite the extra time to finish them I really think they might be more stressful than not. For those of you not in college yet, beware of 11:59 deadlines. They will mess you up.

Anyway, away from my college angst and back to the much greater anguish of Spock trying to see if his mother survived the destruction of his planet by trying to sense the bond!

The wave of psychic pain that greeted him was strong enough that Spock physically recoiled and cried out. The collective Vulcan psyche was still so agonizingly raw and inflamed from the loss of so many lives and the sudden severance of so many bonds. Although it had lessened due to so many people beginning to shield heavily, the pain was still immense. After an unknown but likely brief moment of paralysis from the pain, Spock was able to raise his full mental shields.

Spock found himself unable to resume meditation immediately. He stood up and walked to the replicator in his room to get a cup of tea. It was something that his mother used to do for him when he was young and upset. The thought of his mother did not help calm him like it used to; due to her uncertain but likely grim fate thinking of her was only more upsetting. Spock did not want to be upset, but he also found that he lacked the control at the moment to avoid it.

He must attempt mediation again. In order to attain a state of sufficient calmness to meditate, Spock sat at his desk and drank his tea while looking at reports from the science departments aboard the ship. He had not technically been reinstated as Chief Science Officer, but he did still have access. Spock made a mental note to talk to the Captain about reinstating him as CSO the next day.

There was not much in the reports. During the battles, gathering data had not been the primary focus of anyone on the ship. Still, some of the physicists on board were beginning to analyze the data from the destruction of Vulcan. As that report was having the opposite of the desired calming effect on Spock, he moved on to other reports. Many were using the now abundant free time they had to begin experiments, but because the experiments were still in the initial stages there was not much to report. Spock made note of the experiments that interested him to visit when he went to the science labs.

Having finished his tea and now feeling sufficiently calm, Spock returned to the bed portion of his quarters and attempted to resume meditation. He even changed into his meditation robes to aid in the effort. He resumed his meditation pose and continued progressing through his day.

The next chronological moment after the destruction of Vulcan would be his time as acting captain. Spock had been struggling to maintain his control the entire time, and Kirk had exacerbated his issues. His action of jettisoning Kirk was an excessive response due to his lack of control. Spock took a deep breath. He would fully process all the encounters with Kirk later.

Once Kirk was off the ship, it was calmer. Dr. McCoy had proved irritating when berating Spock about his treatment of Kirk, but he had not challenged Spock’s control as strongly.
The next major encounter was once again with Kirk. Spock had lost control and nearly killed him. Although he wanted to move past the incident, Spock felt himself hesitating. Not since he was a child had he had a violent outburst like that, and even as a child he had not caused such extensive damage. Kirk had insisted that he was fine, but fine had variable meanings. Fine was insufficient.

However, Spock had decided to process his interactions with Kirk later. He must move forward.

That led to his conversation with his father in the transporter room. That had been…a unique experience.

His father had admitted to not only experiencing emotions, but to loving his mother. Admitting that was highly uncommon, indeed nearly unheard of among Vulcans, even among pairs who had been bonded for decades. And his father had acknowledged that his mother believed they were soulmates, although it was still unclear if his father believed the same.

Again Spock wondered if he had a soulmate. He knew that supposedly all humans had soulmates, but for Vulcans there was no real equivalent. The closest possible concept he could think of was the pre-Reform concept of t’hy’la, but that was so rare that many believed that they did not truly exist. It was most likely that he did not have a soulmate.

Spock still had much of the day to process. He could not dwell on soulmates now; he must rest eventually and he must meditate to settle himself for sleep.

He had returned to the bridge after that. The bridge crew had been remarkably accepting despite his show of violence earlier. Even Kirk had been fascinatingly accepting of him. Their conversation in the conference room had added an odd layer to Kirk that Spock was still uncertain how to deal with.

Then they had been on the Narada. He and Kirk had worked well together. Spock still believed that Kirk was withholding information from him regarding the ship that contained the black hole generating matter. Kirk’s behavior there had been abnormal, even from the limited baseline of him that Spock had. Why would a ship, most likely from the future, recognize Spock’s voiceprint? And why did it call him Ambassador?

The logical conclusion was that there was some future version of Spock who had been an ambassador and worked on or visited that ship. However, anything beyond that would be baseless speculation.

Then Spock had enabled the destruction of the Narada. He remembered flying toward the ship with no intention of stopping until his ship and the black hole generating matter it contained destroyed Nero’s ship. His father had told him to use his anger, and Spock was undeniably fueled by emotion at that moment. The destruction of Nero, his crew, and his ship would not be true revenge for what Nero had done to Vulcan, but Spock was willing to give his life for it. Why should he survive when his mother, his planet, and billions of his people had perished?

But Spock had survived. The Enterprise had been able to retrieve him just in time to prevent his death. He supposed there had been some satisfaction in living to watch Nero and the Narada be destroyed.

Their near-deaths in the black hole that had consumed the Narada had ultimately been only one of Spock’s near death moments that day; he had been prepared to die destroying the Narada, so the panic afflicting his crewmates had not affected him.

Then it was back to ship’s business. Working alongside Kirk felt oddly natural. While Spock
wanted Pike to fully recover, he believed that Kirk would make an adequate acting captain. He had been able to handle the emergency situation well and additionally was proving able to handle the mundane tasks.

There had also been Nyota. Spock was looking forward to meeting her for lunch the next day and was grateful that she had survived the day. She seemed quite concerned for his wellbeing, which was understandable given the circumstances. However, Spock did not wish for her to neglect her own wellbeing in attempting to care for him. She too had witnessed horrific events, even if her connection to them was less personal, she had likely lost people in the mass deaths of cadets around Vulcan, and she had had a close encounter with death when the ship was nearly destroyed. Spock would have to make sure that Nyota had someone to help her process these events, even if it did not end up being him.

Spock’s meditation was suddenly interrupted by a noise coming from his bathroom. He got up to investigate. The bathroom was shared, but the only other quarters that had access to it were the captain’s quarters. Pike did not seem to be well enough to leave Sickbay, which could mean a possible intruder aboard the ship. Spock was now near enough to open the door and cautiously advance, ready to face a possible intruder.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone else love dramatic irony? This probably won't be the last time Spock reflects on soulmates and totally misses it.

Also, who do you think Spock heard?
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Unless my math is off (which is possible), we're just about 5 months into this fic. I can honestly see this fic continuing for around a year (total, not necessarily from now) based on my loose mental planning, but given that it's already been 5 months and they're only just starting to like each other as friends I think it's gonna be a long haul. For those of you who are going to be with me until the end of the line, I salute you.

Anyway, let's see who Spock finds in the bathroom. Based on the comments, many of you already have an idea. Let's see if you guessed correctly!

All he found was James T. Kirk with a mouth full of foam, evidently in the midst of cleaning his teeth.

Kirk seemed surprised to see Spock, so he spat to clear his mouth before rinsing it out with water. He turned back toward the door. “Hey Spock. What’s up?”

Spock found himself uncertain how to respond. “I was not aware that anyone would be in the other quarters adjoining this bathroom due to Captain Pike’s continuing recovery in Sickbay. Thus I was surprised to hear a noise from here and decided to investigate.”

Kirk smiled at him. “It’s just me. Pike’s letting me crash in the captain’s quarters since I technically never got assigned quarters and he isn’t using them.”

Spock nodded. “As you are the acting captain, I suppose it is logical.”

“Thanks?” Kirk looked slightly confused.

Spock shared the confusion. “Why are you thanking me?”

Kirk’s face seemed to fall slightly. “For a moment there it seemed like you were saying I deserved the quarters.” He made a dismissive hand gesture. “Nevermind, it doesn’t matter.”

It did seem to matter to Kirk. “While quarters placement is not necessarily a matter of ‘deserving’ a specific location,” Spock paused, mind flashing to the meditation of his day that he had not fully completed, especially in regards to the man before him, before giving his assessment. “I believe you have been performing well as acting captain.”

A small smile spread across Kirk’s face and for a moment Spock believed he understood what humans meant when they said a smile ‘lit up’ an individual’s face. “Spock, if I didn’t know any better I’d say you just complimented me.”

Spock raised his eyebrow. “I was merely stating a fact based on my observations. You have shown focus toward your duties and care towards the crew and ship, which are marks of a good captain.”

Kirk’s smile did not wane. “Thanks Spock. I’ve still got a lot to learn though.” Before Spock could
respond Kirk looked him over before turning back to the mirror along the wall, his expression shifting. “I’m hogging the bathroom, aren’t I? You probably need to get in here to get ready so you can sleep.”

“There is no need for you to rush.” Spock remained in the doorway, not wanting to give Kirk the wrong impression by advancing farther. “I still require additional meditation time prior to resting. You may spend additional time in here if you so wish or require.”

“Thanks.” Kirk met his eyes in the mirror and smiled slightly again. “I should be done soon anyway.”

Spock nodded. “I shall return to my meditation.”

“Ok.” Kirk’s eyes continued to meet his in the mirror. “Night Spock. Sleep well.”

“Goodnight Captain.” Spock nodded before turning and leaving the room. Once he was far enough from the door that it closed he paused.

In a way, that encounter served as an ideal transition into his next phase of meditation; he had been meaning to reflect upon his encounters with Kirk. This was just an additional encounter to add to what he must consider.

Spock settled back into a meditation pose on his bed. He would go through the encounters with Kirk in sequence, then form a final conclusion about the captain.

His initial impression of Kirk had been quite negative. The then-cadet had cheated on an important exam and had a reputation for arrogance and promiscuity. While Spock would not judge a person for their sexual behaviors, that reputation combined with cheating suggested that the cadet did not take his academics seriously, which Spock did see negatively.

However, at the academic hearing Kirk had come across differently than expected. True, he carried himself with confidence, but it was not the arrogance of his reputation. Kirk had also shown poise when countering Spock’s points, even if he had lashed out slightly at the mention of his father. However, having now lost a parent and reacted poorly to the mention of them, Spock could understand Kirk’s response.

When Kirk had come aboard the bridge of the Enterprise the first time Spock could admit that there had been something like irritation. A suspended cadet coming onto the bridge uninvited and demanding to speak to the captain? It had seemed like Kirk’s reputation for arrogance was actually earned. However, Kirk had shown intelligence and had been correct in his assessment that they were going into a trap. While Nero’s fixation on Spock himself may have been what saved the Enterprise from destruction, the preparation due to Kirk’s theory most likely helped them survive long enough for Nero to notice them.

Spock had not understood Pike’s promoting Kirk to acting first officer at the time. Kirk was merely a cadet and there were others aboard the ship who had already graduated the academy and reached officer ranks. Kirk would not have been within the chain of command under normal circumstances, but Spock supposed these were not normal circumstances. Some could accuse Pike of favoritism in choosing Kirk, perhaps rightfully so, but perhaps Pike had merely seen that Kirk showed great promise as a commanding officer. Yes, Kirk had expressed his concerns about being young and inexperienced, but he was doing well so far.

Spock was getting ahead of himself. His next encounter with Kirk had been while Spock himself was acting captain, not Kirk. It had been when they were attempting to plan their next move after
Vulcan had been destroyed and Pike had been captured. Again, Kirk had shown remarkable arrogance; he had sat in the captain’s chair, something Spock had not been able to bring himself to do yet, and he had been almost unwilling to listen to other options, instead insisting that he was right and his plan was the correct course of action, even if it contradicted what Captain Pike had ordered.

But Kirk had been right and his plan had been the correct course of action. Had they not eventually followed Kirk’s plan, Earth might have been lost. Spock paused, not wanting to think of what could have happened if Earth had been destroyed. The implications for the Federation would have been catastrophic.

However, that did not happen. Because of Kirk, Earth had survived. He had proved himself an incredibly skilled tactician with a particular skill for understanding the enemy. That would prove valuable when or if Kirk became an official rather than acting captain.

But Spock had not seen the value of Kirk’s insight. He had been too emotionally compromised to think straight. He had overreacted to Kirk’s disagreement by marooning him. That was an erroneous action. Kirk had been suggesting an alternate course of action, which was well within the duties of a first officer. He had been aggressive and arrogant about it, but the punishment did not fit the crime.

Kirk had returned though. Spock would have to speak with him and Mister Scott further about this discovery of transwarp transporting. It was truly a remarkable discovery, but at the time Spock had just seen Kirk back to challenge him again just as he had been doing all day. And this time Kirk’s arrogance had morphed into aggression. It would prove unable to match Spock’s own aggression ultimately, but it was still present.

And yet that had been what was required to make Spock acknowledge that he needed to relinquish command. It had proved beneficial that Kirk take command because without that the Federation could possibly still be in grave danger due to Nero.

Spock could admit that a part of him enjoyed being able to be part of the effort to take down Nero. While a drive for vengeance was considered decidedly pre-Surakian among Vulcans, giving in to it had helped Spock resolve the anger he felt much more satisfyingly than attacking Kirk had.

He had tempered his anger upon his return to the bridge after speaking with his father. Spock knew that his best chance of taking down Nero would be working with the crew, and the crew and Kirk had proved remarkably able to accept him despite what he had done. Even though he had been the victim of Spock’s violence, Kirk had not seemed to have a problem trusting Spock. He did not even seem afraid of him, which was unusual for humans facing a person who had harmed them.

Their conversation in the briefing room had been quite illuminating. Again, Kirk had had a plan that seemed reckless but had proved both tactically sound and necessary. And he had not meant his words, which provided some comfort to Spock.

A new view of Kirk was forming in Spock’s head. He was not quite as arrogant as his reputation would lead some to believe, but he did carry himself with a definite confidence and believe in his plans once they were formed, possibly to the point of stubbornness. He was willing to take risks, some excessive perhaps, but it was not without good reason generally. If he had someone more controlled to balance him out and occasionally reign him in, he could become a truly incredible captain.

That led Spock to Kirk’s comments when he offered Spock the position of acting first officer. They truly had worked well together while infiltrating Nero’s ship, while defeating him, and while running the Enterprise together afterward. If Spock chose to remain in Starfleet, he would accept serving under Kirk again if he was so assigned.
There were too many variables to predict that future option though. It was unclear how Starfleet would accept a cadet becoming captain, even if Kirk had performed most admirably, and it was unclear if Spock would remain in Starfleet. He felt a duty toward Vulcan to assist in the rebuilding of their civilization even if Vulcan civilization had rejected him in the past.

However, Spock was beginning to feel weariness seep into his consciousness, reminding him of his strong need for rest. Those questions would have to be answered another day.

Spock changed from his mediation robes to his sleeping garments and walked to the now vacant bathroom to begin his nightly ritual.

Chapter End Notes

Ok another mostly unrelated author's note, but I really wish we'd gotten more of the implications of a founding planet of the Federation getting wiped off the map. I know there's a lot of fic on it, but I still wish there was a little bit of canon too. There would have been major sociopolitical consequences I'm sure. And even more so if Earth had also been destroyed, what with it being where Starfleet was headquartered and maybe also the seat of the Federation government. I wonder if the Federation would have survived; it would have been just under 100 years old at that point, which is pretty young by the standard of political entities, and it would have been incredibly vulnerable and disordered.

Also, in a note semi-unrelated to that note, I wonder if Nero would have continued after Earth and Vulcan if he hadn't been stopped. I think at some point he did declare all of the Federation a target, but would that mean planets that were in the Federation at his time but not at the present of the movie? Or would he stop if the Federation fell apart and call it a day? Probably not; he had serious problems. But still, I am curious if he would do everyone in the Federation of his day since that would be a lot of places, some of which probably hadn't even met the Federation or considered membership yet considering the 150-ish year time gap.
Chapter 45

Chapter Notes

Hello everybody! Despite my schedule I'm managing to get a chapter up at a fairly normal time. And this motivation is due in a good part to readers like all of you. So thanks to all of you awesome people reading and giving me feedback!

We're back to Jim's POV this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim woke up with a groan as his alarm went off. It still felt too early, but he’d already hit the snooze button on his first alarm. He cracked open one eye and looked at the time. He’d need to get up and moving soon if he wanted to get food, check in with engineering, and get to the bridge on time for his first official day as acting captain. It would be interesting to see if he could do this outside of a crisis situation.

As Jim got up and went through his morning routine, his mind wandered back to the previous night. Once he and Spock had finished their work on the duty roster and the first shift change happened, Jim had met up with Bones for dinner. Jim was a bit worried that his friend would badger him about his health, but luckily Bones seemed as tired as Jim so he didn’t bring up anything, even the abnormal readings he’d gotten which Jim was pretty sure was a sign of his aging, not that he was ready to tell Bones that.

And then it was off to the Captain’s Quarters. Jim still felt a little weird about staying there. He’d spent a while sitting at the desk, deliberating if he should take the bed or not. It still felt like it should be someone else’s quarters, and Jim had always felt weird sleeping in someone else’s bed, unless of course the other person was there and they’d worn each other out first. But that definitely wasn’t the situation here.

But eventually Jim’s tiredness had won out. Pike had told him it was unlikely he’d be using the quarters anytime soon, so Jim may as well make the most of it.

But he’d needed to get ready before he could sleep, thus a visit to the bathroom. He really hadn’t expected to run into Spock; while he’d seen the other door in the bathroom he hadn’t put much thought into where it led.

All in all, the encounter with Spock wasn’t as awkward as it could have been. Spock had even sortof complimented him. Plus, he got to see Spock out of uniform for the first time, even if Jim assumed were mediation robes.

Jim just hoped that he hadn’t disturbed Spock too much when he’d hopped into the shower afterward. He knew that despite how the worked sonic showers were pretty quiet, but still he didn’t want to disrupt Spock’s unwinding time. Jim needed the shower though. A full day of stress, running, fighting, and strange environments left him feeling a little gross and a lot tired. For once he was missing Iowa, if only because the sonic showers never quite helped relax him the way a nice hot water shower did. And he seriously needed some relaxing today.

He had managed to get to sleep eventually, and thanks to the exhaustion he’d managed to sleep ok.
He was sure that Bones would be bothering him about his sleep eventually.

Jim paused as getting dressed made him switch off of autopilot. He’d have to replicate a shirt since there weren’t any in the closet yet and even if there were, he wasn’t sure if he and Pike were the same size.

What should he do? He was only acting captain and possibly still technically a cadet, so going for the full command gold with captain’s stripes seemed a bit…arrogant. Despite his reputation, Jim was only confident when he knew he’d earned things or was certain he was right. It didn’t feel like he’d really earned this yet. Was there protocol for this? Jim doubted it; as far as he knew it was unpresented for a cadet to get bumped up to such a high position.

Ultimately Jim opted for a command gold shirt without the stripes. After all, he was still command track, so he’d earned that much at least. And at first glance it would probably look fine to most people. Plus, if he was sitting in the captain’s chair people would probably be able to figure out what he was there to do.

Once he was fully dressed, Jim headed out to the mess to get breakfast. He wasn’t sure who’d be there; the shift schedule was skewed by how long everyone had been on duty the day before. They could probably just reset the ship’s day to match, but that didn’t seem like the kind of thing Jim would want to tamper with lightly. Maybe he should talk it over with Spock.

But for now the equivalent of Alpha shift, which would be basically everyone who was on duty for the whole Nero thing, would be starting around 1300 ship’s time.

Jim reached the mess and looked around inside. It was still pretty empty because of the odd time; he’d been exhausted enough that he’d slept through the usual breakfast time but it was still a bit too early for lunch.

So Jim went over to the replicator and paused, unsure what to get since it was too late for breakfast but still felt too early for lunch. Ultimately he opted to just get a burger. Bones might get on his case for not eating healthy, but what Bones didn’t know wouldn’t hurt him.

With the mess so empty, Jim finished eating without talking to anyone. There were a few people on the ship he knew from classes, but no one he knew really well besides Bones and maybe Uhura. Plus with the sudden rank difference, it seemed like there was some sort of weird barrier between him and the others.

Jim went to Engineering next. It wasn’t time for Alpha shift to start yet, but he still wasn’t surprised to find Scotty there. He was doing something to the warp core when Jim walked up.

“Hey Scotty, what’s up?” Jim looked over, trying to figure out what he was doing.

Scotty seemed startled to see him but smiled when he turned around. “Hello Captain.”

Jim looked over the warp core. “What were you doing? I thought we didn’t have a working warp core because of how we had to get out of the black hole.”

“We don’t, but I still wanted to take a look at her.” Scotty smiled at the warp core. “I want to know how this ship works. I don’t plan on going back to Delta Vega and I’d like to stay on this ship if I can.”

“Well,” Jim paused, thinking back to Olson missing the drill and going up in flames. “I know there’s at least one engineering job open on this ship, and since it was your idea that helped us survive I bet people would be willing to listen to where you want to be.”
Scotty’s eyes lit up. “You think so?”

“Probably.” Jim shrugged. “I would offer to put in a good word for you, but since I was in the middle of an academic hearing before this I have no idea where I’ll stand with the Admiralty after this.”

Scotty made a considering face at that. “Well I wasn’t in good standing either, so I guess we’ll see how it turns out.”

Jim smiled at that. “I guess we’ll see.” He looked around. “So how’s the ship doing? Anything I can help with?”

“She’s doing alright. We might want to monitor energy usage since we don’t have a warp core, but right now it’s mostly just repairing battle damage to keep us in good shape.” Scotty looked around. “Not sure what you can do besides keep things running from the bridge.”

“Alright then.” Jim looked around as well. He really didn’t have a reason to stick around anymore, so he may as well get to the bridge. Time to start doing actual captain things. “I’ll see you around Scotty. Feel free to comm me on the bridge if you need anything.”

With that Jim turned around, headed to the turbolift, and started to make his way to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

The shifts are another one of those things that I looked up that's never been fully clarified. It's somewhat established that the standard is 3 shifts per day, so assuming a 24 hour day that would mean 8-hour shifts, which seems ok assuming they get some sort of lunch break or something. But I think this is another fairly mundane thing that never gets stated officially.
The bridge was still pretty empty when Jim got there; he was still a bit early and the only people there were what would have been the night shift, which was always a smaller crew.

Jim relieved the shift’s commanding officer and settled into the captain’s chair. He was a little unsure what he was supposed to be doing. Sure, he’d taken classes about what captains were supposed to do while he was at the Academy, but actually doing something in real life was way different. He knew that there were reports and other things he’d need to do at some point, but was he supposed to save them for after his shift? There wasn’t exactly a convenient console attached to the chair, so he’d need a padd if he really wanted to work on anything. Or was he just supposed to sit here, watch what everyone else was doing all shift, and wait for something to demand his attention? It would leave him more ready to respond if anything did come up, but that also seemed super unproductive.

Well there wasn’t much to do now, so Jim decided to just sit in the chair and watch for how. He could always get something to work on later in his shift if he felt too unproductive.

Slowly but steadily the rest of the Alpha shift bridge crew came in and relieved their counterparts. Jim couldn’t help but notice that Spock and Uhura arrived together, but he tried not to let himself think too much of it. They’d probably just gotten lunch together or something. He was on duty; he shouldn’t let himself get distracted by thinking about the personal life of anyone on the crew, not even if they were his soulmate.

It’s not like he and Spock were going to getting together anytime soon anyway. Jim wasn’t even completely sure at this point if he wanted to get together with Spock. Sure, their counterparts had had some sort of epic love story for the ages, but that didn’t necessarily mean anything here. He and Spock seemed to have a pretty good working relationship once they’d gotten past the initial bad blood between them, but Jim still wasn’t sure if he actually liked Spock or if it was just residual emotional transference from that mind meld with Older Spock. And Spock was still pretty standoffish toward him. Not exactly the kind of thing that made for epic love stories. Plus, they barely knew each other still. And of course, Spock was dating Uhura.

Jim realized he was doing the very thing he’d told himself not to do and letting himself get distracted by thoughts of personal matters. More his own than other people’s, but still. He needed to focus. There was probably some ship business that needed to be attended to.

He spun in the chair toward Uhura’s station. “Good afternoon, Lieutenant.” He waited for her to turn around to face him. “Any response yet to our message with our location and status?”
She tapped through her console then shook her head. “Nothing yet.”

“Alright then.” Jim shifted in his chair. “Keep broadcasting on all Federation frequencies and let me know if we hear anything.”

“Yes sir.” She turned back to her console.

Jim spun back around to face the front of the bridge. Not much to do but watch the stars go by now. He’d already checked on engineering and communications, which seemed like the only things that were really important to monitor now. May as well get comfortable and stare out the viewscreen until someone needed something from him, however long that would be.

Someone ended up needing something sooner than he’d expected. Less than an hour into the shift, Spock came and stood next to the chair. “Captain.”

Jim straightened up from where he’d been starting to slouch and turned to face Spock. “Hey there Spock. What’s up?”

“I would like to inquire about the position of Chief Science Officer.” Spock was standing perfectly upright with his hands behind his back like usual. Jim wondered what he would look like more relaxed. Or what it would take to make him relax…“If you do not have someone else selected, I would like to be reinstated in the position.”

Jim had to reign his thoughts in for a moment. They were talking about the position of Chief Science Officer, not any positions related to relaxing. “Did that not come up when we were doing duty rosters last night?”

“It did not.” Spock shifted slightly. “As the position is still open and I held it under Captain Pike, I would like to formally submit myself for your consideration.”

“Well you’re currently running unopposed, and you’re both highly qualified and have done this before.” Jim shrugged a bit, trying to keep himself on task now. “I see no reason not to reinstate you. Consider yourself acting First Officer and Chief Science Officer for the remainder of…” Jim paused, unsure what to call whatever they were on now; ‘mission’ didn’t seem like the right word anymore, but nothing else really fit either. “Until we get back to Earth.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. “Do you intend to select a different science officer or first officer upon our return to Earth?”

“I don’t know.” Jim looked away, unable to meet those deep brown eyes suddenly. “It’s more that I think Starfleet will want to select a new captain, which would make my choices for who does what not matter much. We’ll see I guess.”

Spock raised his eyebrow again and Jim became aware of most of the bridge crew either listening in or outright watching them. So much for his reputation of complete confidence. He glanced around the bridge, noticing how everyone tried to look away and act like they weren’t just eavesdropping, before looking back to Spock. “Is there anything else?”

“No captain, that will be all.” Spock stood still, waiting to be dismissed.

“Alright then.” Jim nodded at him. “As you were.” He watched Spock walk away, making sure his gaze wasn’t lingering too much because he was on the bridge and eyeballing your first officer didn’t seem like the best way to set a professional atmosphere. His brain’s comments about Spock ‘submitting himself for consideration’ be damned.
When he turned back to the viewscreen Jim saw that Sulu and Chekov were both looking back at him in a way that was probably supposed to be subtle. “What is it?”

They looked back and forth between each other for a moment before Chekov looked forward and Sulu turned back to look at him. The helmsman seemed like he was trying too hard to be nonchalant. “Nothing.”

“Okay…” There was definitely something. Jim could tell. “As you were then.”

“Yessir.” Sulu turned back to the helm, leaving Jim wondering what was going on. He really hoped that they weren’t picking up on him staring at Spock. Because while Jim wasn’t sure if he liked him, he was definitely attracted to Spock on a physical level if nothing else.

Chapter End Notes

Tbh I think one of the funniest things about the TOS Enterprise is that the captain's chair is 100% canonically a spinning chair, as evidenced by many scenes, including one where Spock had the conn and a message came in. The comm was on the armrest opposite where he was standing so he just spins the chair to get the armrest next to him rather than taking the two steps it would take to walk to that side of the chair. That show never takes itself too seriously, which is part of what I love about it.
Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

First off, there was just another kudos bump and now this is at over 500 kudos?? I genuinely am in disbelief that there are that many of you out there leaving kudos on this. There were also a lot of comments last chapter, because apparently there are a lot of stupendous individuals reading this fic. Basically, another shout out/thank you to all of you awesome people.

Now, let's see what Sulu and Chekov were acting weird about...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim would find out what was going on a few hours later when it was time to take his lunch break, which fell closer to dinner with how off all of their shifts were. He’d just settled down at a table with his replicated dinner when Sulu and Chekov appeared across from him.

“Can we join you?” Sulu spoke up first.

“Of course.” Jim gestured to the open seats around him. “Sit wherever you like.”

“Thank you Keptin.” Chekov took a seat on the side opposite Jim and Sulu settled next to him, directly across from Jim. “How are you today?”

“I’m good.” They were both acting a bit off. Jim wondered if it had to do with earlier that day on the bridge. The real question was if it was because of the ‘thought Starfleet would take away his captaincy’ thing or the ‘maybe checking out Spock’ thing. Jim wasn’t sure which one he wanted to talk about less. “How about you two?”

They both responded with some variant of “good” or “fine” but still seemed a bit antsy.

“You know, this doesn’t have to be this weird.” Jim put down his fork. “Just because I ended up acting captain doesn’t mean I’m not still that guy who talked too much in all of the basic command classes.” Maybe shifting talk to the Academy could make them avoid more awkward topics.

“We know.” Sulu glanced over at Chekov. “That’s kinda what we wanted to talk about.”

“Do you really think Starfleet will make you give up command?” Chekov’s tone was curious and had something else Jim couldn’t quite place.

So much for avoiding awkward topics. “Like I said before, I don’t know if they will.” Jim took a bite and thought while he chewed. He swallowed and looked between the two of them. “I mean, I wasn’t exactly in great standing with the Admiralty when we left. Just because Pike has a soft spot for me and gave me a field promotion doesn’t mean it’ll stick.”

“But you did save the Earth.” Chekov leaned in, as if he was trying to make Jim understand. “If it was not for you, many people would be dead.”

“Spock was the one who actually got the black hole device away from Nero and destroyed the Narada.” Jim looked down at his food for a moment before looking back up. “He really deserves
“It was your plan though.” Sulu was also looking at him with something Jim couldn’t quite place. “He may have done the actions, but it was under your orders. That counts for something when giving out credit. Or promotions.”

“Weirdly enough, that’s what Spock said too, minus the bit about the promotions.” Jim took another bite and washed it down with a sip of his drink. “Still, it’s not like I was some brilliant tactician doing this all on my own though. We all came up with that plan together.” He gestured at Chekov. “You were the one who came up with how to sneak up on them. Without you we wouldn’t have been able to do anything without getting destroyed first.”

“Thank you.” Chekov beamed for a moment before his expression settled. “Still, you were the one who decided to go after Nero. It was your initial plan, so you should get the credit. Starfleet will see that.”

Jim sighed. “Field promotions don’t always last, guys. Especially not cadets becoming acting captains. That kinda thing probably isn’t even supposed to happen in the first place.”

“Well whether it is supposed to happen or not, it did work out.” Chekov smiled at him encouragingly. “Do not put yourself down so much; you have been a great keptin.”

Jim smiled back at him. “I’ll trust your assessment more when I’ve been captain for over a day.”

“You will be good.” Chekov nodded at him. “I have faith in you.”

“Thanks.” Jim turned to Sulu with something that felt closer to his old confident smirk. “Are you gonna get in on this too, Sulu?”

“I don’t know.” Sulu shrugged, but his expression was friendly. “I think the kind of guy who would risk his life to save mine by jumping off of a drill toward an imploding planet is the kind of guy I’d be willing to take orders from.” He paused to think. “Actually, that was super reckless, but you saved my life so I can’t complain.” He laughed a bit as he went back to his lunch.

“You’ve definitely got me on the reckless thing.” Jim smiled and sat for a moment with his jaw propped on his fist. “That’s part of why I decided to make Spock first officer. I figured he could balance me out some, although I doubt there will be too many major decisions to make now that we’re just coasting toward Earth.”

“So he is the first officer?” Chekov looked interested.

“Yeah.” Jim thought back over the day. “Is there something I need to do to make that official? I keep forgetting all the paperwork steps that there are for everything.”

“I don’t know.” Sulu shrugged. “Pike would probably be the one to ask.”

“Good idea.” Jim started to mentally plan out the rest of his day. “I’ll go do that after my shift, assuming they’ll still be letting visitors into Sickbay then.”

“You could always go during.” Sulu looked at him earnestly. “You already handed the conn off to Spock to come here; you could just leave it with him a while longer while you go to Sickbay. It’s technically ship’s business, so it’s not like you’d be wasting duty time.”

“That’s true; I think Spock can handle the ship a while longer.” Jim was basically done eating at this point; he may as well head to Sickbay. “Can you two pass the message along to him or do you think
I should comm the bridge?"

“We can tell him.” Chekov was still finishing up so he stayed seated. “Although if you want, you could comm him.”

“Nah, I’ll let you two let him know.” Jim stood up and smiled at them. “Thanks for joining me and everything.”

“No problem.” Sulu smiled back at him. “Let us know how Pike is once you get back to the bridge.”

“Sure thing.” Jim nodded at them as he dropped off his tray and headed back out of the mess hall toward Sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

Someday this fic will answer questions in a way that isn’t horribly vague, but today isn’t that day. Although I do sometimes get less vague while answering questions in the comments. But still, as my amazing repeat commenters could probably tell you, even there there are no promises of specific answers.
Chapter 48

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I got a record number of commenters last chapter, which means that maybe I should promise vague spoilers more often. (BTW, they're basically always on the table. Just saying.) Anyway, all of you are awesome. I know I say it a lot, which probably makes me sound like a broken record, but I really do appreciate all the support this fic gets, whether it's the awesome comments, the miraculously continuing bookmarks and kudos, or the people who read each week. You're the best.

Anyway, this chapter officially makes this fic my longest fic on Ao3 (and probably ever, seeing as my unposted stuff is generally unfinished and short and I don't really post anywhere else), meaning that this fic is officially topping my stats in all categories on here. So confetti I guess

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The first person Jim saw when he got to Sickbay was Bones. He really shouldn’t have been surprised by that; it was where Bones worked after all and Jim himself had set up the duty roster assigning him this shift. Still, as much as Jim loved his best friend that wasn’t what he was here for. It was too late though; Bones had already spotted him.

“Well look who actually showed up on their own instead of getting dragged here.” Bones crossed his arms over his chest and his expression looked smug. “I know I told you to come back so I could monitor those anomalous readings, but I honestly didn’t expect you to come in of your own volition, the next day no less.”

“Sorry Bones.” Jim grinned. “But I’m out of your clutches for now. I’m on duty and here on ship’s business.” He waved the padd he’d brought as if that would prove his point to Bones. “I can’t take the time for another physical; I need to talk to Pike again. Is he up?”

Bones’ eyebrow rose and his expression shifted from smug to distinctly unimpressed. “I should have known it. Although you know, I could argue that the health of the acting captain is ship’s business, which would mean that being on duty wouldn’t be a valid excuse. I think it may even be within the regulations that I could order you to do it.”

“Wow, only a day in and you’re already abusing your powers as CMO.” Jim tried to look serious but his expression broke and he smiled at his friend. “Seriously though, I do have to talk to Pike. And you told me my check-ups could be weekly. I already got checked out this week if you count yesterday, so I’m free even by your rules.”

“I told you you could come in more often than that and you know it.” Bones was scowling, but in a why-do-I-care-about-you-you-idiot way and not in a genuinely angry way so Jim just grinned back.

“Yeah, but you said I should do that if I felt like I needed to. I feel fine.” Jim hoped that this wasn’t just making Bones more suspicious. Maybe Jim should just come clean about the aging thing; Bones would know soon enough anyway. Plus, finding your soulmate seemed like the sort of thing you tell your best friend about, even if in this case it didn’t seem like one of those meant-to-be romances. Maybe it would be better to not tell Bones yet. After all, all he was going off of was that weird
feeling that seemed significant when he and Spock first made eye contact at the hearing. And also Older Spock’s account of things in his timeline. And the fact that he and Spock seemed drawn to each other and worked really well together. Or at least Jim felt a little drawn to him; it was still hard to tell on Spock’s end. OK so maybe there was at least some evidence. It didn’t mean that Jim had to tell Bones. Besides, he was here on ship’s business. “Anyway, I did come here for a reason besides bothering you or getting bothered. Can I talk to Pike?”

Bones grumbled a bit but nodded. “I’ll see if he’s in any state to see visitors, but last time I checked, which wasn’t long ago, he was awake and seemed to be in good shape. Follow me.” With that his friend turned and walked deeper into Sickbay, back toward the curtained off bit where Pike was. When he and Jim arrived Bones held up his hand to make Jim stop before going in to check on Pike.

After a moment Bones reemerged, seeming having decided that Pike was actually in good enough shape to receive visitors. He crossed his arms over his chest and gave Jim a stern look. “Alright, you can go in there, but nothing too strenuous. If I think you’re working him up too much, I won’t hesitate to kick you out. Or give you a physical.”

Jim nodded, deciding that the latter would probably be worse. “Dully noted. Can I see him now?”

Bones stood blocking his way for a moment longer before uncrossing his arms and stepping aside with a small sigh. “Go ahead. Just don’t make a habit of bothering my patients in the future.”

“I think I’m bothering you more than I’m bothering him.” Jim grinned at Bones. “I bet Pike finds a friendly face refreshing after getting that scowl all day.”

Bones mumbled something in response, but Jim didn’t hear because his friend had started to walk away and he had started to walk into Pike’s area.

Pike looked about the same as he had the day before; while he was definitely better than he had been when Jim found him aboard the Narada, but he would still have a while to go before he was back to peak shape. If he ever would get back into peak shape. Jim hadn’t managed to get the specifics out of Bones the night before at dinner because Bones had started to evoke doctor-patient confidentiality to get Jim to stop asking questions, but it sounded like Pike was seriously affected by his time on the Narada in a way that would have long term consequences.

Still, for now he was awake and alert and hopefully ready to answer Jim’s questions. Jim took the seat next to the bed, setting his padd next to him, and nodded at Pike. “Captain.”

Pike nodded back and smiled a little, clearly happy to have a visitor. “Captain.”

“Acting captain.” Jim wasn’t quite sure why he felt the need to correct Pike, but it felt like he should.

“Regardless of rank, anyone in command of a ship gets called captain.” Pike had a certain proud expression that made Jim feel both happy and a little uneasy because he didn’t feel that he’d earned it. “You should know that; it’s an old rule.”

Jim shrugged. “I’ve heard of it. Not like I’d really served on a ship prior to this and gotten to put it into practice though.”

“I guess that’s true.” Pike nodded before his eyes went down to Jim’s sleeves and his eyebrows rose. “Where are your stripes?”

Jim felt a little awkward then and covered the wrist of one hand with the other. “I didn’t add any when I got the shirt out of the replicator. While I may be holding that position on the ship, I feel like I haven’t quite earned that rank yet.” Jim sat back and ran a hand through his hair. “I mean, just a
couple of days ago I was a cadet. If you told me that over the course of a day I would skip over three
ranks and go straight to captain I probably would have laughed in your face.” He remembered who
he was talking to and his eyes snapped back to Pike’s face. “No offence, sir.”

Pike seemed to pick up on his discomfort a bit and smiled at him to let him know it was ok. “None
taken. And while your rise in rank was a bit more meteoric than most, I still think you deserve it.
And I get you not feeling ready, but honestly I don’t think anyone truly feels ready. There’s always
going to be something to catch you off guard, but I think you have the ability to adapt in a way that
some others may lack. You’re going to be a good captain, Jim.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at Pike and it felt a little more genuine this time, a little bit of his nerves gone.
“It helps having you here so I can ask you questions.” Jim shifted in his seat, sitting up a little
straighter. “That’s actually why I’m here. Unfortunately this is a business visit, not a social one.”

“That’s alright.” Pike nodded at him. “Fire away.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at him. “I’ve got a couple, so this may be a while.”

Pike smiled back at him. “It’s ok, I’ve got the time.”

Jim nodded and pulled out his padd, ready to start going over his questions.

Chapter End Notes

I added Jim and Pike as a friendship to the tags for this because I really like their
relationship so it'll probably figure in a bit more. He's such a great mentor/father figure
to Jim and I feel like that's something that Jim really needs.

Also, more bantering between Jim and Bones because I love that dynamic too.

We will get back to Jim and Spock eventually; I just think it's good for people to have
social circles and like exploring different dynamics.
Hello everyone! You seem to like Pike and Jim, so this chapter ended up being more of that. This is not necessarily the chapter I intended, but sometimes it seems like fics have minds of their own.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It took Jim a little while to get through all the questions he had for Pike. But now he knew all the proper paperwork he needed to do, the right procedure for certain situations, and all of those other things that you really only learned once you made captain. He leaned back and set aside the padd. “Thanks for… all of that. While I wish it was under better circumstances, it really is nice having you on board.”

“I’m glad that I could help you out.” Pike smiled at him, but it was a small smile and Jim realized how tired Pike looked. He hoped Bones wouldn’t bother him about wearing out his patient.

“You really have helped a lot.” Jim glanced down at his padd that now held his command cheat sheet. “I think I was more productive in the time I spent here than I was in the whole first half of my shift while I was on the bridge. I don’t know if there was anything else I was supposed to do, but just sitting there I felt like I was there for decoration.”

Pike laughed softly at that. “It can feel that way before the paperwork starts to pile up on you. Even then a lot of captains still just spend their bridge time waiting for an emergency to react to or just being in a set place so the crew knows where to find them if they need anything.” He smiled a bit and something wistful entered his eyes. “The quiet times can be nice. When there’s nothing but you, your crew, your ship, and all the stars out there to explore. It’s hard to grow used to a sight like that. It’s one of the best things there is.”

It was Jim’s turn to offer a comforting smile. He put his hand on Pike’s and squeezed softly. “I’m sure you’ll end up on a bridge again someday. I doubt Starfleet would ground you just because you got injured.”

Pike’s answering smile had something a little bittersweet in it. “It may be time for me to be Earthbound, Jim. I’m not as young as I once was, and I think Starfleet is going to want a lot of people close to home to help them sort out what to do next.”

“You aren’t that old. You haven’t even hit forty physically yet, have you?” Jim addressed the only part he could; he didn’t want to consider a Starfleet that restricted their exploration just because of what they might encounter.

“Not physically, but my actual age is past that.” Pike smiled at him. “Maybe they’ll put me in recruiting. After all, I did find the kid who went on to save Earth.” A gentle pride shone from his eyes.

“Nah.” Jim smiled and hoped he wasn’t blushing; he wasn’t used to someone being this… soft toward him. Even his mom didn’t usually get this emotional with him. “It was a group effort; I couldn’t have done this without the crew. Which you put together I might add, so that’s more points
toward you being a good captain.”

“Or it shows that I’m good at spotting young people with promise.” The pride hadn’t left Pike’s eyes.

This was getting a little too sappy for Jim. “Are you gonna keep breaking up bar fights to find people? Because as someone who has been in a few, I don’t think all of the people involved should be Starfleet contenders.”

Pike laughed. “No, I’ll only go after the ones with famous parents.” Despite the joke a more serious mood fell over the room. After a moment Pike spoke up again, this time looking away from Jim with his voice quiet. “He would have been proud of you.”

Jim found himself suddenly unable to take his eyes off of his hands in his lap, the command gold instead of the cadet red of a few days ago a little jarring now. “Thanks. I’ll have to take your word for it.”

“He would have been.” Pike reached out toward Jim and paused until Jim was looking him in the eyes. “You’re a good man and you saved a lot of people. You’re gonna be a great captain. He’d be proud of you.”

Jim dropped his eyes again. “Thanks.”

“And while I’m sure it’s already come across, I’m proud of you too.” Jim glanced up and saw the sincerity on Pike’s face. “I meant what I said, Jim. You’re gonna be great.”

“Thank you.” Jim took a deep breath then grabbed the padd next to him again and looked back at Pike, trying to smile to cover up the mood he’d slipped into. “Any last captain tips?” He smiled, a little more genuine this time. “I say that as if I’m not going to keep coming back here to see you.”

“Well, I’ll be here if you need me. And even if I’m not on the ship, I’ll just be a comm line away.” Pike smiled at him. “As for advice, keep doing what you’re doing. Care about your crew, trust your gut, and listen to your officers. Pick a first you can trust and rely on who will balance you out so you’re stronger together.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded. “I think I’m good there.”

“I’ll admit, I was a little hesitant about you choosing Spock after I heard what happened.” Pike’s expression was serious but his eyes were still gentle. “But after hearing a little more from other people who have come in and having some time to think it over, I think you two could be good together. He can keep you from being too reckless and won’t back down just because you’re being stubborn. You’ll challenge him a bit too and be ready to act when necessary for the times logic isn’t enough. I think you’ll both help each other grow to be better officers and people.”

Jim tried to stop himself from blushing, thinking of how those words could also fit for a soulmate pair rather than just for a command team. “Thanks. Your approval means a lot to me.”

“Well, you’ve got it.” Pike smiled at him.

Jim cleared his throat and shifted in his seat. “I should probably be getting back to the bridge.”

“Alright.” Pike shifted a bit as well. “I bet your doctor friend is starting to lurk out there waiting to check on me anyway. I’m sure he’ll have some complaints about how long we spent talking.”

Jim laughed. “Yeah, Bones could probably work on his bedside manner a bit, but I trust him as a doctor. He’s good at what he does.”
Pike nodded. “He probably saved my life, so no disagreement here.”

“Why do I get the feeling I’m being talked about?” Both captains turned to see Bones standing at the opening to the curtain with his arms crossed over his chest.

His friend was sounding his usual grumpy rather than actually annoyed, so Jim just smiled. “Were you eavesdropping out there Bones?”

“No.” Bones stayed where he was and his expression didn’t shift. “I was just waiting for you to finish bothering my patient. I’ve done the rest of my rounds and need to check on him.”

“I assure you doctor, he wasn’t bothering me, just keeping me company.” Pike looked at him before turning back to Jim. “We were just about done though, right?”

“Yeah, I think I’ve got everything.” Jim skimmed over what he’d written on the padd before looking back at Pike. “Thanks again.”

Pike’s expression softened. “No problem. I’m happy to help.”

Jim adjusted his grip on the padd and stood up. “I’ll see you later, or at some point.”

Pike nodded. “See you Jim.”

Jim nodded at him once more before starting to leave.

As he passed Bones his friend put a hand on his arm to stop him. “By the way, the hobgoblin commed Sickbay trying to reach you, maybe about ten minutes ago. I told him you were with Pike.”

“Thanks for letting me know. I’ll comm him before I head up.” With one last glance toward Pike and Bones, Jim nodded at them both in parting before heading out of Sickbay. He wondered what Spock wanted to talk about.

Chapter End Notes

So this got way more emotional than I intended. Apparently this story just wants to get emotional.

Also, I don't know if there's anything in canon that could actually support it, but for this fic I'm going with the headcanon that Pike knew George Kirk. They weren't necessarily besties or anything, but they were at the Academy at the same time and had more than just vague familiarity with each other.
Chapter 50

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I can't believe we're already at chapter 50! I would say it feels like just yesterday that I started writing this, but I had the idea for a long time and had the beginning planned out for a while before the 50th anniversary motivated me to actually start posting and keep working on this. It does feel like it was only yesterday that I started posting though. And I gotta say, when I started posting I was expecting maybe 10 people to read this. The response for this really does amaze me.

I think at least one of you has said that you like it when we get inside people's heads and/or that you like Jim angst, so here's a little bit of that.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim stopped at one of the hallway comm panels between Sickbay and the turbolifts. “Kirk to Spock.”

After a moment he got a reply. “This is Spock.”

“Hey Spock.” Jim paused, feeling oddly like a teenage girl making a phone call in one of the old movies he watched as a kid. “I heard you were trying to comm me earlier. What’s up?”

“You had not returned after your meal.” Jim wondered if Spock was in the captain’s chair or if he was at the science station. It would probably be easier to talk at the captain’s chair. The comm in the armrest could come in handy. “I was curious as to your current location and activities.”

“I went to see Pike in Sickbay. Didn’t Chekov or Sulu tell you?” Jim could have sworn that they’d said they’d tell Spock for him. Should he have commed anyway? Was he violating some protocol?

“I was informed.” Spock paused for a moment. “What was the purpose of your meeting with Pike?”

Did Spock think he was playing hooky on his first day as captain? “I had some questions for him about official business.” Jim wasn’t sure if that sounded too vague or questionable. “Just a few captaincy matters.”

“I see.”

Jim wished he were back on the bridge; as unreadable as Spock’s face could be it was still better than just his voice. He couldn’t tell if that was Spock’s usual neutrality or if he was disapproving of Jim. It wasn’t like he really could claim to know what was normal for Spock anyway; they’d known each other for such a short time. “Well, I’m done meeting with Pike now, so I’m headed back to the bridge. I should be up momentarily.” Jim paused, unsure if he was supposed to give Spock time to respond or not. He was probably fine; he’d be on the bridge within minutes anyway. “Kirk out.” He shut down the comm line and headed to the turbolift.

As the turbolift took him to the bridge, Jim found himself thinking of Spock once more. He was really wondering at this point how much of what he felt for Spock was really him and how much was residual emotional transfer from the meld with Older Spock. He’d considered Spock physically attractive from the moment he’d stood up in that oh-so-flattering instructor’s uniform at the hearing.
but Jim really wasn’t the type to claim love at first sight. Lust maybe, but not love.

Still, he couldn’t deny that there was more than that now. He was starting to trust Spock and rely on him far faster than Jim normally would with anyone. Was it because Older Spock set him up to expect friendship with Spock? Prior to his encounter in the ice cave he’d kinda hated Spock’s guts. But they’d also worked all of that out together and started to work together as a team almost perfectly despite knowing each other for such a short time. That had to mean something, right?

But Jim didn’t know if he was idealizing things either. As soon as he’d seen that amazing, epic love story in Older Spock’s meld there was something deep inside him that started to long for it, almost crave it. But was that making him try to force things between him and Spock? It wasn’t even like they could get together now; Spock was with Uhura and Jim didn’t want to start their relationship with him being a homewrecker. Despite what some people might think because of his reputation for sleeping around, there were some things Jim didn’t do.

Still, Older Spock and his Jim had started as friends. Their relationship had a strong platonic foundation and grew from there. They’d been friends, then become as close as brothers, and then they were lovers.

The turbolift doors opened and Jim decided that this wasn’t the kind of thing he should be thinking about around his telepathic first officer. He knew Vulcans were touch telepaths and that Spock shouldn’t be able to pick up his thoughts without physical contact, but Jim didn’t want to take any risks if their minds really were as compatible as Older Spock said.

Jim paused at the back of the bridge and looked over the bridge crew. Most people were either working at their stations or talking quietly to the person next to them. Older Spock and his Jim had had much of the same crew. If that was a universal constant, or at least a parallel between this universe and theirs, what if Jim and Spock were too?

And he’d said he wasn’t going to think about that on the bridge. Jim should keep his mind to captain things. Like the crew. They were a great group of people and they’d been through a lot together. The day Jim made captain, whenever that would be, he was going to try to bring this crew together again.

At that point Spock turned around in the captain’s chair and stood up when he saw who it was. “Captain.”

“Mr. Spock.” Jim nodded his head in greeting and walked up to the center of the bridge. “How’ve things been?”

“The crew and ship are performing well. We have encountered no anomalies and have received no answer to our communications.” Spock stepped aside as Jim got to the chair and sat down.

“Keep broadcasting on all Federation frequencies, and maybe throw in some other ones if you think it’ll help. They’ve gotta be looking for us.” Jim looked over at Uhura, who had looked over when he returned to the bridge but nodded and went back to her station now. Jim really hoped that they actually did have people looking for them; while it wasn’t generally Starfleet policy to give up on people without a thorough search first, it was possible that now all of their attention would be focused on finding survivors around Vulcan, both from the planet and the wrecked ships. Plus the rest of the fleet had been so far away, which is why they’d scrambled cadets and untried ships to Vulcan in the first place. Jim noticed that Spock was still standing next to him. “Anything else, Mr. Spock?”

“Yes.” Spock shifted slightly and if Jim didn’t know better he’d say Spock seemed worried or concerned. “What is the current state of Captain Pike?”
Jim slumped a little in his seat but tried to straighten up before anyone saw it. Pike had told him that he could be permanently affected by what had happened, but Jim wasn’t sure if Pike wanted everyone to know that. “He’s still recovering. He looks better than he did yesterday, but I think it’ll still be a while for him.”

Spock nodded and it seemed like the rest of the crew had been listening intently as well. Jim hoped that one day he’d be able to command that sort of loyalty from a crew.

“Alright then.” Jim consciously sat up in the chair. “I’ll let you get back to the science station now. When we’re just drifting along like this it’s probably more interesting than the captain’s chair is anyway.”

Spock’s answering expression was unreadable. Jim honestly wasn’t sure how he would have responded if their positions had been reversed. Had he really just made it sound like he didn’t want to be in the captain’s chair?

He put on his biggest grin to cover it up. “Or at least, that’s how I imagine it is for you. I’m perfectly happy where I am.” Ignoring his own insecurities that might invalidate that, Jim spun the captain’s chair around to indicate that the conversation was done and pulled out his padd. If he was going over his notes from Pike he wouldn’t have to see if anyone was judging him for panicking because of what he first said or being for too cocky because of what he’d just said.

He’d figure this out eventually, right?

Chapter End Notes

Bonus points to you if you catch the one sentence here I’m especially proud of myself for.
Chapter 51

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We're getting a scene I'd thought about for a while that'll be emotional, so prepare yourselves. I promise Jim will get out of this funk eventually, but it's getting a little worse before it gets better. But for now, ever have those days where you're in a funk and you just overshare? That's where Jim is.

There's some warnings in the end note; this chapter's not gonna be a happy one.

After his official day of captain and all the awkward moments it entailed, Jim just wanted to be somewhere he could relax and not embarrass himself in front of the crew anymore. That ruled out the rec rooms, but Jim didn't feel like going to his cabin either. He decided to find somewhere quiet where he could watch the stars. He'd always liked watching the stars; the one nice thing about the farmhouse in Iowa (besides the water showers) had been that unless he left lights on in or around the house, there was almost no light pollution when he went outside. He'd been able to see so many stars in a way that he generally couldn't when he'd gone to San Francisco to attend the Academy. Back when he'd been growing up in Iowa, he'd just stare at the stars for so long he'd lose track of time, sometimes even falling asleep outside. Some days he'd stare up and wonder which cluster of stars was where he'd been born in; knowing it also served as his dad’s final resting place. Still, no matter what was going on, Jim found some sort of solace in staring up at the stars.

So when he'd heard that there was an observation deck where you could basically just go look at stars, Jim decided to do it. He'd heard that they kept the lights low and dampened most of the ship’s noises so it would be a quiet place perfect for viewing the stars or some quiet contemplation.

He wasn't expecting company, but when he saw Spock there staring out into the black he decided that it could be worse. Maybe Spock just liked staring out at the stars like Jim did. But then he remembered what he'd heard about the last time Spock had been alone and staring at stars, which would have been when he was kamikaze-ing the *Jellyfish* into the *Narada*. Which Jim wanted to talk to him about actually; he wasn't sure if he was way off about this, but something told Jim he might be closer to the truth than he thought if how surprised Spock had looked in the transporter room was any indication. He walked up and stood next to Spock, staying quiet for a moment.

“So how have you been today?” Before Spock could give him a look, Jim held up his hand. “I know, stupid question. You don’t like people to know you have emotions, and if you wanted to talk to anyone I would be pretty far from the top of the list.” Jim turned to look at Spock and wasn’t surprised to find his first officer looking at him with an odd, unreadable expression. “But still, I saw how surprised you were yesterday when Scotty got us all on the transporter pad before the *Narada* was destroyed. And I’ve been there. Not your exact situation, but something similar.”

“I am afraid I do not understand.” Spock’s voice was quiet.

Jim found himself raising an eyebrow. “Afraid?”

“I was using a human expression.” Spock’s eyes shifted back to the stars and his voice dropped a little more. “It was something my mother used to say.”
“Ah.” Jim turned his gaze back to the stars before he could be distracted by that profile illuminated only by their light. “That is sorta what I was here to say. I know I can’t even begin to possibly imagine what you went through, but I heard that you were on a collision course with Nero and showed no signs of stopping or slowing down. I don’t know if you knew the Enterprise would be able to get you or not, but you seemed surprised that you appeared on a transporter pad rather than getting turned into the heart of a singularity. And that’s the bit I do get.” Jim paused, looking around for the nearest bench. The room wasn’t very big but people still liked being able to sit and watch the stars. Once he spotted it he went to sit down. “Come sit with me for a second.”

“Very well.” Spock came and sat stiffly at the opposite end of the bench, keeping distance between himself and Jim.

While he kindof wished Spock would get closer to him, that wasn’t what Jim wanted to focus on now. He looked away from Spock to his own hands, which were loosely together between his knees. “Before I joined Starfleet, I’d only been off Earth once. When I was 13 I got the chance to go to a colony. I was so excited; at that point my mom spent most of her time in space and my brother had already left, so it was just me and my jerk of a stepdad back in Iowa. I would have done anything to get out of there, see the stars, and have an adventure, but I got a little more than I bargained for.” Jim took a deep breath. “The colony I went to was Tarsus IV.” Out of the corner of his eye he saw Spock stiffen even further, going unnaturally still; Jim was glad that it didn’t seem like he’d have to explain too much. “I was there from the start, and I was still there when things got bad. I saw people I knew get called to Kodos’ palace and never come back; it didn’t take a genius to figure out what happened.” He took another deep breath and risked looking over at Spock. “His face, you know? I saw Kodos. No one who saw him made it out, but since I was the hero’s kid they let me go. Didn’t want to cause a scandal if word got out.” Jim looked away before he could see the pity that usually came when he talked about Tarsus. “It wasn’t long after that that the ships arrived. It was too late for half the people there, but I got taken back to Iowa not much worse off than I’d arrived.”

He paused again, getting close to things he really didn’t like to talk about. “My mom stuck around for a bit after that, but she got pulled back into space eventually. My stepdad was better when she was there, but once she was gone it was back to normal. Nothing to protect me there. He didn’t give a shit who my dad was, so it got me wondering why anyone on Tarsus had. Why did I get spared when so many others weren’t as lucky? Why should I get to keep on living?” And now the part Jim really didn’t like talking about. He took another deep breath; he could feel Spock’s eyes boring into his face but couldn’t meet them, staring at his hands on his lap instead. “So my stepdad had this really great antique car. Some people said it used to be my dad’s, but it doesn’t really matter. What matters is I took that old car.” Jim almost laughed; that almost made it seem like this should be one more mark against his record. “I took that old car, and it was a bit of a joyride but I was headed for the old quarry. They’ve dug that thing out real deep, and that old car was a land vehicle, not a hover car.” He glanced over to Spock, but Spock had begun to stare forward out the windows once more. “I was ready to drive that car off the edge of the quarry and never look back. So many others hadn’t made it off of Tarsus, so why did I?” Jim licked his lips and rubbed his hands together; he could almost still feel his white knuckle grip on the steering wheel. “At the last minute, I realized that if I ended it I would be making my dad’s sacrifice that they always held over my head all for nothing. I wasn’t as worried about that, but I also realized that I would be proving Kodos right if I went through with it. I would be showing that I couldn’t survive, just like he’d predicted. And family connections be damned, I wasn’t about to let that bastard win.” Jim took a slow breath, trying to avoid the unpleasant emotions this brought up. “The front wheels were probably already off the edge by the time I opened the door and threw myself towards that cliff. I nearly slid off; I had to cling to it with everything I had to avoid falling.” Another deep breath. Jim looked over at Spock, meeting those deep brown eyes; something was stirring in their depths but Jim was internally relieved that it didn’t seem to be pity or even concern; it almost seemed like understanding. “But I pulled myself up off that cliff because I didn’t want to give the people that wanted me dead the satisfaction. Sometimes
it seemed like that spite was the only thing keeping me going. But it kept me going when I had nothing else.” Jim slowly stood up, not breaking eye contact. “Look, I can’t say if what was going through your head yesterday was the same thing that was going through my head that day. I’m not the telepath here.” He shifted until he was standing in front of Spock, who continued to stare up at him, neither of them breaking eye contact. “What I do know is that Nero wanted you dead, and that if you’d gone through with what you may have been going for, you might have beaten him but he would have known that you hadn’t made it out either, so he would have died satisfied. Don’t let that bastard get the best of you. We can’t let them win. Live to spite him if you have to, but I hope you can find a better reason than that. But at the very least, live. Understand?”

Spock looked like he may have wanted to say something, but eventually he just nodded solemnly.

“Good. You know how to reach me if you did want to talk.” Jim started to walk away, but paused and walked back. “Also, what was shared in this room doesn’t leave this room, alright? I don’t really want everyone knowing…” He trailed off, not sure what exactly was what he wanted kept secret the most.

Before he could decide, Spock interrupted his thoughts. “Understood.” He looked at Jim but his eyes also seemed far away.

“Thanks.” Jim felt his shoulders drop a tension he hadn’t realized they’d taken on. “I’ll just be going then.” With one last nod to Spock, who remained seated on the bench, he walked out of the quiet of the observation deck and back into the bright lights and noise of the ship, although his mind strayed back to the once more lone figure silhouetted by stars.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing actually happens in this chapter itself, but Jim talks about his time on Tarsus, references abuse by his stepfather, and talks rather explicitly about an incomplete suicide attempt (driving off the cliff).

This fic has gotten super dark and sad I feel, but I promise things will get better for them. They say it's always darkest before the dawn, so maybe we're just getting closer to the dawn. Feel free to emote at me in the comments
Hello everyone! This chapter will be from Spock's POV until the break and then from Jim's POV after it because that's just what the fic seemed to want to do. I'd initially intended this fic to be almost entirely from Jim's POV, but it seems like you all like Spock's POV too so I guess it works out.

Also, we aren't quite out of the Jim angst yet because in real life sometime it takes a little bit for weird moods to pass. He'll get there though.

Spock stared out at the stars, unsure what to think. He was still surprised by what Kirk had revealed to him. It added an additional dimension to Kirk to discover that he had been a survivor of Tarsus IV. Spock had overheard reports of the colony from his father, even beyond the media coverage of what had occurred. Although definite numbers were difficult to determine, most reports stated that approximately half of the colonists had been killed under the orders of Governor Kodos. There had been some doubt as to if he was truly responsible because most of the colony had not been told what was happening, being told various cover stories instead. However, a small number of eyewitnesses had heard Kodos ordering deaths and survived.

James Kirk was one of those eyewitnesses. Their identities had been concealed because several of them had been minors and because there was some fear of Kodos’ supporters making an attempt on their lives even though Kodos had been presumed dead. However, no incidents had occurred, or if they had there had been no coverage of it.

But Kirk had made an attempt on his own life. An aborted attempt, but an attempt nonetheless. This was not information that easily fit with the image of Kirk Spock had begun to develop.

And he had seemed to fear that Spock would make an attempt on his own life. Spock had heard of the phenomenon known as survivor’s guilt in humans, but he did not know if the same was true of Vulcans. He supposed that he may not necessarily be immune to problems that afflicted humans however.

A short mental review of the past day’s thoughts and actions could support that conclusion, but Spock did not have sufficient knowledge on the phenomena to be certain.

Kirk’s advice had been solidly based on emotion, but Spock still found himself hesitant to reject it. Perhaps there was a need to address psychological trauma, but that was not a matter Vulcans would speak to others about. However, Spock would monitor his emotional and psychological state more closely.

Despite the clear pain and discomfort it had brought him to speak of the topic, Kirk had been willing to share this with Spock, a person he did not know well, out of concern for Spock. Kirk was truly an odd human.

However, this was not necessarily negative. It showed a level of caring, even to those he did know have a strong connection to, which was valued in many cultures. Spock himself saw it as a beneficial
trait in both a person and a captain.

James T. Kirk was far more complex than Spock had initially presumed. Spock was curious and found himself wishing to know more about Kirk.

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About halfway between the Observation deck and the Captain’s Quarters Jim began to wonder what the hell he’d just done. Even Bones didn’t know the full story of Tarsus and what happened afterward. Admittedly, Jim had hardly told Spock the full story of Tarsus. Still, he told him way more than he’d told anyone else. The only other person who knew that much about Tarsus and after was probably Jim’s mom, but that was really only because she’d been the one who he’d told at the time after a long period of avoiding it.

She’d come back again after the whole incident with the car. Jim had been in his room, trying to avoid Frank as much as possible after he’d found out about the car, but he’d been able to hear the screaming match the two of them had gotten into. He hadn’t been able to make out the words, but he could tell that by the end his mom was doing more of the screaming. By the time he cautiously came downstairs, his mom was on the couch watching a holovid and Frank was nowhere to be seen. He’d never seen Frank after that actually; once his mom got the full story of what went on while she was in space she divorced Frank and had apologized profusely (well, profusely for her) for what Jim had gone through.

She really hadn’t known what was going on back on Earth while she was away; Jim was actually pretty sure of that. He knew other people would have doubted it, but he and his mom and an understanding. They didn’t see each other much, but when they did they didn’t bs each other. Well, initially he’d left out details about Frank, but he’d told her eventually. And they’d both agreed to blame Frank for making Jim think he couldn’t tell.

She’d actually offered to take him into space with her when her leave of absence started to run out. Jim had been tempted, but at the time with Tarsus still fresh in his head he’d decided that it was better to view the stars from afar.

Looking back, Jim almost snorted. Here he was, back in space, almost dying again, desperately trying to protect others again. He just couldn’t get out of this kinda situation, could he?

He’d reached his quarters and went inside, his thoughts wandering back to his mom. She’d also offered to try to track down Sam so Jim could stay with him. Jim suspected that she actually knew where Sam was and was using her connections to check in on him now and then, but he’d never bothered to ask. If Sam wanted to be out of all their lives, he’d be out of all of their lives.

So Jim had stayed in Riverside. Initially she’d set Jim up with a family that she knew that had been old friends of his dad’s. It had been nice, better than Frank for sure, but Jim still felt like he couldn’t stay. He’d felt like he was imposing, even though they always put in effort to make him feel welcome and comfortable. Still, they always looked at him with an odd sort of sad wistfulness; he was expecting a “you look so much like he did” comment every day, and did get those kinds of comments on occasion.

So as soon as he’d reached his late teens, Jim moved back to the old farmhouse. Surprisingly, it was less haunted by the ghost of George Kirk than the rest of Riverside had been, even though he’d lived his whole life there and it’d been where he and Jim’s mom lived when they were married. Still, Jim’s mom had said the place was his if he wanted it and Jim decided to take her up on it. He’d even gone back now and then when he was at the academy, mostly just to check on the place and see the people he’d known while in school.
If or when they made it back to Earth, Jim would have to go back out there. Depending on his fate within Starfleet, he’d either be spending a whole lot of time out there or practically none.

But that was a can of worms Jim really didn’t feel like opening now. Even though he’d already revealed his doubts about his future to the whole bridge crew. He bet the whole ship knew by now; if the ship was anything like a small town, gossip spread fast. And since both were small groups of people isolated from others without a lot to do, the whole damn ship probably knew he was doubting himself by now.

Great. And he’d also gone and opened up about one of the worst experiences of his life to his soulmate who might still hate him. It really wasn’t Jim’s day.

He sighed and ran a hand down his face before flopping onto his stomach on the bed. Today had sucked, but he still had a shift tomorrow. May as well get sleep so he can actually have it together then.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone who doesn't know, Sam is Jim's older brother who runs away in a deleted scene from the '09 movie. He also gets mentioned in one episode of TOS, dies in another, and then promptly gets forgotten (even though his freshly orphaned son was on the Enterprise with Jim, who was possibly his only living family, but the kid also never gets seen again. Trek doesn't do well with kids; they tend to get forgotten). But I digress.

As for Jim and Winona, I always imagine that in this universe they have a relationship that isn't the most traditional, but still close in their own way. It works for them.
Chapter 53

Chapter Notes

As of yesterday we are officially 6 months into this fic! It's hard to believe. So shoutout to everyone following this fic, whether you've been here from the start or if you just found it! I know I keep saying that there are probably several months left in this fic, but when I say slow burn I do mean it. So for those who are going to follow this til the end, I salute you.

Jim woke up before his alarm again. That was probably because the shift rotation was still so off that being up before his shift was probably the easiest it would be for all of his career. Hell, he could get up at noon and still be up in time for Alpha shift. They really needed to fix that. But again, it could probably wait. There wasn’t really an easy fix.

Jim let his mind wander as he got ready. He could talk the shift shift over with… whoever would be best to consult. Spock at the very least, since that seemed like the sort of thing that would concern first officers as well. Possibly the whole group of senior officers, even though most of them were also ungraduated cadets like him at this point. He could talk to Pike, but Jim didn’t want to feel like he was relying on Pike too much. He knew Pike didn’t mind at all, but Jim would still like to be able to feel like he could solve a problem on his own without running to ask for help every time.

But that wasn’t Jim’s main concern for now and he really didn’t want to go down that rabbit hole right now. Today was going to be the day he acted completely professional and captainly. He could do this. Even if it meant sitting on the bridge staring out the viewscreen for hours, he’d do it. After all, this was what he’d made his goal. May as well stick with it. He was gonna prove himself as captain or die trying.

Well, hopefully he wouldn’t die. The day to day of being captain was supposed to just be a lot of sitting in the chair and watching over things with occasional interruptions for handling ship’s business. It sounded like it could even get a little monotonous without the occasional mission or emergency to take up his attention.

But after the day he’d had before, monotonous could be good. Plus, there could always be the excitement of someone actually showing up to rescue them. That would be better than drifting until they had to worry about rationing resources. Jim really wasn’t sure how well he could handle being in charge of people with limited food. It would probably start to bring up unpleasant memories…

Memories he’d told Spock about. Great. At least Vulcans were probably even less likely to bring up emotional things than humans with issues were. So Jim would probably be safe, and he trusted Spock not to go back on his word about telling other people. Jim still wasn’t sure why he trusted Spock so much when they’d known each other such a short period of time and hated each other for half of it, but here they were.

So that only left the problems of captaining the ship and avoiding Bones. With no current mission besides drift home, there really wouldn’t be much for Jim to do on the captain front. That could be good; it might be better than having a lot to handle at once. But nothing to do also meant that Bones probably had nothing to do, which could mean he’d be after Jim sooner than expected. He wouldn’t
put it past Bones. He was just as stubborn as Jim himself, and if he genuinely thought that the abnormal readings could be a sign of something wrong it could drive him to check up on Jim more. Which would make Jim hiding the aging all the more difficult. Bones would have to catch on eventually; all doctors who treated humans were taught signs of aging so they could help people figure out who their soulmates were as soon as possible. Jim’s giant list of potential medical problems could only act as red herrings for so long.

As Jim finished getting ready, he wondered if it would be best to just tell Bones and get it over with. Maybe he could use doctor-patient confidentiality to make Bones not tell anyone. But if he went to Bones and said he wanted to talk to him as a doctor, Jim would be getting hauled to Sickbay before he could even finish his sentence. He could tell Bones as a friend sharing the news, but then Bones might think it’s odd that he didn’t want to tell anyone.

Or maybe not; ever since it cost him his marriage and time with his little girl Bones had been just about as bitter about the soulmate thing as Jim was. He would probably keep it a secret if Jim asked; Jim could trust him.

Jim might just leave out the little detail about who he thought his soulmate was. Most people said they didn’t know right away, right?

By this point Jim had reached the mess hall and went inside. He got breakfast from the replicator and looked around before seeing Bones, who seemed engrossed in whatever padd he was reading.

Jim decided to join him anyway. He plopped his tray down noisily. “Hey Bones.”

His friend glanced at his tray for a moment before turning back to his padd. “Breakfast food at this hour Jim? It’s closer to lunch you know.”

“Don’t judge.” Jim cut off a chunk of his pancakes and chewed with his mouth open just to annoy Bones. “I like breakfast food and it’s not like I was up early enough for normal breakfast hours since the shifts are off. Brunch maybe, but I felt like breakfast food.”

Bones raised an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed. “You could do something about the shifts you know. You are supposed to be in charge.”

“What, and mess up everyone’s days?” Jim took another large bite and shook his head. “I’m not going to do that to everyone.”

“The captain’s supposed to mess with everyone.” Bones still wasn’t looking away from his padd and Jim was half tempted to take it to see what was on it. “It’s basically your job.”

Jim decided to ignore that for now. “What are you reading anyway? You’re looking at that padd like it holds the secrets of the universe.”

“Unless my current patient rotations are essential to the universe, it doesn’t have that.” Bones looked up at Jim finally. “It turns out suddenly becoming CMO when your ship has been through battles and also picked up people from a planet that was getting destroyed makes you pretty busy.”

“Makes sense.” Jim nodded before an idea entered his head. “Too busy to do checkups on certain cadets who become captains?”

“Nope.” Bones stared him down like he knew Jim was trying to avoid him. “Most people are in stable condition and just require monitoring or periodic treatment, which means that I have plenty of time to figure out whatever is going wrong with you this week.”
This could be the moment of truth. Jim could tell Bones he was aging right here and now. But then again, they were in the middle of the mess hall. There was no telling how many people could overhear. Jim really didn’t want to be the subject of gossip more than he already was usually. So he just smirked at Bones. “I’m telling you, I feel fine. The only times I didn’t was when you were hitting me with nonstop hyposprays. And when I was getting beaten up or strangled.”


Jim pretended to be very seriously considering. “Mostly luck probably.” He cracked a smile at Bones. “Probably doesn’t hurt that my best friend is an overprotective doctor.”

“You’re gonna be the death of me.” Bones shook his head in exasperation and looked at his padd again. “Alright kid, I think it’s almost time for our shifts. We should get going.”

“Aww, are you getting too stressed by the thought of my recklessness? Are you trying to get away?” Jim smirked again, not quite done teasing his friend.

“No.” Bones looked his straight in the eye. “I can’t leave you alone for too long anyway. God knows what you’d get up to.”

“I’ll be on the bridge. There’s people to keep me in check there.” Jim grinned at Bones. “But I bet that if I told Sulu to do a barrel roll he’d do it.”

“No.” Bones put down his padd. “If you do that, I would tell the Vulcan to nerve pinch you. I don’t care if that’s mutiny. You’d have to come down to sickbay and help me treat all the injuries and upset stomachs.”

“C’mon Bones.” Jim grinned and tried to hold in his laughter. “There’s artificial gravity. As long as we did it gently you wouldn’t even notice.”

“I’m not afraid to hypospray you and declare you unfit for duty right here.” Bones was glaring but there was still affection there. “You better keep the shenanigans to a minimum.”

“Alright alright.” Jim smiled back. “Minimum shenanigans, I promise.” He glanced at Bones’ padd to check the time. “We probably should be reporting for our shifts. Let’s go.”

They picked up their trays, Bones still mumbling about “idiot captains” and “reckless schemes,” and headed out of the mess hall.

Chapter End Notes

Jim seems pretty determined to keep his aging a secret. Who do you think will find out first?
Chapter 54

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I got a lot of commenters last chapter, which maybe means I should ask questions more often hahaha A lot of you think that Spock will be the first to find out, but we’ll see. He does have a lot going on right now...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim made it to the bridge early enough to get there before his shift started, but still late enough that he wasn’t the first Alpha shift arrival. He walked up to the captain’s chair, surprised its occupant didn’t notice him. “Mr. Spock.”

Spock stood up and turned the chair toward him in one smooth motion as Jim mentally added ‘graceful’ to the list of things he could appreciate about Spock. “Captain .”

“How’s the ship been?” Jim sat down without breaking eye contact with Spock, not entirely sure why. It didn’t feel like a challenging thing either; it just felt natural.

“I arrived on the bridge merely 3.24 minutes prior to you, Captain.” Spock had shifted to stand with his hands behind his back, but didn’t break eye contact with Jim either. “However, the commanding officer of Delta shift, whom I relieved, reported no changes in status from the ship and no messages from elsewhere.”

“Alright then.” Jim finally broke eye contact with Spock to turn the chair toward the viewscreen. “Still drifting along waiting to be found then.”

“Indeed.” Jim glanced over his shoulder to see that Spock was still standing next to the captain’s chair. He was looking out toward the viewscreen but Jim couldn’t help but feel like he was being observed.

“Anything else?” Jim looked up at Spock, waiting for him to look back at Jim. He really hoped Spock wasn’t going to say anything about their conversation on the observation deck.

Spock did look back at him, but his expression was professional; there was no hint of something changing because of their conversation the night before. “No, Captain. I will return to the science station.”

“Sounds good.” Jim held eye contact with Spock. He couldn’t tell who broke it a moment later. He looked back at the slowly passing stars as he heard Spock return to his station.

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The shift dragged on a bit. Jim felt himself wishing he’d brought a padd so he could work on something, even if it was just duty shifts or other ship’s business. He probably even had work to do for some of his classes since they’d been getting close to the end of the term. That all felt like years ago though…

He really needed to stop zoning out. Jim was trying to appear competent and captainly, dammit. He could practically feel members of the crew watching him. They were probably trying to be covert,
but he could still tell.

Spock was definitely watching him. Jim really hoped he wouldn’t regret telling him everything. If it helped Spock, it would probably be worth it, but Jim didn’t like telling people his secrets. He didn’t want them getting out mostly, but he really didn’t think that would be a problem here; he trusted Spock to keep his secrets. It was more that he hated it when people pitied him.

Jim didn’t feel like that would be too much of a problem here though. Yeah, Spock seemed to be looking at him a lot this shift and Jim could practically feel those brown eyes burning a hole into the back of his head, but all that Vulcan emotional control probably ruled out pity. Plus, Spock most likely hated pity as much as Jim did since he was probably getting a ton of pitying looks from the crew with the loss of his planet and his mom. Jim wasn’t sure how many people knew about that last part, but Jim making a scene on the bridge probably hadn’t helped with the gossip on that one. He almost winced but stopped himself last minute since he didn’t want questions from the crew. He knew all of his bruises from his various fights of the past few days were starting to really show now. He’d spent at least part of his time getting ready this morning just poking at them, especially the ones around his neck that his collar just barely managed to not completely cover. So since he was looking a little black and blue, he didn’t want wince in case the crew mistook it for pain. None of them could order him to do anything, but they could still call Bones on him.

And ending up in Sickbay in Bones’ clutches was not what he needed now. If anyone found out he was aging, he’d be the topic of gossip again. But this time it wouldn’t be pity, it would be everyone congratulating him on meeting his soulmate. And then asking him who he thought it was. And that would just get awkward since not only did his soulmate probably just barely tolerate him, his soulmate was also in a relationship. With someone who definitely just barely tolerated him.

Jim resisted the urge to look over at Uhura. She was a great officer and he really wanted her on his ship when or if he got one. But that would mean that he’d have to improve her impression of him so that she’d actually want to work with him, much less be his subordinate. Stealing her boyfriend probably wouldn’t help with that, even if it used to be perfectly acceptable and even encouraged in some places to break up a couple if one of them was your soulmate.

So Jim would have a lot of people to impress. Spock was still pretty high up on the ‘to impress’ list, even if Jim still wasn’t sure if he wanted a romantic relationship or just to have Spock as his first officer. Either way, impressing him would probably be a difficult task; Jim bet he had a long way before Spock would see him as more than the cheating cadet who taunted him about his dead mom.

He really had made a bad impression there, hadn’t he? It was gonna take a lot to make that up. Jim had heard that despite swearing off emotion, Vulcans could still hold grudges like no one else.

So yeah, even if he just wanted a working relationship with some of the people on this bridge Jim would have a lot of work to do. His first impressions with most of them were pretty horrible.

Well, he was starting to try to change their views now. He was going to be a competent and professional captain. It could take time but he’d fix the image some of them had of him. Jim knew his reputation. People thought he was just arrogant, immature, maybe even nothing more than a womanizer (even though gender had never really been an obstacle for him). He’d even heard some people saying he’d only made it into the academy because of his dad or because of Pike’s favoritism.

There may be a little bit of truth to that last one; he knew that Pike had streamlined the process for him a little bit and that people who were legacies had an easier time getting into the academy. But still, once he was there he’d worked hard and showed that he deserved to be there.

And that was what he’d do now. Some people might think that Jim was only captain because Pike
liked him, and there may be a little favoritism at play, but Jim would show that he deserved to be there. This was what he’d been training for the past few years after all.

Jim could do this. He’d prove to everyone that he deserved to be captain.

Chapter End Notes

Jim still has to learn the lesson that people are generally more chill and less judgmental about you than you’d imagine. He’ll get there.

Also, good news for all of you: I was on break from school last week and I was able to get ahead of this fic a lot more! This should mean fewer last minute updates, but life does often have a way of getting in the way. Also a lot of what I wrote was for stuff much later in the fic, which I'm excited for us to reach. A lot of the later segments of this story are now more concretely planned out, so get excited...
Hello everyone! We're still with Jim this chapter. More getting to see how things are as the Enterprise awaits rescue.

That shift ended up passing uneventfully. So did the next few shifts after it. Slowly but surely, everyone was settling into a rhythm, even with the weird shift schedule.

The crew was doing well. Even though this had been the first real assignment for most of them, everyone was adjusting to life on a starship with real duties instead of the busywork cadets usually got during their mandatory duty term.

The science people were probably the closest to enjoying what they were doing. Or at least, the physicists were. While they all talked about it very carefully since it had been their commanding officer’s planet that got destroyed, a lot of them were clearly excited to go over the data the ship’s sensors had gathered during the conflict with Nero. It would probably yield some of the most interesting papers on gravity and singularities in years, although Jim bet that they were a long way from figuring out how the red matter worked. It probably would have been easier if they’d gotten ahold of a sample of it, but Jim thought that it was for the best that all the red matter got destroyed. They’d already seen the kind of havoc that a single drop of it could wreak; the less risk of it falling into the wrong hands again the better.

The rest of the ship was generally more occupied with mundane things; everyone in communications was just trying to see if anyone had responded to them yet. Jim didn’t envy them for that; doing nothing but sending out the same message and waiting for a response would have to get monotonous after a while.

Engineering had the difficult task of keeping the ship running without a functioning warp core. They were doing the best they could, but Jim was betting that the energy reserves they had would start running low soon. He made a mental note to check in with Scotty about if they should start cutting back on anything soon. It was a little difficult because most of the things considered non-essential for the ship’s functioning were the kinds of things keeping the crew calm and entertained, like trying new replicator meals, running experiments and simulations, or spending excess time in the rec rooms. Jim really hoped they would be found before their energy levels got low enough that he’d have to start cordoning off decks or handing out rations. Anything like a food shortage still made him… uncomfortable.

Sickbay was probably the next busiest area. Between the people they’d evacuated off of Vulcan and the people injured the various times the ship had been hit, there were a number of people in there for more long term care. There were also a number of people coming in for smaller things, mostly when people were looking for different ways to destress after what they’d been through or trying to kill their boredom and got a little bit too reckless. If this continued for too long Jim was sure Bones would be on him about making an announcement to the crew about safety.

Maybe it was because it was so busy, but Bones hadn’t been bothering Jim about coming in yet. They were about to reach the end of a week though, so Bones would probably be on his case soon.
Jim could only avoid him so long.

In his defense, Jim had been pretty busy. He’d given himself alpha shift every day and he was also quickly finding ways to fill his free time. He’d spend his meals with Bones usually, but occasionally he’d eat with Chekov and Sulu or Scotty instead. He was sometimes tempted to try to join Uhura and Spock, but the two of them usually ate together with just the two of them. Jim didn’t want to crash their dates uninvited. And when the two of them weren’t together, they were usually with people from their departments. Jim decided that it would be best to wait for one of them to invite him rather that intruding.

Outside of shifts, meals, sleeping, and the occasional visit with Pike, Jim spent most of his time wandering the ship. Part of it was that he wanted to see where there were problems in case he could help, but a lot of it was just him wanting to familiarize himself with the ship. He didn’t know if it was just because of what he’d seen in the meld with Older Spock where he’d seen that other him as the captain of the Enterprise, but he really did feel a connection to the ship. When he was walking the corridors, climbing through Jefferies tubes, or even just staying in one place and feeling the hum of her systems resonate through him, it just felt… right. Like he was meant to end up on this ship. He’d felt the pull from when he’d seen her rising above the Riverside shipyards. It had been part of what made him decide to take up Pike on his offer.

Admittedly, his first mission with her hadn’t gone so well. It could have been worse, but it wasn’t great either. He hoped he’d have the chance to make some better memories with her.

But for now he spent his time trying to be the best captain he could, even if it meant spending most shifts just watching the stars pass and waiting for something to happen. He refused to give up the possibility that someone was looking for them. He would understand if most of the attention was focused on looking for survivors around Vulcan, or at least around where it used to be, but surely there was one ship to spare to look for them.

No matter what, they would make it back to the Federation. Jim had everyone who worked helm, navigation, or anything related to astrometrics or stellar cartography for this area trying to figure out where the best destination would be for them to try to reach. The goal was to get to Earth of course, but if no one found them they might need to stop where they could.

But for now, they were drifting toward Earth and there was no one looking for them that they knew of. Jim figured that he might have to mark this as the seventh shift spent with him staring out the viewscreen waiting for something to happen but expecting nothing.

“Captain.” Uhura’s voice pulled him out of his thoughts; there was a note of urgency there that had him spinning around to face her. She was listening intently to her earpiece.

“What is it?” He was squeezing the armrests of the captain’s chair in nervousness, hoping he didn't bump any buttons.

She stopped listening long enough to look him in the eye. “We’re being hailed.”

Chapter End Notes

Who do you think that could be?

(Someone who's been mentioned previously may be appearing soon...)
Chapter 56

Chapter Notes

So this just passed 100 bookmarks, which I am super excited about! Thanks to everyone reading, commenting, bookmarking, kudo-ing, and subscribing! You're the best.

So who's hailing them?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim jumped out of the chair, filled with a mix of nerves or excitement. Since they’d fired just about everything at the Narada and blown their warp core getting out of the black hole, they’d be sitting ducks if an enemy ship came by. But if it was someone friendly this could be the best news they’d get all day. A quick glance at the viewscreen revealed no ships in visual range. “Who is it?”

Uhura listened a moment longer; when she spoke there was a little bit of excitement and a lot of relief. “It’s a Starfleet vessel. The USS Defiant says they have received our distress call and are asking for our current coordinates.”

Jim felt his shoulders slump in relief a little and leaned slightly against the railing dividing the workstations along the raised perimeter of the bridge from the lower central section. “That’s great news.” He turned to the center of the bridge, not surprised to find all eyes on him. “Sulu, do a full stop. It’ll be easier for them to meet up with us if we’re stationary. Chekov, send Uhura our current coordinates.” He looked back at Uhura. “Once you get them, send them to the Defiant.” He looked around the bridge; people were beginning to look excited. “Once we get confirmation that they’re coming, everyone reach out to your departments and let them know. Someone should comm engineering once we know for sure; they’ll need to get ready.” He looked back at Uhura. “Give us updates when you hear more.”

She nodded and Jim went back to the captain’s chair and hopped onto the seat. There was a definite thrum of energy on the bridge now. People were excited. Hell, Jim was excited. They were gonna make it out of this ok after all. For some reason the ship name Defiant rang a bell, but Jim couldn’t put his finger on why. Maybe they’d been talking about a ship with that name in one of his classes before everything happened?

It probably wasn’t important. What was important was that now they’d be back at Earth before any real emergencies could break out. Whether the Defiant had something that would fix their ship or if they’d just be able to tow the Enterprise back to safety, it looked like things were finally starting to go their way.

After a moment the Defiant dropped out of warp in front of them. It felt surprisingly good to see another Starfleet ship, especially one that was whole rather than in pieces.

“They’re hailing us again.” Uhura looked toward the center of the bridge. “This time with visual, not just audio.”

“Put them on the viewscreen.” Jim nodded at her as she hit a few buttons before looking forward again just in time to see the bridge of the other ship fill the viewscreen.
“This is Captain Nicole Davison of the USS Defiant. We’ve received your distress call and are here to help you.” The captain’s face shifted to confusion after a moment. “Who are you? What happened to Pike?”

Jim hopped out of the captain’s chair, feeling a bit nervous at having to explain everything. “I’m acting captain James T. Kirk. It’s a bit of a long story as to how I ended up in command. Pike was seriously injured by the same people who destroyed Vulcan, but he’s recovering in Sickbay now.”

“You fought the people who destroyed Vulcan?” Captain Davison looked interested now. “I’d heard reports from Earth that the Enterprise and another ship were the ones fighting the enemy ship when it attacked Earth, but what happened to the other ships?”

“Both the enemy ship and the one helping us got consumed by an artificial black hole.” Jim wondered if this story would even sound believable to people who weren’t there. "It was pretty dramatic."

“I look forward to reading the reports about it.” Captain Davison looked impressed before shifting back to business. “So your distress call said that your warp core was gone. What exactly happened?”

“We had to jettison the warp core and explode it to create a shock wave that would push us out of the gravity well of the black hole.” Jim sat back against the captain’s chair. “Like I said, it’s a long story. I’m sure the reports will be interesting to read.”

“I’ll bet.” Captain Davison smiled. “We’re sending over our chief engineer and some other crewmembers to assess the damage. I can’t promise that we’ll have the necessary supplies to get you fully functioning again, but we’ll see what we can do. Anything else you might need?”

“I’ll check in with the various departments and get back to you.” Jim thought over any immediate needs. “Our sickbay did get hit in the early attacks and we have a lot of wounded, so maybe medical personnel and supplies. I’ll get back to you when I know for sure what else we need.”

“Understood. We’ll send over the engineering team first and you can let us know what you need from there.” The captain nodded. “Davison out.”

As the viewscreen switched back to stars and the other ship, Jim looked around the bridge. “Alright everyone, each department should go over what they need that the other ship could feasibly provide and then report to me with the results. I’ll relay that list to the Defiant.” He looked around, making sure that the crew seemed to be complying, before getting up from the captain’s chair. “I’m going to meet the engineering team as they transport over.”

“I will accompany you.” Spock stood from his station.

Jim raised an eyebrow. “I’m not objecting, but as chief science officer don’t you need to check in with your department?”

“I have already alerted them and they are performing internal checks now.” Spock stood by his station, hands behind his back.

“Alright then.” Jim shrugged and started to walk over to the turbolift. “You’re free to accompany me if you want.”

“I shall.” Spock joined him and they entered the turbolift together.

As the turbolift began to move Jim realized he didn’t know which transporter room they were supposed to be going to. He looked over at Spock. “Is there protocol for which transporter room
they’re supposed to beam into? I just realized I’m not sure which one we should go to.”

“There is not official protocol, but usual practice dictates that they will transport to the primary transporters.” Spock entered the proper deck number.

“Thanks.” Jim glanced back at Spock. “This is why you’re such a great first officer. You know all the stuff I don’t.” Jim meant it as a joke, but as soon as he finished saying it he realized that he didn’t know how this Spock would react to it. He got the feeling that Older Spock had a sense of humor somewhere in there, but what about this Spock?

Before he could get a response, the turbolift doors opened and they started walking to the transporter room. Spock fell in step behind him and didn’t say anything; Jim didn’t know how he was supposed to take it.

They got to the transporter room just in time to see the engineering team from the _Defiant_ materialize. As they solidified Jim realized why the ship’s name had sounded so familiar.

There was a very familiar face on that transporter padd.

Chapter End Notes

Someday I’ll do endings that aren’t cliffhangers, but today is not that day.

The random people who only appear in a scene or so will probably not be real people (unless I hit random on MemoryAlpha and come across a name I like), so don’t read too much into them. I might make the occasional reference though.

However, the person Jim recognizes is not just a random person. They have been mentioned/alluded to before, so feel free to put your guesses in the comments!
Chapter 57

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I'm pretty sure the number of commenters I got last chapter was a new record, which is hella exciting. I love it when I get feedback/responses from all of you!

The guesses of who it was seemed to be mostly going in the same direction. Time to see if you were right...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim attempted to stay professional. Just because the unchanging face he’d known for his whole life, and the woman it was attached to obviously, was here didn’t mean he had to make this weird. True, he and his mother had never met in an official setting yet, even though she’d been active the whole time he was at the academy. But there was a first time for everything, and that first time was now. He decided to keep it completely professional. “Commander Kirk.”

She grinned at him, obviously excited. “Captain Kirk.”

He sensed a bit of confusion building in the transporter room, so Jim decided to let it all out into the open. “Before anyone asks, this is my mother.” He looked over at Spock, suddenly feeling awkward about having his mom there when Spock had just lost his but deciding to go for it anyway. “Ma, this is my first officer, Commander Spock.”

“Nice to meet you.” Winona nodded at him. “I’ve heard a lot of good things. Glad that Jimmy’s got good backup here. Gotta have someone to keep him out of trouble.”

“Oh god.” Jim ran a hand down his face as Spock raised an eyebrow. After a moment Jim dropped his hand back to his side and looked back at his mom, attempting to reestablish a professional atmosphere. “What kind of team did you bring over?”

“Mostly engineering.” She gestured to some of the people behind her. “A couple of medical people.” Winona looked back at him. “We’ve got others standing by depending on what you need over here. Just let Davison know and she’ll send whoever you need.”

“Tell her thanks for us.” Jim smiled, genuinely grateful for the help. “Or I guess I can tell her when I pass along what we need.”

“Eh, it’s no big deal.” Winona stepped off of the transporter pad and the others followed. “The Enterprise did save Earth, which makes people pretty willing to lend a hand.”

“That was mostly Spock here.” Jim nodded at his first officer. “He was the one who got the black hole device away from Nero and destroyed the drill.”

Winona looked impressed. “Good job, commander.”

“Captain Kirk is being modest.” Spock stood with his hands behind his back. “I was merely following his plan.”

“I’m sure there will be enough credit to go around.” Jim looked over at Spock, unsure if Spock was
being modest or if Spock was trying to make Jim look good in front of his mom. Probably the first one. Jim looked back at his mom and the crew from the *Defiant*. “Without the amazing crew on this ship we never would have been able to stop Nero. And speaking of that amazing crew, they’re probably ready for some reinforcements.” He looked over the assembled people for a moment before turning back to his first officer. “Spock, you take the medical people to Sickbay. I’ll take everyone else to Engineering.” Jim looked around a moment longer but everyone seemed to be in agreement. “Alright then, let’s go.”

They walked out of the transporter room and went their separate ways. Jim could tell that his mom wanted to talk to him, but one of the other engineers asked about the current situation and Jim started explaining before she could say anything. Pretty quickly she got drawn into the engineering talk too, and before they knew it they were in Engineering and meeting up with Scotty.

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It wasn’t long before someone who definitely wasn’t supposed to be there showed up. Jim got drawn out of the conversation he was having about increasing the energy efficiency of the various ship systems when a blue shirt caught his attention. He left the engineer he was talking to and walked over to the door. “Bones? What are you doing here?”

His friend looked far calmer than he should but also a little smug; something was definitely up. “There’s some new people in Sickbay double checking my work so I had some time. They were saying some real interesting things about getting to meet Commander Kirk’s kid. They said she was always bragging about her kid Jimmy and how they were so excited to meet him.” Bones’ grin was almost unbearably smug now. “I knew I just had to check this out. I wanted to meet this mom that you haven’t told me much about but that apparently brags about you.”

Jim ran a hand down his face again; this was quickly getting out of control. He was gonna have to talk to his mom.

“I’m only gonna have more to brag about now that my kid’s a captain.” Suddenly who should appear but the woman herself.

Jim whirled around to face his mom. “Ma, have you really been telling everyone about me?”

“Of course.” She grinned at him. “It’s part of what parents do, Jimmy.”

“She really does call you Jimmy?” Bones was enjoying this way too much. “And you call her Ma? That’s surprisingly cute.”

“Honestly, I think it started as a joke when I was younger and we just got into the habit.” Jim looked over at Winona, who just nodded and shrugged a bit. “You know how those kinds of things are, right?”

“Of course.” Bones nodded mock seriously. “I’m pretty sure that’s how I ended up friends with you.”

“Really Bones?” Jim raised his eyebrows at his friend.

“I also think that’s how I ended up with this nickname. Do you even know my real name anymore?” Bones looked at him with fake annoyance.

“Of course.” Jim smirked at him. “It was Leopold, right?”

Before Bones could respond, Winona cut in. “Hey Jimmy, aren’t you gonna introduce me to your
“I would,” Jim grinned at Bones, “but apparently I might not get his name right.”

Bones rolled his eyes. “Dr. Leonard McCoy, currently CMO of this ship and that brat’s roommate back at the academy.” He held out his hand for her to shake.

She took his hand and shook it. “Commander Winona Kirk. Chief Engineer of the Defiant and that one’s mother.” She let go of his hand and crossed her arms. “Are you the one who’s been keeping him alive all this time?”

“Probably.” Bones shrugged and crossed his arms. “God knows he’s nearly gotten himself killed enough times.”

“Yeah.” Winona nodded. “Despite what you might guess, I think he gets that from me, not George. He always was the more responsible one.”

“Really?” Bones eyebrow went up. “Jim never talks about his dad, so I wouldn’t know.”

“Jimmy never really met him, so that’s probably not surprising.” Some emotion crossed her face too quick for Jim to catch and then she shifted and uncrossed her arms. “But I’m sure you’ve already heard that story enough, if not from Jimmy. It’s also the reason why I haven’t aged since the day he was born, even though I’ve had some experiences since then.”

Bones nodded. “If I hadn’t known I’d have almost guessed sister, not mother.”

“Alright.” It was weird enough when they were talking about him like he wasn’t there, but now Jim was feeling like it was time to cut this off before they started getting too close. “Don’t you both have stuff to do?”

They both gave him unimpressed looks. Bones lifted an eyebrow. “Don’t you?”

“I think we all do.” Jim looked between them. “So I’ll let you tend to engines and patients respectively; I’m gonna go see what each department says they need.” He paused and looked over at Bones. “Shouldn’t you be making one of those reports?”

Bones rolled his eyes again. “I already did it, Captain. It’ll be waiting for you when you check.”

Jim nodded, eyeing the two of them warily. “Alright then. Don’t forget that I can technically order you both back to work.”

This time it was Winona who looked more unimpressed. “One week and he’s already threatening to abuse his power.” She shook her head in mock sadness. “C’mon Jimmy, do better.”

“Shut up, Ma.” Jim shook his head. “I’m going back to the bridge.” He turned and walked away, listening to them laughing behind him. For some reason he felt like he was going to regret them meeting.

Chapter End Notes

Random thought I had while writing this (because that’s just what these author notes are for apparently): In this transporter room scene, Jim is simultaneously the highest ranked
person (captain) and the lowest ranked person (cadet) in the room.

Also Bones is 100% that one friend who gets along with everyone's parents.
Hello everyone! I'm glad you all seem to like Winona! My perception of her is 100% shaped by awesome fic that other people have written, so if you're interested in that feel free to ask me for recs, or just look at my 2 most recent bookmarks because I just checked and those are two great fics that really impacted how I see her. One of them has Winona, George, Amanda, and Sarek and it's so great (it's called Dexterity and it's by leupagus, screamlet, and waldorf if you just want to look it up; I love that fic a lot).

Anyway, enough of me fangirling, although I suppose I'm just living up to my username. Back to what you're here for! Something that I think a number of you have been waiting for will happen this chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim got handed a padd as soon as he got to the bridge. With a quick nod of thanks to the yeoman who handed it over, Jim began to look through it. “Are these the things the departments need?”

“Yes sir.” The yeoman nodded.

“Alright.” Jim looked up at the yeoman again. “Thanks. I was just about to ask for these.”

“Anything else you need?” They stood there at attention; Jim wondered how often this yeoman got to the bridge.

“Nah that’ll be all. You’re good to go.” They walked away and Jim walked to the captain’s chair and settled down onto it. He was really gonna miss this chair. It was the best one on the bridge, both in terms of comfort and connotation. Some people seemed to think he’d get to keep it, apparently his mom included by the way she was talking about it, but Jim decided that he wasn’t going to expect too much. That way he either wouldn’t be let down or he’d be pleasantly surprised.

Jim looked over the list, trying to decide if he should forward it all over or go through and approve and reject things. The *Defiant* showing up would mean that they would probably get to Earth a lot sooner, which would mean that it wouldn’t make sense for them to start any long-term experiments or projects anymore. They’d be fine just getting the essentials, but how was Jim supposed to define what was essential? He wanted to be the kind of captain that kept his crew happy, and that generally meant more than just the bare necessities.

But wouldn’t the department heads have already filtered the requests some? There had probably already been some things that got denied, and should Jim really deny even more? But he couldn’t ask for too much from the *Defiant* either. He doubted that they just had a ton of extra supplies and people sitting around. According to what his mom and Davison had said, all of the other ships been doing their own missions prior to getting recalled to search for survivors around Vulcan. The *Defiant* had had a quick stop at Earth to request permission to look for the *Enterprise* after spending some time picking up survivors, but restocking probably hadn’t been the main focus.

So Jim shouldn’t ask them for too much. But he didn’t want to deny his crew too much either, especially since these lists had probably already been pared down some.
Jim looked around the bridge. Maybe this was the kind of thing he could ask for input on? But it seemed like most people he could ask would want more for their departments than for other departments. There was too much potential for bias. Unless…

He turned his chair a bit to look at Spock. Sure, Spock was the Chief Science Officer, but Vulcans were supposed to be immune from bias or something, right? It seemed like the sort of emotional thing that they’d try to eliminate. Plus, Spock was first officer, so he’d probably put the general good of the ship before his own department, right? It could probably work.

Jim got up from his chair and walked over to lean against the rail between the center section of the bridge and outer section. “Spock.”

Spock turned around but did not get up from his chair. “Yes captain?”

“Will you go over these requests with me before I send them over to Captain Davison?” They’d made eye contact again and Jim found he didn’t want to break it. “I know the shift’s almost over, but could we meet up afterward. Would that work for you?”

There was a moment where Spock seemed to be mentally checking his schedule before his focus turned back to Jim. “I will be available. Where should we meet?”

“Just come to my quarters.” Jim pushed off the railing and stood upright. “Maybe around 2200 hours?” That would give them an hour after their shift to do whatever they needed to do before meeting up; Jim figured that was probably good.

Spock nodded. “That is acceptable.”

“Great.” Jim stood there for a moment longer; he and Spock had made eye contact again. “I’ll see you then.” He finally broke eye contact and went back to the captain’s chair.

For the last hour or so of the shift Jim looked over the requests more thoroughly. The major question was how much of this stuff needed to be gotten right away and how much could wait til later; the ship would definitely be getting repaired and restocked once they got to Earth, so surely some of this could wait til then? And of course the crew would be off the ship then so not everything they asked for was necessary right away, right?

Jim sighed and set down the padd. This was one of those things where he’d ask Spock or even go to Pike; it would be helpful to talk to someone who had real experience in the field. The two of them had been a major help over the past week as Jim had taken on more of the day-to-day duties of being captain rather than just being in command during an emergency situation. The whole crew was helpful really; most of them were able to just do their thing without much administrative interference or managing. Jim really wanted a crew like this if or when he became captain.

He almost didn’t notice when his Beta shift replacement came up to relieve him; Jim had been zoning out a little bit while he was mentally going over everything and staring out the viewscreen. But still, Jim was glad to get to go back to his quarters, even if it would be right back to ship’s business once Spock came over.

But for now he could grab some food from the replicator in his quarters to skip the mess hall and just chill and eat, maybe comming Engineering and Sickbay for updates on how the people from the Defiant were helping out. He started mentally planning his night as he walked to his quarters.

When he got to his quarters, Jim was surprised that the lights were already on. He didn’t remember leaving them on this morning, so that was odd.
“Hey Jimmy.” Jim jumped and turned to see his mom sitting at his desk. “Don’t freak out, it’s only me.”

“Ma?” Jim felt himself relax a little bit since it was just her. “How’d you get in here?”

“I have ways.” She smirked.

Jim raised an eyebrow. “Not gonna tell me?”

Her expression went serious. “If I told you, I’d have to kill you.” Winona kept the serious look for a second before breaking into a smile. “I probably wouldn’t have to kill you, but I’m still not gonna tell you.” She got up and walked around to lean against the desk.

“I’m gonna find out how you do all of this someday.” Jim crossed his arms.

“You probably will.” Winona shrugged. “But today is not that day.”

“Whatever.” He went over to the replicator and started putting in a dinner order. “Want anything?”

“Nah, I’m gonna be heading back to my ship soon. I’ll eat over there.” She turned and looked at him as he sat down to eat.

“So how have things been in engineering?” Jim started eating, looking up at where she was now standing with her arms crossed.

Winona shrugged. “They’re progressing. Today was mostly assessing damage. We’ll talk over options tomorrow after meeting with Davison, but it seems like the best option will be just towing you back to Earth.”

“Good to know.” Jim nodded and kept eating. “You sure you don’t want anything?”

“I’m good.” After a moment she settled into the chair across from him with a sort of false casualness that had Jim a little on edge. “So when were you going to tell me?”

“Tell you what?” Jim mentally ran through everything that’d gone down since they’d last seen each other. It seemed like she’d gotten excited about the captain thing, but it’s not like he’d had the ability to send her a message about that. “The captain thing? You found out about as early as anyone not on the ship.”

“Not that.” Winona gave a dismissive wave of her hand and looked him in the eye. “You started aging.”

Chapter End Notes

Based on various badass!Winona fics I’ve read, I headcanon her as lowkey part of Section 31. If you don’t know what that is, memory alpha could probably explain it better than me so check out the link here, but basically it’s a top secret and hella sketchy intelligence agency/black ops group that's tangentially connected to Starfleet but really reports to no one but themselves. It sortof came up in Into Darkness, but DS9 goes into it more and apparently Enterprise does as well, but I haven't gotten to Enterprise so idk. From what I have planned so far, it shouldn't be a big thing in the fic, but I like sharing random details here so enjoy.
Anyway, more Winona and Jim up ahead. And also, what do you all think of who guessed Jim's aging first?
Chapter 59

Chapter Notes

So this fic passed 500 comments without me noticing until now somehow???. All I gotta say is holy shit you're all incredible. That is an unbelievable number for me and more than I've gotten on any fic ever. Maybe even more than all my other fics combined. So yeah, not my most coherent or relevant author's note but you people seriously blow me away with all the support for this fic.

Anyway, have some more Kirk family bonding.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim nearly choked on the bite of food he had. He washed it down with some water and looked at his mom incredulously; no one had figured out he was aging yet. “How’d you know?”

“Something seemed different, and it wasn’t just your sudden promotion.” She shrugged. “I may have guided the conversation with your doctor friend a little bit. He didn’t say anything too revealing because I don’t think he knows for sure and because he knows you don’t like your private business shared, but he did mention being concerned over some odd readings. So I put together odd medical readings with you seeming different and I had a theory. I wasn’t certain until you confirmed it just now.”

“Hmm.” Jim chewed a moment. “I think those deductive skills of yours are wasted in Engineering.”

An odd look crossed Winona's face for a moment before she smirked again. “My skills are used well enough.” She held the smirk a moment longer before looking back at Jim. “But we’re not talking about me. Who do you think it is?”

“Are we really doing this?” Jim leaned back from the table a bit.

“What can I say?” She leaned back as well. “I’m interested. Plus, this seems like the kinda thing you’re supposed to tell your family about. I’m pretty sure that’s a thing normal families do.”

Jim snorted. “We’re not exactly a normal family, Ma.”

“True.” Winona tilted her head in consideration for a moment. “But although we don’t always tell each other everything, we don’t bullshit each other when asked. Plus, I’d tell you if I ever met someone, but the only time I did was before you were born, and he’s a little too dead to tell you about now.”

“I know.” Jim sighed. “We’re honest with each other, and I appreciate it. But maybe I’m not sure yet, ok? Most people don’t figure it out for a while and it’s only been like a week for me.”

“You know how long it’s been even though you don’t have the medical confirmation?” She leaned forward. “You must have someone you think it is then. I bet you’re basing it on when you met someone because you suspect that person is your soulmate.”

“Seriously, were you a little too into Sherlock Holmes stories at some point or something?” Jim looked at her with a raised eyebrow before looking away. “I do have a theory, but I’m not sure.”
“Can you tell me?” Winona rested her elbows on the desk and leaned forward. “I promise I won’t tell anyone.”

Jim sighed. He really didn’t want word getting out, but he did trust his mom… “I think it’s Spock.”

She leaned back a little in surprise, but not far back enough that her elbows left the desk. “The Vulcans?”

“Technically he’s only half, but yeah.” Jim ran a hand through his hair. “When we first met and made eye contact, I felt…something. But it might have just been nerves cuz this was at an academic hearing and everyone knows it’s hard to argue with Vulcans.”

“Hmm.” Winona leaned back in. “Any indication on his end?”

“Not yet, but he just lost his planet and his mom, so he’s bit distracted I bet. Plus, with him being half Vulcan, I don’t even know for sure if he’s affected the same way.” Jim picked up his now empty plate and put it in the recycler. He sat back down and rested his forearms on the desk. He was a little unsure about this next question, but decided to ask anyway. “How’d you know with dad?”

Winona got quiet for a minute and leaned back, crossing her arms again. She looked down and away from him. “It’s been a long time. I don’t know if I can remember every detail.”

It was moments like this that Jim remembered that his mom was actually a good amount older than the 26 or so that she looked. She was closer to twice that. “You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.”

“It’s ok.” She met his eyes again and smiled weakly before looking away once more. “I’d barely stopped aging before I met him; we were both still at the Academy when it happened, although he was two years ahead of me. He was command track, but he was taking some engineering classes so he’d be better able to understand what was happening on whatever ship he ended up on. He was in one of my second-year engineering courses and apparently was struggling with it, so he asked me for help.” She looked at Jim and he was struck by the amount of bittersweet sadness he saw in her eyes as she smiled. “He did just fine when I was helping him, which I always thought meant that he just made not getting things up as an excuse to talk to me. He denied that and said that my help was just that good.” Winona cleared her throat. “Got anything to drink around here?”

Jim shook his head, not wanting to break the solemn mood that had settled over the room. “Not unless it’s replicated.”

“Ok then.” Winona nodded. “I’ll pass; the replicated stuff never has the right effect.” She looked away again, her eyes zoning out a bit as she remembered. “There had definitely been attraction between us from the start; he was a good-looking guy and a real sweetheart to boot. When we found out we’d started aging at the same time we were both so excited he practically proposed right then and there. We ended up waiting to get hitched until after I graduated, and then along came Sam not long after that. Once he was past the constant care stage we decided to try again, and I got pregnant with you. But then…” She took a deep breath and let it out before looking Jim in the eyes again. “Everyone knows the story from there. The heroic George Kirk sacrificing himself, tragically spending his last moments talking to his soon-to-be widow and their newborn son.”

“Yeah.” Jim looked down at the desk, unable to meet her eyes. Silence fell over the room.

After what felt like a long time but was probably no more than a minute or two Jim felt her reach out and squeeze his hand where it rested on the desk. He met her eyes, which still looked a little sad. “I’m sorry I always avoided talking about him when you were younger. You deserve to know about
your dad. But losing your soulmate…” She took a deep breath and looked away before making eye contact with him again. “It affects you more than you may expect.”

“I would like to know more about him.” Jim looked down to where her hand rested over his. “Everyone always tells me how I owe him so much, but I never really knew him. Yeah, he technically saved my life, but it wasn’t like that was just for me. He was saving everyone from the Kelvin.”

“That’s not the only thing he did for you.” Winona waited for Jim to look up at her before continuing. “Putting aside the fact that I can’t self-conceive and how he contributed there, including giving you those beautiful eyes of yours, there’s one other major thing I could say he did for you; something that not everyone knows.”

“Yeah?” Jim leaned forward; suddenly interested. He’d barely heard any stories about his dad, and it wasn’t like the two of them had ever really met. How could he have had a major effect on Jim's life without Jim knowing? “What did he do?”

Chapter End Notes

I probably spent too long on Memory Alpha trying to figure out the ages for everyone, since unless they're part of a main crew almost no one has official birth dates. Hell, some characters' families don't even have official names. Apparently George and Winona weren't even Jim's parents' official names until the '09 movie. But I digress (like usual I suppose).

Anyway, what do you think the big secret is? (admittedly this one is less of a big thing than some of my other cliffhangers/questions)
Chapter 60

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! This just hit 600 kudos, which is so amazing. I honestly can't imagine that there are that many of you reading this, but the only other explanation would be that someone found a way to hit kudos multiple times. Either way, you're all awesome and I'm glad to have you as readers!

I may have overhyped this secret thing. But it is the Kirk way (or maybe the way of Winona's family, but we don't know what her maiden name was so oh well) to be a bit overdramatic.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Winona leaned forward like she was about to share an incredible secret. She kept her face perfectly serious. “Without his input, you would have been stuck with the name Tiberius. As a first name.”

“Really?” Jim leaned back and ran a hand down his face to hide the fact that he was almost laughing at the mood change from totally somber to slightly absurd. When he pulled his hand away he saw that Winona was smiling too, but the sadness hadn’t fully left her eyes. “Why?”

“Well, I was a little distracted by soulmate and husband’s imminent death which would leave me with a newborn, a small child, a Starfleet career, and zero help, plus you were early so we hadn’t really talked names yet. Also you know, giving birth on a shuttle escaping from a ship under attack is a little distracting, especially when you're alone for it.” Despite what Winona said there was a certain lightness or humor in her tone suggesting that she was feeling better. “We’d named our last kid after him, so I figured we may as well just keep going up the family tree.”

“Wow.” Jim laughed and shook his head. “He really was the practical one of you two, huh?”

“You bet.” Winona smiled. “Smart enough to know that even though humans have worked out most of our issues by this point, Tiberius was still a terrible name to stick a kid with. Good thing my dad has a normal name, otherwise we would have been totally screwed since apparently naming children is not an area where a time crunch causes creativity.”

“Oh god.” Jim laughed again despite himself. “I guess I'll have to thank him for that.”

“Yeah.” Winona smiled, but there was something wistful about it. “I really do wish you two could have met. I mean, he was on the comms for a couple minutes after you popped out, and he always did enjoy talking to my baby bump when you and Sam were in there, but I sometimes wonder what it would have been like if he’d been around to help with you boys.”

Jim’s mind wandered back to the flashes he’d gotten of that other Kirk’s life that Older Spock had shown him. That Jim had had his father well into adulthood. But he’d still ended up on the Enterprise with the same people. Jim had at least gotten a taste of the captaincy the other him had enjoyed for so long. He looked back at his mom. “I don’t know, Ma. I feel like things would work out either way. While I can’t say I had the best childhood and definitely could have gone without Frank, I know you did what you could.”
At the mention of her ex-husband Winona’s expression darkened and Jim wondered if there was a reason no one had heard from him since they split. But then her expression softened. “Thanks Jimmy. It really does mean a lot to hear you say that, and I’d like to think we both know that if I could go back and never marry that bastard I would in a heartbeat.”

“I know.” Jim smiled a bit at her. “But you can’t change the past.” Except this whole damn thing was the result of Nero changing the past. Should he tell her that? It felt like she deserved to know at least part of the story. “It was the same ship that attacked the Kelvin, you know.”

“What?” Winona looked confused at the sudden topic change.

“The Narada. Nero’s ship. The one that destroyed Vulcan was the same one that attacked the Kelvin all those years ago.” Jim watched understanding dawn across her face.

“Well then.” Winona got a certain glint in her eyes that was similar to when she was talking about Frank. “I almost wish I had been the one to do the honors, but I’m glad that bastard’s been wiped out of existence.” She nodded at him. “Good job.”

It felt a little odd that she was congratulating him for this, but Jim understood in a way. “He knew about it too. I fought him, and he mentioned knowing that who I was and that he’d killed my dad.”

Winona’s eyebrows went up. “You fought him? Like one on one?”

“Yeah.” Jim ran a hand through his hair and glanced at the chronometer; Spock would be arriving soon. “It’s a long story and I don’t know if we’ll have time now, but I did. Between that, the destruction of Vulcan, all the other people he killed, and his definite intention to attack more planets, I don’t feel all that bad that we destroyed him.”

“If you’re looking for someone to tell you it was wrong, you’d be looking in the wrong place here.” Winona shrugged and crossed her arms again. “He did a lot of bad things and killed a whole lot of people. Plus, when someone kills your soulmate you don’t exactly wish for mercy for them.” There was that dark flash across her expression again but then she grinned. “Also, you fought a Romulan one on one. I don’t know whether to be concerned because my kid is being reckless or be proud because that proves that you’re definitely my kid.”

Jim laughed. “If Bones knew how reckless you are I bet he’d stop liking you so much.”

“Nah.” Winona grinned. “If he can put up with you, he can probably deal with me. We just can’t both be reckless all at once, because that would probably overwhelm the poor man.”

“Yeah.” Jim grinned back at her. “Can’t do that, we’ll need someone to patch us up after whatever we get up to.”

Winona raised an eyebrow. “Are we plotting something?”

Jim shrugged. “Drifting through space gets a little boring sometimes. I wouldn’t be opposed.”

“Jimmy.” She looked at him seriously. “You’re captain, you can’t just do random reckless things on the ship.” Her expression shifted and she grinned again. “That’s what shore leave is for. One time I got your dad to-”

“Do I want to hear the end of this story?” Jim was pretty sure he didn't; he knew what most couples got up to on shore leave.

Winona shrugged. “You wanted to hear more stories of your dad.”
“Not that kind of story.” Jim scrunched up his face.

Winona laughed again before looking back at him. “I don’t know, couples shore leave can be pretty incredible. You’ll find that out when Spock comes around.”

Jim looked down at his hands. “It’s really more of an if than a when. He’s seeing someone now, plus there’s the whole Vulcan thing. I might think he’s my soulmate, but I might not be his.”

“Hey.” Winona put her hand on his shoulder and waited for him to look up. “It could still work out. There have been cases of people whose soulmates weren’t human. I actually knew a woman whose soulmate was a Vulcan.” She gave his shoulder a reassuring squeeze. “If it worked out for her, it can work out for you.”

“You met someone with a Vulcan soulmate?” Jim was surprised he’d never heard about this; unusual soulmate pairs typically got a lot of attention.

“Yeah.” Winona sat back and rubbed a hand against her cheek as she thought. “It must have been close to twenty years ago now. If I remember right she and the Vulcan were married and even had a kid, which is why it stuck out to me. I think her name was Amanda.”

“Huh.” Pieces were starting to come together for Jim. There couldn’t be too many Vulcan-Human couples out there, let alone ones with kids. Was it possible…? “How did you meet this woman again?”

Winona took a second to think. “Her husband was a Vulcan ambassador and the ship I was on was transporting them to some diplomatic thing.” She looked at Jim seriously. “By the way, that kind of thing will be one of the more boring things Starfleet makes you do. Unless you stumble across a political plot or have to stop an assassination you’re basically being a glorified taxi service.”

Something else crossed her face. “Why are you so curious about this anyway?”

Jim deliberated about telling her for a moment before deciding to do it. “Because you may have met Spock’s parents. His dad’s a Vulcan ambassador and his mom was human, and I bet there aren’t too many couples like that out there.”

“Huh.” Winona zoned out for a moment, seeming to think about it. “It’s a little odd, but it could be. They had a kid when I met them, so I bet the ages would work out.” She looked back at Jim. “It really is a small galaxy I guess.”

“Seriously.” Jim nodded. Before he could say anymore the door chimed. A quick glance at the time told him it was probably Spock. “Come in.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like 90% of this fic is just me playing with different interpersonal dynamics, but you all seem to enjoy that, so I guess it works out.

Some of you have asked for interaction between Winona and Spock, so stay tuned for next chapter! I can't promise a ton of interaction, but it should be interesting. Or maybe even fascinating...
Chapter 61

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! This weekend marks an astounding 7 months of posting this fic. It's really flown by. So once again, thanks to all my readers! Whether you've been here from the start, found it sometime between then and now, or just discovered this, you're awesome. We've still got a ways to go (I have over 15k of future scenes written, and even more than that planned), so here's to those of you who will be with me til the end! You're the greatest.

Who's ready for Winona and Spock interacting?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The door opened and Spock stepped inside, stopping when he saw Winona. “Hello Captain.” He nodded at Winona. “Commander Kirk.”

Winona nodded back at him but didn’t bother getting up from where she’d turned around in her chair. “Commander.”

“Ma and I were just catching up some.” Jim looked between the two of them, not sure if he liked how his mom was looking over Spock now. She wouldn’t tell him about the soulmate thing, would she?

“Jimmy and I just realized that I may have met your mom before.” Winona was still looking at Spock carefully. “Was her name Amanda?”

Spock shifted slightly and moved his hands from at his side to behind her back. “It was.”

“Then it probably was her.” Winona nodded. “Not many human women married to Vulcan ambassadors with children, right?”

Spock was now looking down, away from Winona and Jim. “Indeed.”

“She was a great woman. I didn’t know her long, but we still spent some time together on the ship while your dad was busy prepping for whatever diplomatic thing we were headed to. I gotta say, I’m not easy to impress but by the end of her time on the ship I’d decided that she might’ve just been one of the best people I’d ever met. One of the smartest and sweetest for sure. Also, even though you weren’t with them at the time, she talked about you a lot. You would have been young then, but it was easy to tell how much she cared about you and was proud of you.” Winona got quiet a moment, still looking carefully at Spock, but in a way that was softer somehow. “You have her eyes.”

Spock’s shoulders stiffened slightly and he continued avoiding eye contact. “Thank you.”

Jim decided that he didn’t like how uncomfortable Spock looked. “Alright Ma, it’s been great catching up but Spock and I should probably get to work. Ship’s business and all that.”

Winona looked back at him with a raised eyebrow. “A captain’s work is never done, huh?”

“Yeah.” Jim nodded and smiled a bit. “It’s a lot less glamorous than they make it sound in their
“recruitment stuff, or even at the Academy.”

“And that’s why you should never buy into ads.” Winona smirked and stood up. “It’s a good thing you’ve got a first officer to help you out, huh?”

“Yep.” Jim glanced over at Spock, who was watching him now and seemed to be recovering from the emotional moment before.

“Good.” Winona looked between the two of them with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes. Jim really wasn’t sure if he wanted to know where she was going with this. “So Spock, you’re going to help my kid out when he needs it?”

Spock raised an eyebrow but nodded. “Yes; it is within the duties of the first officer to assist the captain in the running of the ship.”

She nodded approvingly. “And you’ll look out for him for me?”

“Yes.” Spock sounded as if he was uncertain where she was going with this.

Jim was a little more certain where she was going with this. “Ma.”

Winona glanced back at him with a smirk. “It’s ok Jimmy, I just want to make sure my kid has a good first officer. I want you to be in good hands.” She schooled her expression before turning back to Spock. “As long as you respect him and treat him right, we shouldn’t have a problem.”

“Ma.” Jim glanced over at Spock, who still seemed slightly confused, before looking back at his mom, who looked a little smug. “There’s no need to interrogate him; this whole thing’s probably gonna end as soon as we get to Earth anyway. At that point I won’t be captain so I won’t need a first officer.”

“Hey.” Winona’s expression was more serious now. “Don’t be so pessimistic. You did well; they could still let you keep command of the ship. I know people who’ve been captains for years who wouldn’t have been able to handle a situation like this. And even if you don’t get command now, I think it’s good to start thinking ahead because I doubt they’ll hold you back for long. Whether it’s tomorrow or someday in the future, probably soon, you’re gonna get your own ship. I know it.” She smiled at him, pride returning to her expression.

“I concur.” Both of them looked at Spock, who was still standing with his hands behind his back but looked less stiff now. “You have sufficiently proven yourself during this incident. It is quite likely that Starfleet will grant you a captaincy in the immediate future.”

“Thanks Spock.” Jim smiled and hoped he wasn’t blushing. “That means a lot.”

Winona looked between the two of them again. “Anyway, I should let you two get to work.” She looked at Jim. “But I gotta say, I approve and think you two are a good match.” She waited long enough that Jim almost got nervous. “As captain and first officer, it’s important to balance each other out but also support and trust each other. I know it’s only been a week or so but I think you two have that down, or at least are well on your way to developing that dynamic.” She nodded approvingly. “I’ll head out now. See ya later Jimmy.” She waved at him and then nodded at Spock as she walked past. “Commander.”

Spock nodded at her to return the acknowledgement and watched her leave. Once she was gone he looked back at Jim. “Your mother is…interesting.”

“Yeah.” Jim nodded. “She just wants what’s best for me I think. Anyway, should we get to
reviewing the request lists?”

“Affirmative.” Spock strode forward and sat in the seat Winona had just vacated.

Before they could begin the door chimed again. Jim was a bit confused because he wasn’t expecting anyone, but decided to let them in anyway. “Come in.”

It was Winona again. “One last thing.”

“What is it?” Jim glanced at her as he looked over his desk for the padd with the lists.

“As we were looking for survivors around Vulcan with the other ships, we began to make lists of the people we’d found and the ship leading the efforts combined it into one list. If you want, we could ask for updates over subspace and then compile what we have and send it over; I understand you have some survivors on this ship and I bet they’d like look the list over.” She looked at Spock as she spoke but then turned back at Jim. “Should I ask Davison to do it?”

Jim glanced at Spock, whose expression was a little… overcontrolled once more. He looked back at his mom. “Yeah, that’d be great. Even just send over what you have.”

“Alright.” Winona nodded. “I’ll tell Davison. Should she expect your supply requests soon as well?”

“Yeah.” Jim glanced down at the list on his padd. “That’s what Spock and I are working on; it should be ready to go soon.”

“Good.” Winona nodded again. “I’ll let you get to work then.”

“Ok.” Jim waved at her. “Bye Ma.”

“Bye!” She waved back and left.

Jim watched the door close behind her before turning back to Spock. “So. Supply requests?”

“Yes.” Spock leaned forward in order to see the padd. “What must we do?”

“It’s really a question of just what to approve or not.” With that Jim launched into his earlier thoughts about approvals and denials, content to focus on business and not think about whatever his mom may have been getting up to with her questions to Spock earlier.

Chapter End Notes

I've enjoyed writing Winona. We'll probably get a bit more of her as they head back to Earth, but I can't promise any prolonged interaction between her and Spock besides this for now. I hope you enjoyed!
Hello everyone! I got a lot of comments last chapter, which is always exciting! I love it when you all are enjoying the fic and engaging with it!

This chapter will be from Spock's POV. In case it's unclear, "Kirk" or "the captain" is Spock referring to Jim and "Commander Kirk" is him referring to Winona.

After under a half hour of discussion, Kirk and he had finalized the request lists to send to Captain Davison. Spock had found his opinion of Kirk continuing to rise. The arguments he raised for and against various items on the supply list were logical, even if many of his arguments were based largely in concerns about the emotional states of the crew. Still, Spock could admit that when dealing with humans, emotional considerations were important. Emotions were central to how humans lived their lives, so it was logical to maintain crew morale in order to maintain peak efficiency on the ship.

As he returned to his quarters, Spock did not feel that he was operating at peak efficiency. His emotions were threatening his control once more. The encounter with Commander Kirk had been detrimental to his emotional stability.

Spock had been avoiding thoughts of his mother for the past week. He had been concentrating on ship’s business instead, and that had allowed him to successfully maintain control of himself and his emotions.

It seemed that Kirks had a unique ability to challenge him. True, Commander Kirk had not affected him quite so strongly as her son had, but the woman had still provided a challenge to his control. Thankfully the captain seemed to have noticed his distress and changed the topic. Spock was unsure if he should respond with embarrassment or relief to Kirk’s attention to his emotional state. Spock did not like having visibly observable emotions, and yet Kirk seemed especially adept at reading Spock’s emotions, to a degree that nearly challenged Nyota, who had more knowledge of him. The only human who could understand Spock’s emotions better was his mother, who shared a psychic link with him.

Or perhaps had shared. Spock had not tried lowering his mental shields since the night they defeated Nero, but he was sure that he would find a psychic wound where the connection to his mother had been. Spock had not attempted to ask his father or the other Vulcans onboard if they had tried lowering their shields yet. He knew that some of the Elders, despite their stronger control, had had to visit Sickbay for the pain when they had attempted to lower their mental shields. The pain must have been immense for them to actually consider seeking help from the ship’s medical professionals rather than simply attempting to control the pain themselves.

However, most of the Elders had many strong family bonds that would have been suddenly severed. They would have family bonds with parents and siblings, should they have been living prior to the destruction, the connections to their bondmates, connections to their children, and possibly other weaker bonds to more distant relatives or descendants, in addition to their connection to the collective Vulcan psyche.
Spock had few strong bonds. He had the weak bonds toward extended family that did not register often due to their weakness, as well as the connection to the collective Vulcan psyche that all Vulcans had but rarely felt unless there was some form of emergency. Then there was the connection to his father, which was strong because of their respective telepathic abilities but weakened by both of their continual shielding since their disagreement over Spock’s choosing Starfleet Academy over the Vulcan Science Academy. Additionally, Spock had the bond with T’Pring that had been formed in childhood, however that one was also shielded the majority of the time, and T’Pring and he had never bothered to develop it due to their mutual lack of interest in each other. There was also the other familial bond that had once been strong due to the telepathic abilities of both parties, but Spock had understood that even thinking of the person on the other end of that bond was forbidden.

That left only the bond with his mother. Despite her psi-null status, their bond was strong. His mother had claimed that she had even felt it while pregnant with him, although Spock questioned that claim. He had never challenged her about it though.

That bond had been a source of comfort to Spock throughout his life. While his mother had learned some mental shielding techniques in anticipation of and following her bonding with his father, her psi-null status meant that the shields she created were never exceptionally strong. Spock and his father compensated for this with additional shielding on their ends so as to not compromise her privacy as they had learned that privacy could be very important to humans.

Still, occasionally there would be instances where Spock would be thinking of Vulcan and her (she would call it homesickness, but he would deny such an emotional term, causing her to smile), and he would carefully lower the shield over their bond. He was careful never to actually intrude into her mental space, but he rather just allowed himself to experience whatever she may be projecting over the bond, intentionally or not. While it was not always true, he would often feel a warmth and contentment from her that was comforting to him. He had even learned to gauge the nuances of her emotions from the bond; for example, the contentedness she felt while enjoying her work was distinct from the contentedness she experienced due to something he or his father had done, and similar distinctions could be felt for all her emotions.

On some instances, he would feel a negative emotion from her and make a mental note to call her over subspace once he was available. At other times, she would be content and he would enjoy that feeling, letting it anchor him. There would also be occasions when she would have some song playing in her head, often some form of Earth music, although occasionally from Vulcan or another society. These instances could either provide great comfort to him as some of the songs brought the familiarity of his childhood, or they could provide a source of irritation as the songs, some unfamiliar, would begin to play in his own head and require meditation to remove.

But now that source of comfort was likely gone. There was still some small fragment of Spock that wished to believe that she was not dead. Most would likely dismiss this as his human half exerting undue influence on him, as any Vulcan would be able to acknowledge that the odds of survival of anyone who had been on-planet at the time were infinitesimal.

All these thoughts and emotions that Spock had been successfully suppressing had been renewed by Commander Kirk’s words. While it did provide some comfort to hear of his mother, especially to hear her positive regard for him reaffirmed, no discussion of her now could not carry the heavy weight of her loss.

Spock wondered when his mother and Commander Kirk had met. His parents had gone on many diplomatic missions throughout his life due to his father’s position as an ambassador. Spock had often accompanied them, as his parents saw it valuable to his education to be exposed to other languages and cultures. He had initially been taught both Vulcan and Standard as his parents had
considered it logical to know both as both were native languages of one of his parents and because while Vulcan was the common language of where they lived, Standard was more widely spoken throughout the Federation. Still, while he had accompanied his parents on their travels he had reached near-conversational levels in other languages, some of which he would develop through further study. This would prove valuable to Spock at Starfleet, as they employed him to teach several xenolinguistics courses in addition to the upper level science courses he taught.

Commander Kirk, however, had evidently met his mother on one of the occasions where Spock did not accompany his parents. This was likely one of the instances where he had been actively engaged in studies and thus unable to accompany them. On these occasions Spock was left in the care of a family member, tutor, or other trusted individual. His mother would often call him during the downtime she had while his father was occupied with diplomatic matters and when she knew Spock would not be occupied with schoolwork.

This had continued throughout his time at Starfleet Academy. While his father did not approve of Spock’s decision, his mother had stayed firm in her commitment to respect whatever decision Spock made regarding his future. The two of them had thus stayed in contact even if his father never joined their calls.

This was a tradition that had continued even while Spock had postings on starships, even if it created increased difficulties in calculating the time differences between the two of them.

This likely would have continued when Spock accepted the posting of science officer aboard the Enterprise following the conclusion of the academic year, but now it would be mere speculation if it would have continued. Spock supposed that he could call his father in lieu of communicating with his mother now that the two of them had begun to repair their relationship; however, Spock doubted the experience would be similar.

He supposed that although his eidetic memory meant that he could not forget any encounters with his mother, Spock would have to take additional effort to preserve those memories of his mother, illogical as that may be. He would have no more opportunities to form memories of his mother from this point forward, except through stories heard from others. Still, the experience would not be comparable to memories formed through direct interaction with his mother.

Spock decided that the reflective state he had been in since the return to his quarters would constitute his nightly meditation as he found himself unwilling to slip into deeper contemplation. He stood from where he had settled on his bed during his rumination and began his nightly routine in preparation for sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the sad-ish chapter everybody. I wasn't necessarily intending to do a chapter of Spock introspection right now, but sometimes the fic picks its own direction. You get a lot of my headcanons about Spock/Vulcans here. Also, Spock is a momma's boy.

I realize I ended up putting a lot of stuff (headcanons etc) in this chapter, so feel free to ask me questions/start a conversation in the comments.
Chapter 63

Chapter Notes

Well, the laws of fanfiction once more assert themselves. One chapter practically writes itself, even if it was something you didn't intend to write, and then the next practically refuses to be written. Thanks for your patience everyone; this chapter didn't want to end nicely. Good news for that means longer chapter, bad news means it comes later than intended. But it has arrived at last!

We're back to Jim's POV.

The next day supplies and people started coming over from the Defiant. Jim decided to supervise that rather than stay on the bridge, mostly because there wasn’t much happening on the bridge right now. They were staying still until there was a final decision from the Defiant on how to best get them back to Earth. Since it wasn’t common for ships to carry around the sort of replacement parts the Enterprise would need to fix her warp core (although now that he thought about it, Jim decided that backup warp core parts would be a really useful thing for a ship to have, kinda like spare tires in old cars), it seemed like they would have to get towed back to Earth.

So since there was something to do instead of staring at space, Jim was currently in a shuttle bay, standing around watching that instead. He was occasionally useful in that he would point people in the right direction for dropping things off now and then since the Defiant had a different layout, meaning people didn’t always know where to go, but besides that he was mostly just watching the shuttles pass in and out of the forcefield on the back of the shuttle bay. A lot of people and supplies were coming via transporter, but for the occasional more sensitive supply (or person) they had to use shuttles still.

He and Spock had ended up approving almost all of the supply request list. It was mostly practical stuff after all. The exception was the occasional thing that seemed like it was just required for someone’s project or experiment, which they ended up turning down since they likely wouldn’t be on the ship much longer now.

The shuttle traffic was waning now. Jim was just about to consider going back up to the bridge when a yeoman approached him with a padd. They paused, standing at attention. “Captain.”

Jim turned to face them. “What’s up?”

They held out the padd. “I’ve got the survivor list from Vulcan, sir. I was told to give it to you.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at them and took the padd, glancing over the list on it. It was longer than he would have expected. After dimissing the yeoman, who had been awkwardly standing at attention, Jim walked over to a wall panel. “Kirk to bridge.”

“Spock here.”

Good, just who Jim wanted to talk to. “I just got the list of survivors from Vulcan. I was gonna bring it to the Elders and other survivors. Wanna come with?”
There was a pause before Spock replied. “I will accompany you.”

“Great.” Jim took a second to try to remember where the Elders were. Them and the other survivors the Enterprise had managed to beam up from Vulcan in the brief window after the drill was taken out were all in one part of the ship, in the quarters usually reserved for guests or passengers. There weren’t a lot of rooms, but there weren’t a lot of people either. “Meet on Deck 5 outside T’Pau’s quarters?”

“I will meet you there.” There was another pause. “Is there anything else, Captain?”

Jim thought for a moment. Supply transfers were going well, so there really wasn’t much else to say. “Nah, that should be all for now. Kirk out.”

As he took the turbolift to the right deck, Jim was tempted to look over the list for anyone he knew. There were probably some people from the Starfleet ships who’d gotten rescued too; while Jim knew that realistically there were probably a lot of people who did die since the ships around Vulcan had been pretty wrecked, he hoped that at least some of the people he knew on other ships had survived. He hadn’t gotten to talk to Gaila since news had come out about the Kobayashi Maru. She’d probably figured out what he’d done before then, but he hadn’t gotten to talk to her about it. And now she might be dead.

Jim decided to not look over the list. He’d find out who lived or not when they got back to Earth anyways.

He’d gotten the right deck by this point. Spock was already there. Jim held out the padd. “Want to look for any names you know?”

Spock hesitated. Jim could tell that he was still holding onto the hope that his mom might be alive, but that he also didn’t want to get his hopes up too much. Spock seemed to make a decision; he clasped his hands together behind his back. “I will allow the others to view the list first.”

“Alright then.” Jim held the padd back at his side again. “We can probably make copies of the list for other people to look at too. I bet members of the crew will want to know about other Starfleet survivals.”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded. “Distributing the list to the crew would be wise.”

“Alright then.” Jim nodded back to him. “We’re in agreement. Now should we take this list in? You said they’ve been gathering in T’Pau’s quarters, right?”

“Yes; as she is one of the remaining leaders they have been discussing options for the future in her quarters.” Spock turned toward the door. “Shall we go in?”

“Let’s do it.” Jim stepped forward and pressed the chime on the door. After a moment it opened.

Sarek stood in the doorway. “Hello Captain. Spock.”

“Hello Ambassador.” Jim felt himself standing up a little straighter. He was suddenly very aware of how and he and Sarek hadn’t really interacted since Sarek watched Jim get taunt his son until Spock nearly killed him. Not exactly the best first impression. Jim held out the padd. “We’ve got a list of people Starfleet has rescued from around Vulcan. It’s from the Defiant, so it should be pretty up-to-date.” Jim glanced over at Spock, who also seemed to be standing up a little straighter in the presence of his father. “We figured you’d appreciate looking it over.”

“That would be appreciated.” Sarek took the padd and began to skim it over before looking back at
Jim. “May we make copies of this list to distribute to others?”

“Yeah go ahead.” Jim nodded at him before looking over at Spock. “Do you want to stay and look at survivors?” He knew Spock said he didn’t want to be the first to look it over, but maybe now that he could look it over with the others he’d want to?

“No; I will finish my shift then retrieve a copy.” Spock turned to look at Jim before turning back to his father. “Will you notify me if…certain names are on the list?”

“I will.” Sarek nodded at his son.

Jim raised an eyebrow and looked between them. “Are you sure you don’t want to take the rest of your shift off? We don’t have much to do.”

“I will finish my shift.” Spock looked at Jim and his father, his hands behind his back. “If you will excuse me, I will return to the bridge.”

“Alright.” Jim felt a little concerned about Spock, but he didn’t want to make a scene in front of his dad. At least, not again. “You’re dismissed.” Spock nodded at him and walked away; Jim watched him for a moment before turning back to Sarek. He was much more intimidating and hard to read than his son. Jim stood there for a moment before glancing at the corridor where Spock just left and then back to Sarek. “I should probably get back to the bridge as well. Gotta coordinate all the supplies that have been arriving.” Jim stood there for a moment, feeling awkward, before turning to go.

“Captain.” Sarek’s voice stopped him and he turned back around. Sarek held up the padd. “Thank you. It will be a relief to know who of our people survives.”

Jim felt himself smile as the tension decreased. “No problem. I know that if it were my planet, I’d want to know.”

“Yes.” There seemed to be some odd expression on Sarek’s face for a mere moment before it was gone. “It is fortunate that Nero was stopped when he was.”

“It was really all your son. He’d deny it, but it’s true.” Jim hoped that he came across as genuine and not like he was just trying to make Spock look good to his dad, which admittedly he wasn’t opposed to doing. “He’s a great man.”

“Yes.” Sarek started off in the direction Spock had gone. “His mother was a great woman.”

Jim paused, not quite sure how to respond. “I’ve heard she was. I’m sorry for your loss.”

Sarek nodded to him in acknowledgment before looking back at the padd in his hands. “I must review this list with the others.” He looked back up at Jim and held up his hand in the Vulcan salute. “Peace and long life, Captain.”

Jim knew there was a proper response, but he didn’t quite know what it was, so he just attempted to return the hand sign. That must have been enough, because Sarek seemed satisfied and dropped his hand before returning to the quarters, allowing the doors to close behind him.

Once he was alone in the corridor, Jim let the last of the tension drain from his body. While he wouldn’t exactly call them friends or anything, it seemed like Sarek didn’t hold the bridge incident against him anymore. That was good.

Jim turned and walked towards the turbolift that could take him to the bridge. He seemed to be
getting better relationships with his soulmate and his soulmate’s dad. Not that it seemed like anything would happen with his soulmate anytime soon, but oh well. Maybe this universe was different from Older Spock’s and they were just meant to be friends. But now wasn’t the time to mope about that.

He’d arrived at the turbolift; it was time to get back to work. Jim hit the controls to activate it and set his destination; a moment later he felt the movement of it taking him to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

Random thought of the day: How bad would it have been for Starfleet if the Enterprise had been destroyed? Between that and all the ships lost around Vulcan they basically would have lost an entire year of cadets, a lot of older officers, and a bunch of ships, some of them brand new. Plus the larger impact on the timeline would be enormous... It still will be with everything that already happened(Like losing a major Federation planet), but who knows how much exploration of the Kelvin timeline we'll get. Probably not too much in depth, but there's only so much you can do in movies I guess. But that's what fic is for.
Chapter 64

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Apparently I am still able to get chapters written and posted at a reasonable time. This one was longer than expected, so I ended up splitting it. That also means that the Spock chapter I had planned for Thursday will now happen next week, but sometimes that's just how fic goes. So we're still in Jim's POV for now

See the end of the chapter for more notes

There wasn’t a whole lot of time left on Alpha shift by the time Jim reached the bridge, but he headed for the captain’s chair anyways.

As soon as Spock saw him approaching he got up from the chair. “Captain.”

“Mr. Spock.” Jim settled into the chair and looked up at Spock. “Any word from the departments on how the new supplies and temporary extra hands are settling in?”

“Yes.” Spock stood next to the chair and held his hands behind his back. “All departments report that supplies and personnel are being received where necessary. As of yet, there are no complaints, problems, or issues reported.”

“Awesome.” Jim shifted in the chair some to better face Spock. “Any word yet on how the Defiant will help get us back to Earth?”

“Negative, Captain.” They were holding eye contact again.

“Alright then.” Jim found he didn’t want to break eye contact yet. He was tempted to ask Spock about the survivors list from Vulcan again, but he figured that even if Spock would want to talk about it with him, which didn’t seem all that likely, he definitely wouldn’t want to talk about it on the bridge.

Before either of them could say anything else, there was a noise from the comm panel on the arm of the captain’s chair. “Sickbay to Kirk.” It was Bones, and he sounded irritated.

Jim broke eye contact with Spock to look down and find the button to respond. “Kirk here. What’s up Bones?”

“It’s not a short explanation; I’ll tell you when you get here.” There was a momentary pause; Bones’ voice shifted from irritated to a little bit calmer and almost placating. “I promise it isn’t a surprise physical; I just need you to report to Sickbay as soon as possible.”

Jim glanced up at Spock, who was still standing by the captain’s chair. “You ok holding down the bridge a while longer?”

The expression earned him an eyebrow raise but Spock still seemed to understand. “I can.”

“Alright then.” Jim hit the button to open up the comm line again. “I’ll be there soon Bones. Kirk out.” He got out of the captain’s chair and looked back to Spock. “I guess the conn is yours once more, Mr. Spock.”
“Indeed, Captain.” Spock sat back down in the chair once Jim had stepped away.

With one last glance back, Jim headed for the turbolift. As he started descending to the proper deck, Jim thought about Spock in the captain’s chair. He’d probably been there more than Jim had this shift, and with the shift being close to over it would probably end with Spock in the chair more than Jim that day. He wondered if Spock wanted to be captain. From their week or so of working together, Jim thought that Spock made a great first officer. Spock hadn’t done as well as captain in his brief trial period, but that was probably due more to the mission than Spock himself. It couldn’t be easy losing your planet and a parent like that, especially if you were close with your parent like Spock must have been with his mom.

Jim tried to remember if Older Spock had ever made captain. He couldn’t really remember from the either mindmeld. The first had been all about Nero, and the second had mostly been about Older Spock and his Jim together, so Jim couldn’t really say much what had happened in their lives outside that relationship.

As he neared the proper deck, Jim wondered why he’d been called into Sickbay. Surely Bones hadn’t figured out the aging yet, right? Yeah, he’d noticed the odd readings during the physical, but that didn’t mean he’d know for sure. It’s not like Bones would have had a lot of spare time to compare the readings to Jim’s old baselines and figure it out, right? Except they’d been drifting through space for a week so he might’ve. But he’d also probably still be dealing with the aftermath of talking on survivors from Vulcan and having crewmembers injured in battle. So really, who knew how much free time Bones had had? Still, the shift was almost over. What was so important that it couldn’t wait another hour or so?

Well, Jim was about to find out. He’d arrived at Sickbay. The doors opened and Jim stepped inside; Bones was there, waiting for him. Jim walked over, trying to act casual. If Bones figured out the aging, should he fake surprise or come clean? He definitely wasn’t ready to tell Bones who he thought his soulmate was yet. So act casual for now for sure, and fake surprise if the aging comes up. Jim had a plan. “Hey Bones. What was so urgent?”

“Don’t worry, it’s not that urgent.” Bones crossed his arms. “It’s just your mother. She’s visiting Pike and refuses to leave even though visiting hours are over.”

“What?” Well that was not what Jim was expecting to hear. “Ma?”

“Yeah.” Bones glanced over to the curtained off area where Pike was. “I told her visiting hours were over and that she had to go, but she told me that she wouldn’t take orders from someone of a lower rank than her. She also pointed out that I couldn’t pull the CMO thing because I’m not her CMO.”

That did sound like his mom. There was just one bit Jim didn’t get. “And you called me in why?”

“Because even with the field promotion to CMO, which may or may not come with a rank upgrade, I’m a lieutenant commander at best. Since her rank is commander, she does outrank me. You, however,” Bones eyed him critically, “are a captain. You outrank her. You could make her leave so my patients can get some goddamn rest and so I can finish my rounds undisturbed.”

Jim felt his eyebrows lifting. “You want me to order my mom out of Sickbay? Really?”

“Yes.” Bones was deadly serious. “I don’t care if you can talk her out or if it has to come to making it an order; I just need her out. Now go do it.” He uncrossed his arms and patted Jim on the arm as he started to walk away.

Jim turned to watch him go, his expression mock-stubborn. “You can’t order me to do it.”
Bones groaned and rubbed a hand over his forehead. “Dear god, it’s hereditary.” He looked at Jim, a little pleading this time. “Just do it, Jim. Please.”

“Well since you asked so nicely…” Jim grinned at Bones before turning and walking over to Pike’s biobed. Getting his mom to leave shouldn’t be too hard, right?

Chapter End Notes

Tbh, I spent a good amount of time when I watched TOS just figuring out how the ranks worked (i.e. who outranked who. with the obvious exception that I knew the captain was the highest rank) since I have zero background with any sort of military so didn't know how the structure was set up. Then I spent a while figuring out the rank stripes worked, and then the collar pips on TNG and later shows when I got there. I'm still not quite sure how the TOS movie uniforms showed rank tbh. This note has little to nothing to do with the chapter, but then again these notes typically don't. With the exception of one person who mentioned in the comments that they did (and I hope you still find them entertaining), does anyone even read these?

Btw, if anyone is curious, the reason Winona can be free to visit Pike even though Jim et al. are still on duty is because the shift times for her ship don't align with how the shift times currently are on the Enterprise, in part because the Enterprise's shift schedule was thrown off by everyone staying on duty past when they would have during the Nero thing and in part because I imagine that ships just end up having different schedules sometimes. But I'm gonna stop myself there before I let myself ramble too much this author's note.
Chapter 65

Chapter Notes

Ok first of all, wow. So many comments, kudos, and new bookmarks last chapter. I haven’t been keeping track of subscriptions, but I feel like there might have been a bump in those two. Did you all just really like last chapter or was there a wave of people who just discovered this? Whatever it was, I love all the feedback and you’re all awesome.

Well, time for Jim to see how easy it is to get your mom to leave when she’s talking to her friends (with the age I have her at, she and Pike were the same year at the Academy). A number of you were anticipating some struggles here...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Jim got to Pike’s biobed, Winona and Pike were in the middle of a conversation, but Pike stopped when he saw Jim and smiled softly. “Captain.”

“Captain.” Jim nodded to him before looking at his mom. “Ma, Bones says you need to leave Sickbay.”

“Really Jimmy?” Her eyebrows went up. “Who are you to make me leave?”

“Well, he said that you told him he couldn’t order you out because you outranked him, but I technically outrank you right now.” Jim shrugged. “He seemed to think it would work.”

Winona looked unimpressed. “It feels like yesterday you were still a cadet, and yet here you are, trying to order your own mother around. I guess power really does corrupt.”

Jim shrugged again. “It’s more like last week I was still a cadet, but hey. If you think I shouldn’t be captain, blame him.” He gestured to Pike. “He’s the one who put me in command.” Jim paused and thought for a second. “Well technically Spock getting compromised did, but still, Pike made me first officer, so he set it up.”

“Yeah.” Winona looked at Pike, who was watching their interactions with slight confusion. “That was a bit of an odd move, Chris. I’m not saying my kid wouldn’t get there someday or doesn’t deserve it, but a cadet is not the usual choice for first officer.”

Pike shrugged, or at least did as much as he could from a semi-reclined position. “What can I say, I’ve got faith in the kid.”

“I think it’s more than that.” Winona narrowed her eyes at him for a second. “Let’s be real Chris, if you could have adopted him after you met him in Iowa you would have.”

“Really Win?” Pike looked at her incredulously.

“That wasn’t a denial.” Winona looked smug. “I don’t blame you; he’s a great kid. He’s like me, but with just enough George to not cause problems that are too serious.”

“Oh my god.” Jim ran a hand down his face; when he opened his eyes both of them were looking at him. “Were you two just talking about me this whole time?”
“Of course not.” Winona shifted in her seat to face Jim more. “We’ve known each other since the Academy. We’ve got plenty to talk about.”

“She’s right.” Pike looked at Jim and nodded.

“In fact,” Winona looked over at Pike mischievously, “you could probably get just as many George stories from him as you could from me.” She looked at Jim and leaned in like she was going to tell a secret. “He was a little bit obsessed in our Academy days. I don’t blame him; I was a bit obsessed myself, but Chris here had a bit of a hero worship thing going on.”

“I did not.” Pike seemed a little embarrassed.

“Dude.” Winona looked at him, seeming totally unimpressed. “You wrote a paper about him. We were both out of the Academy for years at that point, and you wrote a paper about my dead husband.”

“I was doing my dissertation.” He still seemed a little embarrassed, but covered it up some. “You know, some of us went back to school, Winona.”

“Well excuse me, Christopher.” Her tone was sarcastic, but Jim could tell there was no heat behind it. She was smiling.

Jim looked between the two of them curiously. “Is this what having real parents is like?”

Distinct but equally odd expressions crossed both of their faces. Pike recovered first. “No Jim. If it were her and George, she probably would have climbed onto the biobed by now. The two of them were all over each other.”

“Oh god.” Jim felt his nose scrunch up. “Not the images I need.”

“Relax Jimmy, we never did anything more than cuddle in Sickbay.” Winona glared briefly at Pike, but again it seemed more teasing than anything else. “Besides, Chris here was around us most when we were at the Academy and newly together. Everyone’s all over each other at that stage of the relationship.”

“Not to the extent of you and George.” Pike shook his head. “Me and Number One were never like that.”

“Yeah, but you met when you were older; she wasn’t even a physical teenager because her species doesn’t work like that.” Winona waved her hand dismissively. “I was 19 and he was 22; we were both still young and physically 18.”

“Anyway.” Jim looked between them, not really wanting to hear about what they got up to with their soulmates. “Any chance you’ll leave Sickbay soon so Bones will stop bothering me, Ma?”

Winona sighed dramatically. “Fine. But only because you asked nicely rather than trying to pull rank when you’re sortof still a cadet.”

“Hey, you’re the one who was bragging about your son the captain yesterday.” Jim smiled at her. “But I guess if I’m just a cadet, you have nothing to brag about…”

“Hey. A cadet with promise.” Winona finally stood up and then pointed seriously at him. “Don’t sell yourself short, Jimmy. All you command people are supposed to be egocentric.”

“Wow Win.” Pike crossed his arms. “Way to insult me, your dead husband, and your son all in one
“There’s exceptions.” A grin spread across Winona’s face. “George wasn’t full of himself. In fact, typically I was the one who was—”

“Oh god Ma!” Jim looked at his mother, feeling a bit scandalized but playing up to make her stop. “How many times do I have to tell you that I do not need to hear that stuff?”

“Aww, Jimmy.” Winona smiled at him, a little gentler but definitely still teasing, and ruffled his hair. “I may not have been there in person to give you the sex talk, but you have to know that you weren’t from the stork.”

“I know.” Jim crossed his arms. “Still, just because I never met my dad doesn’t mean I want mental images of you having sex with him.”

“I would say I don’t want the mental images, but I already have enough from the Academy.” Pike shuddered, but Jim could tell it was just for effect. He looked at Jim seriously. “Kirk, get your mother out of here before she scars us both.”

“Yes sir.” Jim looked at Winona. “C’mon Ma, I think visiting hours are officially over. I’ll walk you out.”

“Fine.” Winona looked back at Pike. “I’ll see you later, Chris.”

“See you, Winona.” Pike waved. “It was nice catching up, up until you started trying to scar your son and I.”

Winona smirked. “Don’t pretend you never thought about George like that.”

“And we’re definitely leaving now. C’mon Ma.” Jim grabbed Winona’s arm and started to pull her away. “Bye Pike!”

“Bye Jim!” Pike was laughing as they walked away.

Once they were clear of Sickbay (Jim was able to see Bones’ grateful look as he passed him with Winona in tow), Jim let go of his mom. When he turned to face her she was still smiling. “Are you always like that with old friends?”

“Nah, Chris is different.” The two of them started walking toward the transporter room. “We knew each other from the start right back at the Academy, and he was there for the early days with George. It’s fun to reminisce.” Winona’s smile shifted to a smirk. “Plus, what’s the fun of friends if you can’t mess with them?”

“That’s true.” Jim wondered if he and Bones would still be messing with each other like that when they were that old. They probably would. “If you two are so close, how come neither of you talked about the other much?”

Winona shrugged. “You sometimes drift apart from friends; it doesn’t mean you can’t still be close when you get back together.” Winona looked back at Jim. “Why? Are you wondering why he couldn’t have been your stepdad?”

“God no.” Jim laughed. “Teen Jim probably would have hated him. It’s probably good we didn’t meet until he picked me up off of a bar table and talked me into the Academy.”

“Yeah, that was an interesting call to get.” Winona looked over at Jim. “He asked why I never
pushed you to join. I told him Starfleet wasn’t ready for two of me. That threw him off; I think he was expecting another George.”

“Well he was in for a surprise.” Jim smiled.

“Damn straight.” Winona bumped her shoulder against him. “You’re my kid for sure. There’s a dash of George, but mostly you’re me 2.0. I’m surprised he didn’t see it considering he found you mid-barfight. That was always my thing; George never started them, just got dragged in when I was too outnumbered.”

Jim nodded. “Good to know.” They paused outside the door to the transporter room. “You ready to head back to your ship or are you gonna wreak havoc elsewhere?”

Winona paused for a moment as if considering it. “I’ll leave the havoc wreaking to you. I gotta get back to my ship for an Engineer’s meeting about how to get you out back to Earth.”

“Alright then.” Jim paused. “I’ll see you then.”

Winona slapped his arm affectionately before pulling him into a quick hug. “See you soon, Jimmy.”

He watched her walk into the transporter room before turning and starting to head back to the bridge.

Chapter End Notes

So Number One (who is Pike’s soulmate) was in basically one episode of TOS, but I’ve seen fics I like with them together so here we are. Since she was in the show for so short, we don’t get a lot of backstory for her, but D.C. Fontana made up a backstory where she was an alien so I’m going with that (again, cool fics I’ve read may play a role in choices here).
Hello everyone! There were a lot of commenters again last chapter, which always brightens my day. I know I say this a lot, but you're all awesome and I love the feedback.

We're switching to Spock's POV this chapter and will continue with it next chapter. I know some of you wanted to see Spock's POV, so here we go!

Spock once again rose from the captain’s chair as Kirk reentered the bridge. He stood next to the chair as Kirk sat. “What was Dr. McCoy contacting you for?”

“What?” Kirk’s blue eyes flashed to him, evidently surprised that Spock had remained rather than returning to the science station. He shrugged. “It was nothing much, really. He just needed me to get my mom to stop visiting Pike in Sickbay so he could start wrapping things up for the night. Nothing too urgent really.”

Spock was unsure what to do with that information. “That does seem like a trivial matter to contact the captain of a starship for.”

“Maybe.” Kirk shrugged. “But what was he supposed to do, call in a security team? Plus, it was my mom. I guess he figured I could work the personal angle.”

Spock raised an eyebrow in acknowledgement; he was unsure how to respond.

“Anything new up here? I realize I wasn’t gone long.” Kirk shifted in the chair and crossed his legs.

“Negative.” Spock clasped his hands behind his back. “There were no new reports in your absence.”

“Allright then.” Kirk looked away from him and towards the viewscreen, which had an unchanging image of the Defiant and the surrounding stars because the Enterprise was not currently in motion. “Should be a relatively unexciting end of the shift then.”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded before returning to the science station.

Here as well, there was not much to do. As they had remained in the same section of space for over 24 hours ship’s time, the sensors, which were meant to take in information while traveling at warp speeds, or perhaps while in orbit of a planet, were not detecting much new information. The processing of the information could be better done in the labs than at the bridge console, which was designed for quick rather than thorough analysis.

When the shift was nearly complete, Nyota approached Spock’s station. “We’ve got five minutes left this shift. Want to get dinner afterwards?”

While he had initially planned to review the list of survivors from Vulcan following his shift, Spock found that he did not mind postponing that activity. “That would be agreeable.”
“Alright.” Nyota smiled softly at him. “I’ve got a few things to do to finish my shift but then we can just head to the mess hall together.” For a moment, she moved her hand toward his as if intending to initiate a kiss, but after a moment she seemed to consider their surroundings and withdrew it. “I’ll let you know when I’m ready to go.” She returned to her station.

Spock turned back to his console. Nyota had seemed to realize that he had not been doing any work that would suffer greatly if interrupted or stopped. Indeed, there was little to report to his replacement, who arrived 3.4 minutes later.

Once Nyota had finished her duties, the two of them went into the turbolift together and began their journey to the mess hall. Upon their arrival, they entered the line for the replicators with the other officers who had just finished alpha shift. Nyota reached the replicators first and procured a table while Spock ordered his meal.

Once seated, they ate in silence. Nyota typically started their conversations, although Spock did on occasion; however, they both seemed distracted today.

After several minutes, Nyota broached the topic of their distraction. “So I saw the list of survivors from Vulcan came over today.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. He was not surprised by the topic, but rather how she had brought it up. “How did you see it?”

She raised an eyebrow in return. “I’m chief communications officer for alpha shift, Spock. There aren’t many messages to and from the ship that I’m not aware of, especially transmissions of that size.”

“That is true.” Spock paused to consume more of his dinner. Without looking back up at Nyota, a thought entered his mind. He swallowed his current mouthful of food. “Did you review the list?”

“No.” Nyota sipped her drink and shook her head. “I’d like to though. More for the Starfleet people rescued from the wrecked ships than for the survivors of Vulcan admittedly. But instead I just transferred the information to a padd and told a yeoman to take it to Kirk.”

Spock nodded. “I have not reviewed the list either. Kirk presented me with the opportunity, but I believed it was more important that the Elders have the opportunity to review the list as soon as possible. It will be important for their efforts to rebuild our society.”

Nyota nodded. “Yeah, I can see how knowing how many people and who you’re working with would be useful. Hopefully once we’re back toward Earth they’ll have a place for the survivors to get together and regroup, or at least form a network for communication.”

“I imagine the eventual goal will be finding a new planet to settle.” Spock stared down at his plate, now mostly cleared. “That will likely take some time, however.”

“Yeah.” Spock looked up to Nyota and found her expression distant; likely distracted by thought. After a moment, her eyes returned to him. “Do you have any idea if she’s on the list?”

Nyota did not need to specify who she was referring to; Spock had informed Nyota previously that his mother had been on the planet at the time of its destruction and had likely perished. As a way of comforting him, she had reminded him that they did not yet have conclusive evidence of his mother’s demise. This was likely a continuation of that line of thought. “I have not reviewed the list, so I cannot conclusively say. However, my father was the one who received the list, and he agreed to inform me if she was on it.”
“Well that’s good.” Nyota smiled at him, warmer and bolder than on the bridge. “Soon enough, you should know either way.”

“Indeed.” Spock finished the remainder of his meal, which was not much.

“Whatever you find out,” Nyota paused and waited for him to look up and make eye contact once more, “let me know.” She extended her hand towards his on the table but did not make contact, as if waiting for him to initiate whatever he was comfortable with in public. “I’ll be there for you, whatever you need.”

He placed his hand atop hers briefly, a human gesture rather than a Vulcan one. “Thank you, Nyota.”

She smiled at him again. “No problem, Spock.” Nyota held his gaze a moment longer before withdrawing her hand and glancing down at their plates; by now, both of them had finished their meals. She returned her gaze to his face. “So what are your plans for the rest of the night?”

“I plan to return to my quarters and contact my father to ascertain if he has finished reviewing the list.” That he would be asking for information about his mother went unspoken, but was understood nonetheless. “Afterwards I will likely meditate then sleep; I plan to visit the science labs prior to alpha shift tomorrow to see how the crews’ experiments are progressing.”

“Alright.” She nodded. “Meet for lunch before alpha shift again tomorrow?”

“That would be agreeable.” Spock nodded to her and they both stood to deposit their now empty trays and leave the mess hall.

Once they were out in the corridor, Nyota paused and Spock stopped in response. She looked at him, seeming slightly nervous. “Well, since our quarters are in different directions, we may as well part ways here. Let me know about the list though, ok?”

“I shall.” Spock extended a hand with two fingers outstretched to her as part of their customary farewell. “Goodnight, Nyota.”

“Goodnight Spock.” Her fingers met his and, after a quick glance to ensure that the corridor was empty, she gave him a quick kiss on the cheek before their hands separated. “I’ll talk to you later; I can even come by if you want.” She looked at him, concern evident in her expression.

“Thank you.” Spock did not think that would be necessary; he would likely turn to meditation to deal with the information, although he knew that Nyota was attempting to support him. “I will contact you when I have the information.”

“Aright.” Nyota watched him a moment longer before turning with a wave. “Goodnight.”

He nodded in response and watched her a moment longer before turning and proceeding to his quarters.

Chapter End Notes

So the big question remains: is Amanda on the list of survivors? And if she isn't, does that mean that she's dead for sure?
Chapter 67

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! You all seem quite eager to find out Amanda's fate, so I won't draw things out with a long author's note. We're still with Spock's POV.

Once he had returned to his quarters, Spock was surprised to see that he had already received a call from his father. He was unsure what to expect when he called his father; the two of them had not interacted much outside of professional settings since their conversation in the transporter room. Spock knew that his father had been occupied meeting with the other Vulcan Elders in order to plan for their people’s future. Spock had been busy with his own work as well. But if his father did have the news Spock sought now, Spock would not avoid him. He sat at the computer console and returned the call; momentarily his father’s face appeared on the console screen. “Hello, Father.”

“Hello, Spock.” Sarek nodded in acknowledgement, but if he did more than that the limited view of the console screen obscured it.

Spock did not want to spend time on idle pleasantries, so he decided to get to the point. “Why have you called so soon?”

“I have completed the review the list of survivors with the other Vulcan Elders.” Sarek’s face was solemn; it seemed foreboding to Spock.

“And my mother?” Spock had avoided making a direct inquiry in the presence of Captain Kirk earlier due to concern about his emotional stability, but his desire to know of her survival was strong. Sarek paused before answering; Spock wondered if it was hesitation or perhaps reluctance. “Amanda’s name was not among the list of the survivors.” There was another pause. “We must accept that she is likely lost.”

“No.” Spock was surprised by his own boldness. “We have been informed that the rescue efforts around Vulcan—the former site of Vulcan—are ongoing. There may be survivors whose names are not yet listed.”

“My son,” Sarek’s composure was less steady than previously, “your response to this is illogical. The likelihood of survivors being discovered decreases with the time passed since the destruction of the planet. Approximately nine Terran days have passed; those who have not been found are likely lost. It is not logical to reject this.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. “Was it not you who told me to embrace what I felt nine days ago during the conflict with Nero? I feel that my mother is not dead.” Spock paused to regain his composure; excessive emotions would not help his argument with his father. “Additionally, Commander Kirk informed Captain Kirk and I that the list they sent may have been incomplete. It is imprudent to draw a conclusion without the proper information; we do not yet have all the proper information.”

“Your logic is true, but its foundation is unstable.” Sarek seemed to be tensing; Spock recognized the sign of frustration. “It is not the Vulcan way to begin with emotion then bend logic to fit; that is mere
rationalization. Do not be obstinate, my son. Acknowledge the logic of the situation.”

“You yourself told me to utilize my emotions during the conflict with Nero. You told me Mother would have advised me similarly. Why is it now wrong to utilize them?” Spock realized that he was repeating previous statements, but he wished for a response. “It is the human way to use emotions to guide judgement, is it not? And it is not totally against the Vulcan way to utilize emotion. You yourself admitted to marrying my mother because you loved her. Is love not an emotion?”

Sarek tensed further; it was beginning to approach levels Spock had not seen since the time he rejected the Vulcan Science Academy in favor of Starfleet. Sarek’s facial expression was even starting to reflect the strain. “It is, and I admit to being influenced by emotion in that decision. However, Vulcans must be cautious with their emotions; emotions run deep within us and may be perilous in their consequences if we allow them to control us. This is true of you. You have already seen the dangers of allowing your emotions to run unchecked; you nearly killed another who had done you no harm except through words.”

Kirk’s forgiving attitude had allowed Spock to put the incident on the bridge largely out of his mind; the two of them had discussed it afterwards but they had not spoken of it since and there had been no hostilities afterwards. Still, it stung when his father brought it up. “Does one incident indicate I must rid myself of emotion forever?”

“It is not the only incident relevant to this discussion.” Sarek’s expression remained serious. “It was not the first time you attacked another for mere taunts, and there is also the history of our people to consider. The control of emotions has brought peace that was unattainable when our ancestors allowed themselves to be ruled by emotions. The control of emotions is a better way.”

“Is control or eradication required?” Spock stared down his father. “You seem to be suggesting a complete loss of emotions.”

“Strong control is all that is required; eradication of emotions is only possible through Kolinahr; you know this.” Sarek met his stare.

“Would you require mother to strictly control her emotions?” Spock did remember how much more somber and controlled his mother was when they were in public on Vulcan compared to when they were alone or off world. On Vulcan, her levels of emotional expression were notably less than what Spock realized was average for humans based on his observations while in Starfleet.

“No.” The mention of Amanda seemed to disturb Sarek’s control, but he quickly contained it. “She is—was human. It would be illogical to hold another to our standards.”

“Am I not half human?” Bringing up his mother had agitated Spock as well. “Am I not her son?”

Sarek appeared ready to respond, but after a moment he met Spock’s eyes and the tension left his frame and expression. “You are her son. And she would not wish for us to be fighting like this.”

Spock felt the tension begin to leave his frame as well; he looked away from his father. “She would not.”

There was a long pause before Sarek spoke again. “Do you require a copy of the list? There may be others you wish to know the status of.”

Spock returned his gaze to his father. There were few from Vulcan that he cared for, but Nyota had mentioned wanting to know who from the Starfleet ships was rescued and others would likely want to know as well. “May I have a copy to disseminate among the crew? They will likely wish to know
who survived from the other Starfleet ships.”

“I will see with the other Vulcan Elders about giving you a copy of the list to share.” Sarek nodded; his composure seemed completely returned. He held up his hand in the ta’al. “Peace and long life, my son.”

Spock returned the gesture. “Live long and prosper.” He held his hand up until the comm line was closed and the console screen went dark.

Chapter End Notes

So are you all with Sarek or Spock? Also, writing arguing Vulcans is difficult. Having to stick with advanced language and relative calm is not exactly what feels natural with writing arguments.

Also, just as a heads up I am entering finals week next week. If updates a a bit delayed, it's because I'm probably writing one of the several essays I'll need to do. Or studying for one of the tests. Wish me luck in the abyss.
Thanks for all the comments everyone! It's interesting to see where you all stand on if Amanda lives. So far more people seem to be with Spock on wanting her to live, but we'll have to wait and see...

But on a larger note, the comments on this and past chapters are always a great thing that keeps me going with this fic, even as I face down finals. I will stand by my promise to not abandon this fic regardless of response because I know the pain of abandoned fics, even if you discover them years later, but a little encouragement is always nice, so thank you!

This chapter is a bit longer than usual. I considered splitting it up or cutting it down, but there's no good way to do it for this one, plus I have no idea how timely Thursday's update will be so consider this an apology in advance if that chapter's late.

Anyway, back to the fic. We're still in Spock's POV

Spock still felt agitated. His regular meditation since Nero’s attack had not been fully satisfactory at helping him achieve optimal levels of control. Perhaps Vulcan methods were insufficient. Perhaps he needed to attempt human methods of emotional release.

He considered visiting Nyota to speak about his conversation with his father and the likely loss of his mother. She seemed to believe that it would be beneficial for him to talk about these experiences, and many human forms of therapy centered around speaking, suggesting that it did have some benefits for the human psyche. However, Spock still felt reluctant to speak to anyone about his problems. Additionally, he looked at the chronometer and realized that it was now nearing 2300 ship’s time. It was possible that Nyota would be engaged in other activities, or even preparing to retire for the night. Spock did not want to disturb her, although he knew that she would allow the disturbance.

There were other human methods for the release or regulation of emotions. Humans turned to various activities, such as meditation, exercise, art, and many others, to help facilitate the release of emotions. Spock did not wish to attempt meditation, but perhaps he could exercise. The ship’s gymnasium had several rooms that were open to crewmembers at all hours; he could utilize one and practice the martial arts he learned as a child.

With a course of action resolved upon, Spock changed into the proper clothing and left his room. When he reached the gymnasium, it was mostly empty. Few officers were awake and active during this time; most who were not on duty were either sleeping or preparing to do so. Spock went to one of the private rooms, entered, and adjusted the temperatures to allow himself to be more comfortable.

Spock removed his robe and began to go through the motions he learned as a child. There was something calming in it; the motions were familiar enough that he could do them almost automatically, but they still required some concentration, so his mind was not allowed to wander too much. It was working well at focusing his thoughts and clearing his mind.

As he was nearing the end of his routine, Spock became aware of the feeling that someone was
He did not stop his routine but instead decided to finish it. Once it was completed, he turned toward the door and saw Kirk leaning against the doorframe with his arms crossed. He was also wearing workout clothing; he had likely visited the gymnasium for similar reasons as Spock. Spock stood at attention with his hands behind his back. “Captain.”

“We’re off duty, Spock. There’s no need for formality.” Kirk pushed off the doorframe but did not advance any farther than standing in the doorway. “What were you doing anyway?”

“It is a Vulcan martial art called Suus Mahna.” Spock allowed his hands to rest by his sides instead of behind his back. “I learned it as a child.”

“It looks cool.” Kirk entered the room but did not advance farther than a few steps. “I would ask if it’s any good in a fight, but I think we both know you can hold your own.”

Spock felt tension increase along his spine. He clasped his hands behind his back once more. “Captain, if you are referring to what occurred on the bridge during Nero’s attack—”

“Spock.” Kirk held up a hand to stop him. “Don’t worry about that. We talked it over, and I meant it when I told you that I wasn’t gonna hold it against you.” His expression was genuine, but something challenging entered his eyes. “I wouldn’t be opposed to a rematch through.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Are you sure that would be wise, Captain?”

Kirk smirked. “Hey, that same day I was able to fight Romulans and take them down. Admittedly that was with weapons, but still.” His expression got slightly more serious. “Besides, I’ll probably need to know how to fight people stronger than me. Humans are pretty far from being the strongest in the galaxy, and while most of the fights Starfleet gets into are in space, it wouldn’t hurt to know how to fight hand to hand. I bet at some point in my career I’ll have to fight someone stronger than me one-on-one. I should know how to handle it.”

“That is logical.” Spock tipped his head in acknowledgement. “Very well. Prepare yourself.” He began to shift into a beginning stance.

“Alright.” Kirk smiled. “One thing though. It’s hot as hell in here.” He pulled off his shirt.

Spock had been about to correct Kirk that it was actually at normal temperatures for the Shi’Kahr region of Vulcan, but Kirk removing his shirt surprised him and he did not speak. He raised an eyebrow. “Was that necessary?” The temperature was elevated enough that Spock was comfortable in workout pants and a short sleeved shirt, but surely it was not at unbearable levels for humans. His mother had survived in temperatures like this for decades without major complaint.

“What?” Kirk shrugged. “This is just how I deal with heat.”

“I could lower the temperature in the room to a more comfortable level for you.” Despite the amount of skin bared, Spock attempted to keep his focus on the captain’s face.

“It’s fine.” Kirk waved his hand to dismiss Spock’s concern. “I’m good; let’s do this.”

They both shifted their stances and began to slowly circle each other; Spock looked over Kirk for any weaknesses and he was sure that Kirk was doing the same. Kirk, like almost all of the humans on the ship, had stopped physically aging at 18. He was in good physical shape. He had an amount of muscle tone that humans (and others, if Kirk’s reputation at the Academy was to be believed) found attractive without being excessive. He was also curiously free of body hair; Spock knew that the same could not be said of himself. Spock saw that there were still fading bruises on Kirk, likely from the incident on the bridge but possibly from others Kirk fought that day. Spock resolved to not
used his full strength to avoid further injury to the captain. Additionally, with Spock’s being a touch telepath the amount of bare skin he was faced with could present challenges. While he would try to avoid any contact with Kirk’s psi points this time, he would have to keep his shields up strongly to ensure that he did not violate Kirk’s privacy by reading anything he was not intended to know.

After a few moments of circling, Kirk swung towards Spock with his right fist. It was a move that seemed more suited to the bar fights like the one Nyota had told him Kirk got into than anything Kirk would have learned in the combat courses he likely took at the Academy.

Spock was easily able to block the blow. The fighting began to move quickly, but he found himself mostly able to block Kirk’s blows, although some landed. Spock himself mostly focused on defensive moves rather than offensive ones as he did not want to seriously harm Kirk again. Still, after a minute and a half of fighting he saw an opening too obvious to ignore. Kirk’s stance had become unbalanced; Spock swiftly moved his leg to knock Kirk further off balance until he fell onto the mat; Spock then dropped down to pin him. When Kirk was unable to free himself after 5 seconds of struggling, Spock released him and stood.

Between the heat and the exertion, sweat had started to gleam on Kirk’s skin and he was now beginning to breathe more heavily than usual. However, when he looked up there was still a challenging look in his eyes. “Stop holding back, Spock. The Klingons and Romulans won’t.”

“That is true.” Spock watched as Kirk pushed his hair back off of his forehead. “But it would be best for your training if I do not begin at my full strength. Once you can defeat me while I am restraining myself to something closer to human strength levels, I will increase the amount of strength I use.”

Kirk tipped his head in consideration. “Logical.” The gleam was back in his eyes and he smiled. “But there’s no fun in that.”

Before Spock could respond, there was a whistle from the comm panel in the room. “Bridge to Commander Spock.”

Spock looked over at Kirk. “Hydrate yourself while I respond to this.” Kirk nodded in acknowledgement and went in search of water while Spock walked to the comm panel. “Spock here.”

After a moment, the voice of who was likely the beta shift communications officer came through. “Sir, this is Ensign Flannery. You’ve got a comm request from Ambassador Sarek’s quarters; should I put it through to you?”

“Affirmative.” Spock waited for them to enact the transfer.

There were some sounds over the line and then Sarek’s voice came through. “Spock?”

“I am here, Father.” Spock glanced back to the room; Kirk was still gone. If this would be a continuation of their conversation about his mother, Spock would not want Kirk in the room.

“I had attempted to call you in your quarters, but I was unable to reach you.” Spock was unsure if Sarek was searching for an explanation; his tone betrayed nothing.

Spock opted to provide one. “I have left my quarters. I am currently in the ship’s gymnasium.”

There was hesitation on Sarek’s end as if he was curious why Spock was there but not willing to ask, but then it passed. “I have the list of survivors. Do you still require a copy to distribute to the crew?”

“Affirmative.” Spock resisted the urge to nod; his father would not see that. “Pass a copy on to the
“Very well.” There was some noise, likely Sarek connecting to the computer console and transferring the information from a padd. “It has been done. It is sending now.”

“I will tell the communications officer to distribute it.” Spock paused; at this point ending the conversation with his father was necessary but he was unsure how to do it.

Sarek seemed to understand. “I will let you do what is necessary. Goodnight, Spock.”

“Goodnight, Father.” The communications line went silent. Spock hit the button to initiate a new call. “Spock to bridge.”

“Ensign Flannery here, sir.” He had reached the communications officer; that was good.

“You should be receiving or have already received a file containing a list of survivors from Vulcan and the surrounding area, including the Starfleet ships.” Spock paused to await acknowledgement.

“I have it, sir.” There was the sound of a few controls being activated, likely the ensign bringing up the list on the communications console. “What do you want me to do with it, sir?”

“Post it on the ship’s servers. Additionally, send an announcement to the crew saying it has been posted.” Spock looked up at the sound of Kirk reentering the room, a towel over his still bare shoulders and a bottle of water in each hand.

There were more noises of console operation on the other end of the comm line. “Will that be all, sir?”

“Yes; that is sufficient. Spock out.” Spock turned to Kirk, who was watching him expectantly.

“What was that about?” Kirk took a sip from one of the bottles of water he carried. “Also, they should really put more replicators in here. Or even just old school water fountains. People need access to that kind of stuff while they’re exercising.” He held out the water bottle he had not drank from. “I brought you one too.”

“Thank you.” Spock took the water bottle and drank before recapping it. “I have obtained a copy of the list of survivors from my father. It has been passed on to the communications officer on duty to be placed on the ship’s servers so the crew can access it. Additionally, I instructed the officer on duty to make an announcement to the crew to notify them about the list.”

“Awesome.” Kirk took another sip of water before placing the towel and water bottle down near his discarded shirt on the edge of the room. “Want to go another round?”

Spock also set down his water bottle, ensuring it was far enough away from Kirk’s to avoid confusion. “I am willing if you are.”

“Alright then.” The challenging look was back. “Let’s go.”

Spock resumed his stance and prepared for another round of sparring.

Chapter End Notes
I gotta say, this scene was a little weird to write. As much fun as it was to add a little sexual tension between the two of them, it was weird having Spock check out Kirk since he's physically 18 here. Sure, that's considered adult and at age of consent in most places as far as I know (although I admit that it isn't something I've really looked into), but still it was odd having someone who is an adult (Spock's 28 here) checking out someone who is physically 18 (although [and this is something that comes up later] mental development continues to 25 like it does in humans in our world; given that the part of the brain that controls rational decision making develops last, arrested development there could be bad considering the number of people who stay physically 18 for extended amounts of time). Basically, brief soapbox moment here in that if you're 18 or under, be highly wary of anyone who's an adult (especially 10+ years older than you, but less than that as well) who shows romantic/sexual interest in you. As someone who has studied psychology and neuroscience, I can tell you that a lot of brain development happens in adolescence/early adulthood, so a certain maturity gap is an understandable and real thing. Even if you are considered mature for your age, someone in their 20s or above showing that kind of interest in a teenager is just generally not a good situation.

But that's part of why I'm having neurological development continue even if physical aging stops. It's just too weird otherwise. Plus, the aforementioned societal consequences if neurological development stopped.
When Jim woke up the next day, he was sore. He rolled over with a groan and ran a hand down his face. He and Spock had sparred on and off for the better part of an hour; with the breaks they took in between for water and discussing technique it probably didn’t amount to that much actual fighting, but still.

He could tell Spock was holding back the whole time. It was clearly taking a lot of self-control for him to do so, but Jim figured that Spock must be pretty used to restraining himself at least partially. Most things in Starfleet were still designed with use by humans in mind since they made up most of the fleet still, so having strength that much past human levels probably meant that Spock had to control himself just to not break everyday things. Everything probably seemed so delicate to him.

Jim yawned and rolled over so he could check the chronometer. He and Spock had been sparring until past midnight ship’s time; Jim wouldn’t be surprised if between being up later and the exercise (not to mention the heat of the room adding to how tired he got) he’d slept in a little later than usual.

It turned out he had, but not by much. Jim sat up; he’d still have time for his regular morning routine. He got out of bed and headed for the bathroom; pausing for a moment to make sure that it wasn’t occupied. After his knock got no response, he figured Spock wasn’t there and the coast was clear.

It was clear when he got in; Spock must have still gotten up earlier than him. It was hard to tell whether or not Spock had been there typically; he kept all of his things the bathroom so pristine and carefully placed that it almost made Jim self-conscious. It wasn’t that he was even messy necessarily; he just wasn’t at Vulcan levels of control and precision.

That had Jim’s mind wandering back to last night again. Spock had seemed to be strictly controlling himself not only physically but mentally as well. Jim wondered if anything had slipped through last time that made Spock want to be more careful this time. He’d like to think he would have noticed Spock slipping into his head, but Jim had been a little distracted by the almost dying on the navigation console. If something had slipped through, Jim certainly hadn’t noticed it.
But this time Spock seemed far more in control. Jim had also been focused on controlling himself, but for different reasons. He could admit that while it wasn’t a requirement or anything, he found it attractive when a partner could manhandle him a little. So getting pinned by Spock all those times, and having him make it look so effortless each time… It may have had an effect on Jim.

It didn’t help that despite their exercise and the heat of the room, Spock never broke a sweat. Although Jim had heard that that was a Vulcan thing; he’d never been sure if that was true or just rumor though. It seemed like he had an answer now.

Plus, despite the sparring, which did seem to start to challenge Spock as Kirk picked up on more, there never seemed to be a hair out of place in that bowl cut of his. Jim just wanted to see if he could actually mess it up. He bet that Spock was one of those people who could just shake their heads a little and have their hair fall perfectly back into place. It would seem fitting.

Last night had also been the first time Jim had seen Spock out of uniform. True, he’d seen Spock in both the instructor uniform at his hearing at the Academy and the science uniform while they’d been on the ship, but neither of those prepared Jim for what Spock had been in last night. Sure, it was just a t-shirt and loose sweats, but it was still odd. It didn’t seem like the sort of clothing he’d ever expect to see Spock in, but he still made it look so natural. Plus, Jim was hardly going to complain about seeing those arms in short sleeves.

Jim was just about done with his routine at this point and he realized he’d spent his whole time thinking about—or almost fantasizing about really—his first officer. Or temporary first officer really; Jim didn’t know how things would work out once they were back at Earth. Then maybe Spock would go back to being an instructor and Jim would go back to being a cadet. That would be a little weird. Jim had kindof gotten used to being a captain over the past week or so; it would be weird being told that he’d have to go back to square one and maybe have to work his way up the ladder and get back to the chair in a few years.

Still, he didn’t want to get his hopes up. If he kept his expectations low, he’d either have them met or he’d be pleasantly surprised. Neither of those options were too bad.

As for things with Spock, Jim was continuing to hope for friendship at best at this point. Last night had proved that they could get along off duty without being at each other’s throats (or at least, not out of anger). That was promising. Again though, Jim wasn’t going to hope for too much. Spock was dating Uhura. If that was any indication, Jim wasn’t really his type. Although Spock was probably the kind of guy who’d go for brains over looks. But Uhura was hardly lacking in either category; Jim could admit that.

He paused before the doors of his quarters. He had to stop thinking about Spock, or at least stop thinking of him romantically or anything else that wasn’t purely professional or platonic. He was going to get food, and then he’d have another standard shift with Spock on the bridge. So Jim would have to control himself and find something else to think about. He headed out to the corridor.

There was also that list of survivors that had been posted last night. Jim would have to check to see if Gaila was on there. He really hoped she was. He’d never had the chance to properly apologize for stealing her access codes to get into the Kobayashi Maru. That all felt like ages ago now, but Jim would still hate to think that she’d died being mad at him. He’d hate to think that she’d died period really. And there were so many others...

Jim took a deep breath and put his order into the replicator. Maybe that wasn’t a great topic to think about either. He grabbed his food and headed to an open table.

He’d just started eating when Bones joined him. “Hey kid.”
“Hey Bones.” Jim swallowed his current mouthful of food and looked up at Bones. He seemed a little more stormy than usual. “What’s up?”

Bones poked at his food and held up a padd. “I was going over the list.” He looked up at Jim. “There’s a couple names I recognize from Medical, but a whole lot more I don’t see on here.” He sighed. “Most of them were younger than me. Some of them had already started aging though.”

Jim looked down at his food. He wasn’t quite sure how to respond to that.

“Have you looked it over yet?” Jim looked up to see Bones looking at him seriously. “Starfleet’s got their people organized by division; it makes it pretty easy to find people.”

“I’ll have to look it over.” Jim glanced at the padd, which was now sitting on the table. “After shift though.”

“After shift you’re coming to Sickbay.” The sudden change in topic had Jim looking up at Bones again. His friend seemed completely serious. “It’s time I check back in on whatever it was that was causing those weird readings before.”

Jim took a sip of his coffee to cover up his surprise. “Is that really necessary so soon? I thought you said check in after two weeks.”

“I said weekly check in, maybe two weeks, and it’s already getting close to a week and a half.” Bones pointed at him with his fork. “Don’t make me pull the CMO thing and order you; you aren’t the only one who got a promotion, remember?”

“Yeah.” Jim leaned back. “Can’t we just get through our food without you switching into doctor mode?”

Bones looked unimpressed. “Given the number of times I’ve had to jump in when you’ve had allergic reactions or other problems at meals, I think eating with you is one of the times I should definitely be in,” he paused and did exaggerated air quotes, “doctor mode.” Bones looked down at Jim’s plate and back at him. “Now finish eating; I don’t want to hear complaints mid-Alpha shift because you didn’t finish your breakfast.”

“Alright, mom.” Jim leaned back in and began to eat again.

“I could call her in if you want.” Bones raised an eyebrow and took a sip of his coffee. “She gave me her comm signal.”

Jim paused with his fork halfway to his mouth; he narrowed his eyes at Bones. “I don’t think we need to go that far.”

“Good.” Bones put his coffee down. “Now eat up. I want to be able to get to Sickbay before Alpha shift starts; I need to make sure no one from the other shifts messed with my patients too much.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “Is there a proper amount of messing with patients?”

“Yes.” Bones took another bite and looked at Jim. “It’s one of the first things you have to figure out as a doctor. Now eat up.”

“Alright, I’m eating.” Jim took another bite and was content as Bones began to share some old med school anecdote that he’d probably heard before. He was a little nervous about what Bones would find out when he went in to Sickbay later, but it seemed to be shaping up to be a good day.
I am nearly done with finals. To everyone in them now or who has them upcoming, good luck. To anyone who's finished them or doesn't have finals for whatever reason, have a pleasant early May!
Chapter 70

Chapter Notes

Happy 8 month anniversary to the fic! I wish I could have celebrated with an update that was a little more timely, but I’m still a bit wiped from finals and moving out of my dorm and back home, plus it’s still Monday where I am. Still, I can’t believe I’ve been posting this for 3/4 of a year! Tbh at this pace I think I’ll be posting for over a year easily. There will be slight time jumps here and there but there’s still at least 2 or 3 arcs I want to work in and I still haven’t gotten them back to Earth yet. So I know I keep saying this, but shoutout to all of you with me for the long haul. If you’re reading this once it’s finished, props to you as well because it’s gonna be long. Basically, I just appreciate everyone reading.

Anyway, on to the fic! Most of you seem to be focused on the physical but we quite there yet...

Jim got to the bridge a few minutes before alpha shift started. His lunch with Bones had been nice despite starting on such a serious note. Jim would have to remember to get a copy of the list of survivors once he was done in Sickbay. As tempting as it was to stay in denial and think that if he never found out then the people he knew couldn’t be dead, he’d have to find out eventually. It might as well be on his own terms rather than just from hearing from other people. Or through invitations to funerals.

That was a grim note to be starting the shift on. There were probably some people still alive. There had to be; it’s not like Starfleet would make a list with no names on it. Plus, they’d probably still be finding people for a while; there was a big field of destroyed ships around the planet and while some of it had probably gotten sucked into the black hole, there were probably still plenty of escape pods and shuttles that had gotten away. Some people had probably survived in the sections of ships too; there were systems in place to seal up hull breaches and they’d probably still be in operation on the broken ships.

Now Jim was probably getting too optimistic. While he didn’t want to get too down about it, it wouldn’t do to let himself think that everyone could have survived. He had to keep his expectations realistic. There had to be survivors, but probably not a ton.

Maybe Jim could get Bones to drink with him after he read over the list. He’d probably want a drink anyway, and drinking with other people was always better than drinking alone. They’d have to keep it in moderation because they’d both have shifts the next day, but they could still do it.

Thinking of Bones reminded Jim that he was supposed to have a physical today. He groaned internally. It had only been a little over a week, but if Bones had been able to pick up the slight changes of him aging last time he’d be able to figure it out for sure this time. Jim wasn’t sure how he would feel when Bones found out. Would Bones know that Jim knew? Sure, Jim had felt... something when he and Spock first made eye contact at the assembly, but other people talked about it like they didn’t always realize right away when they met their soulmate or soulmates. Should Jim act surprised when Bones told him he was aging?
Jim wondered if Bones would get mad at him for not telling him right away if he knew. Most people got all excited about meeting their soulmates and told all their closest friends as soon as they knew, but Jim was pretty far from excited about the prospect of being soulmates with Spock when he found out. They’d gotten a really rough start. But now…

Now things were better. Still not anywhere near the epic love story that Older Spock had showed him, but better than when they’d met. They worked well together professionally and even could get along pretty well in their free time too if last night was any indication.

Jim glanced back at Spock. He’d nodded at Jim in acknowledgement when he got to the bridge before the start of shift, but he’d been pretty absorbed in whatever he was looking at at the science station so they hadn’t talked. They must have finally gotten some interesting readings.

Jim looked around the bridge. Everyone was either at their stations minding their respective consoles or they were just talking among themselves. Jim didn’t want to eavesdrop but he bet the list was a popular topic. Everyone probably knew some people on the other ships. Some people may have even known some people on Vulcan; it was less likely but it wasn’t out of the question.

But the person most likely to know people on Vulcan was probably still Spock, who definitely had known people there. Jim wondered if Spock’s mom had been on the list. It seemed too personal to ask; they weren’t that close yet.

Thinking of Spock and how close (or not) they were made Jim think of his appointment later today again. Even if Bones found out he was aging, there was no way he’d figure out who Jim’s soulmate was, right? He’d have access to the medical records of everyone on board, but who knew if Spock was aging? Doctors were allowed to look at the records they had access to to find pairs who’d started aging at the same time, but usually they only did it if a patient asked. Jim could always say that he didn’t want to find out like that.

Bones would probably believe it too. They’d always bonded over their mutual dislike for the obsession over soulmates, so that could apply here too. Jim could just say that he didn’t really care who it was or that he’d wait and see who else was aging as time passed.

Jim tried not to sigh over how worried he was getting about this. He was probably stressing about this more than necessary. Maybe Bones wouldn’t even pick up on the aging. It was still early. Plus, Bones had seemed convinced that that the weird readings were just Jim reacting to something he’d been exposed to on the *Narada*. Maybe he could keep that up.

But if that was what it was Bones would probably get concerned and try to fix whatever was wrong, even if Jim insisted that it didn’t seem to be harming him.

It didn’t matter. Bones would probably figure out the aging thing and Jim needed to accept that. But for now he really just needed to get out of his head.

Jim stood up and walked over to the communications station. “Uhura.”

She spun around to face him. “Yes, Captain?” Jim was still surprised that despite the fact that they’d never really gotten along, she’d been very professional to him the past week or so. He wasn’t sure if he’d be able to pull it off if things had been the other way around; he’d have to give her credit for that.

“Have we heard anything from the *Defiant* yet about how they’re going to help us get back to Earth?” Jim wasn’t sure if he wanted to know. Getting back to Earth would mean he’d have to give up command and likely not get it back, but it would also mean that everyone would get to do things
like reunite with whoever survived.

“I don’t think we’ve heard anything definite yet.” Uhura looked over something on her console, probably checking to see if any messages had come through during the last shift. After a moment she turned back around. “Actually, apparently we got a message during gamma shift to call them once our alpha shift was on duty.”

Jim’s eyebrows came together in confusion. It was almost a half hour into alpha shift now. “Why didn’t I hear about this earlier?”

Uhura shrugged. “When I got here I asked the gamma shift communications officer if there were any messages and they said no. They must have forgotten.”

“Alright then.” Jim decided not to press for an explanation; Uhura probably would have told him if she knew. “Hail the Defiant.”

“Yes sir.” Uhura turned back to her station as Jim walked back to the Captain’s chair.

Finally, a little excitement. They were going home.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully from here on out updates will be better timed since I'll have more time. But once again, updates may be later than expected (like last Thursday, which really came on Friday) but they won't stop til the fic is done.
Told you I would get the next chapter up a little earlier. Admittedly this isn't super early, but it's not the latest I've been. Anyway, who's ready for the physical? It's coming up...

After a moment, the bridge of the *Defiant* appeared onscreen. Jim shifted in his seat and nodded at Captain Davison. “Captain.”

He got a nod in return. “Captain.”

“So I hear you have a plan for getting us home?” Jim tried to sound neutral despite his own mixed feelings. The crew probably wanted to get back, and he needed to focus on what was best for them.

“Yes.” Davison was doing a better job than him at staying professional. “We think it should be possible to use the tractor beam to get you in a low-warp tow, which would dramatically reduce the amount of time it would take to return to Earth.”

“That’s great.” Jim smiled; if this would make the crew happy he would be happy too. “I’m assuming the engineers have already worked out the logistics?”

“Yes.” Captain Davison shifted slightly. “It will require constant monitoring, but we should be able to pull it off.”

“Thank you again. I’m sure the crew will be glad to get home.” Jim was just about to ask if there was anything else they needed to get done when a thought occurred to him. “Wait. We’re not exactly in peak shape over here; the *Enterprise* took on some damage during the attacks. Will we be able to be towed without risking further structural damage?”

“According to our simulations, yes, but we’ll be doing constant monitoring for a reason.” Despite the seemingly harsh words Captain Davison’s expression softened slightly. “But that is an important consideration. Good catch.”

Jim felt himself smiling a bit. “Thank you.” He let himself enjoy being treated like an equal by an experienced captain for a moment before returning to business. “Is there anything else I should know?”

“Your own engineering team should be able to brief you at this point.” Davison paused and looked over a padd from a yeoman. “Our engineering teams have been working together closely, but I’ll send over the complete plans so you and your crew can review them in full.” The padd was handed back to the yeoman, who took it to what must have been the communications station. “You should be receiving the transmission shortly.”

Jim looked back to Uhura, who nodded after a moment to indicate that she’d received the transmission. He turned back to the viewscreen. “We’ve got it. My crew and I will look over it and get back to you.”

“Alright.” Davison nodded. “Let us know if your crew finds any adjustments that need to be made,
otherwise we’ll begin preparations and await word from you as to when to begin.”

“Sounds good. We’ll contact your ship once we’ve gone over everything.” Jim glanced around the bridge, deciding who he should bring in on this. He’d definitely give a copy to Spock for review, and he’d probably go down to engineering for the rest of the shift to review the plans with Scotty. He looked back at the viewscreen. “Thanks again.”

Davison smiled. “We should really be thanking you for saving Earth. It’s the least our crew can do to help yours get back.”

Jim smiled in return. “We were just doing what anyone would do.”

“You may have gone above that, but I’m sure you’ll be having this conversation a lot once we’re back at HQ, so I’ll spare you it now.” The other captain nodded. “Review the plans and get back to us. Davison out.”

Once the viewscreen went blank, Jim turned to the rest of the bridge. “Spock, review the plans they sent over. Make a team to help if you want. I trust both engineering teams, but we aren’t exactly in peak shape so I don’t want us flying apart at warp if something goes wrong.” He looked around the bridge, trying to think if anyone else would be needed for this. He wasn’t sure, but it wouldn’t hurt. “If anyone else wants to review the plans, feel free to get a copy and run it over. If you need me, I’ll be in engineering talking it over with the crew down there.” He looked around the bridge one more time. It seemed like that was all he’d need to do. “If you need me, comm me. Spock, you have the conn.” With one last look around the bridge, Jim headed for the turbolift and made his way to engineering.

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Jim was pretty excited for a shift that he could actually spend doing something. It flew past as he and Scotty reviewed the plans for the tow, Scotty explaining since he’d had a hand in making them, and also going around the ship figuring out which areas had taken on enough damage that they’d have to be reinforced and watched closely while they were at warp. Jim took his lunch break with Scotty and didn’t actually end up going back to the bridge until the last hour of the shift, when he met up with Spock to review the plans together. Just as Jim thought, there weren’t many problems, but they sent what they had to the Defiant for review. They’d expect their answer the following morning.

In all the excitement of the shift, Jim had forgotten that he’d had plans for afterward. That is, until he’d been finalizing sending everything over and hadn’t realized that the shift had ended 15 minutes ago. He remembered as soon as the comm panel on the arm of the captain’s chair went off. “McCoy to Kirk.”

Right. He was expected in Sickbay. He hit the button for the comm panel. “Kirk here. I’ll be right down.” He glanced around the bridge but everyone seemed mostly absorbed in their own tasks. There was a lot of excitement around finally having something to do so they were all busy preparing.

With a quick nod at the commanding officer for beta shift, Jim entered the turbolift and began his descent into Sickbay. The excitement of the day had distracted him, but now his concerns from earlier were back. Jim had no idea how Bones would respond to him aging. But he had his game plan from earlier: act surprised about the aging, don’t reveal the suspected soulmate.

Bones was waiting for him as he got into Sickbay. “Finally. I was beginning to worry that you were planning to skip out on me.” He uncrossed his arms and ushered Jim to a biobed. “Lay down; this shouldn’t take long.”
Jim did as instructed and tried not to fidget. “I would apologize for keeping you waiting but I think we both know that I wouldn’t fully mean it. Plus, there was finally something exciting happening. We’ve got a plan to get home. I spent all day reviewing plans and making preparations.”

Bones broke away from the readings on his tricorder and the biobed for a moment to look at Jim. “That is exciting. It should be nice to be back on real ground again.” He turned back to the readings. “I, meanwhile, spent my free time this shift reviewing your records and comparing the latest readings to known phenomena. Admittedly, we don’t have a ton of data on people being exposed to things on Romulan ships, let alone ones from the future, but I made do with what I could. I have a hypothesis now.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “If you have that much, why did I need to come in at all? We could have just grabbed dinner and you could have told me then.” He started to get up only for Bones to push him back on the biobed.

“I need confirmation before I’m willing to say anything official.” Bones looked back at Jim, his expression stern in the way Jim was used to when Jim was interfering with medical proceedings. “Stay still, dammit. These things are good but you still need to be on it for the best readings.”

“Fine.” Jim almost shifted into a more comfortable position but a quick glare from Bones stopped him. “So how long until you can tell me if I’m dying?”

“Should be soon.” Bones adjusted a few things on his tricorder then ran it over Jim a few more times. “And don’t worry; you shouldn’t be dying anytime soon.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “Always comforting words to hear from your doctor.”

That got him another glare from Bones, who looked over the biobed readings for a moment more before flicking the display off. He looked back at Jim. “Follow me please.”

Jim got off the bed and followed Bones to his office. “What, news so bad you can’t tell me in public?”

“No.” Bones closed the door before sitting in the chair behind his desk and indicating for Jim to take the chair opposite him. “Not bad news necessarily, but just news that I don’t think you’d want everyone to know.”

Chapter End Notes

I would ask what you thought Bones was going to tell Jim, but I think most of you know at this point. I’m still down to hear any and all theories, no matter how out there. Some of you have made correct predictions about what’s going to happen in past comments, even for things that weren’t immediately upcoming...

As usual, all predictions in the comments will be met with vague answers, so feel free to share! You might find out something I have planned....
Chapter 72

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We're getting awfully close to 100k posted on here... And with me having more free time now hopefully I can continue to get updates up at good times!

Now, to a moment I know you've been anticipating!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim settled in across from Bones, suddenly feeling a bit uneasy. There was the fleeting thought that maybe something was wrong with him and he was mistaken about the aging thing. But Bones had told him not to worry. Still, what if he wasn’t aging and him and Spock weren’t soulmates? A little over a week ago he probably would have been glad about that, but now… things had changed since then. A lot had happened. While he wouldn’t be devastated by the news, Jim might be disappointed. Even if it didn’t end up being romantic like in that other universe, Jim realized that he still liked the idea of having that connection with Spock.

Bones had been oddly silent the whole time Jim was thinking. Jim decided to just get this over with. “So? Are you going to tell me the news or will this dramatic pause go on longer?”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “You’re hardly one to judge on being dramatic. Your middle name is Tiberius for crying out loud.”

Jim shrugged. “It was a family name.”

“It’s a fitting name.” Bones shifted and looked over his padd once more. “But unlike you I technically swore an oath to do no harm, and as much as I wouldn’t mind a little payback that probably involves stressing you out unnecessarily.” Bones put the padd down. “So do you want me to give you the full explanation or the quick news at first?”

“I don’t know.” Jim already knew either way, but he had to pretend like he didn’t. “Maybe quick?”

“You’re aging.” Bones wasted no time and despite how that sort of news was usually perceived, he didn’t seem especially happy. “So either you’re having the most impossible of reactions to something you were exposed to during that whole crisis, or you just met your soulmate.”

“Wow.” Jim felt like he wasn’t reacting enough, but maybe Bones would just take it as surprise. “How long?” He knew, of course, but that seemed like a normal question to ask.

Bones looked over the padd once more. “I’d say no more than two weeks, probably a little less.” He looked back up at Jim. “That’s what the odd readings I detected after you fought the Romulans were. So that was what, ten days ago? But usually it takes around a day, maybe a little less, for the hormones that indicate the aging process restarting to actually reach detectable levels. So it was probably around the start of that whole mess, maybe a little bit before, but it was definitely happening by the time I fixed you up in Sickbay.”

“Ok.” Well, Jim knew that it definitely fell within that timeframe. He looked away from Bones. It felt like if Bones saw his face too much he’d know what was up.
“So.” He could tell Bones was looking at him so he looked back up. “Any idea who it is? I could look to find other crewmembers who seem to be aging.”

“Nah, there’s no need.” Because Jim already knew, or at least suspected. “I met so many people in those few days, and knowing my luck it was one of the Romulans.”

Bones snorted. “If that were true, you would have stopped aging by now since they’re all dead. Or at least they should be. But,” Bones held up the padd he’d been looking at to show Jim, “The latest scans say you’re still aging. So your soulmate should be alive and well.”

“Well that’s good.” Jim sat back in his chair. Time to shut down the conversation. “So we’ve talked about this before. Neither of us really buy into the soulmate thing, right?”

Bones’ expression shifted a bit; his expression had been pretty normal all conversation but now there was a certain guarded edge to it. “Right.”

He seemed on edge but Jim decided to go with it anyway. “Neither of us really think that soulmates are the be all end all, only chance at happiness I mean.”

That seemed to get through to Bones a little more. “Yeah.”

“So what I’m saying is, maybe I don’t want to look for my soulmate right now. If it happens it happens, but I don’t think I want the pressure to get together that newly discovered soulmate pairs face.” Jim hoped he was channeling some of that trademark Jim Kirk smoothness, but not enough to make Bones suspicious.

“Makes sense.” Bones leaned back in his chair, seeming to accept what Jim was saying. “If it happens naturally and you notice each other aging, you’ll just do something then.”

“Exactly.” Not really, but Jim was willing to roll with it. “If it’s really meant to be, it’ll be. In the meantime, I’d rather not have this get out, ok? I bet there will already be a media circus around me when we get back without them getting to throw ‘tragic love story’ on top of it all.”

“I get it.” Bones set the pad down. “I remember how annoyed you got when they were hounding you around your birthday for the follow up stuff for the Kelvin since it was the 25th anniversary this year. Don’t worry, I don’t plan on adding more fuel to the fire.” Bones leaned across the desk and gave his hand a brief squeeze. “I’ve got your back, Jim.”

Jim smiled. “Thanks Bones.” For a moment, Jim wondered what it would have been like if they’d made each other age. It probably would have been platonic since while Jim would be lying if he said the thought never crossed his mind, Bones never seemed interested that way. Still, there were far worse things than growing old with a friend. But unfortunately, Jim’s life was never that simple. Things always ended up a bit more challenging or dramatic. Jim looked around Bones’ office. “Well, it’s gotta be a good half hour or more since the shift ended. I should let you finish up here.”

“Everything’s already done. I was just staying here to make sure I could figure out what was going on with you.” Bones stood up and stretched a bit. “Want to go grab dinner?”

“Sure.” Jim stood up as well. “I bet all the replicator lines in the mess have cleared by now.”

“Great. I’m hungry.” Bones led the way out of his office and Jim followed, glad that that was one secret he wouldn’t have to keep from his friend anymore. Well, part of the secret was revealed at least. The other part he’d hold onto a while longer.
So Bones doesn't know quite yet. I already have how he finds out planned out though, and I think you'll enjoy it.
Chapter 73

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I’m just gonna say again that the amount of support this fic has been getting continues to astound me. Typically everything except maybe comments drops off after a while, but it’s been so delightfully continuous for this fic. I have no idea how many of you there are (the numbers suggested by the kudos is frankly unbelievable; I can’t wrap my head around that many people reading this), but however many of you there are you’re all awesome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim was surprised by how well Bones had taken the news. He seemed to be respecting Jim’s wish to keep it on the down low too; he hadn’t even brought it up when they were in the mess hall for dinner. Jim wasn’t really worried about Bones telling though; between doctor-patient confidentiality and Bones being a good friend the odds of him telling were pretty low.

Bones’ negative experience with the whole soulmate thing probably had to do with why he was willing to accept Jim’s reluctance about it. Although it didn’t come up often, Jim knew that Bones was still a bit bitter about his ex-wife breaking up with him over not being soulmates. It was a little satisfying to both Jim and Bones that apparently she still hadn’t met her soulmate despite making such a big deal about it.

So Jim got that Bones wouldn’t make a big deal about the aging/soulmate thing. But he wondered if it would be any different if Bones knew who his soulmate was…

Bones still seemed like he still wasn’t warming up to Spock. Jim wondered if he was still holding the whole “nearly killed Jim” thing against Spock, which would be odd because Jim himself wasn’t even bothered by that anymore. But Bones did sometimes get more protective of Jim than he was of himself. Although considering Jim had been called reckless and lacking self-preservation instincts by many, that probably wasn’t saying too much.

Still, even if Jim and Spock were only platonic soulmates, it would suck for Jim if Bones and Spock never got along. Having friends who didn’t get along was never fun. Jim didn’t really want to lose either of them, even if all he really had with Spock now was potential. Still, if what Older Spock showed him was any indication, there was a lot of potential.

Jim tried to remember if there was anything about Bones in the mindmeld with Older Spock. He remembered flashes of other people even if it had been pretty focused on that Spock and his Jim. There was someone who looked a little different but that Jim thought was Bones who had popped up a good amount, which probably boded well. It seemed like the two of them would at least learn to tolerate each other.

Thinking of friends made Jim remember the list of survivors. There were a lot of people he knew who’d been assigned to ships going to Vulcan. It would be good to see who lived, even if figuring out everyone who wasn’t on the list would be pretty much the opposite of good.

Still, it was like Jim decided before: better to find out himself than hear it secondhand. He’d rather process the information on his own than get all upset on the bridge or elsewhere.
With a deep breath to brace himself, Jim sat down at his desk and started to pull up the file. He considered getting a drink from the replicator, but decided against it because he had a shift the next day and because it was never as good when it came from the replicator.

The list had loaded. Jim saw that it was set up with a search option, but he didn’t feel like doing that. It would be better to go through and find people and be pleasantly surprised than to search and be disappointed.

Still, Jim skipped down to the Starfleet section. It wouldn’t really do to look over the Vulcan section since the only Vulcans he really knew (with one notable exception) were the ones on the ship now. He knew they were alive.

The Starfleet section was organized by division and alphabetical from there. The command section was first. Jim was pleasantly surprised by the number of names there; it was enough that he decided to skim it for anyone who stuck out rather than reading it all.

There was definitely one familiar person there. Standing out because her name didn’t seem like a name was Number One, Pike’s usual first officer and also soulmate. Jim had never quite gotten the backstory on her name, but from what he understood it was a designation or something that had significance back on her home planet.

Jim wondered if Pike knew she was alive. Would he have felt it if he stopped aging? Pike hadn’t brought it up any of the times Jim had visited him in Sickbay, but he’d mostly gone to talk about captain things or ship’s business. They always did a little catching up when Jim got there, sure, but they hadn’t gotten very personal in their discussions.

Jim decided to take the list to Pike once he was done reviewing it. It was entirely possible that someone else had given Pike a copy of the list by now, but Jim could take a copy just in case. If nothing else, they could just talk for a bit. Maybe he could even find a way to get Pike to talk about having a soulmate who wasn’t human. It could be nice to get advice from someone else who was in that situation. Pike had known Number One for almost 20 years now; Jim didn’t know exactly how much of that they’d been together, but he knew it was probably most of it. Jim would have to be careful to make it seem like he wasn’t directly asking for advice because he was in the same situation; he didn’t want it getting out who he thought his soulmate was.

But now was not the time to consider relationship advice. Jim still had a lot of the list to review.

He made it through the rest of the command section without paying too much attention. There were a number of names he knew from the academy on there and more who weren’t there. Jim tried not to think about that too much. Once he finished he realized the name Gary Mitchell hadn’t been there that he’d seen, but he could have missed it. He didn’t feel like going back to check; he’d moved on from Gary and didn’t want to get caught up in all that again.

The next section was Operations, which was helpfully broken down further into Communications, Engineering, and Security. Jim tried to remember which area Gaila technically fell into. With her focus on computer programing, he remembered her taking about how she could work to help program things for sciences, communication, or even engineering. He couldn’t remember which area she’d ultimately gone with, but decided to look closely at the communication section just in case.

It took a little bit, but there was a moment of relief when he found her name. It didn’t say much, just her name, species, and rank, but it was enough for Jim to identify her. There weren’t many Orions in Starfleet after all.

Jim was glad that there was finally some good news. Not that it had been just bad news the past few
days after all, but it still seemed like today was a better day than some of the others this week. They found out how they were getting home and would be starting as soon as they were ready, Bones found out about him aging but took it well, and Jim got confirmation that one of his best friends was alive after all. He still wanted to talk things over with her about using her code to access the Kobyashi Maru, but he hoped the relief that they were both alive would be enough that she wouldn’t hold it against him long.

Still, his mood had lifted considerably. Jim went over the rest of the list with a better mood than before. It took some hits as he went over the rest of the list, but there were still people he knew who lived. He just had to focus on that and not get overwhelmed by the negative. Plus, he could go talk to Pike. Despite Pike’s current situation and Jim’s usual dislike of hospitals and Sickbays, seeing Pike typically helped his mood.

Jim glanced at the chronometer. It was getting late. Maybe it would be best to visit Pike tomorrow. He decided that was for the best; that way he could just get up early before his shift and go.

Tomorrow could be a good day. They were getting ready to head back to Earth, which meant there’d be preparations to make and things for Jim to do. He’d get to talk to Pike. Maybe he’d even get to talk to other people who’d reviewed the list.

Since it was getting late and he was tired anyway, Jim decided to go to bed. Might as well be well rested for everything tomorrow.

Chapter End Notes

Have you seen the trailers for Discovery? I'm still a little wary that we don't have an air date yet, but it looks so good! I'm excited. Hopefully it'll come soon!
Hello everyone! According to a Tumblr post I saw (not the most reliable source I know), this fic is longer than some of the *Harry Potter* books by word count. That's really weird to me. However, I should be able to wrap this up without it reaching *Order of the Phoenix* lengths. Hopefully at least. But once again, shoutout to all of you who are with me til the end. I salute you.

The next day Jim got up earlier than normal so he’d have time to talk to Pike. Once he got to Sickbay, he nodded at the gamma shift doctor but didn’t stop to check in; he’d been here enough times that they probably knew he was just visiting Pike. Plus, being captain had its privileges and apparently that included people giving you a good amount of leeway on the ship.

Jim poked his head into the curtained off area Pike was occupying. Pike was reading something on a padd and seemed very focused on it.

Jim cleared his throat to get his attention. “Captain.”

Pike looked up and smiled when he saw who it was. “Jim.” He put the padd down on the table next to the biobed. “Come on in; I was just reviewing the survivor list.”

“What a coincidence.” Jim held up the padd he’d brought. “I was just about to bring you a copy because I wasn’t sure if you’d gotten one yet.” Jim sat down on the chair next to the biobed and set down the padd. “So how far did you get?”

“Far enough to know that Number One is still kicking if that’s what you’re asking.” Pike smiled. “I didn’t doubt that she’d make it; I could just feel that she was alive still. Plus, all this medical monitoring would have probably picked up if I’d stopped aging.”

“It is.” Pike continued smiling softly; he was in a good mood today and Jim could guess why.

After a few moments of comfortable silence, Jim decided to just go for it with his question. “Sir, if you don’t mind my asking—and you don’t have to answer if you don’t want to or if you think it’s too personal—what’s it like having a soulmate who isn’t human? Is it...odd?” Jim hesitated a moment; the slight smile had slipped from Pike’s face but he didn’t look angry or offended, just like he was thinking maybe. “I was just curious since it’s still so rare. I mean, there’s billions of humans but the number of people with nonhuman soulmates has got to be what, maybe a few hundred known cases since first contact?”

“That’s true.” Pike smiled slightly at him, this time different than before, more reassuring than anything else. “It is quite uncommon. As we meet and interact with more species, there are more recorded cases, but I know most people still end up with other humans.” He looked away, seemingly deep in thought. It was a moment before he spoke again. “It can be odd. The thing you hear about most often is people saying they didn’t realize who their soulmate was right away since other species
don’t have the same aging patterns. Beyond that, it really does vary with the soulmate’s species, so each individual relationship can have its own set of challenges and excitements.” Pike looked back at Jim. “There’s a theory that humans with nonhuman soulmates will actually have their aging rates adjust to match their soulmate’s rate of aging, but there’s been no real confirmation on that yet. Most known species have aging rates too close to humans’ rate for it to make much of a noticeable difference if it does make a difference at all. An exception was a human woman with a Vulcan soulmate, but she’s dead now so I guess we’ll never know.”

“Spock’s mom.” Jim’s voice seemed soft even to him and he didn’t look at Pike.

“Yeah.” Pike’s quiet response made Jim look back at him. “Have you two talked about her much?”

Jim shook his head. “Not really.” He shifted his hands on his lap. “We’ve developed a good working relationship, but we haven’t really spent much time together off shift.”

“It’s good that you’re making progress and working well together. I think you two have good potential as a command team.” Pike shifted on the biobed a bit. “As for Amanda,” he looked at Jim, “Spock’s mom that is, I’ve met her a few times. When Spock first came to Starfleet, she came to me and asked me to look out for him.” He paused a moment. “I guess she figured as someone else with a non-human soulmate I would get the struggle of being between two cultures a little bit.” He smiled some at that before his expression went thoughtful again. “We kept in touch but only saw each other a few times after that. She made sure to see me at Spock’s graduation and at his promotion ceremonies, the ones I was there for at least.” Pike made a face Jim couldn’t quite read. “I never met his dad though while Spock was at the Academy. Apparently his old man didn’t approve of Spock joining Starfleet instead of staying on Vulcan.” Pike looked back at Jim. “He clearly isn’t too against Starfleet since he still lets Starfleet take him to diplomatic events like they do for other ambassadors, but I guess he thought it wasn’t right for his son.”

“Yeah.” Jim nodded. “I think they’ve reconciled some, but I’ve seen the two interact and it still seems a bit…stiff. I mean, I’m not really the best to judge Vulcan relationships,” Jim paused and thought for a second, “Or father-son relationships really. But still, even though they were talking it seemed a little…tense.”

“Yeah, from what I’ve heard Sarek isn’t always the easiest to talk to, even though you’d think that would come with being an ambassador.” Pike sighed. “Amanda spoke very highly of him though. Despite how he was treating his son, he must be a great man to have won over such a wonderful woman.” Pike smiled at Jim. “I guess that difference in expression and attitude is just another aspect of relationships with other species. Number One and I don’t have it quite to that extent, but there are still differences.” Pike smiled. “Another thing that varies with the species of your soulmate I guess. Vulcans just seem to be very different that humans when it comes to that sort of thing.”

“Yeah.” Jim hoped that he was saying that in a calm way rather than in a way that reflected how he was feeling now. He hadn’t really been thinking about all the possible cultural differences between Vulcans and humans; he’d been looking at him and Spock as individuals instead of considering the big picture. Spock’s parents had lived on Vulcan; what if Spock wanted to live with Vulcans rather than humans? True, Spock seemed to not mind living among humans since he’d opted to go into Starfleet, which was mostly human, but still…

“Jim?” He looked up to see Pike looking at him with what was starting to look like concern. It seemed like that might not have been the first time he said Jim’s name.

“I’m ok.” Jim smiled in a way he hoped was reassuring. “I was just getting a little distracted thinking about what living among Vulcans would be like. It seems like there could be some culture shock.” Jim needed to stop fantasizing about what it would be like if he were with Spock. It didn’t seem like
it would be happening anytime soon, if at all. So he really wouldn’t have to worry about living with Vulcans.

“It would be an adjustment.” Pike looked away and seemed to be trying to remember again. “I don’t think Amanda ever complained about it, but then again by the time I’d met her she’d lived there for around 20 years, so she’d had plenty of time to adjust.”

“Yeah, that’s true.” Jim glanced down at one of the padds on the bedside table and noticed it was later than he’d realized. He’d have to get going if he wanted to eat before his shift. He looked back up at Pike, who seemed to have noticed the change in his temperament.

“Do you have to go?” Pike didn’t sound disappointed necessarily, but Jim could tell that he wouldn’t have minded visiting for longer.

“Yeah, it’s starting to get close to time for the shift to start.” Jim started to stand up. “I guess I’ll let you finish going over the list. We’re starting the tow back to Earth today, so that should mean that you’ll get to have a reunion soon.”

Pike smiled. “That’ll be nice.”

“Yeah.” Jim picked up the padd he brought, double checking that it was the right one, before starting to head out. “I guess I’ll see you around, sir.”

“Come by anytime, Jim.” Pike waved at him and Jim returned it before making his way out of Sickbay. He headed to the mess hall and started mentally reviewing what he had to do during his shift. It should be busy now that they were finally headed back. Hopefully it would be busy enough to get all those thoughts of soulmates out of his head.

Chapter End Notes

I hope at least some of you caught that story detail I dropped in this chapter. It probably undermines foreshadowing to call it out in the author's notes, but I'm being vague about it so you'll have to come to the comments if you want confirmation...
Chapter 75

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, I'm just gonna say that I love how much people are engaging with this in the comments! I've gotten such great questions about this story and I really love sharing worldbuilding stuff with all of you. Not everything can be worked into the story easily, so it's nice to be able to share my ideas about everything. You're all awesome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim managed to get to the bridge just prior to the start of Alpha shift. He nodded at Spock, who was already there, before heading to the captain’s chair. He turned and looked over at Uhura. “Have we heard anything from the Defiant yet?”

Uhura turned around in her chair. “We have, Captain. They’ve been in communication with beta and gamma shifts over the concerns we sent over, and they said once Alpha shift began they’d send a team over to discuss it in person. Once we let them know, Captain Davison and an engineering team will beam over.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded. “Tell them we’re ready. We’ll meet them in transporter room 2.” He got up from the chair and looked over at Spock. “Spock, come with me.” He looked back at the front of the bridge. “Sulu, you have the conn.”

With everything settled on the bridge, Jim made his way to the turbolift with Spock following him. He wasn’t fully sure why he brought Spock with him. Maybe it was because he figured that Spock could handle the technical stuff well, although Jim did know a good amount between his mom and occasionally working at the shipyards back in Riverside. It could also be that Spock knew protocol better than him. Jim was once more reminded of his relative inexperience and lack of practical knowledge about starship workings as he had no real idea of how you were supposed to welcome another captain onto your ship. Well, it probably wouldn’t matter once they were back on Earth. Jim still wasn’t expecting to keep this command. He wasn’t gonna let himself get his hopes up.

The turbolift was still a bit away from the deck they needed. Jim turned to Spock and smiled what he hoped was a charming smile. “Thanks for coming with, Spock. I figured it would help to have someone who knows all the technical stuff as well as all the protocol. I guess I could have asked Pike to come to help with protocol, but when I saw him earlier today he still didn’t seem like he was in shape to be up touring the ship.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. “Why were you seeing Captain Pike? Were you consulting him about our return to Earth?”

“No, actually.” Jim shifted a little to face Spock more. “It was more of a social visit than anything else. I went to bring him the survivor list.”

Spock didn’t turn to look at Jim. “I am sure that he would appreciate that”

“Yeah.” Jim found himself looking away; he felt like staring at that profile too long (as tempting as that view was) would make Spock suspicious. “He already had a copy though. He was looking it
over when I got there and he’d just found out Number One was still alive, so he was in a good mood.” Jim paused before deciding to go with it. “I bet finding out about your soulmate being alive would put anyone in a good mood. We actually ended up talking about soulmates for a bit after that, specifically times when a human has a nonhuman soulmate like he does.”

Spock seemed get a little tenser when he found out the topic of conversation. “And what did you discuss about such pairings? I realize some humans… disapprove.”

Jim almost snorted at the irony of Spock thinking he would be against it. “You can relax Spock, I’m not one of those assholes. To me, people should love who they love, regardless of gender, race, species, or other arbitrary things. As long as everything is consensual and age appropriate all around, I think people should just mind their own business and not bother each other. Humanity has found enough reasons to vilify people for who they’re into; we don’t need more.” He paused to make sure Spock seemed to be relaxing. “Besides, it wasn’t that kind of talk. We were just having a general conversation about what interspecies soulmate life was like because I was curious.”

That earned another raised eyebrow as the turbolift doors opened and they began to walk. “And why were you so curious about such a topic, Captain?”

“I don’t know.” Jim really hoped he was sounding genuine; although he was interested in this it wasn’t like he could tell Spock why. “It’s not like it was a thing that happened much or at all back in Riverside, so the stories I did hear always caught my interest. Pike was willing to talk about it, so we talked about it.” Jim glanced over at Spock; they were nearing the transporter room and he was feeling bold. “It’s just interesting because it’s a human phenomenon but other species can still be involved, you know? I was always curious about what other species thought since it was apparently so unique.” Jim paused and decided to go for it. “What do you think of the whole thing, Spock?”

“Vulcans do not have soulmates.” Again, Jim had to stop himself from reacting to the irony. Spock seemed so unfazed. He must not know, or even suspect it. “As such, I was not raised with the cultural preoccupation with the idea of soulmates as many of the human crewmembers or crewmembers from human-majority worlds were.” Spock paused and looked over at Jim. “Still, as my mother was human I was not unfamiliar with the concept. It is a scientifically interesting phenomenon.”

Before Jim could respond, they reached the doors to the transporter room. It was time to get down to business. Jim held back a sigh and turned to Spock with another smile. “Well, as interesting as this has been, I guess it’s time to get back home.” Jim flinched when he realized what he’d said and had to stop himself from facepalming. Spock’s expression remained unchanged but Jim felt like he was disapproving all the same. He’d just lost his home; he probably didn’t need Jim rubbing his intact planet in his face. “Sorry about that. Back to Earth I mean.” He looked away from Spock and gestured at the doors. “After you.” He followed Spock inside a moment later.

Well, despite how horribly that conversation had ended, at least he learned one thing from it: Spock did not know they were soulmates. Hell, Spock didn’t even seem to think that he had a soulmate. That should make Jim’s life more interesting. Not that he needed it.

Still, this was not the time to be thinking all of that over. Jim turned to the transporter pad and watched it light up as the *Defiant* crew came over.

Chapter End Notes
Just a quick reminder that most of the characters do not know the full story and may occasionally draw wrong conclusions. We might see this conversation a little differently if we were in Spock's head...
Chapter 76

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and welcome to your last update for the month of May! I'm just gonna take a moment and reiterate how amazed I am at how much support this fic continues to get. Like comments, kudos, bookmarks, subscriptions, none of it has stopped completely yet. So again, all of you are amazing and the amount of support this gets never ceases to make my day.

Alright, time to stop the sappy stuff because we're back to Spock's POV.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock returned to his quarters that night feeling in need of rest. He immediately settled into a meditation posture and began to review his day as part of his pre-sleep routine.

His morning had been unremarkable. He had visited the science labs prior to his shift to review the experiments the crew were conducting, although many of them had shifted their focus in favor of assisting the efforts to ready the Enterprise for its return to Earth. This visit had not been in vain, however, as Spock would spend the remainder of his day in dedication to that very pursuit. He was able to utilize some of the ideas generated by his science teams later that day.

Spock had spent the first half of his shift reviewing possible problems with the plan for the Defiant to tow the Enterprise back to Earth and the rest of his shift working with members of both crews to create and implement solutions to those problems.

As they had also traversed both ships to inspect possible problem areas on the Enterprise and to assess potential supplies that could be spared from the Defiant, Spock’s shift had been taxing both mentally and physically. He had also spent additional time at his post into beta shift to ensure that the beginning of the tow process did not encounter any problems.

That had meant that Spock was unable to visit the mess hall with Nyota for dinner, but she had not seemed perturbed by this. Indeed, she had been highly understanding, as she often was. This was a trait Spock valued in Nyota, although in this instance he believed it was due in part to her desire to return to Earth as quickly as possible.

Because of that missed meal, Spock’s social encounters had been limited that day. When he had later gotten dinner, he had eaten alone. His previous meal he had eaten with the teams from both ships, but they had spent the entire time discussing their plans to return the Enterprise to Earth. He had eaten his morning meal with Nyota. It was a pleasant meal, but they had also been mainly focused on the Enterprise’s return to Earth. She had also mentioned her joy upon discovering that her roommate and friend from the Academy, Gaila, had lived according to the survivor list. However, Nyota had quickly changed the topic, quite possibly for fear of reminding Spock of what he had lost by speaking of the deaths that had occurred.

While Spock could see how Nyota’s actions in avoiding the topic could be thought of as considerate, he found them unnecessary. He would have to adjust to the reality of his mother’s death and the destruction of his planet, and avoiding thoughts of either would not assist him in adjusting.
The only other social interaction of note that Spock had experienced that day was his conversation with the Captain as they traveled between the bridge and the transporter room. It had been a brief encounter, but like most with Kirk, it had been…interesting.

While Kirk visiting Captain Pike was not uncommon, their topic of discussion was. Discussion of soulmates among humans was not rare, but discussing humans with nonhuman soulmates was more uncommon.

Spock had known that Captain Pike’s soulmate was not human. He had met Number One previously and worked with her during his previous time on a starship, during which he served as a science officer under the command team of Pike as captain and Number One as first officer. While her background was largely unknown to him as neither Spock nor Number One engaged in discussions of their personal histories often, Spock did know that she was not human, although she did appear remarkably humanlike. Still, from his time traveling with his family on his father’s diplomatic missions Spock knew that there were many species that were visibly similar to humans.

Despite this similarity, Spock still knew that many humans were opposed to relationships between humans and nonhumans. They were not the only species to hold such prejudices, as Spock knew personally from many encounters with prejudiced Vulcans, but it was noteworthy in humans because some became particularly vocal or violent about it. Upon further research, Spock had learned that this sort of prejudice concerning others’ intimate relationships had occurred throughout human history with various other divisions serving as the source of strife. However, humanity had managed to overcome those prejudices, or at least reach a point where holding such prejudiced beliefs was considered improper, so Spock believed it reasonable to assume that humanity would eventually overcome their prejudice against interspecies relationships as well.

Still, he knew that the prejudice continued to exist in some parts of human culture, which was why he had been wary when Kirk first mentioned the topic. Kirk’s reassurances had soothed Spock somewhat, but his comment that he found such relationships interesting had renewed Spock’s wariness; he knew that there were some humans who did not truly accept interspecies relationships, but still engaged in them because they enjoyed the idea of being with a member of another species for the superficial differences between the species rather than because of any individual traits of the person they were engaged with. Given that, according to Kirk’s reputation, most of his encounters had been brief, Spock briefly wondered if Kirk was such an individual.

However, Spock soon dismissed the possibility. Kirk’s behavior during the time Spock had known him had not been consistent with the behavior of such individuals. Spock had encountered them before; they seemed to focus entirely on the Vulcan aspects of his appearance, even though Vulcans were not highly visually dissimilar from Humans, and show a notable lack of interest in his personal life, unlike how people commonly behaved in romantic encounters. In the time he had known Kirk, Spock had noticed that despite his reputation Kirk treated all the crewmembers he interacted with as individuals, only seeming to vary his behavior according to species if there were cultural protocols for certain species that needed to be observed.

So it was unlikely that Kirk was one of the people who engaged in interspecies relationships simply because they found it interesting. Additionally, the focus on soulmates suggested an interest in long term relationships rather than brief sexual encounters, which was also unlike the humans who sought out brief encounters with other species for the excitement it brought them.

It seemed like the evidence suggested that Kirk’s interest in interspecies relationships was genuine and not of a…derogatory nature. Spock could acknowledge that studying how the already interesting human phenomenon of soulmates reacted to the introduction of other species was, to some degree, fascinating. He knew that some humans studied it from an anthropological or biological perspective,
among others. His parents had occasionally agreed to participate in such studies along with other human-nonhuman pairs.

Perhaps Kirk held an anthropological interest in the phenomenon.

As for the matter of soulmates, Spock had been caught off guard when Kirk directed a question about it at him. Many people did not consider the opinions of nonhumans on the matter of soulmates, and because most humans saw Spock as Vulcan and thus nonhuman, it was not a matter he was asked about often.

While Spock had been honest in telling Kirk that he considered it a scientifically interesting phenomenon, he was glad that they reached their destination and ceased their discussion when they did. Spock’s half-human status likely would have caused Kirk to question if he, Spock, believed he had a soulmate, and Spock would be unable to answer. While Spock knew that his mother had believed that Spock had a soulmate, there was not enough data on human-nonhuman hybrids to reach a definitive conclusion. Because while there had been interspecies partnerships prior to Sarek and Amanda, few had had children. Thus, Spock did not have a large enough sample size to draw on to support a conclusion, and he had not yet noticed a major change in his own aging process. However, Vulcans also aged much slower than humans did, so a lack of noticeable bodily change could be due to a change in aging or due to his largely Vulcan physiology.

Spock supposed that eventually he would discover whether or not he had a soulmate. He was not sure which possibility he preferred.

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully my chapter postings won't all be buzzer beaters when it comes to getting them up on the right days, but sometimes the writer's block and lack of time get you.

Anyways, a lot of you have been asking for Spock's thoughts on soulmates. What do you think?
Chapter 77

Chapter Notes

Happy Pride Month everyone! I would have gotten this chapter up earlier, but unfortunately my computer died partway through writing it (lack of charge died, not anything serious) and I lost part of the chapter. So here’s your reminder to always save your work as often as you can remember to on word docs.

Also, again with the random jumps in kudos and bookmarks. I have no idea where all of you are coming from, but you’re all so great!

Anyways, we're back to Jim's POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim woke up and was a bit surprised that he could actually feel the ship moving after so many days of being still or puttering along at impulse. He rolled over with a groan to check the chronometer. He still had time before his shift. He could go back to sleep…

Jim flopped over onto his back. It had been a long day yesterday. There had been all the time going around both ships trying to prepare for them to tow the Enterprise back to Earth, and then the tension in the crew that it wouldn’t work and the ship would end up getting more damaged from the strain of the low-warp tow.

It had turned out ok though. And now they were on their way back to Earth. They’d be there in around 24 hours from now.

Jim was feeling a little torn. On one hand, he would be glad to be back. This crew had been through enough and they deserved to get home again. And Jim would be lying if he said there weren’t some things he was looking forward to as well, like reuniting with his friends who’d been rescued from the damaged ships around Vulcan. He hoped he’d get the chance to talk things out with Gaila.

But on the other hand, there were still so many consequences awaiting him once they reached Earth. He didn’t know whether the Admiralty would try to continue the Kobayashi Maru trial or try to keep him suspended. Although he might not have to worry about that; Spock was the one who’d brought up the charges, and now Spock seemed to like Jim at least somewhat. They hadn’t really talked over that specifically, but they seemed to be understanding each other in at least some capacity now. But the Admiralty might want to crack down on him to make an example about cheating.

But still, that wasn’t really Jim’s biggest concern at the moment. He was more concerned about his general fate within Starfleet. How exactly would the Admiralty react to finding out that a cadet had been made captain of a starship? Hell, if someone had gone up to Jim himself a few weeks ago, before all of this started, and told him that a cadet became acting captain of a starship (without everyone else dying first), he probably would have laughed at them. It was unheard of.

So who knew how the admirals would take it. True, Jim hadn’t really gotten any problems from the crew as far as insubordination or not respecting him as captain, but they’d all been working together, first to survive and then to get home as quickly as possible. Getting people to work together when there was a common goal was pretty easy. But once they were back at Earth, there’d be no big
mission to get done because they’d have already finished it. He just hoped that all the admirals did was put him back down to cadet rank rather than actually seriously punishing him. If he was back to cadet, he’d at least graduate soon and then he’d be an ensign. He could work his way up from there. If he remembered right, Pike said it was possible to become captain after only 8 years. He’d been able to do the Academy in three instead of four, so maybe he’d be able to do this in six instead.

As nervous as Jim had been initially, he had actually enjoyed his time as captain. He was still a little nervous at times and felt like he hadn’t earned it, but Jim felt like he was actually doing ok at this. Sure, he’d mostly joined Starfleet to prove a point to Pike, but he was actually enjoying himself now. He’d started to enjoy himself at the Academy, but here it felt like he was really doing something good. He’d have to thank Pike for goading him into this and then making him acting first officer.

Pike. Jim sat up with a start. Would Pike get in trouble for promoting Jim? There were probably rules about how you were supposed to set up your chain of command, and Jim had jumped over a ton of people who were higher ranked or had more experience. Was that allowed?

Jim really hoped Pike wouldn’t get in trouble for this. While Jim couldn’t say exactly why Pike had picked him to be acting first officer, he was grateful for the opportunity. So he really hoped that Pike hadn’t violated some regulation in promoting him.

He glanced at the chronometer again. He still had some time before he needed to get ready, so Jim could check.

He got up and went to the computer console on the other side of the room. It didn’t take him long to pull up the Starfleet regulations. He started to search for anything related to the chain of command or creating one.

After a few minutes of reading through what he found, there didn’t seem to be any specifically about putting cadets in the chain of command, which meant that there didn’t seem to be anything specifically against it either. That was good for Pike. Jim looked over a few related regulations just to be sure, but it looked like Pike should be ok.

He leaned back in the chair and sighed in relief. He was glad that Pike wouldn’t be getting in trouble. It was just Jim’s fate that was uncertain now.

He didn’t expect to get to keep the ship. Would the Admiralty really let a cadet, let alone one with little to no practical experience and a few marks on his record, stay in command of one of their newest (and in Jim’s opinion, nicest) ships? He doubted it.

Really at this point Jim was just hoping that they wouldn’t ground him permanently. He looked at the time on the console screen. He should probably start getting ready. Gotta enjoy what would probably be one of his last shifts as captain for a while, if at all.

He got up to start getting ready.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Jim's getting a little down on himself. How do you think things will go for him?
Chapter 78

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, this chapter means that I'll have over 100k of this up. Seriously, hats off to all of you reading this and staying with me. You're the best.

You all seemed quite concerned for Jim. Let's get back to him...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After a quick breakfast (or really lunch if he was going by the time of day) with Bones, Jim made it to the bridge just before his shift started. He settled into the chair and watched the stars go by, the view partially obstructed by the Defiant and the tractor beam that was pulling them along.

They were supposed to arrive at Earth during the next day’s Alpha shift. When exactly they would get there was unclear; they’d been mostly focused on getting to Earth that they’d spent less time on the procedures for the approach.

That could be a potential problem area. Jim furrowed his brow. If they didn’t work with the Defiant to come up with a foolproof stopping method, the Enterprise could end up continuing at warp and missing the Earth entirely. Or worse, they could still be at low warp speeds and not miss Earth, which would be worse. They needed to get that under control.

Jim got up and went to Spock’s station. Spock looked like he was busy looking at sensor readings, but Jim decided this was probably more important. “Hey Spock.”

Spock turned around in his seat and clasped his hands in his lap. “Yes, captain?”

Jim took a moment before answering. He didn’t know how long it would be before anyone called him captain again once they were back at Earth. “Can we review the stopping procedures for once we reached Earth? I feel like we didn’t go over that as much during planning and I want to make sure everything will go smoothly.”

“Of course, captain.” Spock stood and gestured for Jim to come to his station. “I can pull up the plans on my console.”

“All right.” Jim came and stood next to Spock, who was typing to bring up the plans. “I know the Defiant will drop out of warp and that should drop us out too, but I feel like that might not be enough. Do we have anything else planned? I think we need some sort of backup in case something goes wrong.”

Spock hesitated a moment, looking over the plans. “That may be a wise precaution.” He looked at Jim. “How do you wish to proceed?”

Jim glanced at the console and back to Spock. “Do you mind if I…” he gestured at the console to indicate using it.

“You may use my station.” Spock leaned back slightly and clasped his hands behind his back.

Jim smiled at him. “Thanks Spock.” He turned to the console and began pulling up the most recent
status reports from engineering and other departments. “We should check what we have working right now. I know warp is completely offline, but we’ve still got impulse. We could use those engines to help slow us down; it might even be best if we contact the Defiant and tell them that we need to change plans a bit. I’m thinking maybe we should drop out of warp outside of the Sol System just to be sure and then continue in at impulse. It shouldn’t delay our arrival that much; we’d probably still get in during our alpha shift.”

Spock looked over the information Jim had pulled up. “That is a sound plan, Captain.”

“Thanks.” Jim grinned at Spock. “Plus, it might be nice to have the Enterprise reach Earth on her own power, for the last leg at least. Show that she still has a little fight left.”

That earned Jim an eyebrow raise. “Vanity or posturing is unnecessary, Captain. We have already eliminated the threat; we are not required to “fight” more, only return home.”

Although Spock didn’t actually use air quotes, Jim could practically feel him putting the quotes in anyway. “Alright, it may be a little bit of vanity. I just want to show that the ship is still at least mostly functional. I don’t want everyone thinking that I completely wrecked a brand new ship on my first command.”

Once again, Spock was quiet a moment before responding. “Your reasons aside, your plan is sound and possibly superior to our initial one. We can contact the Defiant and relay our potential course of action; we should get their approval before implementing anything.”

“Good point.” Jim smiled at Spock. “Let’s get on it.” He looked over at Uhura, who had probably overheard their whole conversation since she was just one station over but was focused on her work nonetheless. “Lieutenant, can you open a channel to the Defiant?”

“Yes sir.” Uhura glanced at him before shifting her attention back to her station and beginning to pull up a channel. “Ready; just awaiting a response.”

“Thanks. Put it onscreen when they answer.” Jim flashed her a quick smile before leaving the back of the bridge to go to the captain’s chair.

A moment later the bridge of the Defiant appeared onscreen. Captain Davison nodded. “Captain.”

Jim nodded in return. “Captain.”

“What’s the reason for this call? Is there a problem with your ship?” There was a note of concern in Captain Davison’s voice.

“No, the Enterprise is holding up just fine. We just had some concerns about the final leg of our journey tomorrow.” Jim shifted a bit in the captain’s chair. Technically he had had concerns, but Spock had agreed with him. He glanced back at Spock before looking forward again. “My first officer and I came up with an alternate plan for our approach to Earth. We can send it over for you to review, but we think it would avoid some potential problems.”

Captain Davison thought for a moment then nodded. “Send it over. We’ll review it and get back to you.”

From most other people it would have sounded like a dismissal, but from working together the last few days Jim knew Captain Davison enough to know that that was a genuine statement. “Alright. We’ll get that right to you.”

“We’ll get back to you by the end of your shift. Davison Out.” With that the screen went dark.
Jim turned around to Uhura and Spock. “Can you two send that over?”

“Yes, Captain.” Spock looked to Uhura and the two of them began to coordinate between their consoles.

Jim turned back to the front of the bridge. Might as well enjoy the view from the Captain’s chair while he could.

Chapter End Notes

Ok I'm by no means a physicist, but I have questions about how the ships would actually operate. If there's no forces acting on them in the vacuum of space, would ships need to actively maintain warp or would they just be able to start moving and then coast until they needed to stop? This is only semirelated to what I was thinking about this chapter, but feel free to chime in if you have the right scientific knowledge or if you just want to speculate with me.
Chapter 79

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and happy 9 month anniversary to this fic! At this rate they may be stranded away from Earth for longer than the Voyager crew. But don't worry, it won't actually be that long!

Trekkie humor aside, I'm going to once again thank everyone who's been following along with and supporting this fic. You're all amazing and you seriously blow my mind with how great you are.

Also, a lot of you really know your physics if the comments on last chapter are anything to go by. I haven't taken it since high school (which admittedly means only about 4 years ago) so some of you were going a little beyond me, but it was cool and I enjoyed it. Rock on science nerds!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

They eventually got the reply from the Defiant; they agreed that Jim’s plan would present fewer risks and decided to implement it once they neared the Sol System. Jim was almost looking forward to it because it would mean that he was ending his time as captain on a positive note; he wasn’t looking forward to it because it would be ending his time as captain.

There was still the chance that he wouldn’t necessarily have to give up command. Still, Jim was keeping his expectations low. Better to be pleasantly surprised by low hopes and good news than seriously let down by high hopes and bad news.

He wanted to do one last visit to Pike while he was still Captain Kirk for sure. So after his shift ended Jim headed to Sickbay. He planned to continue to visit Pike when he was at Starfleet Medical back on Earth of course, but it would be different once Jim was bumped back to cadet or whatever they’d end up doing. They wouldn’t be equals in the same way. Not that Pike had ever really made Jim feel inferior; it was just a little different now in a way that Jim knew it might not be again, at least not for a while probably.

Jim skipped dinner after his shift and went straight to Sickbay. He didn’t want to be there too late since Bones had stressed that Pike needed his rest and Jim didn’t want Bones coming after him for keeping his patient up.

Again, Jim was able to walk in without needing to check in with anything more than a nod to the doctor on duty. That was another captain privilege that he’d miss. But Jim decided to not think about that too much; he was here to see Pike.

Thankfully, Pike was still up when Jim got there. That probably meant that he could avoid a lecture from Bones, which was always good. Pike had been reviewing something on a padd but he looked up and smiled when Jim got there. “Hello again, Captain.”

Jim couldn’t help but smile back. “Captain.” He settled down into the chair next to Pike’s biobed. “You know, you can’t get too used to calling me that. This time tomorrow we’ll be back at Earth and my time in command of a ship will be done.”
“For now.” Pike set his padd on the table next to the biobed. “But I’m pretty sure that the day will come again, and soon if I have anything to say about it, that you’ll be a captain once more.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence.” Jim shifted a bit in his chair. “We’ll see if the Admiralty agrees. I wasn’t exactly in great standing with them when we left.”

Pike’s expression went a bit more serious. “Jim, I know things weren’t great for you when we left but I think that pales in comparison to everything you’ve done since then. You saved Earth.”

“The crew saved Earth; it was mostly Spock really. He was the one who took out the drill and then Nero.” Jim looked away from Pike. “Besides, it’s not like they saw what I did as no big deal. I was on trial in front of practically the whole school, and they suspended me even though it was an emergency situation.”

“Jim.” Pike waited until Jim met his eyes. “The real test is always how people do in the field, and you passed with flying colors there. Compared to that, I’m sure they’ll be willing to let go of you changing some things in a simulation. Besides,” Pike smiled encouragingly at him, “I’ve had plenty of time to look things over, and it turns out that what you did wasn’t technically against the rules. There were no rules against adding to the program.”

“It was still considered cheating though, and they didn’t seem very happy about it.” Jim shifted in his chair. “It was enough that they were willing to suspend me.”

Pike reached out and laid his hand over Jim’s. “Son, I’m telling you that it’ll be alright. Trust me on this.”

Jim smiled even though he was still feeling a bit nervous. “Thanks.” After a moment though, his thoughts from earlier returned to him and the smile dropped from his face. “What about you though? Could you get in trouble for promoting me to first officer?”

Pike shifted back and put his hands in his lap. “I’m not really sure.” He looked back at Jim. “There aren’t too many rules for setting up the chain of command, especially if the crew is new and it hasn’t been set up already, which was definitely the case here. There are usual ways it gets set up, but that’s really a matter of convention rather than any sort of formal guideline.”

“That is reassuring.” Jim thought for a moment. “If you do get in trouble, you could always say I set you up for it.” He looked at Pike; Jim was unsure how serious he was or how serious he was coming across. “I’d be willing to take the fall. I’m probably in enough trouble for various things anyways; what’s one more?”

Pike seemed somewhere between tired and exasperated. “Jim, don’t. It probably won’t be that bad, if there are negative consequences at all. Besides, if we turn it into some sort of grand conspiracy we’ll both get court martialed.”

“Meh.” Jim shrugged. “Like I said, there’s probably already things I should be court martialed for. Like what I did to Spock.”

“Actually Captain, it is I who should be court martialed.” Both turned to see Spock standing at the foot of Pike’s bed. He turned to look at Pike. “I did not mean to intrude on your conversation, but I had come to visit you and arrived in time to overhear.” He looked back at Jim. “We have reviewed this previously, Captain. As striking another officer is a court martial offence and I nearly killed you, it is I who should be court martialed.”

“C’mon Spock, it may not have affected you much but I was striking back. Plus, what I was saying
to you could probably considered verbal assault; I said some pretty terrible things.” Jim still felt a little bit guilty about that, even if he and Spock had already talked it out.

“Your methods were…unorthodox, but your actions were necessary. I was emotionally compromised and needed to relinquish command as I was no longer fit due to high levels of emotional entanglement with the mission.” Spock was still standing and hadn’t stepped forward, but seemed to be leaning slightly toward Jim now. “Additionally, there is my improper treatment of you while you were acting first officer. I endangered your life by marooning you, which makes two incidents in which I was nearly responsible for the loss of your life.”

“I lived though, didn’t I?” Jim had to resist rolling his eyes. “Besides, both times I provoked you in ways that are probably court martial-able. I was probably close to mutiny the first time, and—”

“Alright.” Pike had definitely shifted into his command voice and it instantly got both of their attention. Jim was a little bit jealous; he needed to work on his captain voice still. Pike looked at both of them. “As the senior commanding officer on this ship, I think I’m in position to make a ruling on this. Do both of you accept that?” He looked at them expectantly.

Jim hesitated a moment and looked at Spock. After a few seconds of eye contact he looked back to Pike and nodded. “Yeah, I’ll go with whatever you say.”

Spock nodded as well. “I concur, Captain.”

“Good.” Pike shifted on the biobed and sat up a little bit straighter. “It sounds like a lot happened between you two. I think my verdict would be that since neither of you seems to want to press charges for what the other did, I think it would be alright if we dropped the charges. If one of you wants to change that, just let me know.”

Jim glanced at Spock then back to Pike. “If he’s ok with it than so am I.”

Spock clasped his hands behind his back. “I also consider that an acceptable solution.”

“No one is getting court martialed on this ship. It sounds like you two just need to stop punishing yourselves now.”

Jim couldn’t help but smile a bit at that. “Thanks.” At that point his stomach rumbled a bit, reminding him that he hadn’t had dinner yet. He stood up from the chair. “I should probably get going. I haven’t had dinner yet.” He looked at Spock and smiled. “He’s all yours.”

“Thank you Captain, but it is becoming late. I do not wish to keep Captain Pike up when he should be resting.” Jim was about to apologize for taking up Pike’s time, but then Spock continued. “I will visit Captain Pike tomorrow prior to alpha shift.”

“Alright then.” Jim looked at Pike then back to Spock. “Have you eaten yet? You could join me in the mess hall.”

Spock thought a moment before replying. “I will accompany you.”

“Alright.” Jim looked back to Pike. “I’m not sure if I’ll have time to stop by again before we reach Earth, so I guess the next time I see you might be at Starfleet Medical.”

“I’ll see you there.” Pike smiled at him before looking back to Spock. “And I’ll be seeing you tomorrow?”

“You will.” Spock nodded at Pike before turning to Jim. “Shall we proceed to the mess hall?”
“Sure.” Jim gestured for Spock to go in front of him. “Lead the way.” With one last wave goodbye at Pike, Jim turned and followed Spock out of Sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

Looks like we'll be getting some alone time between Jim and Spock...
Chapter 80

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Eighty chapters in and we're finally getting some alone time for Jim and Spock with no emergency breathing down their necks. You can't say I don't mean it when I called this a slow burn hahaha

Anyways, let's get to the fic!

Once they were free of Sickbay, Jim and Spock fell into step with each other. Spock looked over at Jim. “If you do not mind my asking, Captain, why were you visiting Captain Pike in Sickbay?”

“It’s alright.” Jim looked over at Spock with a slight smile that he hoped was reassuring. “I was just updating him on how we were doing and talking a little bit about what comes next, my future in Starfleet, that sort of thing.” He glanced at Spock as they entered the turbolift. “What about you?”

“I was attempting to speak to Captain Pike for similar reasons.” Spock looked at Jim before directing the turbolift to the proper floor. As it started moving Spock looked back to Jim. “Are you having doubts about a continued career in Starfleet?”

“I’m not the one with the doubts.” Well, at least not doubts about wanting to stay in. Jim glanced at Spock as the turbolift stopped and they started to walk to the mess hall. “But as you might remember, I wasn’t exactly in the best standing with the admiralty when we left. I was in the middle of a trial.”

“As I was the one who originated the charges, I do remember.” The entered the mess hall; thankfully it was pretty empty and they were able to get to the replicators and find seats quickly. Once they were seated, Spock resumed their conversation. “Do you believe that the trial would disadvantage you once we return?”

“I’m sure we could get it fixed.” Jim started to eat but paused to look back up at Spock. “It was enough that they suspended me even though it was an emergency, all hands on deck sort of situation. Admiral Barnett certainly made it seem like a big deal at the time. And I did cheat according to them, which they usually consider a big deal at the Academy.”

Spock’s expression went curious for a moment. “Do you admit to altering the test?”

“Really?” Jim raised an eyebrow but Spock seemed serious. He sighed. “I think we both know I did.” Before Spock could say anything, Jim held up a hand to stop him. “But apparently Pike read through the rules and there’s technically nothing against reprogramming it.”

Spock didn’t seem all that amused. “I believe no one thought that it would be necessary to record such a rule because no one believed anyone would attempt to alter the test.”

“Really?” Jim smiled. “Someone had to challenge it eventually. It was a bad test.”

“I do not believe so.” Spock set down his fork; he seemed to be getting invested in the conversation now. “It is important for cadets to accept the possibility of death while they are serving in Starfleet.”
“But do you really think the best way to introduce it to them is to throw them in an impossible situation?” Jim started to gesture with his hands without realizing it. “I can see how you’re biased here, but I don’t exactly think the best way to end people’s time at the academy is to go ‘things are hopeless and everyone will die no matter what you do, now have fun in space.’ I mean, really?”

“That is not the intended message of the test.” Spock leaned in. “At times it will be impossible to avoid deaths, and cadets must accept that.”

“I think there can still be ways to avoid deaths. No situation is ever completely hopeless; there’s gotta be a way out.” Jim was leaning in a bit as well; his voice might have been getting a little louder too. “There’s always gotta be a way to figure out how to make it out.”

“Not every situation can be hacked, Captain.” Spock’s brow furrowed. “In real life, you cannot change the parameters of the situation.”

“Maybe not, but I don’t think it hurts to learn how to bend the rules or view it differently.” Jim was glad that he was finally getting to express himself on this, even if talking about it with Spock seemed difficult because Spock was as stubborn as him. “You can’t win the simulation from within it, so change the simulation itself. You just have to think differently.”

“You may have a point, but it is still not always possible to avoid death.” Spock was giving him some ground but still seemed unwilling to cede too much. “As you should know from your father—“

“Spock, you’d think that by now you’d know that bringing up people’s dead parents to make a point is really a dick move.” As bad as it sounded, Jim was really getting tired about hearing about his dead dad as some sort of goal or having it used against him. “That’s not the kind of thing you should just throw at someone; you’d think you’d know that now.”

That shut Spock up for long enough that Jim almost felt the need to apologize. But before he could say anything, Spock spoke again. “Continue your argument.”

“Alright.” Jim felt like after that they were both a little calmer after that; it felt a bit less heated now. “I think if you do want to make it about accepting death, it still could be, but maybe don’t make everyone die. It shouldn’t be a completely hopeless situation. That’s too demoralizing and makes people want to just give up. It should have some possibility that not everyone would die; make it so that it tests how people work under pressure or lets you see who’s willing to sacrifice themselves to save others. I think that would be a better final test for the command track people than just telling them that them and their crew will die no matter what.”

That got another pause from Spock, but this time it seemed like he was just thinking it over so Jim didn’t feel like he needed to say anything. Finally, Spock broke the silence. “You make some valid points.” He looked directly at Jim. “I do not necessarily think that the entire test should be rejected due to one cadet’s objections, but I suppose a… redesign or perhaps revision could be possible.”

Jim smiled. “Hey, that’s all I was going for by challenging it. I just wanted someone to see that the premise of the test was bad, or at least somewhat faulty.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “So your motivations were not simply to challenge the test because you did not like that it was unwinnable?”

“Hey.” Despite the words it seemed like Spock might have been joking, so Jim didn’t get too offended. “I’d be lying if I said that that wasn’t part of it, but I did have objections to the test itself. And besides, I think I managed to win it, so it could hardly be considered unwinnable anymore.”
“That is debatable.” If Jim didn’t know any better he would have thought that Spock was still a bit annoyed that Jim beat his test. “However, we were not discussing the philosophy of the test.” He looked back at Jim. “You believe that what occurred with the test will negatively impact your career going forward?”

“Yeah?” Jim wasn’t sure how Spock wasn’t getting this. “They were acting like it was pretty big deal, and I bet they won’t like that I ended up taking control of one of their ships. So as nice as it’s been to be in the captain’s chair this past week or so, I’m not getting my hopes up about being back in one anytime soon.”

“Interesting.” Spock took a moment to return to his dinner before looking back at Jim. “So you do not believe the advancement of officers is solely on merit?”

“I think Starfleet likes to say it is, but it’s not completely that way.” Jim could definitely speak from experience on this one. “I mean sure, you have to be at least somewhat competent, but connections and impressions also go a long way. I mean, I didn’t even have to take the usual tests to get in to the Academy. It was pretty much just Pike’s recommendation and my family legacy.”

“You did also have high aptitude and intelligence scores in your previous schooling.” At Jim’s confusion Spock continued. “I did some research into your past records when investigating you for the Kobayashi Maru violations.”

“Alright then.” That seemed a little odd, but Jim was willing to just chalk it up to Spock being thorough. “But if you did that, you probably also saw that I had some not-so-great records in there too. Like my police records. But a good word from a captain can go a long way. I mean, the only reason I ended up in command of this ship now is because Pike likes me.”

“I do not believe that was the only reason.” Spock looked like he was about to continue, but Jim didn’t want to go there now.

“Anyway.” He felt a little bad cutting Spock off, but not enough that he wanted to let him continue. “If a good word from a captain can do all that to help you advance, how much can a bad word from an admiral do? I’m not saying I think I’m gonna be kicked out completely, but I just don’t think I’ll be getting stripes on my sleeve anytime soon.” Jim felt like he was oversharing a bit, but at least he hadn’t brought up that other thing that had happened during the trial. Even if he’d brought up the topic of soulmates with Spock, he definitely wasn’t ready to tell Spock that he thought they were soulmates. He slipped into his old cocky expression to cover up the weird feelings he was having now about oversharin. “So what do you think of my logic on this one? A better or worse argument than my thoughts on the Kobayashi Maru simulation?”

That got him another raised eyebrow; Spock could probably tell he was deflecting but decided not to call him on it. “As both arguments were based solidly in emotion, it is difficult to rate the logic of them.”

Jim shrugged. “Well, I guess that’s the difference between human and Vulcan discussions. We’re far more likely to use emotion.”

“That is true.” Spock turned to his dinner. It was almost gone by this point; Jim was surprised to notice that he was almost done as well. He’d been caught up in their discussions and hadn’t even realized how much he’d been eating during, which was unusual for him.

He looked between their plates one more time before looking back up at Spock with a smile. “Well, might as well finish up and get to bed. We’ve got a big day tomorrow; if all goes well we’ll be back in San Francisco by this time.”
This is a completely unrelated AN to the story, so feel free to skip, but I just felt like I had to in some way mark that today is the one year anniversary of the Pulse shooting. I wish I had something profound to say, but I don't think I do. 49 people died in the biggest mass shooting in US history (and there's far more history there than there should be, but I'm trying to not get too political here). I think we just gotta remember the people who were killed and who they were (it wasn't a random thing; it was a shooting at a Latinx night at a gay nightclub), but also try not to let ourselves get too weighed down by all of it. We gotta keep moving forward if we want to make a better world, but we also can't ignore our pasts, especially when these sorts of things are less in the past than we'd like. I don't want to ramble too much here, but here's hoping for a future where that sort of thing doesn't happen anymore. I really look forward to the day when we don't wake up to mass deaths in the news anymore.
Look at me, getting this chapter up earlier than usual. Anyway, you seemed to enjoy Jim and Spock getting some quality time together to discuss the ethics of Starfleet testing and favoritism. There was a little spike in kudos, which either means you all just really like the two of them spending time together or that more people found this. If it's the former, more will be coming, if not right away, so stay tuned. If it's the latter, where are you finding out about this? Not that I'm complaining, I'm just curious. Welcome to the fic!

Jim woke up the next day and didn’t really want to get out of bed. He knew that this would probably be the last time he woke up in these captain’s quarters. Even though he’d been there less than two weeks and didn’t even have any personal items in the quarters, Jim couldn’t deny that he’d gotten comfortable.

But he’d be moving out tonight. It would be a bit odd going back to the dorms; it felt like forever ago since he’d been a cadet. Sharing a room again would be odd too; at least he’d be back with Bones though. It might be good to have someone to commiserate with.

Jim rolled over and checked the time. He’d have to get going pretty soon to get to his shift on time. He sat up with a groan. He wouldn’t want to end on a low note by being late.

A quick shower and a bite to eat in the mess hall later, Jim walked onto the bridge with a cup of coffee. He was a good amount early, but he wanted to enjoy his bridge time while he could. There weren’t many command positions on the bridge beyond the captain’s chair and the center console, and while Jim wasn’t horrible at navigation or helm he knew he wouldn’t be the first pick for those either. So he decided he’d let the commanding officer for gamma shift head out early and enjoy his time in the chair while he could.

He’d miss the view of stars through the viewscreen. There weren’t too many places on a ship where you could watch the stars go by, and if things went as badly as Jim imagined they could he’d probably end up working at a computer console in the middle of the ship where he’d have to go to another deck or two to even consider getting a view.

He just hoped they didn’t leave him earthbound or stuck on a station. Half of the appeal of even being in Starfleet was getting to go out and explore the galaxy. Even if he was stuck in the bowels of some ship where he couldn’t see them, Jim’d rather be out among the stars than just about anywhere else.

Jim snapped out of his thoughts as the rest of alpha shift started to file in. Sulu and Chekov paused next to his chair. Sulu smiled at him. “You’re here early.”

“Yeah.” Jim smiled back at them. “It’s the last bridge shift for a while, so I figured I may as well enjoy it.”

“I doubt it will be too long before we’re back here.” Sulu looked out the viewscreen and Jim was a bit jealous of his confidence. He hid his reaction as Sulu looked back at him. “I don’t think Starfleet
would want to break up this dream team.”

Jim laughed and couldn’t help but grin at that. “I guess we’ll see. We’ll have to wait for them to patch up the ship anyways.”

Sulu nodded in acknowledgement. “True.”

“I also think we’ll all end up on the bridge again, keptin.” Chekov looked at Jim with a smile before looking out the viewscreen. “It will happen.”

“Alright.” Jim really wasn’t sure how to respond to all of this optimism and trust. Time to change the subject. “Do you two have the new approach plan down? I wouldn’t want to get this far only to crash land on the final stretch.”

Sulu looked at him with a smirk and a raised eyebrow like he didn’t get why Jim would doubt him. “I got it.”

“If you say so.” Jim smiled. “Just don’t forget to put the parking brake on once we’re at spacedock.”

Chekov laughed and Sulu grumbled something under his breath that didn’t sound to happy. He looked between Jim and Chekov. “I’m never going to live that down, am I?”

“Probably not.” If Chekov’s grin when he said it was any indication, the probably was unnecessary.

Sulu looked like he was about to retaliate, so Jim decided to cut it off before things got too dramatic. “Alright you two, get to your stations. I think the shift should be starting.”

He smiled as they both gave some variant of “yes captain” and went to their stations. Jim was gonna miss this crew too. Even if he wouldn’t be their captain, he’d want to serve with them. Maybe not being captain would even be better; they’d be equals and there wouldn’t be any awkwardness about him sortof being their boss. Not that there had been over the past two weeks or so, but still.

He glanced around the bridge at the rest of the bridge crew. The only people who were missing that could be considered senior staff were Bones and Scotty, but both of them were probably better suited to be in their own departments for this. Still, both of them were on the list of people Jim would want to serve with again. He and Bones had been talking about being on the same ship since they’d started at the Academy, but Scotty had surprised Jim. His first impression had been a bit odd (not that Jim’s was much better with most of the crew), but he’d really come through with getting them out of the wormhole. He seemed like he could be a bit of a miracle worker if given the chance.

Jim’s overview of the bridge paused at the science station. He’d already spent plenty of time thinking over the potential of whatever might happen with Spock. The two of them had definitely shifted their relationship since their rather negative first encounter. Under two weeks seemed a little fast to start calling someone a close friend to Jim, but it felt like there was the beginning of something there. Maybe it was the soulmate thing, maybe it was everything he’d seen with Older Spock, but it just felt right to Jim. Like he and Spock were meant to be side by side.

Looking a little over on the bridge reminded Jim that there could be a problem there. Spock was dating Uhura. Jim didn’t want to ruin that for either of them; he’d been impressed by Uhura since the day they’d met. She was ridiculously smart, really driven, and not to mention attractive. Jim had also heard basically nothing but positive things about her from Gaila and other people that knew her. He’d felt like the two of them were reaching a better place after his bad first impression; while it could still be a bit antagonistic between them at times and they didn’t really hang out alone, when they were with Gaila or around other friends they got along and even bantered some. Jim enjoyed
that and he didn’t want to ruin it by stealing her boyfriend. Plus, if the past two weeks or so was any indication, she was a great officer. Jim wouldn’t want to miss the chance to serve with her again. And while it wasn’t super common to avoid serving with people over personal disputes, it wasn’t unheard of. And then there was also that from what he’d seen and heard, Uhura and Spock seemed to go well together. And if they made each other happy Jim wasn’t gonna mess with it; both of them deserved that.

Jim glanced out the viewscreen again. He needed to stop zoning out. This was his chance to be on the bridge, maybe his last chance for a while (or ever, but hopefully it wouldn’t be that bad), and he should enjoy it and stay in the moment. In a few hours they’d be nearing the Sol System and it would all come to an end.

Chapter End Notes

Are you ready for the return to Earth?
Chapter 82

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! A lot of you seem ready to have them reach Earth! We'll see how that goes...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was almost time. According to the navigational information Jim had Chekov bring up on the viewscreen, they were nearing the Sol System and it was almost time to drop out of warp and execute the maneuver Jim had planned. He really hoped it would go smoothly and he wouldn’t get everyone killed.

He decided that he better make sure everything was ready. Jim hit the comm button on the arm of his chair. “Kirk to Engineering. We good to go down there?” They’d need every ounce of power they could get from the impulse engines for this to work. And also repair teams standing by and forcefield generators ready as a backup in case of hull breaches. They’d done all they could to reinforce the structural integrity of the ship, so Jim was hoping it was enough.

There was a little bit of background noise and then Scotty replied. “Scott to bridge, we’re good to go.”

“Allright.” Jim practically breathed a sigh of relief. “If we encounter even the slightest problems, comm the bridge right away.”

“Acknowledged, Captain.” There was a moment of background noise, like Scotty was working on something. “We’ll let you know, but we’re not expecting to experience any problems.”

“Good to hear. Have your teams on standby just in case.” Jim wanted to take every precaution possible to ensure this went smoothly. “Kirk out.” He closed the channel and took a deep breath, hoping he wasn’t being obvious about it. If the captain was nervous, the crew would be nervous, so it was important that Jim keep his cool. He wouldn’t mind stealing some of Spock’s Vulcan levelheadedness right now.

He spun in the chair to face Uhura. “Open a channel to the Defiant. Audio only; we need to be able to see what we’re doing.”

“Yes sir.” A few seconds at her console and she turned and nodded to him. “I’ve opened the channel, Captain.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant.” He turned back toward the viewscreen and pressed the button on the arm of his chair to speak into the open channel. “Kirk to Defiant. Are you ready to begin the procedure to drop out of warp?”

After a moment there was a reply from the other end. “Davison here. We’re ready when you are. We’re awaiting your signal.”

“Copy that.” Jim nodded at Sulu. “Mr. Sulu, be ready to do full reverse impulse at my command. We’re going to need it as soon as that tractor disengages, so be at the ready.”
“Aye, sir.” He could see Sulu readying himself and his station.

All things considered, it was a bit of a risky plan. On Jim’s command, the Defiant would drop the tractor beam, at which point the Enterprise would do full reverse with their impulse engines. That should be enough to ensure that they wouldn’t be entering the Sol System at dangerous speeds, but just in case the Defiant would be ready to catch them with their tractor beam as soon as they dropped out of warp.

Since this wasn’t exactly a standard drop out of warp, the crew needed to be ready. Jim hit a button to switch to the shipwide comm channel. “Kirk to all hands. Prepare for approach. Engage safety procedures.”

Prior to this, everything that had even remotely seemed to need it had been secured. Now, the whole crew was to brace or utilize restraints as necessary. It was probably overkill, but Jim decided it was better to be safe than sorry. He knew firsthand the kind of damage careless leaders could do.

Satisfied that the crew had had enough time and acutely aware of how close they were getting to the Sol System, Jim knew it was now or never. “Kirk to Defiant. Disengage tractor beam at my count.”

A quick glance at Sulu to confirm he was ready and then Jim knew he couldn’t put it off any longer. “Alright. Disengage tractor in three… two… one. Now!”

Jim felt the ship lurch as their main source of propulsion let them go and Sulu engaged the impulse engines at full power in reverse. He watched the displays on the viewscreen. He’d reviewed the projections for this plan countless times and memorized the proper rate of deceleration and speed they should be going for their return to Earth. They had to be going just the right speed to ensure their approach would go right. Too slow and they might not make it, too fast and they risked not being able to stop, either missing the planet entirely, entering the atmosphere wrong and starting to burn up, or worst of all hitting Earth and causing catastrophic damage to themselves and the planet. Jim knew the exact speed and rate of deceleration they needed to go because it was imperative they end up at precisely that speed and rate of deceleration.

They were going too fast. And they weren’t slowing down nearly fast enough.

This wasn’t good. Jim hit the button for the comm channel. “Kirk to Defiant, we need your assistance. Requesting tractor for aided deceleration!”

“Captain!” He spun the chair around at the sound of Uhura’s voice. She sounded alarmed, but not quite panicked yet. “We’ve lost our communication channel with the Defiant. I think it happened when we dropped out of warp before them.”

Not good not good. Jim looked at her, trying everything he could to stay calm. If he panicked, the crew would panic. True, this situation might be going dangerously wrong, but he needed to stay calm if he wanted the crew to keep working. “Your top priority now is reestablishing communication.” She nodded and turned back to her station and Jim looked back to the viewscreen. They were getting close to the outer bounds of the Sol System now. They were nearly within visible range of Earth with no magnification.

Jim opened a comm channel to Engineering. “Scotty, if you can squeeze anything more out of those impulse engines now would be the time.”

“We’re nearly overstraining them already!” The loud noises of Engineering leaked through along with the edge of desperation in Scotty’s voice. “If we don’t let up on them soon we might lose them!”
So very, very not good. “Do everything you can to keep them running; we need everything we can get from them. Kirk out.”

Jim watched as the blue dot on the viewscreen started to grow. Of all the scenarios he’d imagined for their return to Earth, everything he’d worried about and feared, he’d never imagined it quite like this. He always worried about what would happen once they were back on Earth. He never really considered that they might not arrive intact.

Chapter End Notes

It’s been a little bit since I left you with a cliffhanger.
Chapter 83

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Not gonna lie, I almost forgot it was Thursday. Thankfully, I already had this written, so I just had to get it ready to post. I wouldn't leave you awesome people with that cliffhanger for too long!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Aulu!” A slight head turn was all the acknowledgement he got. “If we can’t slow down in time, point us away from Earth. We need to avoid impact with the planet at all costs!” Jim may not be able to stop this ship but he would minimize the damage he caused, dammit. They weren’t hitting Earth if he could help it.

“Aye sir!” He watched Sulu work at his console for a moment before the helmsman glanced back at him, clearly frustrated. “I’m not sure it’ll be enough!”

“Keep at it!” Jim might have been screaming but it felt like the situation earned it. “Even if it means we just enter the atmosphere wrong and burn up, it’s better than hitting the surface at this speed!” Jim was going to do whatever it took to minimize casualties, even if it meant that the main casualties were on his ship. Worst come to worst they could use escape pods to get the crew out. Jim would be willing to take the helm if necessary to make sure everyone else could get out.

But now was not the time to jump to worst case scenarios. They might still have a chance. Jim got out of his chair just to feel like he was doing something and went to the back of the bridge. “Uhura! How goes making contact with the Defiant?”

“I’m trying, sir!” Uhura didn’t turn to face him this time, too focused on her work. “I think I might have them, but the comm line seems unstable!”

“Divert power from anything but thrusters if you need to; they may be our only chance at stopping if all else fails!” Kirk looked over at Spock next. “Spock, please tell me you’ve got something!”

“I am attempting to find a solution, Captain.” There was even an edge creeping into Spock’s voice now. “We may be able to—“

Just then the ship lurched again. Jim had to grab the rail between the levels of the bridge to keep from sliding across the deck at the sudden change in momentum. He felt his hands starting to slip across the smooth surface and had almost accepted his fate when suddenly a strong hand grabbed his wrist, keeping him from tumbling across the floor.

Once he had his feet back under him, Jim looked up in time to see Spock releasing his wrist. He smiled. “Thanks Spock.”

Spock nodded, his expression not changing much but maybe a little calmer than before. “Perhaps you should return to the center seat where you will be in less danger should the ship experience major changes in velocity again.”

Jim couldn’t help but grin. “That’s probably a good idea, Spock.” He turned and went back to the
center seat, noticing that the viewscreen display was much less alarming now. Speaking louder than he had a moment ago when talking to Spock, Jim addressed the bridge. “Somebody give me a status report. I’m not complaining about us being reduced to a manageable speed, but I’d like to know what happened.”

“I’ve got audio contact with the Defiant.” Uhura listened to her earpiece a moment longer before turning to face Jim. “They lost us on sensors momentarily during the shift out of warp, but once they found us again and saw what situation we were in they shifted to help immediately. They currently have us in their tractor.”

Jim wasn’t the only one breathing a sigh of relief. “Mr. Sulu, power down the impulse engines. Full stop. Uhura, see if you can get them on the screen.”

There was quick agreement from both officers and a moment later the now familiar view of the Defiant’s bridge appeared. Jim couldn’t help but grin at Captain Davison. “Nice save there.”

One end of Davison’s lips quirked up. “It wouldn’t do to get you all the way here only to have you crash in the final stretch.”

“Yeah.” Jim laughed. “That would have been a bit of a letdown.”

“So do you think you can go the rest of the way on your own power or should we tow you?” Davison turned to hear from an officer before looking back at Jim. “We have crews willing to come help if you need it.”

“I can ask our engineers, but I think we’ll be ok.” Jim hit the button on the comm to check with Scotty. “Kirk to Engineering, can we make it the final stretch?”

After a moment Scotty’s voice came through. It sounded a little less chaotic in Engineering this time. “I think we’ll be good, Captain. Giving the engines a wee break like this should be all they need.”

Jim glanced up at the viewscreen, sure that both crews had heard that. “Good to hear. Kirk out.” He closed the comm line to Engineering and turned his full attention back to the viewscreen. “It sounds like we’ll be ok on our own. You can go on ahead and let them know we’re coming.” That was probably for the best anyways; Jim imagined that the usual protocols prohibiting unannounced or unauthorized visitors to Earth might be a bit more strictly followed at the moment.

“Will do, Captain.” Davison nodded to him. “It’s been an honor helping you get home. Davison out.”

Jim stared at the now blank viewscreen a moment longer. An honor? That seemed like a bit much. He knew Starfleet crews liked to help each other out, as well as generally helping where needed, but saying it was an honor seemed a bit over the top. He’d have to ask Davison or maybe his mom about it later.

After a moment of quiet on the bridge, everyone else seeming just as puzzled by Davison’s comment as Jim was, Jim hit the comm button on his chair. “Kirk to Engineering. Do the impulse engines need more rest or should we finish this?”

“They should be alright.” Jim thought there was a bit of amusement in Scotty’s voice. “Although I’d recommend not straining them. Less than full power if you can.”

“That should be fine; we’re nearly there.” One more look out the viewscreen at Earth, which had now shifted from a blue dot to a larger blue object with visible green areas, and Jim decided that it would be alright. “Kirk out.” He ended the comm link and leaned forward a bit toward the center
console, where Sulu and Chekov were watching him, awaiting orders. “Mr. Chekov, plot a course for a geosynchronous orbit over San Francisco so we can connect at the spacedock. Mr. Sulu, take us in at three quarters impulse.”

They both nodded and turned back toward the front. A few moments of both of them tapping at their stations and then the *Enterprise* was moving again, seen in how Earth slowly but steadily grew larger and clearer on the viewscreen.

Chapter End Notes

I hope I didn't alarm any of you too much with last chapter's ending. Although to be honest I forgot how much fun cliffhangers were...
Hello everyone! Today this hit 900 comments and when I saw that my jaw literally dropped. Even though about half of those are me responding to the comments, I'd also like to do a quick shoutout to my repeat commenters. You're all the best and I may or may not know all of you by (user)name. But seriously, I just want to say thanks again for all the awesome support you give this fic. Even if you aren't feeling quite bold enough to comment (and tbh, I've been there) I appreciate all forms of support that this gets. So thanks everybody!

It didn’t take them long to reach spacedock. They ended up reaching it just after the Defiant did; Jim figured that the crew of the other ship must have filled in the spacedock crew some, because as soon as they were approached they were hailed.

Jim told Uhura to put it onscreen, and a moment later a smiling communications officer that Jim didn’t recognize appeared. “Welcome back, Enterprise.”

“Thanks.” Jim was feeling a bit thrown off. Why did everyone seem so excited to see them? “Do we have permission to dock?”

“Permission granted.” The comm officer did something on a console for a moment before turning back to them, still smiling. “I’ve sent you docking coordinates. Will you be needing any particular assistance once you’ve docked?”

Were people at spacedock always this cheery? Admittedly, Jim had limited experience with this sort of thing, but it seemed odd. Jim glanced around the bridge; at least he wasn’t the only one who seemed confused. “We’ve got some people in Sickbay who will need to be transferred to Starfleet Medical; I think all of them are stable and ok to transport but I’ll leave coordinating that to our CMO.” Bones would probably be annoyed at him for that, but he’d probably be more annoyed if he thought Jim was meddling with his patients by deciding for him. “And we also have some survivors from Vulcan; is there anywhere in particular that other survivors have been gathering where they should go?” Jim took a second to make sure he wasn’t forgetting anything. The only thing he could think of was the obvious. “Also, we’re going to be needing repairs.”

“We can help you coordinate all of that for you.” The comm officer focused on the console again before turning back, still remarkably upbeat. “If that’s all, you can go ahead and dock and we can coordinate with parts of your ship from there.”

“Sounds good.” Jim nodded; was this how things normally went or was this person being extra helpful? “We’ll go ahead and dock now.”

“Alright.” The comm officer smiled again. “It’s great having you back, Enterprise.”

“Thanks.” Ok, Jim might not have experience in this area but this seemed excessive. “Kirk out.” He signaled for Uhura to cut the transmission. As soon as the viewscreen switched back to the view of the spacedock and Earth Jim looked around the bridge. “Did we get the docking coordinates?”
“Yes sir, I’ll send them to the center console.” Uhura was once more focused on her station before looking back at the rest of the bridge. “It should have transferred.”

“I have it.” Chekov began to work at his station, presumably figuring out where exactly they were supposed to go.

“Alright.” Jim sat in the chair, realizing that in no more than a few hours (and probably less than that if he was being honest) he’d have to get out of it, possibly for good. “Guide us in. I’ll be making an announcement to the crew.” With a quick glance at Uhura to make sure it was set up, Jim hit the button on his armrest to open up the shipwide channel. “Kirk to all hands. We’re approaching spacedock and preparing to dock. We will be leaving the ship. I’m giving priority to the patients from Sickbay and the survivors from Vulcan.” He tried to remember the usual procedures for evacuating the ship in non-emergency situations; he had to have learned it at some point. Might as well go with what sounded right. “Crewmembers who are needed to escort the previously mentioned groups can go with them. After that, all crew members who are not on duty can begin to leave. On duty crew, make sure everything is ready for them to come in and make repairs once you leave.” Jim paused; he didn’t want to just sound like a glorified flight attendant in his last message to the crew. He wanted to end on a more captainly note. “We did it everyone. We defeated Nero and made it home. I’d like to thank all of you for all of the hard work you’ve put in during our time on the ship. It’s been an honor serving with all of you.” There, that was better. “Now go get some well-earned rest. Kirk out.”

He ended the transmission and found the bridge crew staring at him; it didn’t feel like judgement, but it still felt odd to Jim. They’d made it to their docking station while he was talking and there was no likelihood of an accident, so he had no real reason to tell them to turn around besides that it was making him feel self-conscious. “What? Did I say something wrong?”

“No.” Chekov responded and then shared a look with Sulu before continuing. “That was a good speech, Captain. Did you plan that ahead of time?”

“No.” Jim shrugged. “I just made that up just now.”

Chekov and Sulu shared another look; this time Sulu spoke up. “It was a good speech for making it up on the spot, sir.”

“Thanks?” Why was everyone being so nice today? “It was pretty basic. And you don’t need to keep up the sirs and captains, I’m only in command for a little while longer.” Part of him wanted to soak it in while he could, but Jim knew he shouldn’t let himself get too used to it. He didn’t expect to be a captain much longer.

“As you are still in command, however, the title is still an appropriate address.” Jim turned in the chair, surprised that Spock had spoken up.

Was Spock respecting him or just reminding him of protocol? He wasn’t really sure, but Jim also didn’t want to drag out an awkward silence on the bridge. “Alright then.” Jim looked around the bridge; most of the crew was watching him still. “We’ve got work to do. If there’s anything you need to do to prepare your station or your division for leaving the ship and then repairs, get to it. I’m going to be tracking down a padd so I can start on the reports that I’ll have to be doing about everything that happened since we left Earth pre-Nero.” He glanced around the bridge once more. “Let’s get to work.”

Chapter End Notes
This part of my AN isn't quite related but I want to talk star trek, so here goes. On my watchthrough of all star trek, I'm starting to near the end; I'm almost done with season one of Enterprise. Tbh I'm not sure what I'm going to do with my free time when I'm done. But anyway, if I start incorporating people from Enterprise into this (which wouldn't be too hard; we know Archer is an admiral at this point in the Kelvin timeline and Kirk's about to face the Admiralty), you'll know why. Also while I wouldn't say it's my favorite of the star trek shows, I don't see why Enterprise has such a small following. It's pretty good.

Anyways (more fic related now), what kind of reaction are you expecting them to get back on Earth?
Chapter 85

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Welcome to the last update of Pride month! You all seem very concerned with Jim and his nearly catastrophically low expectations. Hopefully he'll be connecting with people who can help him with that...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Clearing out the ship took longer than Jim expected. His search for a padd ended up turning into a few laps around the ship as he got called to various places to answer last minute questions, check things over, and other things like that that he didn’t quite feel qualified for. Still, he was mostly able to talk people through what they needed, and he figured that other people more experienced than him would be boarding the ship soon to check it over and start repairs.

Eventually he was able to track down a padd (thanks in part to a helpful yeoman), so he made it back to the bridge to start the reports. He probably could have found a quieter or more private place to do them, but he wanted to be with the crew and in the captain’s chair a little longer.

News must have gotten back to Starfleet Command that he was in command of the Enterprise now, because when he checked his account Jim saw several forms waiting for him to fill them out. He wasn’t quite sure how he felt about that. On one hand, this saved him the work of having to look up all the paperwork he’d have to do. On the other, if Starfleet Command now knew that he was in command of the Enterprise now, that meant that someone had to have told them. Jim wondered what kind of perspective that person had had. Jim knew how big first impressions could be, and he really hoped that whatever version of the story that they heard hadn’t painted him in too bad of a light. He knew that the circumstances leading to him becoming captain were unusual, maybe even questionable or unflattering even, but he really hoped that they wouldn’t be too biased against him when it came time to tell his side of the story. Even though he was making himself not expect much, Jim still wanted to have a fair chance.

But he’d cross that bridge when he came to it. For now he’d focus on the bridge he was on. As in the Enterprise bridge. Jim smiled a little at his joke. He’d only have a few more hours here until he had to leave, and he didn’t want to spend all of it in a bad mood. So he was going to tackle these forms and then head back to Earth and hopefully get some time to himself before he had to face the music.

The forms were taking a lot longer than Jim expected. He glanced up from the padd after what felt like hours (and might have been one or two; there were multiple forms and they were all several pages long) and saw that the bridge itself was starting to empty out. Some people had probably just gone to other parts of the ship to see how their departments were doing, but there were a few that had actually gotten Jim’s attention long enough to tell him that they were disembarking. Most of these conversations were short, but a few had made comments about serving with Jim again, including Sulu, who had told Jim that he’d see him back on the bridge again once the Enterprise was back in shape to fly again. Chekov had been leaving with him and had nodded to show his agreement; Jim was once again envious of their confidence that they’d be back.

But again, he wasn’t gonna let himself wallow in his worries about the future right now. Jim glanced
back at the padd. He’d done just about everything he could do so far, but there were still a few things he wasn’t quite sure about. He’d be needing some guidance on this one.

His first thought was to go find Pike and ask him for help. Pike had been both able and willing to help him with just about anything he had questions on during the past week and a half or so, so he’d probably be ok helping with this. Plus, it could be good to see Pike. Just being around him often helped calm Jim down when he was starting to freak out; he just had a way of emanating calm most of the time. It was probably what helped him be such a good captain.

Jim was just about to get up from his chair and head to Sickbay when he realized that Pike probably wouldn’t be there. Anyone needing or currently receiving medical attention had been one of the first groups evacuated, which meant that Pike was probably now at Starfleet Medical getting whatever treatment he needed. Jim was glad for that; while he knew Bones did the best he could, Sickbay had been one of the areas damaged in Nero’s attack, meaning that their facilities weren’t in the greatest shape at the moment. Starfleet Medical would be able to do more for him, even if it meant that Pike would be out of contact for a bit. If he wanted to visit Pike there, Jim would have to wait for visiting hours instead of just waltzing in like he’d done with Sickbay.

So asking Pike to help was out of the question. Beyond that, Jim’s options for advice were limited. There weren’t a ton of people on this ship with extensive experience, let alone with the kinds of forms that commanding officers had to fill out after missions. But there was always Spock. Although he had only been first officer since the start of this mission, which meant that he might not have much more experience with all of the administrative stuff than Jim did. Which, even though it might limit his helpfulness, was an oddly comforting thought in a way.

But still, Jim needed to get these done. A quick look around the bridge revealed that Spock was not there. Jim headed over to one of the computer consoles on the outside part of the bridge. “Computer, locate Commander Spock.”

A moment later the reply came. “Commander Spock is in science lab one.”

With one last glance at the bridge that he was unsure he’d be able to return to, Jim headed to the turbolift. Thanks to spending all his free time over the past week or so wandering the ship and figuring out its layout, Jim was able to find his way without needing to stop for directions.

Once there, Jim began his search for Spock. It didn’t take him long; the labs were starting to empty out as most experiments had been wrapped up prior to their tow back to the Sol System.

Plus, being the only Vulcan in this part of the ship (and quite possibly the only one left on the ship at all) meant that Spock was pretty easy to spot.

Jim walked over to him and leaned against the table Spock was sitting at. “Want to help an acting captain with paperwork one last time?” He held out the padd.

Spock looked up from the equipment he’d just finished inventorying and storing. “Of course, Captain.”

“Great.” Jim grinned. “I’ve mostly got it, but there are a few things I have questions on.”

“I will assist you as much as I am able.” Spock took the padd and skimmed over the forms on it before looking around the room once more. “Would you like to move to a more appropriate venue?”

Jim glanced around. There were still a few people working on shutting down the labs. It would probably be best not to get in their way. “Sure. The bridge was mostly empty, but we could also use
one of the briefing rooms.”

“I believe a briefing room would be best suited to our needs.” Spock stood up and gestured for Jim to lead the way. “There is one on this deck that should be unoccupied.”

Jim thought for a second before nodding. “I know it.”

As they walked out of the lab and made their way to the briefing room, Jim decided that despite their rough start he was going to miss working with Spock. They’d made a really good team over the past week and a half. Even without the soulmate thing hanging over their heads and everything he saw from Older Spock, Jim thought that he still would have wanted to work with Spock. He hoped they ended up together on another assignment, even if the dynamic would be different if they weren’t captain and first officer. Jim looked at Spock out of the corner of his eye. Even the dorky bowl cut was growing on him. He’d have to find some way for them to work together again.

Chapter End Notes

Most of you seem a little more optimistic than Jim is about what will come next. We’ll be finding out who’s right soon, but next chapter we’ll be having a surprise for Spock...
Hello everyone! Happy "Firework or Gunshot?" eve to my fellow Americans, and happy belated Canada Day to our neighbors up north. As for everyone else, I don't know when your independence day/national holiday is (except Mexico's, which is mid September and not Cinco de Mayo like the common misconception), but have a good one when it comes around. Anyways, typically I'd split up a chapter of this length (I aim for 1-1.5k and this is just over 2k), but there wasn't a good spot to split it and I'd just left you with a cliffhanger recently, so I decided not to do it again.

We're switching to Spock's POV this chapter. Who's ready for a surprise for him? A few of you guessed what it was already...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It did not take him and Kirk long to complete the paperwork. Spock was once again impressed with how much of an efficient, competent officer Kirk had become during his time in command. Perhaps that was what Pike had seen that had caused him to promote Kirk; it seemed unlikely that it was merely favoritism as Kirk seemed to think, although Spock did believe that could be a partial factor.

As with previous times Spock had aided Kirk in his duties, most of his problems stemmed merely from a lack of experience rather than incompetence or arrogance. With the opportunity to gain more experience and “learn on the job” as humans put it, he would likely become an exemplary captain one day.

It was unfortunate that Spock’s upcoming resignation from Starfleet would prohibit him from observing Kirk’s development in person. However, as fascinating as the opportunity to watch talent develop was, and it was indeed one of the aspects of teaching that Spock had enjoyed most, even if this would be entirely different from the classroom, Spock could not stay. He had an obligation to his people in the wake of the tragedy they had experienced.

Although they may reject his help in regrowing the population due to his mixed Vulcan-Human ancestry, there still would be other ways he could provide aid. He had considerable knowledge that could be beneficial in building the colony. He could also provide assistance in other ways, like using his scientific and linguistic knowledge to teach or by entering his father’s profession and becoming a diplomat. His time in Starfleet, limited though it now was for a Vulcan’s first career, had provided him with considerable experience working with other species, more than most Vulcans besides diplomats had.

But first, Spock would have to focus on formally ending his career in Starfleet. The only person who he had spoken about it with thus far was Captain Pike, who had encouraged him to “take a few days to think it over” as he believed that Spock could potentially be better served in Starfleet still. That had been earlier today when Spock visited him in Sickbay prior to his shift, and Spock had yet to change his mind. Perhaps there were others he should inform of his decision, like Nyota.

“Spock?” He had forgotten that he and Kirk were still concluding the paperwork. Kirk had been working on an area once Spock explained it, but evidently he had finished as he had put the padd down and was now looking at Spock with concern. “Are you ok? You were hardcore zoning out,
which is pretty unusual for you.”

Perhaps Kirk was another person Spock should inform of his decision. He seemed to be relying on Spock during his time as captain, and he would need to find that support elsewhere now. But as Spock was taking time to decide as Pike had advised, informing Kirk could wait. “I am fine, although perhaps the task of clearing out the science labs was more strenuous than I anticipated.”

Kirk smiled in a way that would likely be deemed commiserating. “Yeah, shutting down the ship is a lot more work than I expected. Plus, it’s been a hell of a few weeks, especially for you.” There was a moment where something like regret or embarrassment crossed his face. “I mean—“

“It is alright.” Since Nero’s attack, Spock had learned firsthand why humans were so irritated by being shown pity. “It has, to paraphrase you, been a difficult few weeks.”

“Do you want to head out early?” The concern was still present in Kirk’s voice, but thankfully it had shifted away from anything approaching pity. “The science labs seemed just about done when I grabbed you, and I can probably handle everything else from here.”

There was a moment where Spock considered refusing, but due to his earlier start to the day he was now beginning to experience exhaustion. He had spent more hours than usual today working as it was now nearing a late hour of the night, past even when the modified shift schedule the Enterprise had adopted would have ended his workday. Perhaps it was time to retire for the night. “I will accept your offer. I had intended to debark with Lieutenant Uhura, but I have not communicated with her to confirm since I left the bridge several hours ago.”

“She’s probably gone.” Jim checked the time on his padd. “I think we’ve got even less than a skeleton crew at this point. If I see her when I’m doing final checks I’ll let you know, but you’d probably have a better chance of trying to reach her planetside.”

“You may be right.” Perhaps Spock was more in need of rest than he initially believed. “Will you be able to complete the rest of the forms on your own?”

“I already finished.” Kirk smiled again. “That’s what I was telling you when I noticed you were zoning out.”

“Very well.” Spock stood. “Permission to depart, Captain?”

Kirk’s smile widened and he nodded. “Permission granted, Mr. Spock. It’s been a pleasure serving with you.”

It was an odd statement considering their time serving together had nearly resulted in the loss of Kirk’s life twice in the first day, but Spock had since decided to stop questioning Kirk on emotional matters. He turned and headed toward the doors of the briefing room.

“Wait, one more thing.” Spock paused at the doors and turned back toward Kirk, who was holding up his hand to stop Spock. “They already took the transporters offline, so you’ll have to use the ones at spacedock.”

“Thank you for informing me.” With one last nod to Kirk, Spock departed. It did not take him long to reach the area where the spacedock and ship connected, even with a quick stop to comm the science labs and tell the next highest ranking officer that the duty of overseeing inventory and shutdown now fell to them.

Before long he had arrived outside the transporter room for the spacedock. He was surprised to see Sarek there. “Father? I thought the Vulcan survivors from the Enterprise were evacuated to Earth
first.”

“They were.” Sarek nodded in greeting to his son. “However, as I am one of the few surviving Vulcan ambassadors, the surviving council members decided it would be best if I spent my time upon our arrival to Earth making calls to other Federation planets to appeal for aid for the survivors of Vulcan. As they had sufficient facilities here, it would be illogical to return to Earth prior to beginning my calls.” Sarek took a moment to adjust his robes, and Spock had the momentary question if part of the reason his father had not beamed down yet was because he was apprehensive about returning to Amanda’s planet for the first time without her in approximately three decades. “However,” Sarek had regained his composure, “I have finished my calls, so it would be illogical to delay transporting to the planet’s surface now.”

“I have also finished my duties and intended to transport to the planet’s surface.” Spock gestured to the door of the transporter room. “May I accompany you?”

“You may.” Sarek entered the transporter room, followed closely by Spock, and after confirming the coordinates with the technician the room around them disappeared.

The view was soon replaced by one of the transporter rooms at Starfleet headquarters. It was familiar to Spock, but not as familiar as the voice that cried out a moment later.

“Oh my god! Spock! Sarek!” Before either of them could respond a very familiar set of arms wrapped around both of them as much as possible. Amanda instantly began to talk as both men were too stunned to speak. “I thought you were both dead! I’m so glad you’re not, oh my god! The bonds were totally silent; I couldn’t feel anything from either of you. You must have just been shielding far more than you ever used to; I just got so worried because the planet was gone and the Starfleet ships were wrecked too and there was no word about either of you for over a week.” She paused to take a breath and removed her face from where it had been shoved into their shoulders so she could look at them. “I hadn’t realized how weird it would feel being alone in my own head after all this time. I mean I knew I didn’t have it as bad as the Vulcans who lost their spouses and were in so much pain they were showing it, but still. It wasn’t pain, just,” she paused to think, “…emptiness. Numbness of a sort, like a ringing in your ears when there’s a sudden silence after a lot of noise. I figured it was just less of a reaction because I’m psi-null so the bonds were different, and of course part of me hoped the lack of pain meant you both were still alive, but I didn’t want to get my hopes up.” She smiled and released them so her hands would be free to wipe her eyes. “But all that worrying is over now. We’re back together again, and we’re all alive. That’s what’s important right now.”

Spock was still fighting to contain his disbelief, but Sarek seemed to recover more quickly. “My wife,” he reached out and carefully, as if he feared she were an illusion that would shatter, touched Amanda’s arm. “How are you alive?”

She smiled before taking Sarek’s hand in her own and squeezing it, a gesture that Spock would typically prefer not to see but he was still too stunned to look away. “All the ships orbiting Vulcan that had transporters, even the damaged Starfleet ones, started beaming people up en masse when they realized what was happening and the jamming signal stopped. Since I was in the market in ShiKahr at the time, I ended up being taken up with a group.” Her expression went more somber. “We spent days floating in a broken chunk of ship, hoping we’d be rescued.” She looked at Spock and smiled. “I was very impressed by the Starfleet officers. They did a very good job keeping their cool and making sure everyone was getting rations and things like that, even if they had to be careful with the supplies since they weren’t sure how long it would take for a rescue. But more ships came, and then we were back at Earth.” She looked between them again. “Because of the bonds and because I hadn’t heard anything, I was starting to fear the worst when neither of you were among the survivors they found in the wreckage. But then I heard that there were some survivors on the
Enterprise, so when the ship got here I came when I heard there would be survivors beaming down. But you weren’t in there, but I decided to stay anyways…” She trailed off and smiled at them again. “I’m glad I decided to stay.”

It took Spock a moment to realize the implications of what she’d said. “You’ve been here waiting for hours?”

“Yes.” She gestured to her bag. “I figured it might be a bit of a wait, so I brought things to do. Plus, getting to see with my own eyes that you two are alive and well was well worth it.” She smiled again.

There was a moment of contented silence, everyone basking in the realization that their losses were not quite so great as they imagined.

Amanda once again broke the silence. “Spock, you look exhausted.” She reached out and squeezed his arm; typically Spock would reject the contact, but now he was too grateful for the physical reassurance of her continued life.

“I believe I am in need of rest.” His only hesitation stemmed from the fact that that would mean returning to his on-campus quarters and separating from his mother.

Amanda seemed to thinking something similar; she looked at Sarek and then back to Spock. “You know, they’ve been letting me stay in our usual rooms in the Embassy. If you wanted, you could probably come stay in your old room, where you stayed as a child visiting Earth with us.” There was something slightly hopeful to his mother’s expression that Spock found difficult to refuse.

He looked at Sarek. It had been many years since they’d slept under one roof, their time on the Enterprise notwithstanding, but his father merely nodded. Spock looked back at his mother. “That would be agreeable.”

Amanda’s grin was wide and excited. “Excellent! We can head out now and get some rest, and then we’ll spend tomorrow catching up.” She turned and walked towards the exit of the transporter room, leading Spock to realize that they hadn’t moved from the transporter pad yet. She looked back at them. “Well? Are you coming?”

With one last shared look that conveyed their mutual disbelief and gratitude at the situation they found themselves in, Sarek and Spock followed her.

Chapter End Notes

I know several of you probably saw this coming, but as I've told at least one person (probably more) in the comments, I hate to let a good female character go to waste, unlike probably the majority of writers in Hollywood (the male ones especially). Plus, I'm very anti-fridging (if you don't know what that means google should be helpful; the definition was circling the internet a while back). This author's note is more grumpy than initially intended, but the treatment of female characters in pop culture is rarely something that gets me in a good mood.

Anyways, family reunion! Yay!
Chapter 87

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I'm pretty sure last chapter set a new record for comments for this fic, which is really exciting. I think you all must have been pretty happy to find out about Amanda, although I think in your excitement you may have forgotten the revelation from earlier in the chapter...

Anyways, as today is also the update closest to the 10 month anniversary of this fic (hard to believe as that may be) I'd just like to say a general thanks for all the support this fic is getting. I know I mention comments most, but the fact that things like kudos, subscriptions, and bookmarks aren't dropping off is amazing. Even if all you do is read each chapter, you're great and I appreciate the support!

We're back to Jim's POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim sat in the briefing room for a bit after Spock left. All he had to do now was formally submit all the forms and he would be just about done with his official captain duties. The only other thing he'd have left would be to finish watching over the ship getting ready for repairs, and even then there wasn't much left to do.

Jim sighed and sent off the forms. Might as well end his time as captain as a competent officer rather than the kind of person who puts everything off til the last minute. He'd have to face the admiralty and find out his fate either way, so he may as well go in on a good note.

Might as well get back to his duties now. Jim got up and took the padd as he left the briefing room. There weren't many places on the ship that he hadn't been yet, and most of it was pretty empty by now. Sickbay and most of the quarters would definitely be cleared out. The science labs were probably nearly cleared out by this point, and the bridge had been basically abandoned when he left. As he neared the turbolift Jim tried to think about where he hadn't really been yet. Engineering was one of the few major departments he hadn't visited. May as well go there now.

So he took the turbolift to Engineering. He found it full of people; it was a mix of Enterprise crew and spacedock people and they were all swarming around where the warp core would normally be. Jim quickly decided that he would probably be mostly in the way if he tried to do anything here, so he ducked off to the side. He was surprised when he heard someone.

“Captain?” It sounded like Scotty, but Jim looked around and didn't see him.

“Scotty?” Jim glanced around again but still couldn't find him. “Where are you?”

A moment later a head popped out of a nearby Jeffries tube. “Over here.”

Jim walked closer and was able to see Scotty nearly upside down in front of an open panel with a toolkit clipped to the side of the Jeffries tube he was in. “What are you doing? I thought you’d be in the middle of the warp core repairs.”
Scotty shook his head. “I made an admiral mad, remember? I’m staying out of the way.” He paused and patted the Jeffries tube affectionately. “Besides, my girl needs a lot of repairs, and someone has to handle the small things while the big things get focused on.”

“I’m sure someone would take care of it eventually.” Then the rest of what Scotty said caught up on other Jim and he made a face. “Wait, your girl?”

“Well,” Scotty looked a bit embarrassed, “Engineers get awfully close to their ships. I haven’t been here long but I already don’t want to leave.”

“I can understand that.” Jim smiled ruefully. “Captains tend to get pretty attached to their ships too, and even though I was just acting captain for two weeks, I still got attached.”

“Captain.” Jim looked up and saw Scotty uncharacteristically serious, but not angry. “I think most of us dropped the ‘acting’ bit of the title and accepted you in the chair.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at Scotty. “And if we’re being honest, you seem to have been acting awfully like a chief engineer on our voyage home.”

Scotty smiled. “Aww, thank you captain.”

“Jim. I think we can drop the formality now.” He ran a hand through his hair. “Like I’ve been saying, I don’t know what rank I’ll end up with after this, so I’m not trying to get too used to the title.”

“Whatever you say.” Scotty shrugged. “But minus the bit with the warp core, we’ve treated this silver lady pretty well. I bet she’ll take us back.”

“Well if you’re right, we’ll go out for a celebratory drink.” Jim hoped Scotty’s optimism wasn’t completely unfounded.

“And if i’m wrong?” Scotty raised an eyebrow, which looked a little odd considering he was still partially upside down.

“Then we’ll go out for a consolation drink.” Jim grinned.

“I like your style.” Scotty grinned back at him. “Let's hope your taste in drinks is just as good.”

“Alright.” Jim laughed. He looked around Engineering before looking back to Scotty. “I’m just about done here so i’m gonna head down soon. Want to join me?”

“If it's alright with you I’ll stay.” Scotty glanced around Engineering. “I think I’ll keep working.”

“Ok.” Jim had noticed that more Enterprise crew seemed to be here than in other sections, so he decided to clarify something. “You and the other engineers know you can go down to the surface and leave the repairs to the crew here, right?”

“We know.” Scotty shrugged. “Most of ‘em will be beaming down soon. I’ll be staying up here til it's done though.” He looked a little nervous. “Got an admiral angry, remember? I'm gonna enjoy my starship time in case they exile me to an ice planet again.”

“Yeah, I remember the story with Archer’s dog.” Jim shrugged. “But hey, remember your optimism from earlier.”

“Whatever you say, sir.” Scotty started to inch back into the Jeffries tube. “I’m gonna get back to
“Alright.” Jim watched him slowly disappear up the Jeffries tube. “I'll see you back on Earth, Scotty.” He waited until he heard a muffled acknowledgement and then laughed as he left Engineering.

He wasn't quite sure where to go from here. It seemed like it might be time to go. Jim sighed as he got in the turbolift. He already finished up in the captain's quarters, and it wasn't like he was gonna need to go there to get anything. Might as well do one last trip to the bridge then head out.

As the turbolift doors opened on the quiet bridge, Jim took a moment to take in the view of Earth. It had been afternoon in San Francisco when they arrived, but now night was falling. From such a high orbit he could see the area where day was shifting to night and lights were coming on. It was an incredible sight.

He kept his eyes on the viewscreen as he slowly walked toward the captain’s chair. Once he was next to it he let a hand rest on the armrest and looked away from the viewscreen to the chair. He wondered if he should sit in it one last time...

“Do you two need a moment? I can leave the bridge.” Jim jumped more than he'd like to admit and turned around to see Uhura.

“What are you doing here?” He paused when he realized how harsh that might sound. “I mean I don't mean that in a 'you don't belong here way,' just in a 'I thought you'd left already so now I'm confused' way.”

“I'm finishing up my job.” When he still seemed confused Uhura raised an eyebrow. “You weren't the only one who got a promotion, Kirk. Being the alpha shift bridge communications officer apparently puts you in charge of the department. So I've been supervising my department.”

“Oh. That makes sense I guess.” It was quiet for a moment before Jim remembered something. “Wait. I thought you'd already left, so I told Spock to just beam down without you since he seemed exhausted.” He felt a little bad; just because she was dating his soulmate didn't mean he wanted to actively sabotage their relationship. “I hope I didn't ruin your date night.”

“It's alright.” Uhura shifted in her seat at the comm station. “Spock commed me from the surface to let me know he'd have to cancel anyway. Apparently a family thing came up.”

That didn't sound good. “Is he ok?”

Uhura shrugged. “He didn't sound exactly like his normal self, but he didn't sound distressed either. I'm sure he'll let me know later.”

“Alright. Let me know when you find out.” Uhura seemed thrown off for a second so Jim quickly clarified. “You get close to someone when they're your first officer. I want to know if he's ok.” Plus there was the soulmate thing, but Jim definitely was not telling Uhura that.

“Ok then.” She didn't seem fully convinced, but she didn't seem suspicious either. “I'll let you know.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at her. “Anyway, since Spock ditched you, want to head down with me?” He realized what that sounded like a moment after he said it. “I don't mean it like that.” He held up a hand to stop her from interrupting. “I just meant that I finished my work, so if you finished yours we could leave together. I think some of the crew are planning to celebrate beating Nero and getting back and it's always more fun to go to that sort of thing with other people. But if you need to keep
“working or just would rather not go with me just let me know and I'll leave.”

When he looked up Uhura thankfully looked more amused than annoyed. “It’s ok, Kirk. I'm all done here so I'd be alright with beaming down together.”

“Aright.” Jim smiled. “Let’s head out.” He made an ‘after you’ gesture and took one last look around the bridge before following her onto the turbolift.

Chapter End Notes

Ten months and Jim is finally gonna be back on Terran soil. But that just leads to our next question, which is what happens to our crew from here. But maybe they'll have a little fun before they get the official verdict...
Hello everyone! Since we just hit the 10 month mark, I was looking at the stats for this again and I gotta say the number of subscribers has really gone up since I last checked to the point where the numbers are now so high I honestly can’t believe them. So again, thanks to everyone supporting this fic! Hopefully everyone who is subscribing but not reading regularly isn’t getting too spammed with emails for this. But anyways, to my regular readers, the updates are just going to keep coming.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim felt like he was moving a bit slower than usual as he and Uhura walked through the Enterprise on their way to Spacedock. Uhura kept getting a little ahead of him and stopping to wait or telling him to hurry up a bit.

Eventually she seemed to just decided to address it outright. She stopped and put a hand on her hip. “Kirk, what’s going on? You normally don’t walk this slowly.”

Jim wasn’t quite sure how to respond. “I—I don’t know. Am I walking slowly?”

“Yes.” Uhura raised an eyebrow. “Are you worried about not coming back to the ship?”

Damn, she was perceptive. Might as well stop trying to avoid it. “Maybe.”

She sighed and dropped her hand from her hip. “Kirk, I know I tend to give you a hard time—and don’t get me wrong, you typically have it coming because someone has to keep that ego in check, not to mention you typically give it right back—but I’m just gonna be honest with you here. I think you’re overthinking this.” Jim looked up at her; this wasn’t quite where he was expecting this to go. Once she had his attention Uhura continued. “I think you’ve got a pretty good chance of making it back on this ship. Will you be captain again? Maybe, maybe not. But could you be back on this ship and maybe even get a promotion instead of graduating as an ensign? I think it’s possible, maybe even likely. So stop moping like this will be the last time you’ll ever be on the Enterprise.”

Jim felt a smile creep across his face. “Thanks Uhura.” With just about everyone else he might assume they were just saying it to make him feel better, but he could trust her to be honest. “If or when I make captain, I’m totally making you my chief comm officer.”

She smiled, a mix of amused and confident. “I don’t think I’ll need your help for that, but thanks.”

“That’s probably true.” Jim laughed. “So, should we head out? We’ll be finding out who gets what promotions soon enough anyways.”

“Let’s head down.” Uhura started walking again and gestured for him to follow. Jim took one last look around before going after her.

They reached the spacedock transporter room pretty quickly. After quickly confirming the coordinates, they dematerialized.

They hadn’t been in the landing area for long before Jim heard a very familiar voice. “Oh my god!
My two favorite humans!”

The next thing Jim knew there was one green arm around him and another around Uhura; despite only having a partial grip on either of them Gaila managed to have a tight hold on both of them.

“You two took so long to beam down!” Gaila’s voice was a little muffled from where her face was pressed to their shoulders but she didn’t let that deter her. “I came when I first heard Enterprise officers were beaming down since I’d heard that both of you ended up on it, but then you weren’t there! And then I heard senior officers were beaming down and I figured I’d go check and now you’re here!” She let him and Uhura out of the crushing hug and looked between the two of them expectantly. “I can’t believe you two were out there saving the Federation while I was stuck in an escape pod hoping I wouldn’t get pulverized into space dust by debris. They’ve been so tightlipped around here that all I know is that the Enterprise was the one that saved Earth. You two have to tell me everything!”

Jim smiled and was surprised to see that Uhura was smiling too when he looked over at her. “The story is gonna be everywhere soon, Gaila. I bet within a week you’re gonna be sick of hearing about it.”

“Maybe.” Gaila looked between the two of them, still grinning at being reunited with her friends. “But that doesn’t mean I don’t want to get the first hand story from you now. The official story will just be based on the briefings and logs; that’s nowhere near as fun.”

“She’s got a point.” Uhura looked at Jim with an eyebrow raised in consideration. “No official story would be able to match your flair for the dramatic, Kirk.”

“Hey.” Maybe Gaila was starting to put out pheromones without realizing it again but Jim felt like he just couldn’t even get fake mad right now. Plus, it seemed like Uhura was joking. “Your boyfriend was the most dramatic one for most of it in my opinion, but given the circumstances it was understandable.”

“Spock?” Gaila’s voice was understandably incredulous. “In all the time working with him on the Kobayashi Maru he was the most levelheaded person I ever met. I thought it would be impossible for him to lose his cool.”

“Clearly he just hadn’t met me yet.” Jim smirked before it dropped. “That and his planet got destroyed and a ton of people died. It was a really messy situation.”

“I’ll say.” Uhura leaned against Gaila and looked at Jim. “Kirk was still pretty dramatic though. Only he would reappear after getting marooned then get himself nearly murdered only to dramatically reveal that it was all because he needed to take command of the ship.”

“Oh my god.” Gaila looked at Jim, exaggerating her surprise but not by much. “You became captain?” At Jim’s hesitant nod she slapped his arm. “Lead with that kind of thing next time! Have I taught you nothing about gossip?”

“No more than I already knew from living in a small town.” Jim had forgotten about Riverside for a second. He decided to delay going back; he didn’t want a whole lot of hoopla around his visit to the farmhouse.

“Anyway.” Gaila turned her attention back to Uhura. “How was he?”

“Gaila, could you say that in a way that doesn’t sound dirty?” When Uhura’s exasperated expression was met with only a raised eyebrow from Gaila and a muffled laugh from Jim since there was really
no need to answer, she sighed and looked between the two of them. “He was surprisingly competent.” She looked at Jim. “Don’t let it go to your head too much Kirk, but you weren’t half bad.”

Jim nodded. “Not the best review I’ve gotten, but I’ll take it.” He grinned. “I guess I gotta work on my performance a bit.”

Uhura shook her head, but she was smiling. “I can’t believe you’re the same person who commanded a ship through an emergency and almost two weeks after and actually did ok at it.”

“Did I do well enough to earn a first name?” Jim smiled, easily slipping into the old game.

“Really?” She was smiling back at him. “We both know you heard Spock say it.”

“Yeah, but it only counts if you tell me yourself.” Jim nodded at Gaila. “That’s why I never just looked it up or bothered just asking Gaila here for it even though I knew she knew it; it would ruin the fun.”

“What makes you think I would have told?” Gaila was trying to look serious but failing at it and still grinning. “I can totally keep a secret when I need to.”

Jim was about to respond but then paused a second and looked at Uhura. “I honestly don’t know if she has any secrets, which either means she’s really good with them or absolutely terrible.”

Uhura shrugged. “I trust her.”

“Well me too obviously.” Jim looked at Gaila again. “Don’t doubt that.”

“I didn’t.” Gaila shrugged it off then looked between the two of them. “Now, gather your other friends from onboard if you want, but I want to hear all the details. I don’t care if we’re up all night; I’m getting the full story.”

“Alright, alright.” Jim smiled. “I’ll grab Bones if I can and then meet you; you two can check with other people if you want but I say if we’re gonna be up all night we should grab some food and maybe drinks. But let’s do this.”

Chapter End Notes

Tbh, a good portion of this fic will just be female characters not dying or going away when they did in the movies. And some who hadn’t showed up will be making appearances here. Anyone you’d like to see?
Hello everyone! I’m just going to take a moment to celebrate that this just passed 1000 comments! Again, about half are me responding to comments, but I’m still pretty damn excited about this. You’re all the best!

So I almost didn’t do this scene/chapter, but I decided it could be a bit of fun before we jump into plotty stuff. So here’s the crew’s night out, with a quick warning for underage drinking (at least by American standards, and also probably other places because Chekov’s 17).

They ended up getting a pretty good group together. Along with the initial group of Jim, Gaila, and Uhura, they managed to convince Sulu, Chekov, and Bones to come over. They’d tried to get Scotty to come as well, but he’d refused to leave the ship again.

Still, they’d managed to get most of the Enterprise’s senior staff, which Gaila had enjoyed because it meant she could get the story from multiple people. They spent the first part of the night in Gaila and Uhura’s room eating takeout and telling the story, everyone jumping in and interrupting each other when they felt they had good details to add. Bones had brought along some booze, which they also shared over the course of their time in the room, before deciding that they should all go out as a group.

So after a quick break so everyone could get changed and prepare, they met back up and headed to a club that Gaila recommended that Sulu had apparently been to as well.

That was how they ended up squeezed into a booth on the edge of a packed dancefloor while loud rhythmic music played and colorful strobe lights flashed. Jim looked over his crew and couldn’t help but smile. Gaila and Uhura had finished their first round and then gone to the dancefloor, where they were both attracting a lot of attention but ignoring it in favor of having a good time. Chekov had had a drink that Jim suspected he might have been a bit too young for at only 17, but he seemed to be handling it well enough, to the point that Jim decided this probably wasn’t his first time with alcoholic drinks. He’d also made his way to the dancefloor and was staying close to Uhura and Gaila. Sulu had started off with them, but had wandered over to another table to talk with a cute guy who’d caught his eye when they came in. They were too far away for Jim to pick up what they were saying, but they both seemed really interested in it, or maybe just interested in each other. Bones had done the least socializing out of everyone; he’d stuck to the booth and complained about how loud the music was, but he still seemed to be enjoying himself.

Jim himself had been going back and forth between the dance floor and their booth; there certainly had been some people who’d caught his attention, but he wasn’t really feeling it that night. While his mood had been a bit improved when he’d found out that Spock’s family thing that was keeping him occupied was good news instead of bad, Jim still found his thoughts drifting back to his soulmate, although more out of curiosity than concern. He wondered what Spock would think of a place like this. He’d probably be more annoyed with it than Bones was; from what Jim understood Vulcans weren’t fans of alcohol, loud music, big groups of people, or even dancing according to some. Still,
Jim wondered if Spock would be an exception. He could picture Spock dressed more casually in going out clothes that showed off a little bit, maybe something tight and black, dancing in a way that really highlighted that toned body Jim got to see while they were sparring…

This was not the time for those kinds of thoughts. Jim shook his head to clear it. Spock was probably the kind of person who’d spend shore leave actually resting, or maybe just exploring museums or that sort of thing. Still, that could be fun. Days spent learning about the local culture, nights spent learning about each other and maybe each other’s bodies…

What the hell was he drinking that was making him have these sorts of thoughts? Jim glanced down at his glass and decided to go with something more tried and true for his next round. Or maybe just get water; it might be good for him to sober up some.

Sulu sliding into the booth alone dragged Jim away from his thoughts. He raised an eyebrow at Sulu. “Where’d your boy go? It looked like you two were really hitting it off.”

“He had to head out. We did exchange contact information and agree to meet sometime later this week though.” Sulu smiled in a way that was a little shyer than his usual calm confidence. “His name is Ben and he seemed really cool; I really want to see him again.”

“Meet for one night and you’ve already got it bad.” Bones shook his head and took a sip of his drink, but he was smiling slightly. “This guy must really be something.”

“He is!” Sulu leaned across the table. “We didn’t even get to talk much because it was so loud in here, but we really hit it off still. I think he could be the one, guys. I bet you’ll check me out in a week and I’ll be aging!”

“Congrats dude.” Jim took another sip of his drink, hoping it wouldn’t drag up too many mental images of ‘the one’ for him. “Ignore Dr. Grumpy over here, that’s exciting stuff.” Jim nudged Sulu’s arm. “So were you impressing him with stories of your heroics? Cuz you were pretty badass when we were fighting those Romulans on the drill, not to mention the space battles.”

“Nah.” Sulu leaned back and looked through the drinks on the table before finding one that might have been his and taking a sip of it. “No one outside of Starfleet really knows the story yet; people know that one Starfleet ship saved Earth but I figured that it might sound fake if I claimed to be on it.”

“It is true though.” Chekov scooted into the booth, followed closely by Uhura and Gaila. “But maybe this way he can be more impressed when the story comes out because he met you before you got famous.”

“Yeah, some people really dig heroics.” Gaila nodded emphatically. “Even though it didn’t really seem like you’d need any help getting with that guy from what I saw, when the story blows up it might help push things along.”

“C’mon, do you really think the story’s going to get that big?” Uhura grabbed her drink off the table. “I doubt any of us are going to get that much attention compared to what happened to Vulcan.”

Silence settled over the table for a moment as they all thought about what had happened. The suddenly somber mood felt at odds with the upbeat environment around them.

After a moment Gaila broke the silence. “While a lot of attention will be on that, I think some focus will still be on all of you. I mean, you were the only Starfleet ship that survived, and you saved Earth and maybe the whole Federation in the process. People are gonna want to talk about that.” She
paused to think. “There already has been some buzz around it here; I doubt the story will settle, especially now that you’re back.”

“True.” Jim tipped his head in consideration. “Plus, some of the tabloid people will do anything for a story. I still can’t believe how many people I had to dodge earlier this year because they wanted to follow up on ‘the Kelvin Baby’ 25 years later.”

“God, that was the worst.” Bones took a long drink before continuing. “I swear you used the window more than the door to get into our room that week because they were loitering near the entrance of the dorms so much.” He shook his head. “I’m not looking forward to all of that.”

There were grunts of agreement from around the table. Jim glanced at the time; it was getting late and this was not the kind of note he wanted to end the night on. “Whatever comes next, tonight we’re celebrating even if we’re the only ones who know what we did right now. So somebody flag down a server because the next round is on me.”

Once they’d managed to find someone and get drinks Jim raised his glass. “Here’s to the best crew in the fleet.” He paused and looked around the table. “Whatever comes next, we kicked some major ass out there. Let’s hope we can get the band back together and do it again.” He looked around the table again and decided to add one more thing. “Gaila, you’re an honorary crew member for tonight at the very least, but let’s see if it can be for real on our next adventure.”

“It better be.” Gaila raised her glass and everyone laughed.

“Anyways,” Jim smiled at everyone around the table. “To the Enterprise and her crew!”

The crew echoed the toast and everyone clinked their glasses together. Jim smiled before taking a sip and deciding that whatever came next, with his career and with his love life, as long as he could be with this group of people it would be pretty good.

Chapter End Notes

I definitely took the idea of Jim being considered "the Kelvin Baby" from another fic I've read, but I forget which one at this point. Maybe multiple tbh.

It was probably most of you, but anyone catch the introduction of a significant minor character?
Hello everyone! Most of you seemed to really like the crew hanging out (and the introduction of a certain someone that most of you caught on to). But we're getting back to business!

The next morning Jim woke up to a buzzing sound. For a moment he thought it was his head, but then he saw it was his padd. A quick glance at the screen showed that he had a message from Pike and that it was still very early. Jim groaned and decided to go back to sleep. He'd always just dealt with hangovers by sleeping through them, and the message from Pike couldn’t be that serious…

The next time Jim woke up was several hours later. He checked the time and saw it was now 1230. That was probably late enough that he should get up. He rolled over and decided to check the message from Pike. He picked up the padd and opened the message.

Jim sat upright, all sleepiness gone instantly. He had a meeting with the Admirals at 1300. It was now 1231 and the meeting would be in a building across campus, a 10 minute walk away.

Jim jumped out of bed and swore. He was thankful to see that Bones had left him water and a hypo that Jim assumed was his hangover cure (Jim had never quite found out what was in it, but he trusted Bones as a doctor and it definitely worked). Jim downed the water and stabbed himself with the hypo before digging through his dresser. He had no idea if he was supposed to be wearing command gold or cadet red at this point, but a quick glance around the room revealed that his only command tunic was the one he’d transported down in, which was now crumpled on the floor. Cadet red it was.

A quick stop in the bathroom to do his business and make sure he was presentable (as much as Gaila told him it was a good look for him, Jim doubted bedhead was the right look for a meeting with the Admiralty) and it was 1245. Jim smoothed out his uniform and debated whether he had time to grab food. He knew Bones would get on his case for not eating, and that it probably wasn’t best to face the admiralty on an empty stomach, so he decided to look for something he could eat quickly.

It took him longer than expected, but he finally found a bar that he could eat on the go. He started to shove it in his mouth, then noticed the time. It was 1251. This was not good. Jim scrambled to find his boots from wherever he’d tossed them off the night before. He finally found them half under the futon and pulled them on, taking a moment to be glad that Starfleet had done away with lace up boots as he ran out the door.

It was 1253 when he left the dorm. Jim ran across campus in a half sprint, dodging people as he went and cutting across the grass. He really hoped he wouldn’t trip.

Panting and starting to sweat from a mix of nerves and the sudden exertion, Jim made it to the right building at 1259. He took a deep breath and ran a hand through his hair, hoping he didn’t mess it up too much. It might be more like bedhead after all at this point. Oh well.

A realization hit him and Jim froze. He had no idea what room this meeting was supposed to be in; he’d only looked at the building. In his rush he’d forgotten all about bringing his padd, too, so he had
no way to check. He began to frantically look around the lobby for any sign of where he was supposed to be, but there didn’t seem to be any indication of where he was supposed to be.

A poorly suppressed laugh from behind him made Jim turn around. He saw an ensign in command gold who raised an eyebrow at him. “I’m guessing you’re Kirk? I didn’t mean to laugh but you were getting comically distressed there.”

“Yeah, I’m supposed to be going to a meeting with the admirals, but I have no idea which room it’s in.” Jim took another deep breath. “And yes, I am James T. Kirk. I would give you my rank but it was sortof Captain yesterday and cadet a few weeks ago and uncertain today; I think that’s what this meeting is. At least in part.”

“Not to break your suspense too much, but that is what this meeting is about. At least in part.” The ensign stood up and smiled. “Ensign Marie Tran; I work with Admiral Komack. They’re expecting you in room 106; it’s just up the stairs and to the right.”

“You’re a lifesaver.” With one last nod of appreciation, Jim took off up the stairs, smiling slightly at the sound of laughter behind him, less muffled this time.

A quick glance at the chronometer above the door showed Jim that he was getting there at precisely 1301. Not bad, all things considered. He took a deep breath, smoothed his hair and uniform one more time, and stepped inside.

“Kirk. Nice of you to join us.” Jim looked up to see Admiral Barnett seated with the others at a large oblong table. The admirals were clustered toward one end; there were a few faces Jim recognized and some he didn’t; he was surprised to see that one seat towards the end seemed to have Pike on a video screen calling from Starfleet Medical.

Jim tried to school his expression and stand at attention. “Admirals.” He wasn’t quite sure what he was supposed to be doing; was there a specific salute you were supposed to do when faced with practically the entire Admiralty?

“It’s alright Mr. Kirk, you were barely late. Take a seat.” Jim tried to keep the surprise off his face at that voice. If Admiral Archer was here despite being semi-retired (as were most who’d been around long enough to remember when it was Earth Starfleet rather than Federation Starfleet), it was probably a big deal.

“Thank you, sir.” Jim nervously took a seat at the end of the table away from the admirals, hoping that even if he wasn’t projecting his usual confidence he was at least projecting calm rather than anxiety.

“Interesting choice of attire there, son.” Jim looked over at Pike, who was smiling reassuringly from the screen he was on. “Got tired of the gold shirt already?”

“No, just going with what I had that was clean.” Jim smiled back at Pike, slipping into the comfortable rhythm the two of them had. “Not much command gold in my dorm closet, but a lot of cadet red.”

A chuckle from another part of the room reminded Jim that as much as he would have preferred it, it was not just him and Pike in the room. A quick survey of the admirals’ expressions had them ranging from serious but amused to seriously unamused. Not the best start probably.

“You’re probably wondering why we called you here today.” Jim turned back to Archer, who seemed to be leading the meeting since he was the seniormost Admiral there in more ways than one.
“Or maybe not; given that you commanded a ship in a situation unprecedented in Federation history you may have an idea of what you’re doing here.”

Jim nodded; he wasn’t quite sure what he was supposed to say.

“Any further details you could provide on that situation would be greatly appreciated.” Jim turned to the admiral that spoke; he thought this one was Marcus. “Anything or anyone with the capability to destroy a planet is something we’d like to know as much as possible about.”

“I submitted my logs, but if you have any questions ask away.” Jim really hoped this wouldn’t turn into an interrogation. “But I don’t think you’ll have to worry about the enemy ship; it got sucked into a massive black hole and we watched it get destroyed. The Enterprise’s sensor records can probably confirm that.”

“We’ve downloaded the data and have started to analyze it; you’ll understand if the idea of matter that could spontaneously generate black holes sounds a bit unbelievable.” This admiral wasn’t one Jim recognized at all.

“That is understandable.” Jim shifted slightly in his seat and hoped it didn’t look like he was fidgeting. “You could probably call in the science officers from the Enterprise; some of them had already started to analyze the data from our sensors while we were making our way back here.”

“We’ll consult them.” The admiral from before nodded and seemed to make a note on a padd.

“Now, onto other matters.” Jim sat up straighter Admiral Archer spoke again. “Part of the reason we’ve called you here today is to discuss your future within Starfleet.”

Chapter End Notes

I suppose I'm not entirely past cliffhangers. What do you think Jim's fate will be? He's facing down a whole lot of Admirals, and chances are not all of them are friendly...
Hello everyone! Sorry (or maybe not) for that cliffhanger, but I think most of you know where this is going anyways. Who's ready?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Here it came. Time to be let down or hopefully pleasantly surprised. Jim sat up even more, probably getting as close as he could to standing at attention without leaving his chair.

“Prior to the incident, you were not in good academic standing with Starfleet Academy.” Admiral Barnett was still looking like he had from the beginning of the meeting, which was unamused. “As I’m sure you recall, you were suspended due to allegations of tampering with the Kobayashi Maru test, which would be considered a breach of Starfleet Academy’s code of academic ethics.”

“I recall.” Jim nodded and again hoped that he seemed calm even if he really wasn’t feeling it at the moment. He’d had a bad feeling that that would come back to hurt him.

“However, your performance in the incident we’ve previously discussed notwithstanding, there have been changes to the circumstances.” Barnett still seemed serious, but there seemed to be a slight shift coming from him. Jim couldn’t quite place it, but maybe he was a little less disapproving now? “Admiral Pike—” Jim glanced at Pike for confirmation and got a nod that signaled ‘we’ll talk later’ in return “—has brought up evidence in your favor, which was that there was no rule within the testing procedures that forbade altering the programing of the test. Based on that evidence and conversations he apparently had with you, Commander Spock has rescinded his accusation and instead suggested we present you with a ‘commendation for original thinking’ due to, as he put it, your ‘unique approach to the problem presented by the exam.’ Because he is not willing to continue the trial, we will listen to his recommendation. You will not be facing any charges, nor will this incident be recorded on your record.”

Jim felt himself start to grin but tried to contain it. He was really starting to like Spock. Even if he didn’t end up being captain, it was a relief to know that he wouldn’t have that on his record. He’d really have to make it up to Spock somehow.

“Now that that’s settled,” everyone looked at Archer as he spoke again, “onto the matter of your rank and future assignment.”

Jim sat up straight again; he hadn’t realized how much he’d started to relax when the verdict from before was said. But one of the biggest names in Starfleet talking about your future in the organization was certain to get you back on edge.

“No need to look so stressed.” Archer smiled at him in a way that was probably supposed to be reassuring, but in this situation it was hard to relax. “Deciding what your current rank should be created a bit of a predicament for us. Typically any sort of promotions would be decided by your commanding officer, but for most of your time on the Enterprise you were the commanding officer. You’d understand why we couldn’t leave it up to you.”

There were quiet chuckles around the room and Jim nodded. The slight tension break was even
enough for him to smile a bit at the joke.

When Archer continued, he was more serious again. “You are, as you may know, the youngest person to command a ship for any significant length of time. Even your father, who was only in command of a ship for minutes, was several years older than you are now.”

Part of the team that saved a planet and he still couldn’t quite escape his father’s legacy. Jim hoped it wasn’t showing on his face. What would he have to do, die while singlehandedly saving a whole ship’s worth of people?

“Additionally,” Jim’s attention was drawn back to Archer, “most people your age are at the rank of lieutenant at the highest. And it’s not solely about age; it’s a matter of experience. Most people spend at least one year, typically more, working on a ship or at a starbase before earning their first promotion. You have yet to even formally graduate from the academy, and your field experience is extremely limited.”

Looks like he had been right to expect the worst. This didn’t seem to be leading to a command position. Maybe he’d get to skip over ensign and get to lieutenant though; that could be cool.

“However.” Jim focused back on Archer again. He really needed to stop zoning out. “The field experience you have accumulated, while hardly a typical situation, has shown you to be an incredibly competent commanding officer despite your young age and relative lack of experience. You have a natural talent that’s a rare find and you display skills that some seasoned captains have difficulty mastering. You also have received very good reviews from the officers who served with and under you as well as from Admiral Pike and Captain Davison.” Archer smiled. “While we expected Pike to speak highly of you since he was the one who promoted you,” another round of quiet laughs from the table, “Davison is more known for being blunt. But still, we received another very positive view of you. According to Captain Davison, whenever you were given the opportunity to take charge, you displayed confidence and competence befitting someone in the center seat. You also showed great skill at anticipating problems and working with others to develop solutions, which are other traits any good captain should have.”

Things seemed to be shifting his way. Despite himself Jim felt himself starting to hope a bit. He also would have to thank Davison when this was all over; some positive words from a captain really did seem to carry a lot of weight from the admirals.

“Can I tell him?” Pike was smiling, and the monitor had rotated some to better view the other admirals. After a few nods he turned back to Jim with a grin. “They’re giving you the Enterprise.”

Jim had been trying to contain his reactions all day but now he couldn’t help it. He felt the excited surprise spread across his face. “Really?”

“Yes.” Pike was still smiling. “You did it, son.”

Jim couldn’t help but grin back at him, but his attention was once more drawn to the other end of the table.

“There are some caveats.” Archer was more serious now, but he too was smiling some. “The decision to make you a captain was not unanimous. There were some that thought that due to your previous record, or lack thereof, you weren’t ready yet. Although I’m always of the opinion that if you have the right people with you, it’s ok to head out before some of those in charge think you’re ready.” For a moment his eyes shone at what Jim was sure was a reference to something, but he didn’t quite know what. After that moment it was gone and Archer’s face went serious again. “But we reached a compromise. Upon graduation from the Academy, you will be the captain of the
Enterprise, but for the first year you will be in a sort of probationary or trial period. You will report directly to Admiral Pike, who will serve as an advisor or mentor of sorts and also be your liaison to us. Additionally, should your actions or behavior indicate that you are not truly ready for command, you will be demoted. This will not mean that you will never be able to be a captain again, but you will have to wait and earn the promotion anew.” Archer’s face shifted to a slight smile again. “So there’s just one more step to determining your rank and assignment.” He paused. "James T. Kirk, do you accept the rank of captain and command of the Enterprise under the terms we’ve stated?”

This was big. Jim knew he’d have to be careful not to mess this up. But he was also so excited. For possibly the first time that day Jim let himself grin without holding it back. “Yes sir, I accept.”

“Excellent.” Archer nodded and smiled. “Once the Enterprise gets repaired and ready to take off once more, we’ll hold a ceremony to officially promote you and Pike, but feel free to tell others in the meantime within reason. You’ll have to start the work of a captain soon to ready the Enterprise for her first missions, so you may as well let people know, especially those on your crew, which you will get to choose. With Pike’s guidance of course.”

Jim nodded. “Of course.”

“Alright then.” Archer stood and the others followed. “With no other matters to discuss, we will now dismiss you. Congratulations on the promotion, Captain Kirk.”

Jim stood and grinned. “Thank you sir.” With one last nod to all of them, Jim turned and left the room.

He waited until he was in a secluded corner to allow himself to actually celebrate in ways that would have probably been embarrassing to do in front of the admirals. But once he’d finished his victory dance, Jim smoothed out his uniform and headed out of the building. He couldn’t wait to tell everyone. He’d have to visit Pike too; congratulations were in order there too. Jim grinned. Things were looking good.

Chapter End Notes

There's a reference in here just for those of you who have also seen Enterprise, so let's see if you got it(I'm only on season 3 so it's from early in the show).

Anyways, who's excited for Jim?
Chapter 92

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I see in addition to the Enterprise reference, I know some of you caught the allusion to Into Darkness (or was it foreshadowing). It’s fun to slip in allusions so that’ll probably keep happening. Anyways, this chapter should be less stressful then the last one. Something will be happening that I know at least one of you has been wanting to see...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim was so excited that he didn’t really know who to go see first. Pike was high on the list, but not necessarily first since he already knew the big news. There were so many people Jim would have to tell that he was captain now. Really, this warranted another night out with the crew. He’d have to see if they could all get together again so he could make the announcement.

But in the meantime, there were other people who he’d have to tell. He should probably call his mom at one point; from what he’d heard the Defiant and all of her crew had been planning to head out almost immediately after they got the Enterprise back to Earth. All of the intact Starfleet ships were occupied either continuing the search for survivors around where Vulcan had been or patrolling the Federation’s borders because some of the admirals had been concerned about another attack. So if what he’d heard was right, his mom, Captain Davison, and their crew must have spoken to the admirals as necessary the day they got back, had one night off, and then headed out in the morning.

Jim would have to tell his mom to thank Captain Davison for him. It sounded like all the testimony from others had really helped sway the admirals’ decision, and Davison had been a big part of that. Captains really did have a lot of influence in Starfleet. So Jim would have to have him mom pass along his thanks.

The other person Jim really wanted to tell was Spock. Clearly Spock had had a chance to talk to the admirals or at least send in a report, so he probably already knew something, but it would still be good to see him and tell him. Plus Jim wanted to talk to him about the Kobayashi Maru thing. He probably shouldn’t be too surprised given that Spock had actually seemed to consider his arguments when they’d talked about it back on the ship, but it had still caught Jim off guard that Spock had not only dropped the charges but also recommended that Jim get a commendation for original thinking. He really hadn’t expected what he’d said to have that much of an influence on Spock.

But he had, and now Jim was on his way to being captain of the Enterprise, thanks in part to Spock. He also wanted to tell Spock because they’d need to start picking out a crew soon and Jim would want his first officer to help him with that. It would take a while for the Enterprise to undergo repairs, but they still shouldn’t put off the big decisions; it seemed like it would be too much work to do at the last minute. Still, Jim was excited to do it.

According to Uhura, who’d heard from him the night before, Spock was staying at the Vulcan Embassy in San Francisco. Jim considered changing out of his cadet reds before going but decided he was too excited to stop. So he got on a transport and made his way to the Embassy.

It didn’t take him long to get there. Jim walked toward the Embassy and tried to contain his excitement about his promotion. Even though he was having a good day, it wouldn’t be good to
disturb The Vulcans’ space and mourning with his enthusiasm. It was easier once he got inside; while most Vulcans had been temporarily settled on various parts of Earth, there were still a lot of them who were at the Embassy while they worked with Starfleet and the Federation government to coordinate the rescue and relocations. The overall atmosphere was somber and felt weighed down by all the repressed grief in the room. It was almost overwhelming to Jim.

He hadn’t really thought this through. Jim knew that Spock would be somewhere at the Embassy, but the Vulcans had a fairly large compound and it was currently packed to the brim with people. How was he supposed to find Spock?

“Hello?” Jim turned around at a voice from behind him. He saw (surprisingly enough) another human, who smiled at him. “I couldn’t help but notice you looked a little lost. Are you looking for someone?”

“I am actually.” Jim smiled, relieved he was getting some help. “I’m looking for Commander Spock; I would tell you his family name, but even though I’ve seen it written out I have no idea how to pronounce it. He’s in Starfleet though; that should help narrow it down.”

“I know exactly who you’re talking about.” The stranger’s smile grew. “And I could also give you some assistance with pronouncing that family name, considering it’s been mine for about thirty years now.”

That threw Jim for a loop before the pieces clicked into place. There weren’t exactly many humans in Vulcan families, and while it didn’t necessarily mean much she definitely looked past 18 physically. “Are you Spock’s mom? I thought you were dead!”

His raised voice and shocked expression drew some looks from the Vulcans around them, but she only smiled in amusement. “I’ve been getting that a lot lately. And I am Spock’s mother, but I’ll spare you the Vulcan name; you can call me Amanda.”

“Nice to meet you; I’m Jim Kirk.” He almost extended his hand to shake but then reconsidered it given their surroundings and nodded at her instead.

“You’re Kirk?” Her eyes lit up with interest. “My son has told me about you.”

Jim’s expression shifted to a grimace. “I would say that I hope it was nothing but good things, but I was also there for the past few weeks so I know that there are some not-positive things he could throw in.”

“Don’t worry; it was mostly positive, or at least he seemed willing to excuse or explain the not-so-positive things.” Amanda scrutinized him some but ultimately smiled gently. “If you’d like, we could go see Spock now. You did say you were looking for him, right?”

“Yes.” In all the confusion and excitement of everything since he’d gotten to the embassy, Jim had almost forgotten why he’d come in the first place. “I’ve got some news to share with him. Starfleet things.”

“Alright.” Amanda nodded at him. “Follow me; I’ll take you there.” With that she turned and led Jim to one of the doors in the back of the room.

A Vulcan at a desk stopped them at the door. “Lady Amanda.”

“Hello Vorik.” She held up the Vulcan salute, which the Vulcan returned. “My guest and I are going to go see Sarek and Spock; could you let them know that I’m back and that I’m bringing someone?”
“I shall.” Vorik pressed some buttons at the desk and the door opened. “You may proceed.”

“Thank you.” With one last nod Amanda went through and gestured for Jim to follow her.

He looked around at the lobby filled with grieving Vulcans before looking back at the surprisingly happy woman waling through the door. It wasn't a difficult decision. Jim followed her through the door.

Chapter End Notes

So who else is hella excited but also slightly nervous about all the new Discovery news we're getting? The show looks intense and I'm already worried about characters dying considering the number of explosions, space jumps, and other dangers.
Chapter 93

Chapter Notes

So this chapter did not want to be written. But after many stops and starts, here we go!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After some meandering through corridors, they reached a door marked as ambassador’s quarters. Amanda punched in a code on the panel next to the door and it slid open. She adjusted her grip on the bags Jim hadn’t noticed she was carrying before walking in to the quarters and calling out to her family. “Sarek! Spock! I’m back from the market. Also one of Spock’s Starfleet friends is here.”

Jim followed her in and half wanted to try to correct her. Were he and Spock friends? They worked really well together, and they’d reached the point where they were civil, or maybe even friendly, when interacting outside of work, but did that make them friends? Jim wanted to be friends with Spock. But what did Spock think?

A moment later Jim was drawn out of his thoughts by the Vulcan himself entering the room, followed shortly by his father who came in from a different room then went to the kitchen area to help Amanda unload her bags. Spock nodded at Jim. “Mr. Kirk.”

Jim couldn’t help the grin that broke across his face. He’d come to tell Spock the news, so he might as well not put it off. “Captain, actually.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose in a way that seemed to indicate surprise or confusion to Jim. “You are no longer in command of a vessel.”

“Not right now, but I will be.” Jim held up his hand to stop Spock from interrupting and stepped closer to Spock until he was only about an arm’s length away. “They gave me command of the Enterprise, Spock. Admittedly, I start when I graduate and they finish repairs and they said that they’ll start off keeping a close eye on me, but still!” Jim wanted to reach out and grab Spock’s shoulders in his excitement but restrained himself when he saw Sarek and Amanda still moving around just one room over in the kitchen.

“Congratulations, Captain.” Jim turned back to Spock when he spoke. "As I had believed, Starfleet saw your aptitude during your time as captain and acted accordingly."

“Thanks.” Jim grinned again at Spock’s confidence in him. “We’re gonna have a lot of work to do though. We’ve gotta pick a crew and get the ship ready to go on her next mission. Admittedly, she doesn’t have a next mission yet, but still. We have a lot of work to do to get her ready for it.”

“We?” Spock’s eyebrow rose and for a moment Jim started to feel disheartened, but then decided not to let it get to him.

“Yeah, of course.” Jim smiled at him again, but it felt a little less enthusiastic this time. “You’re my first officer and I value your input on this kind of thing; I wouldn’t think about doing it without you.”

Spock hesitated for a moment. “Captain, there is something I must tell you.”

His expression wasn’t really shifting but Jim felt like whatever Spock was going to tell him wasn’t
However, before Spock could tell Jim anything, his parents reentered the room. Jim stepped back
from Spock and turned to face them. Amanda looked between them curiously before looking at Jim
and smiling, “So, what was the news you came all the way here to tell Spock?”

Jim smiled again. “I’m going to be captain of the Enterprise. There’s a few conditions on it and
they’ll be watching me closely, but with Spock here and the rest of the crew helping out I think it’ll
all go smoothly.”

Amanda looked impressed. “Congratulations. Sarek and Spock spent the morning telling me what’s
been going on on their side of things since the destruction of Vulcan. With a few exceptions, it
sounds like you’ve been handling yourself remarkably well.”

Jim winced a bit internally. Without a doubt, she was talking about the incident on the bridge with
Spock, the one that Sarek had witnessed. Jim couldn’t help but think back to the things he’d said to
Spock about his mom, the woman who was now standing in front of him. He wasn’t quite sure what
to say, but he felt like he had to say something.

Before he could, though, Spock turned to his mother. “We have discussed this. I was unfit for
command but refused to admit it. Kirk’s actions were necessary, as the only logical option to make
me give up command due to my emotional compromise was to make me display that I was
emotionally compromised by provoking me.”

“Still,” Jim decided now could be a good time to cut in, “even if I was completely convinced at the
time that what I was doing was right, and if it seemed to lead to a good outcome, I can realize that
some of the things I said at the time were probably crossing a line.”

The room was quiet for a moment before Amanda nodded, seeming satisfied. “It takes a lot of
maturity to admit when you’ve messed up, especially if what you did got good results. While I can’t
say I’m exactly happy about some of the things you apparently said about my son, I realize that it
was mostly for effect and you didn’t actually mean it. It is good to hear that you know you crossed a
line though.”

It took moment for what she said to sink in for Jim. Had she been testing him? Or had she been
genuinely mad about what happened? It was a little hard to tell; after so many years of living with
Vulcans it seemed like she was really good at hiding her emotions when she wanted to. Jim looked
around the room; before he’d thought Sarek was the most intimidating one in the family since he was
nearly as old as the Federation and held an important position, but it seemed like the whole family
might just be intimidating. He looked around the room again before nodding at Spock. “Well, I
should get going.”

“Are you sure?” Amanda gestured to the kitchen. “We were just about to have some tea.”

Jim smiled. “It’s alright. I have more people I want to tell. Plus, I wouldn’t want to interfere with
your family time.” He smiled directly at Amanda this time. “I realize you also have something to
celebrate.” He looked back at Spock. “I’ll see you later for crew planning?”

Spock hesitated for a moment before replying. “I will assist you.”

“Great.” Jim grinned at him before heading toward the door. “I’ll comm you to work out the details.”
He looked around the room before heading out once more.
In all that excitement, Jim seems to be forgetting that something was up with Spock...
Chapter 94

Chapter Notes

Happy last update of the month everyone! Unlike last chapter, this chapter was pretty easy to write, even if it didn't quite go in the direction I anticipated. But still, I like where it ended up.

We've switched to Spock's POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“Why did you not inform him that you wish to leave Starfleet?” Sarek broke the silence that had settled over the room once Kirk left.

Spock turned from the door that Kirk had just exited to where his father was now sitting at the table while his mother brought the kettle for tea. Spock sat down across from him. “My decision is not yet finalized. As there is the possibility of change it would be illogical to inform him prematurely.”

“I still say you should consider staying in Starfleet.” Amanda sat at the table and poured herself a cup of tea before taking a sip. “Whatever your reasons may have been, you chose Starfleet over working on Vulcan before. Why change your decision now?”

“The circumstances have changed.” Spock had not informed his mother that his reasons for choosing Starfleet had included his emotional response to the disparaging comments the Science Academy board had made about her and his heritage; he wondered if Sarek had told her, but he doubted it. “There is now greater need for skilled individuals among the Vulcans than there is in Starfleet. I should not ignore the needs of others to pursue my own self-interest.”

Sarek paused with his tea in his hand. “The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. A logical argument.”

“I can see that, but I still disagree.” Amanda set down her cup. “Want to hear what I think?”

Spock nodded and sipped his tea. “I welcome your counsel.”

She shifted to face Spock more. “Vulcan’s place in the Federation could come under debate when the planet that joined, or really helped found the Federation, isn’t there anymore. While I doubt anyone will be trying to reject the Vulcans that remain or kick them out, I think that if the Vulcans want to keep their standing and presence in the Federation, it could be good for them to still have a presence in the Federation.” Amanda paused a moment to consider her next thought and looked between her husband and son. “While I think that concentrating on resettlement and rebuilding is important, I think it would be best if Vulcans didn’t withdraw completely from other parts of the Federation. Maintaining those connections will be important to show that Vulcans still value their place in the Federation.” She turned to Spock. “You’re one of the few Vulcans who have ever been a part of Starfleet, which is a major organization in the Federation. One person here or there leaving won’t matter, but if Vulcans leave those sorts of institutions en masse some might see it as Vulcans withdrawing from the Federation, not necessarily on the level that they’d think the Vulcans wanted to leave and be completely politically independent, but at least enough that they’d assume Vulcans wanted to step back some from the major workings of the Federation. After that, it would be hard to
regain the level of influence that Vulcan once had, and that level of influence will be necessary in the coming days as the remaining Vulcans will need a place to settle and supplies to help reestablish themselves. They’ll need some people to stay engaged with the rest of the Federation so that the rest of the Federation stays engaged with them.”

After a moment while the others thought over what she’d said, Sarek nodded at Amanda. “A logical and well supported argument. You show a great understanding of the potential political consequences.”

Amanda smiled at him and extended two fingers, which he met. “I have been paying attention to your work all these years. I had to do something at all those political events and diplomatic missions I accompanied you to considering I couldn’t always bring my own work.”

The normalcy of his parents’ interaction comforted the part of Spock that had still been grieving for his mother only a day prior, but he was still uncertain about his future and wished to return the conversation to that. “So you believe it would be best for the surviving Vulcans if I continued my Starfleet career?”

Amanda sighed and turned back to him. “I think what’s best for the Vulcan people shouldn’t necessarily be the driving factor in your decision, but in a way yes. It could still be beneficial to the surviving Vulcans for you to remain in Starfleet instead of helping reestablish them. However,” she looked Spock in the eye and placed her hand on his arm, “I don’t think it would be wrong for you to indulge your human side a bit and do what you want, Spock. It seems like you’ve found a place you could belong with Starfleet. Pike, Kirk, and the other Starfleet people I’ve met seem to really like and value you. I know that hasn’t always been your experience with other Vulcans, so maybe you should stay where you feel comfortable. It wouldn’t be the worst thing for you to make this decision based on you instead of others.”

“With our numbers so greatly reduced and the amount of support we will require, it would be illogical for Vulcans to continue displaying prejudice toward others. That sort of attitude will likely become uncommon.” Spock and Amanda both turned toward Sarek when he spoke. Spock could not help but wonder if his father had never truly borne the brunt of the prejudice from other Vulcans as Spock and his mother had. While he knew that Sarek had faced disapproval for marrying a human and having a child with her, he was still completely Vulcan and not human like Amanda or half like Spock. It was unlikely that he had received the same form or intensity of criticism.

“Really?” An edge of irritation had crept into Amanda’s voice. “I think we all know that it’s still perfectly possible for Vulcans to act in illogical ways and just rationalize it after the fact so it seems logical. Also, I don’t like the implication that it was somehow logical, or at least less illogical, for the Vulcans to be prejudiced when they were less reliant on other people.” She gave Sarek a look that Spock understood meant that they would be discussing that more later before turning back to Spock, the traces of irritation mostly gone. “While I understand that you value our advice, ultimately this decision won’t lie with your father or I, it’ll have to be yours. We can’t decide for you.” She smiled softly at him. “Just like I told you the first time you were making this decision, I’ll support you no matter what you choose. I just want you to choose what you think will be best for you, even if it isn’t necessarily what you think would be best for other people.”

Spock nodded. “Thank you, Mother. I will go meditate on the matter.” Having finished his tea, Spock got up from the table and went toward his rooms.

He would have to decide which path he would choose soon. In the meantime, however, he could attempt to assist with both Starfleet matters, like selecting the crew of the Enterprise, and the efforts on behalf of the remaining Vulcans, although it may not be feasible to do both for very long. Spock
settled onto the mediation mat in his room. He would need to choose soon.

Chapter End Notes

I ended up thinking more about the immense consequences that a planet getting destroyed would have on the Federation again this chapter because seriously, there's no way that that could happen without some social or political fallout. And while that won't be a major focus of this fic, this probably won't be the last time I look at that kind of thing.

Anyways, does anyone else wonder what Amanda does? I know at one point Spock says she was a teacher, but the fandom idea seems to be that she worked on the universal translator (some even say invented it, but it was around in Enterprise so that wouldn't quite fit), other stuff I've seen has her doing some sort of diplomatic stuff and having her and Sarek meet that way, and then in her appearances in canon we really don't see her doing much outside of things with Sarek and Spock. There's probably novels and fics that explore this more, but I just want to know more about her.

Another thing because this seems to be one of those longer ANs: writing this family scene after the news about Michael in Discovery came out made me want to work her in somehow, but tbh since we don't know much about her yet I'm probably going to wait to write her until after I've seen her. But she and other people from Discovery may come up (or show up; we'll see) at some point.
Chapter 95

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I gotta say, I'm really glad that you all seem to like Amanda too. I know she's pretty popular in the fandom, but the response to last chapter just proves that we're all still bitter about her getting killed (or at least I am, and I'm interpreting your support of her that way) because she was too awesome to get fridged.

Anyways, we're back to Jim's POV

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim had finally made it back to the Starfleet campus. If he was being perfectly honest, it was a bit of a relief to be away from the Vulcan embassy compound. The grief there was nearly overwhelming, and understandably so. Even if the Vulcans weren’t outwardly expressing it much Jim could still feel it.

It hadn’t been quite so bad when he’d been visiting Spock and his family. They obviously had still lost people, but having their family together really seemed to help their mood. Jim was glad for Spock. Even though he technically knew what it was like to lose a parent, it really wasn’t the same if you never actually knew them like Jim and his dad.

But at least Jim had the person he considered like a dad still (not that he’d admit it to anyone that he considered Pike his surrogate dad). His next stop on his celebration tour was Pike’s room in Starfleet Medical. Pike already knew about Jim’s promotion, of course, but Jim still wanted to see him.

After a quick check in when he got there and finding out where Pike was, Jim headed to the proper floor and went into Pike’s room after first checking to see that no one else was there.

Pike smiled when he saw him. “Captain.”

Jim couldn’t help but grin back. “Admiral.”

“Come on over and have a seat, Jim. I know it’s a little different than Sickbay back on the ship, but they’ve still got a visitor chair at the ready.” Pike gestured to the chair next to his biobed.

“Thanks.” Jim sat down and leaned back in the chair. “So have you gotten many visitors?”

“Not really.” Pike gestured to the pile of padds and other equipment on the other side of the bed. “I’ve been busy catching up on business and filling people in on what happened. Much to the doctors’ chagrin, I can’t seem to avoid work.” Pike shifted a bit but waved Jim off when he leaned forward to help him. “You did just miss Number One though. She was here for a bit and we were swapping survival stories for the aftermath of Vulcan’s destruction. I was trying to tell her that actually getting captured by Nero meant I had it worse, but she did have a point about how trying to keep panicked cadets and grieving civilians calm in a ship fragment floating around the former site of a planet for a week was no easy task.”

That image made Jim pause. “Wow. I hadn’t really thought about what everyone on the other ships must have been going through.” The only person who’d been there but hadn’t been on the Enterprise
that Jim had really talked to was Gaila, who seemed to prefer hearing what the *Enterprise* crew had been through. He began to wonder what it had been like. They’d probably lost all communication with Starfleet. They probably wouldn’t even know if someone was coming to rescue them. That would be terrifying, just floating through space around the ghost of a planet, wondering if you be rescued, destroyed, or left to die…

“You still with me, son?” Jim looked up at the sound of Pike’s voice. He seemed concerned, as if that wasn’t the first time he’d tried to get Jim’s attention.

“I’m fine.” Jim ran a hand down his face and sat back up. “What were you saying?”

“I was talking about Number One’s visit and how she already knows you’re going to get the *Enterprise*. Since she’d already gotten her own ship and was waiting for them to rebuild or fix it and was focused on that she didn’t seem to be paying much attention to who got the ship, but she did say to pass along a congrats from her if I saw you before she did.” Pike looked at him closely. “You sure you’re ok?”

Jim smiled in a way that he hoped was reassuring. “I’m not the one in a biobed. How are you doing?”

Pike looked at him skeptically like he knew Jim was deflecting but decided to let it pass. “I’ll be alright. Whatever Nero shoved down my throat did a number on my nervous system so I’ll probably end up at least mostly paralyzed from the waist down, but I’ll live. And with me being planetside full time, or just about full time, I won’t need to worry about running from hostile aliens on away missions or anything like that, so I should be fine.”

“You know, if you did want running speeds, I bet Scotty could rig something up with rockets; he could make the already existing models meant for speed look like impulse compared to warp.” Jim grinned. “I know I’ve only known him for a few weeks, but I feel like I already know he would do it and love doing it.”

“This is why the other admirals picked me to supervise you. So none of them would have to deal with this.” Pike shook his head, but he was still smiling. “Speaking of promotions, have you told everyone yet?”

“Not yet.” Jim grinned. “The only person I’ve really told so far was Spock, but I’m gonna try to get the message out to the rest of the people who served as senior staff on the *Enterprise*. I want to get them locked down before anyone else can take them away, and then I’ll work on the rest of the crew.”

“A good plan.” Pike nodded in approval. “Plus, once you have the senior staff picked out they can probably help plan their departments. This is certainly an area where delegating can come in handy.”

“Yeah, Spock already agreed to help, which is nice.” Jim paused when something odd crossed Pike’s face at the mention of Spock, but it was gone quickly.

“So what about everyone else? Think they’ll help?” Jim almost got the feeling that Pike was changing the topic, but he decided to roll with it.

“I think they will.” Jim thought over his main crew. Sulu and Chekov would probably be excited to help, Uhura would probably help to ensure she got good people in her department, Scotty would probably help for similar reasons if they pulled him away from the ship long enough to work, so that just left Bones…
As if he’d been summoned, the next moment a very familiar voice came from behind Jim. “Dammit, what are you doing here?”

Jim turned to face his friend. “Hey Bones. I’m visiting Pike, what are you doing here?”

“My job.” Bones walked into the room and began to look over the various monitors attached to Pike, at which point Jim noticed that he was wearing Starfleet Medical scrubs and not normal clothes. “Since I’m the doctor most familiar with his injuries, Starfleet Medical asked me to work on Pike’s case. I’ve also been added to the more general rounds for if they need backup, which considering all the people they’ve been pulling out of space rubble is a pretty big need.” He turned to Jim and raised an eyebrow. “Didn’t you notice that I wasn’t there when you woke up?”

“No.” Now that he thought of it, it was kindof surprising Bones hadn’t been there. “But I had to go to a meeting with the admiralty just as soon as I woke up, so that’s probably why.”

The mention of the admiralty got Bones’ attention and he stopped running his tricorder over Pike. “The admiralty? What did you do?”

“He got promoted.” Pike smiled proudly and looked between the two of them. “You’re looking at the next captain of the Enterprise, at least as soon as he graduates.”

“Really?” Bones looked impressed. “Well then congrats, kid. It’s the outcome most of us except you were expecting.”

Jim didn’t really know how to deal with the praise, so he decided to focus on something else. “What was that about graduation though?”

“Oh, it’s not a big deal.” Pike waved a hand dismissively. “There’s still going to be a formal ceremony for graduation since we weren’t quite done with the academic year when everything happened. Classes will also be continuing for those who wish to attend, but it’s highly doubtful that anyone who survived Nero’s attack would be held back or prevented from graduating. I think you’ve all proved yourselves enough.” He looked between Jim and Bones again. “There will be a formal announcement soon since classes are supposed to start next week.”

“Good to know.” Jim thought over what his schedule had been. It was more difficult than expected as all of that felt so long ago. There were a few classes he decided he would probably keep attending, but a few others he decided he might take advantage to the relaxed attendance policy. It would give him more time to start working on getting the Enterprise ready to go, which he would definitely need. There was so much to do…

He was drawn out of his thoughts when his stomach grumbled loudly. Bones looked up from where he’d continued his examination of Pike and eyed Jim critically. “When was the last time you ate?”

Jim had to think back. He’d been offered food while visiting Spock and his family, but he’d left before he could eat. That meant that he’d last ate before the meeting with the admirals, so… “Around 1300?” Jim tried to make himself sound less uncertain, but he wasn’t sure how well he did.

“It’s past 1700; you need to eat.” Bones had now switched to the voice and posture that was somewhere between doctor and parent. Despite him still only looking 18, it was pretty effective. “I’m guessing whatever you ate earlier wasn’t all that substantial, although I’m glad you did eat, but you need to go get something into your system.” Bones crossed his arms. “Go eat.”

“But visiting hours aren’t over.” Despite being mostly done talking with Pike, Jim was reluctant to leave.
“They are for you. Now go.” Bones made a shooing motion with his hand and waited until Jim got up before walking him to the door. “Make sure you get something good.”

Jim smiled and rolled his eyes. “Yes, mom.” He turned and waved to Pike. “I’ll see you later.” He waited until Pike waved before turning and walking away.

He heard Bones grumbling behind him and Pike laughing at whatever he was saying but Jim just smiled and pulled out his communicator. He would get some food, but first he had to spread some news.

Chapter End Notes

Unless the fic starts deciding it's own direction again (which has happened and tbh can lead to some great chapters, like last one), we're probably going to be doing some small time jumps in the next few chapters. We'll still get some moments with the crew, but it'll mostly be jumping forward to preparing for the Enterprise to take off on her mission.

Also, another thing I'll touch on but not explore: what it would have been like for the people in the destroyed ships around where Vulcan was. I know the 09 movie seems to want to assume that they were all dead, but there had to be some survivors. Right?
Hello everyone and happy 11 month anniversary eve to this fic! This chapter is up a little later than I intended, but I ended up really rewriting it because I wasn't quite happy with it. But hey, better late than never, right?

We get some exciting news this chapter...

The crew took the news about Jim’s captaincy well and much to his excitement, Uhura, Sulu, Chekov, Scotty, and Bones all agreed to come back once he asked them. Gaila congratulated Jim and then began asking when she’d get her offer, which made Jim laugh and then begin thinking about if he could make it work. It was his ship after all, and he got to pick the crew.

The crew actually ended up meeting up to go out again the night Jim told them, although this time it was only for dinner. Uhura, Gaila, and Chekov met up with Jim at a restaurant he picked out, and Bones joined them as soon as he could. At the time Jim didn’t think to invite Spock since it was mostly to share the news, but he figured that Spock would probably still be taking in as much family time as he could before he would have to return to duty. Still, Jim wished Spock could have been a part of the crew bonding.

The other no-shows were Scotty and Sulu; Scotty was still basically living on the ship and working on repairs nonstop, in part because he was becoming almost concerningly attached to the ship and in part because he was afraid that if he set foot on Earth Starfleet Command would send him back to Delta Vega because of Archer’s disappearing dog. Jim told him he would put in a good word with the Admirals, which he really meant that he would get Pike to talk to them.

Sulu, however, was busy with social plans. He was going out to dinner with the guy he’d met the night before, Ben. He did sound excited to hear the news about Jim’s promotion, but it didn’t outweigh how excited he was for his date. The crew agreed that Sulu’s excitement was adorable and that they’d have to get all of the details from him when they saw him next.

After that night out, things began to shift to a relative normal. Just as Pike had said, classes resumed the next week, and after quick trips home for some of them the whole crew was back on campus to either teach (in Spock’s case) or get back to class. Again the exception was Scotty, who was neither an instructor nor a cadet, so he stayed on the ship still.

About a week later, they were having a crew meeting to prepare for the Enterprise’s departure after they graduated. Everyone was there except Sulu, and Jim was finally able to lure Scotty off the ship with the promise that he had some good news to give him.

Other conversations were happening elsewhere in the room, but Jim sat down next to Scotty and launched into his story. “So I talked to Pike about everything you did for the ship and the mission while we were fighting Nero and how much I want you on the ship, and he agreed to talk to the other admirals. Once he got released from Medical a couple days back, he went to them and explained what you’d done and how much the ship needs you. They ended up deliberating about it for a bit, since testing transporter theories on living subjects like animals isn’t exactly the kind of
thing Starfleet condones, especially when that animal is a dog belonging to an Admiral. So—"

“Cut to the chase, laddie.” Scotty held up his hand. “You’re stressing me out. Are they ending my
damn exile or are they sending me back to the ice planet?”

Jim smiled. “I told you it was good news, right?” Scotty seemed to relax some at that and nodded for
Jim to continue. “They agreed to let you join the Enterprise crew on the condition that you not use
living test subjects for experiments anymore.” Jim grinned. “As long as you agree and keep to it,
you’ve got the position of Chief Engineer!”

“That’s amazing news!” Scotty shouted loud enough to temporarily attract the attention of the rest of
the room. He just grinned at the rest of the crew. “I’m gonna be chief engineer!” After a round of
congratulations from the rest of the crew he turned back to Jim. “I absolutely agree to those
conditions.” He paused. “You left out that technically the last test subjects for transporter theories
were us, right?”

“I did. Although we did fare better than Porthos the Tenth, or whichever dog it was.” Jim paused for
a moment; that reminded him of something else he was going to say. “Pike said that surprisingly
enough, Admiral Archer had been the one to ultimately approve your transfer; evidently he’s mostly
gotten over the beagle incident, or at least he has a soft spot for anyone who helps save ships named
Enterprise.” Jim couldn’t help but grin again. “So congrats, Scotty. The job is yours.”

Scotty smiled. “I always knew that Archer was a good man.”

Everyone’s attention was suddenly drawn to the doors when Sulu burst in on the room. He was
holding hands with Ben and practically dragging him with him, although Ben didn’t seem all that
upset about it. Jim raised his eyebrows. “Sulu, these meetings are supposed to be for crew only.” He
looked at Ben apologetically. “Not that I mind you being here, it’s just a bit unconventional.”

“It’s ok, he’s just here because we have an announcement to make.” Sulu grinned at Ben, who had
the same dopey grin on his face, before looking back at the crew. “Despite knowing each other for
only about a week, we felt such a connection that we went and got checked for aging. We just got
the results today and—”

“We’re aging!” Ben clearly couldn’t contain it anymore and smiled apologetically at Sulu. “Sorry
hon, I couldn’t wait. I’m just so excited we’re soulmates!” He squeezed Sulu’s hand.

“It’s ok.” Sulu didn’t sound mad at all; in fact he leaned in and gave Ben a quick peck on the lips
before turning back to the crew. “We’re telling everyone.”

“Well, it’s exciting news. Congrats.” Jim smiled as the rest of the crew began to voice their
congratulations and get up to hug Sulu and Ben. He did as well, but he hoped no one noticed he was
a little less effusive than the rest of the crew.

“You’re the first of us to find your soulmate! That’s so exciting!” Chekov was practically beaming as
he looked over the rest of the crew. “Congratulations, Hikaru!”

Jim didn’t bother correcting Chekov about who was the first to find their soulmate, and despite a
quick look toward him Bones seemed to be ready to keep quiet about it too. Jim was suddenly really
grateful for doctor-patient confidentiality. Despite being the only other person in the room who could
possibly know that a soulmate pair already existed in the crew, Spock didn’t say anything or even
indicate he knew either. Jim chalked it up to him not knowing, because despite Older Spock’s
experience this Spock didn’t seem to age according to soulmates.
Once the crowd cleared up Jim pulled Sulu into a hug. “Seriously, congrats.” He grinned at the crew, who all seemed a bit too excited to focus on work now, with the possible exception of Spock who seemed about the same as normal, although he had congratulated Sulu and Ben. “I think we’ve been doing well enough on prepping for launch. How about we call up some friends and celebrate this exciting news?”

Chekov cheered and the rest of the crew joined in. Jim smiled. Even if he didn’t want to think about his own soulmate situation, he was always happy to celebrate with friends. He gestured to the door of the room. “C’mon, let’s go. First round’s on me.”

Chapter End Notes

The mention of Archers dog in the ’09 movie has just made me think that he took up dog breeding as a hobby and has been keeping the same lineage going for like a century by the point of the Kelvin movies.

Also, I hoped you all liked the big news this chapter! You may have seen it coming, but still. Also even if we'll see Sulu and Ben and the rest of the crews' soulmate pairs some, I won't be tagging them for the fic since they won't be a focus.
Chapter 97

Chapter Notes

I was in a bit of a rush posting last chapter, but we're still right around this fic's 11 month anniversary (unbelievable as that is; to be honest I never expected this fic to go this long, and we still have a ways to go) so I just wanted to take a chance again to say thank you to all the awesome people following this fic. Thanks for sticking with me through the slowest of slow burns (even if it'll be a little while longer til we get full ignition)! If you're a commenter, a bookmarker, a subscriber, a kudos leaver, or even someone who just reads, you're awesome.

Anyway, this chapter ended up being long, but there wasn't a really good spot to split it so happy belated 11 month fic anniversary!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Unlike the first time they’d gone out as a crew, this time when they went out they quickly attracted media attention. Thankfully saving the planet meant that once they actually reached the bar they wanted to go to they got a private area, but Jim knew that the next day there’d still be plenty about their night out on any media outlet he looked at.

Sure enough, Jim saw the articles the next day when he was in Gaila and Uhura’s room. He was sitting on the floor leaning against Gaila’s bed while she sat on it working on an assignment for a class she’d decided to finish up. He’d already finished his assignments since command track didn’t have many big assignments after the Kobayashi Maru, so he was flipping through news articles on his padd. The news about the Enterprise crew being the ones to save Earth had been officially confirmed by Starfleet earlier that week, so all of those stories hadn’t died down yet. Still, as much as people joked about Jim’s ego, he was getting tired of seeing his own face everywhere he looked and couldn’t wait to get back into space and away from it all. There was finally a break as one article seemed to focus on the “mystery man” accompanying the crew on their night out. Jim bet Ben would get a laugh out of that one, but he also hoped that this wouldn’t lead to paparazzi swarming Ben and Sulu on their date nights. Soulmates or no, they were still getting to know each other and they deserved a little privacy.

But swiping through the next few articles and videos reminded Jim that Sulu, Ben, and really most of the people involved weren’t the biggest point of interest for the media. “I just don’t get all the hype.” Jim started swiping through the articles on his padd; he’d tried to avoid the stories on himself but gave up because it was getting pretty impossible. “Why is everyone so fixated on me specifically?”

“I don’t know.” Gaila shrugged her shoulders without looking up from the padd she was working on. “Maybe they just consider it a good story.” She looked over Jim’s shoulder at the headlines as they went by. “Was that your dad?”

Jim flipped back a few articles until he was at the one that caught Gaila’s attention. “Yeah, that’s him.” The article had side by side pictures of him and his dad with the questionably catchy headline ‘Hereditary Heroics?’ Jim snorted. So much for getting away from his dad’s legacy. He looked back at Gaila. “This one doesn’t even make sense. If anyone pulled a George Kirk, it was Spock. He was doing literally the same thing; he was the one piloting a ship directly at Nero to try to stop him. And
if Scotty hadn’t been on top of it with the beamout he would have met the same fate.” Jim looked ahead again and gestured with his hands for emphasis. “Death by heroic self-sacrifice.”

“True.” Gaila shifted, rolling onto her stomach and closer to Jim. “Everyone seems to love that kind of stuff though. The public eats it up, Starfleet builds memorials, that kind of thing.”

“Not me.” Jim shut down the padd and looked at Gaila. “If you can’t find a way out and you just let yourself die, then you aren’t trying hard enough. It’s like the Kobayashi Maru all over again; everyone thinks you should just accept your fate when actually that’s bs.”

“No no-win scenarios, right?” Gaila seemed to be thinking it over. She looked back at Jim after a moment. “Unlike the Kobayashi Maru though, you can’t steal access codes to hack life from me. Or anyone probably.”

“Hey!” Jim slapped her leg. “You said you were over that thanks to the whole everyone nearly dying thing putting it all in new perspective.”

“I’m not mad, but I’m still going to hold it over you for jokes.” Gaila laughed at his pout but waved at him to continue. “Anyway, no win scenarios?”

“Right.” Jim smiled. “I haven’t encountered any I couldn’t beat yet.” Jim realized that that could sound a little cocky, but he had a point to prove. “I can’t imagine being in a situation where I’d just accept death like that instead of trying to get out. There’s always a way out, and I’ll always find it.”

Gaila raised an eyebrow, clearly unconvinced. “From what I understand, humans aren’t immortal. Do you expect to cheat death forever?”

Jim grinned in a way that he knew she found charming, or at least amusing. “Hey, I haven’t died yet.”

“Alright then.” She sat up and shrugged. “I’ll be sure to tell this story at your funeral. I bet it’ll get some sad laughs from everyone there.”

“Why do you assume you’ll outlive me?” Jim turned around to face her, still sitting on the floor. “Maybe it’ll be the other way around.”

Again, Gaila raised an eyebrow. “You don’t know how long Orions typically live. Maybe our average lifespan is 1000 standard years. I could be 390 for all you know.”

“Really?” Jim looked up at her and raised his eyebrows. “I’m pretty sure I’ve seen your personnel file and it had your birth date in this century.”

“I could have lied.” Gaila shrugged but then confusion crossed her face. “Wait, how have you seen my personnel file? I thought that kind of thing was restricted.” A moment later she looked disapproving. “Did you hack it?”

“No!” Jim probably sounded more incredulous than he should have been, considering they’d just been talking about him hacking her stuff to get into the Kobayashi Maru. “It’s not that.” He started to smile a little. “It’s just that captains usually review the personnel files of the people they’ll be having on their crew.”

It took Gaila a second to realize what he meant. “Wait a minute.” A smile broke out on her face. “I’m gonna be on the Enterprise?” Her smile grew wider. “You got me a spot on your ship?”

Jim laughed. “I didn’t just give it to you, Gaila. You applied and earned it.”
“Ahh thank you so much!” Gaila went to give him a hug but thanks to her sitting on the bed and him on the floor, Jim ended up with her arms around his head, which ended up somewhere between her chest and stomach.

At that moment the door opened. Over the sound of Gaila’s continued excited noises Jim could hear someone walk in, stop and finally speak. “Are we interrupting something?”

Was that Spock? Jim put his hands on Gaila’s waist to gently push her off; she seemed to get the message because she released his head and he turned around in time to see Uhura join Spock right inside the door.

Uhura looked them over for a sec before turning to Spock. “Nah, they’re both too fully clothed. Plus, they usually give me warning beforehand. We had to set up that system after I walked in on them enough times to know that another reason they weren’t doing anything is because they’d both be on the bed.”

“You might want to get other indicators than that.” It was surprisingly easy to fall into his usual teasing with Uhura. “There have been some times where she’s on the bed and I’m on the floor.”

“It’s true.” Gaila nodded, a mischievous grin slipping across her face. “It puts him at a great height for—”

“Okay!” Jim turned around and squeezed Gaila’s thigh to get her to stop. “We don’t need to share that much detail, Gaila.” He turned back around in time to see Spock’s eyebrow raise. “We actually weren’t doing that this time. I just sortof unofficially confirmed that Gaila got a spot on the Enterprise and she was excited.”

“Yeah.” Gaila grinned at the others. “It’s gonna be great all working together.”

Uhura turned to Spock. “You didn’t tell me Gaila was getting posted with us.”

“Crew announcements were to be sent out shortly.” Without moving, Spock seemed to be doing the Vulcan equivalent of shrugging. “I assumed that you would become aware then.”

“Eh, I guess Kirk was probably more likely to spill the beans than you anyway.” Uhura shrugged before turning to Gaila and smiling. “It’s great to hear that you’ll be working with us.” She walked over to where Gaila was sitting, carefully stepping around Jim, and held out her arms for a hug.

“Aww, thanks Ny.” Gaila went in for the hug. “It’s gonna be so much fun. It’ll be great to actually be on the ship that’s part of the action this time rather than having to hear it secondhand.”

Uhura laughed and let go of Gaila, letting her hands rest on her shoulders as they separated. She glanced between Kirk and Spock before saying something in a language Jim didn’t recognize that made Gaila start laughing before replying in what seemed to be the same language.

Jim looked at Spock, who seemed similarly confused. That eliminated a number of Federation languages. Jim looked back at Gaila and suddenly it clicked. “Were you two speaking Orion?”

Gaila responded with one word in the other language and paused a moment to laugh at Jim’s continued confusion. “It’s kinda cute when you make that face.”

“Gaila.” Jim tried to sound serious, but it probably came across a bit more pleading than he’d intended.

She just laughed again. “Yes Jimmy, it was Orion.” She reached out and ruffled his hair.
“I was not aware you spoke Orion.” Spock was looking at Uhura and seemed a little bit impressed.

“Gaila’s been helping me pick it up.” Uhura smiled at her friend before turning back to Spock. “I’m trying to match Hoshi Sato’s record for number of languages learned. I’m still nowhere near her still, but she did have her entire life to get there. I’ve got time.”

“That is an admirable goal.” Spock seemed focused on Uhura and Jim shared a glance with Gaila.

“Do you want us to give you the room?” Gaila was a bit more direct than Jim would have been, but despite her bluntness there was no judgement there.

“What Gaila was saying,” Jim glanced back at her and grabbed his padd, “was that we were thinking of heading back to my place. Bones’ rounds just started, so we figured we’d have a lower chance of being interrupted there.” He glanced back at Spock and Uhura. “It would free up this room for whatever you’d want to do without being interrupted.”

Uhura glanced at Spock and then responded before he could. “I wouldn’t want to kick you out, but if you were heading out anyway…”

“No problem.” Gaila got up and grabbed her padd before helping Jim up from the floor. As they walked past Uhura Gaila slapped her shoulder and said something else in Orion that Jim strongly suspected was along the lines of ‘go get ‘em, tiger’ based on the way Uhura started laughing.

Jim tried not to think too much about the prospect of Spock and Uhura hooking up as he left. If he was in a relationship with either of them it’s what he would be doing. So what if Spock was his soulmate. If Uhura made Spock happy, or whatever the equivalent of that was that Vulcans would actually admit to, than Jim would accept that and wouldn’t mess with it. He wasn’t a homewrecker. Besides, even if his soulmate didn’t want to be with him, there were other people that did.

He glanced at Gaila, who was reading off of her padd as she walked. “By the way, what was it that you and Uhura said in Orion back there? Not just now, but before.”

“What?” Gaila looked up from her padd to look at him. “Oh. She said ‘with those two in charge it’s bound to be interesting’ and I said ‘it definitely will be.’ Or at least roughly that; you know how translation can change meanings.”

“I’ll take your word for it.” Jim smiled at her and she smiled back. Even if they weren’t soulmates, they could still have a good time together. Jim just wouldn’t think about his soulmate off having a good time with someone else.

Chapter End Notes

Jim and Gaila’s dynamic is kindof a fun one to play with because (at least how I’m trying to do it) they’re close friends, which is where you get the teasing and that kind of stuff, but there’s also a bit of friends with benefits thing going on between them, which means between the two they’re very comfortable with each other in a lot of ways.

Also yes, I will be collecting all the female characters and keeping them safe. I can probably write them better than Jbrams would anyways, in part because I’ll actually write them instead of killing them or writing them off.
They continued preparations for the Enterprise’s launch through the last week of the semester and into what was finals week for the cadets who still had finals. Many instructors had cancelled their finals for the cadets who had survived Nero’s attack as they believed that that had tested the cadets’ ability to perform as Starfleet officers far more than any multiple choice exam, essay, or simulation would. The remaining cadets could choose to take exams or not; Starfleet was allowing the surviving cadets to graduate regardless of if they finished their classes completely.

Jim, on the other hand, didn’t have a lot of class work left. Despite how rigorous his class schedule had been in order to graduate in three years instead of four, he really didn’t have a whole lot left to do at this point. He did continue to attend some of his classes if he thought the information would be useful, but for the most part he was focused on duties related to his captaincy. He had a full schedule of working with the senior staff to prepare for the launch, visiting the Enterprise to oversee the repairs and refits where necessary, and meeting with Pike for a crash course in the technical side of captaining a ship. Jim was grateful for it; as much as he knew that Spock had experience with some of the aspects of the administrative duties involved with keeping a ship running, Pike was the one who’d actually been a captain before. He knew more about exactly what Jim would be doing and was able to help with what Spock wouldn’t be able to.

Spock was throwing Jim off a bit lately. Initially he’d been really helpful when Jim was figuring out the crew and other things for the ship, but lately he’d been pulling back some. He’d still help if Jim asked for it, but more and more he was missing meetings with Jim unless it was prescheduled. At first Jim assumed he was just trying to spend as much time with his family as possible before they left. After all, for most people nearly dying made them want to reach out to their families more. For Jim there wasn’t much family to reach out to since he’d already spent some time with his mom and he hadn’t talked to his brother since Sam left him with Frank, but he could imagine that for Spock after thinking he’d lost his mom he’d suddenly appreciate family time a lot more.

Still, part of Jim couldn’t help but wonder if there were other reasons Spock was avoiding him. After all, it was a bit awkward when Spock and Uhura walked in on him and Gaila. Not that Jim and Gaila
had actually been doing anything, but still. Jim was pretty open about the fact that he’d had casual relationships like that, although if he was in a relationship with someone who wanted to be monogamous he’d respect that and not sleep with or mess around with other people. Still, while his reputation was a bit exaggerated, there was some foundation to it. Jim knew that Vulcans were generally monogamous and didn’t do casual sexual encounters, so he hoped that Spock wasn’t judging him for that. He didn’t seem like the type that would, but he was still pulling back and there had to be a reason.

A small part of Jim wondered if maybe Spock had been jealous when he saw Jim with Gaila and that was why he was pulling back. He made himself dismiss that possibly pretty quickly though; Jim hadn’t noticed any indication that Spock thought of him that way, and he didn’t want to get his hopes up and make working with Spock awkward.

It was probably just that Spock was getting in as much time as possible with his family before the Enterprise headed into space. Pike had told Jim that they’d be mostly exploring with the occasional mission from Starfleet Command, and when Jim had told the crew they’d mostly been excited, but he had noticed that Spock seemed a little quieter than usual. But Jim didn’t get too caught up in it. It would all work out when they took off after cadets graduated, which was now only about a week away.

But for now, Jim was focused on his current meeting with Pike. They would typically meet in his fancy new admiral’s office and spend half the time just chatting or catching up, and today was no exception. Jim decided that this was an upside to none of the other Admirals apparently knowing how to deal with him. He was glad they left Pike in charge of him; it was good to have someone who seemed more willing to hear him out and take his side. Meetings with Pike were generally way smoother than meetings with the full admiralty.

However, not every visit to Pike went well. This was one of those more stressful days. It had all started with mostly benevolent business talk.

“So.” Pike leaned on his desk and folded his hands together. “You’re captain now and your mission is coming up. While I know you’ve spent a lot of time choosing and approving your crew, you still need to pick a first officer.”

“What?” Jim felt his eyebrows scrunch together in confusion. “Spock’s my first officer. He’s been working with me on everything so far and we worked together really well before. I thought that for crew holding the same positions you didn’t need to put in new requests; if that’s not true then I’m about to lose my bridge crew.” Jim smiled and hoped that the joke would distract him from his nerves, but Pike’s serious expression had him wary.

Pike sighed and leaned back. “I see he hasn’t told you yet.” He leaned forward again. “You were right about the procedures. You don’t need to file anything for crew staying on the ship; you just need to approve their requests to stay on the ship. But Spock…” Pike took a deep breath and ran a hand through his hair. “Don’t expect one from Spock.”

“Why not?” Jim leaned forward. What was Pike hiding from him? Or was Spock hiding something? Jim had just been thinking about Spock being more withdrawn lately, but that didn’t necessarily mean he was hiding something, right?

“Jim,” He knew it must be serious if Pike was dropping all formality and also making that serious face without a hint of his usual humor he had when dealing with Jim. “Jim, Spock’s leaving Starfleet. He’s going to help with the new Vulcan colony. I didn’t want to mention it because I figured he’d tell you himself, but—“
“He hasn’t said anything to me.” Jim wasn’t sure who to be more mad at. These were two of the people he trusted most, and they were both keeping something this major from him? “The Enterprise is supposed to launching in a week, and no one bothered to tell me that my goddamn first officer is jumping ship?”

“Jim, please don’t take this personally.” Pike held up his hands in what was probably supposed to be a placating gesture. “I thought that he would have told you by now. And besides, there are plenty of very competent officers you can pick from; many of them would probably be glad to serve on the Enterprise with you.”

“I don’t want anyone else.” Jim crossed his arms and was aware that he probably looked like a kid throwing a tantrum, but he wasn’t going to budge on this. “I want to keep my team together.”

Pike sighed. “Look son, I get the appeal of keeping your original crew together, I really do. You can form really close bonds with those people, especially when you’ve been through the kind of stuff that you and your crew have. But…” He trailed off when he saw that Jim’s expression wasn’t changing. “If you want, you could also promote someone from within the crew.” He pulled up a padd and looked over the roster. “You’d want someone who’s already earned a higher rank or has some experience, but that still leaves a number of people. There’s Lieutenant Commanders Scott and McCoy, although medical officers usually don’t end up in the command structure, then we also have Lieutenants Uhura and Sulu…”

“No.” Jim crossed his arms tighter. “They’re all needed where they are. Spock is the best choice for my first officer, and the only choice as far as I’m concerned.” He probably wasn’t being fully rational about this, but for reasons he couldn’t fully express (or maybe didn’t want to) it felt wrong to have Spock gone. “I’m not taking any of them from where they are, and I’m not picking a new first officer.”

“Jim, you’re being unreasonable.” He could tell Pike was getting frustrated now. “Spock was able to handle being science officer and first officer, so I’m sure that one of them would be able to balance the duties. You need to pick a first officer.”

“I already have.” Jim stood up. “If you’ll excuse me, I’ll be leaving now.”

He could hear Pike shouting after him that they still needed to settle this, but it didn’t matter. Jim had a Vulcan to confront.

Chapter End Notes

Guess who will be popping back up next chapter?

Also, I'm currently 3 episodes away from being done with watching all of Star Trek. I'm not sure what I'm going to do with my time now to be honest.
Hello everyone! For those of you paying attention to the author's notes, I have now finished all of Star Trek. It was a little rough since the second and third to last episodes dealt with a group that was basically an allegory for white supremacists and that was a little too topical and then the last episode was just kindof bad, but honestly heavyhanded social messages and off episodes are pretty typical of trek. They had some good ones there too.

A longer chapter than usual, but you may not be grateful for it. This was one of those chapters that was a bit difficult to write but still probably more enjoyable for me as a writer than it will be for you as readers. Enjoy!

It didn’t take Jim long to reach Spock’s classroom. Despite the short walk Jim felt himself getting angrier as he thought it over. How long did Spock intend to go without telling him? Was he just going to keep lying to Jim until they left? Jim may have been hurt about Spock leaving if he’d told him, but the lying just made it worse. Weren’t Vulcans supposed to be honest?

When he reached the classroom and looked through the window in the door he saw Spock at the front of the room, not doing much since every student who was there seemed occupied with the final exam they were doing at the terminals in their desks. Jim poked his head in, trying to keep his features neutral even though it felt like he was radiating rage. “Commander Spock, can I have a word with you in the hallway?”

Jim must not have been hiding it as well as he thought because Spock immediately rose from his chair and walked to the door. He closed the door behind him and looked around to ensure that they were alone in the hallway before turning back to Jim. “Is there something wrong with the ship or crew?”

He actually seemed concerned. It almost made it worse for Jim. “Yeah, there’s a goddamn problem. My first officer has been lying to me.” Jim was trying to keep his voice down because of the students but he could feel the tension building in his shoulders from the urge to scream or pace.

“I do not understand.” Spock did seem genuinely confused, but Jim didn’t let it get to him.

“When were you going to tell me?” Jim’s hands clenched into fists at his sides. “Were you going to let me get to our launch date and make me look like an idiot by just not showing up?”

“You are referring to my decision to leave Starfleet and assist the efforts to reestablish the Vulcan population.” Spock shifted back slightly and clasped his hands behind his back. “I did intend to inform you. I believe it would be the best option for me going forward, but if you disagree—”

“I couldn’t care less.” It was a lie, but Jim was angry enough that he could snarl it out and make it feel true if only for the moment. “It’s your goddamn life to live and I clearly don’t have a whole lot of control or influence over it. That’s not my problem here; my problem is that you didn’t tell me. You were just going along acting like you meant to be a member of the crew, like you wanted to be
my first officer, never dropping the slightest hint that you were going to leave. I’d thought we’d
gotten past all the distrust and were actually being honest with each other, but you’ve been lying to
me for god knows how long.”

Spock’s spine seemed to stiffen up impossibly further. “Vulcans do not lie.”

“That’s bullshit and everyone in the goddamn Federation knows it.” Jim’s anger was beginning to
burn itself out as quickly as it had come, and now he was just tired. He was tired of people betraying
his trust, and he was tired of people leaving him. He sighed and ran a hand down his face. “Look,
it’s just…” Jim didn’t even know where he was going with this. He finally managed to meet Spock’s
eyes. “I’d thought we had a connection, maybe even the beginnings of a friendship.” Jim’d thought
they were soulmates, but clearly he was off there. Soulmates were supposed to improve your life, not
cause you all this anguish by lying to you. “But clearly I was wrong, because you don’t even trust
me enough to tell me before you leave me. So now I’m gonna go before I cause more of a scene than
I already have.” He turned and walked away without looking back at Spock. If Spock wanted the
two of them to split up without saying goodbye, then Jim would give him that.

Jim started spiraling back to anger as he walked back to his dorm. How could he even think he and
Spock were soulmates in the first place? A moment of nerves at the trial that he made out to be
goddamn butterflies, then everything that Older Spock dumped into his head…

Older Spock. Jim was starting to get angry just thinking of him. He was a liar just like his younger
self. Telling Jim he’d have this great friendship and this fairy tale love story when really none of it
could ever happen, all because Older Spock himself had messed with the timeline. Him messing
around with red matter had made Nero go through and kill Jim’s dad and destroy Vulcan, and all of
that had put Jim where he was now. A horrible childhood with a father replaced by a monster, the
person he’d been told was supposed to be the love of his life lying to him and abandoning him. Was
any of it real?

As soon as Jim was back at his room, he went to the terminal at his desk and put in the comm
frequency he’d gotten a little while back.

It didn’t take long for Older Spock to pick up. Once he did, his face lit up in that way that wasn’t
quite smiling but felt like it. “Jim.”

Normally that would put him in a better mood, but Jim had had it with Spocks today. “You’re a
goddamn liar.”

“Excuse me?” Confusion crossed Older Spock’s face.

“Everything that you showed me is wrong. None of it will ever happen here.” Jim clenched his fists
at his sides, glad that Bones was off at his rounds so no one would hear him yelling, except maybe
the neighbors. “Everything you showed me about that beautiful fairytale love story shit between you
and your Jim? Not happening here. Spock’s with Uhura and that doesn’t seem like it’s changing
anytime soon. Plus, now I won’t even get to experience even a fraction of what you showed me
because he’s leaving Starfleet.” Jim was fighting the urge to get up and pace if only because it would
mean that he couldn’t look Older Spock in the eye to show him how mad he was. “And so now I
don’t get to be with him, I don’t get him as my first officer, and I probably won’t even get to be
friends with him because he’s leaving because of a problem you caused!” Jim took a deep breath but
it did nothing to calm him. “If you hadn’t messed around with that black hole stuff, Nero never
would have come here, my dad would still be alive, Vulcan wouldn’t have been destroyed, and I
would have still had Spock! This is all your fault!” As the words left his lips Jim was aware he’d
crossed a line, but he just couldn’t stop.
Older Spock, meanwhile, had started to fold in on himself. Jim had never seen a Vulcan look so much like a kicked puppy. He didn’t even look Jim in the eye when he finally replied, just stared down at his lap. “There is logic to your argument. It was my actions that set off the chain of events that led to our present circumstances.”

Jim felt himself starting to deflate. It wasn’t even this Spock he was really mad at. This one hadn’t really done anything to intentionally hurt Jim. “No, Spock.” Jim sighed and ran a hand down his face. “Don’t blame yourself. You never intended for any of this to happen, and you certainly couldn’t have anticipated everything Nero would do.” He looked back at Spock, who still looked a bit guilty. “I shouldn’t be taking this all out on you. It’s not even you-you I’m really mad at, it’s my Spock.” Jim paused as those words sank in. “Well not my Spock in any sense really, since I’m about to lose him forever, but the Spock native to this universe.” He looked down, away from the Spock who still looked so understanding even after Jim had snapped at him. “I just wish he’d told me sooner, you know? I thought we’d been working so well together, but I don’t even know anymore. I wish I could somehow convince him to stay, but if he won’t even bother to tell me he’s leaving I don’t know how much sway I could possibly have with him.” Jim looked up at Older Spock, who now looked less like a kicked puppy. “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to dump all of this on you. I should let you go; you were probably doing something important.”

“It is alright, Jim.” That warmth from earlier was returning now. “Your problems will never be insignificant to me.” The honesty in his words made Jim ache for a connection like this Spock must have had with his Jim. He watched as Older Spock’s expression shifted, perhaps becoming more determined. “However, there is a matter that I must handle within this coming week. Perhaps it would be best if we ended our call now.”

“Ok.” This emotional roller coaster of the day was starting to catch up with Jim and exhaustion was creeping in. “I might just head to bed now.” He glanced at the time. It was still pretty early, but he really didn’t want to do anything right now…

“Take care of yourself, Jim.” Older Spock raised his hand in the Vulcan salute. “Live long and prosper.”

“Same to you.” Jim attempted to raise his hand in the salute, but between his lack of practice with it and his tiredness it didn’t quite work out. Still, it prompted another warm look from Older Spock before the screen went dark.

Jim sighed at the blank screen before stripping down to a t shirt and underwear and climbing into bed. He had less than a week until his first official mission as captain kicked off and his top and only choice for first officer just ditched him. He should just go to sleep now. Maybe it would be better in the morning…

Some time passed and he hadn’t managed anything more than tossing and turning before the door opened. He could hear Bones moving around quietly, obviously mindful of the lights being off, but he couldn’t shake the thought that had been haunting him since his confrontation with the Spock from this timeline. “Hey Bones,” he heard his friend still at the unexpected voice but continued anyways. “Are you sure that I’m aging?”

“Yeah?” Bones sounded a little uncertain but it seemed like he was just thrown off by the question rather than being actually uncertain about the facts of it. “Prior to a couple weeks back all the medical scans I’d taken of you showed neurological development but no other signs of aging, typical for someone 18 to 25 chronological years old who hadn’t reported meeting their soulmate. But then those scans of you on the ship showed the beginning of the aging process, and I’d bet that any scans I took now would confirm it. I could do that you if you like.” Bones came over next to Jim’s bed and
paused. “What prompted this, kid?”

As much as he’d been mad at Spock for lying this sure as hell wasn’t a situation for the truth. Jim sat up in bed, still half under the blanket. “I’m not sure. I guess seeing Sulu and Ben all happy has made me wonder who’s supposed to be out there for me. Surely something should have happened by now, right? Some grand sign or declaration of love?”

“You know I’m not the one to go to if you’re expecting advice on finding the right person.” Bones sat down on the bed. “Still, it seems to work out for most people, and I doubt you can be the exception to everything.” Bones smiled teasingly. “I’m sure your prince, princess, or royalty-of-whatever-gender charming will show up and take you away soon. Now get some sleep, you look terrible.”

“Thanks Bones.” Jim rolled his eyes and shoved Bones enough to get him away without actually hurting him. Bones laughed and moved away. Jim laid back down; he really should sleep. When he woke up, he’d focus on getting the ship ready and preparing to formally accept his promotion to captaincy at the graduation ceremony. If he was still not feeling it then, he had a lifetime of faking the proper emotion at Starfleet ceremonies to draw on thanks to all the Kelvin memorials he’d had to attend even if he didn’t want to. He would get through this. He had to.

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to direct any and all vitriol to me in the comments, where I will embrace it and maybe or maybe not laugh evilly. But remember, I have a plan, even when it seems like it’s all going terribly...
Chapter 100

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off a giant thank you to everyone who left kudos here cuz it just hit 1k! This is amazing and has never happened for me before, so thank you to all of you. There was a huge spike last chapter, which makes me wonder if you just all really like angst...

Anyways, this chapter would have been up sooner, but my computer has not been cooperative. But still, happy 100th chapter! We're getting things from a new perspective, but I won't spoil the surprise here...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was odd, yet gratifying to see the ceremony where many of the crew graduated and Jim and Captain—no, Admiral in this timeline—Pike received their promotions. Spock had not witnessed Jim’s promotion ceremony in his own timeline as they had only met once they were both aboard the Enterprise, so it was fascinating to be able to witness it this time. It was amusing to see that like his counterpart, this Jim was ultimately commended rather than punished for his unique approach to the Kobayashi Maru. Spock wished that he could stay until the end of the ceremony to congratulate Jim, but there would be time for that later. There was a more urgent matter to deal with now.

It was easy to find the transport his younger self would be traveling on to help scout prospective locations for New Vulcan. While the timeline had changed and his younger self would undoubtedly differ from himself given more time, for now it was entirely possible for Spock to find his younger self’s reservation and check it as if it were his own.

So even if it meant that he had to miss the end of the ceremony, Spock left to ensure that he would have plenty of time to encounter his younger self before he made what Spock would consider a grave mistake.

The shuttles were to leave from Starfleet grounds since the program to find a new homeworld was done in partnership with Starfleet, so it was not difficult for Spock to find his way, even if he was remembering the grounds as they would be rather than how they were. Still, once he reached the proper hangar he was not quite sure where to go. He began to wander, trying to remember the shuttle designation, until he was stopped by a voice that was both familiar and yet undeniably odd to hear.

"Brother?"

As he turned around Spock wondered what had become of Sybok in this universe. If he had been exiled while Spock was young like he remembered, it was likely he still lived. But he was not who Spock was currently concerned with. He saw the confusion spread across the familiar-yet-not face and he resisted the urge to smile. It would only alarm his past self further. “I am not our brother.”

He and the younger Spock began to approach each other, and it was fascinating to see his counterpart rapidly process the information until he reached what was likely the correct conclusion. Spock could not help but wonder about the flashes of emotion he saw as part of that process; was it simply over a century and a half of knowledge that made him able to read himself well, or did the events of this timeline make this Spock more expressive? It was still likely that only a few would be able to recognize those emotions, which reminded Spock why he was here.
Still, a direct approach would not be best. As Dr. McCoy had enjoyed reminding him, Spock could be quite stubborn. Best to open the conversation more gradually. “There are so few Vulcans left. We cannot afford to ignore each other.”

“Then why did you send Kirk aboard when you yourself could have explained the truth?” An odd first question from his younger counterpart.

There were many answers to that question. It was not his place, his coming onboard would have created too much confusion and raised too many questions, he did not want to risk further damage to the timeline by interfering further. But there was one answer he knew he must give. “Because you needed each other. I could not deprive you of the revelation of all that you can accomplish together. Of a…” How could he simplify his relationship with Jim in a way that would not alarm his younger self but would still hint at all there could be? “…friendship that will define you both, in ways you cannot yet realize.” An insufficient description perhaps, but it would do for now.

“You speak of a relationship with Kirk, and yet he no longer wants any connection with me.” His counterpart stood a little straighter with his hands behind his back; Spock recognized the gesture and what it meant.

“I have spoken to him; he was actually the one who informed me that you chose to leave Starfleet, a decision that I disagree with.” There would be more time to discuss that later. “He was distraught and acting rashly because of his emotional state. While that may not justify his reaction, it does explain it.” Spock thought back to what he had heard. “As I understand, you yourself are not entirely innocent of such a failing.”

Younger Spock seemed ashamed at that and looked away. “That is an additional reason why I should not remain in Starfleet. Among other Vulcans I can work to better my control; among humans it may again become threatened.”

“As someone whose experience is greater than my appearance may suggest, I will tell you that the occasional loss of control is not the worst failing to have; the balance of logic and emotion that you find is best for you may not be what is typical for humans or for Vulcans.” That lesson was one that had taken Spock many decades to learn, but he was glad for it. However, he must again turn his focus to the situation at hand. “Why do you believe it would be best for you to leave Starfleet?”

“There are many logical reasons.” His counterpart stood a bit straighter and was likely clasping his hands more tightly behind his back. “In the face of extinction, it is logical that I resign from Starfleet and help rebuild our species.”

“Are there no logical arguments for remaining in Starfleet?” There had to be many. Surely his younger self had encountered some.

His counterpart hesitated. “There are. Mother suggested that it could be good for Vulcans to retain a presence in the Federation, and my remaining in Starfleet could help accomplish that.”

“A good reason.” Spock had been glad to hear that Amanda had survived. In his timeline her death had had a profound effect on him even though she lived a very long life for a human, and he could not imagine how losing her as young as his counterpart nearly did would have affected him. “And there is another. As you seem to have already deduced, it is now possible for you to be in two places at once. And while you can no doubt contribute, I have had the time to live a long life and experience many professions, which may make my contributions greater. You, however, could remain in Starfleet.”

“Again you reference living a long life, but you do not appear much older than I am.” His
counterpart stared at Spock more closely. “How old are you?”

Spock sighed. “Far older than I appear. I inherited the human aging trait from our mother, and I have spent many years without my soulmate. While I appear young, I am actually well into my second century.” He considered telling his younger self more, but in his timeline the realization of all that he and Jim Kirk were had sent him to Gol to attempt to purge his emptions. With this Spock so close to leaving already, it was better not to risk it.

“Fascinating.” His counterpart seemed to be processing that, and Spock knew that soon there would be questions.

“I will not tell you any more. There are some discoveries that you must make on your own, and I have already interfered too much.” This interference most likely broke several rules, but meeting and aiding your past self did not do too much damage. At least, it hadn’t for Admiral Janeway. “Speaking of discoveries, you will make many more in Starfleet than you could on New Vulcan. It would be best for you as a scientist and an individual to remain there.”

“It is not the time to be thinking of myself.” The younger Spock had been relaxing but he began to tense once more. “Our people are in danger. I cannot ignore that. The logical option is to help them.”

“But there will be a Spock helping them; I will be going to the colony. Additionally, we have already established that there is logic in you remaining in Starfleet and that it could still be beneficial to the Vulcan people for you to do so. However,” Spock resisted the urge to step over to his counterpart and put a hand on his shoulder as Jim would have done, “in this case, I would encourage you to put aside logic and do what feels right. Do you wish to remain in Starfleet?” His younger self hesitated, then nodded slightly. “Very well. Do that, and we will both be aiding our people.”

His counterpart still seemed hesitant, but eventually nodded cautiously. “Very well. I will visit Admiral Pike to attempt to reinstate my commission.”

Spock nodded approvingly. “I believe you may also find a certain first officer position is still unfilled. You may choose your own path of course, but I found serving on the Enterprise to be one of the most gratifying experiences of my life.” His younger self seemed to be considering it, so it seemed to Spock that, as Jim would say, his work here was done. “I must go now. I will leave you to your decision.”

He began to walk away but turned back after only a moment, thinking again of his Jim. He waited until his counterpart was looking at him again. “Since my usual farewell would appear oddly self-serving, I will simply say good luck.” He held up his hand in the ta’al and waited until his younger self returned it before turning and walking away.

He glanced back in time to see his younger self turning away from the shuttles and back towards the main Starfleet campus. He allowed himself a slight smile. It seemed he was on the right path.

Chapter End Notes

In case you forgot, Spock Prime looks about the age he was in The Motion Picture (Look up the "this simple feeling" scene if you want a mental reference point and some old school Spirk feels).

Also, the answer to "how many references to other trek will I put in this fic?" is
probably "as many as possible." It's meant to be like an easter egg for those of you who have seen more, but I hope it isn't disruptive for those who haven't watched as much. After all, despite what some jerks think you don't have to watch/know everything to be a fan.
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! The last two chapters were probably a bit of an emotional roller coaster ride, but expect things to be a bit smoother for a while. Since there were a ton of comments last chapter and there was a recent bump in bookmarks, I'm just gonna take another moment to say thanks to all the awesome people giving me feedback on this fic! You're all the actual greatest.

Another POV swap here; we're back to Jim

Well, this was it. They day they launched away from Earth and into their first official mission with Jim as captain. He was excited and nervous and so many other things all at once.

He still didn’t formally have a first officer. Older Spock had cryptically advised him to wait, and much to Pike’s frustration Jim had done just that. So he didn’t officially have a first officer. They’d established a chain of command of course; as a lieutenant commander and thus tied for the second highest ranked person on the ship, Scotty would be the one to take command if something happened to Jim, but they both knew he would prefer that to never happen. Bones was also technically a lieutenant commander, but since it was assumed that any kind of emergency that took out the captain would be best served with all the doctors being on call for Sickbay, he was out of the chain of command. After that it got a bit unclear; Uhura and Sulu were both lieutenants and part of the senior bridge staff, but Sulu had a slight edge since he was command track and Uhura wasn’t. Still, Jim was willing to trust both of them with his ship and crew.

That was more than he could say of the numerous first officer candidates Pike had begun suggesting to him with increasing franticness as the launch date drew closer. It wasn’t that Jim doubted the competence of those officers necessarily, it’s just that he’d never worked with them. The only person that Pike suggested that Jim knew was his own mother, which just made Jim laugh. He was pretty sure that Winona would have laughed as well; they were way too similar to work together well. Instead of balancing each other out they’d upset the balance of the quadrant by starting a war with the Klingons or something.

There was a moment where Jim almost considered asking Older Spock to be his first officer. After all, he had been in Starfleet, and he was certainly experienced enough for the job. The main obstacle Jim could think of initially was convincing Starfleet; he’d either have to tell them that a random Vulcan they’d never met was qualified to be first officer without (to their knowledge at least) ever serving in Starfleet or attending the academy, or he’d have to tell them that this was actually Spock from another universe, which would just raise more questions than he wanted to deal with. Plus, he wasn’t sure if Older Spock wanted everyone to know who he was.

Ultimately though, the reason Jim didn’t go through with it was because he felt like it would just be awkward for Older Spock and himself. All that Older Spock would see was distorted versions of something he knew and cherished, and Jim knew that on a certain level Older Spock would always be comparing him and everyone else to their counterparts, which would be uncomfortable all around. So Jim didn’t do that because he didn’t want to mess up what he had with Older Spock.
But now was not the time to be thinking of that. Jim finished the last of the food he’d replicated in the captain’s quarters, which were now officially his. There wasn’t all that much to show for it, just some of his old books on a shelf and some of his off-duty clothes in the closet, but it still felt less like he was sleeping in someone else’s room. He looked around, satisfied, before going to the closet and pulling out a gold shirt, now complete with rank stripes, and pulled it on. He was ready to go to the bridge.

Despite all his nerves and the lack of a first officer, Jim couldn’t help the excitement that crept through him when the turbolift doors opened on the bridge. This was his crew, and his ship, and he was getting to lead them on this ship’s first exploratory mission.

He actually grinned when Chekov announced “Keptin on the bridge,” once he stepped out of the turbolift. He actually got to be captain. Jim still wasn’t fully over it.

He settled into the chair, trying to ignore the empty science station behind him. Jim hadn’t formally appointed a new chief science officer either, but the person who’d been second in command in the department was running things. They were probably setting up the labs now.

All that was left before they could take off were the status checks. Jim turned to Sulu first. “Mr. Sulu?”

Sulu made some checks on his console. “Maneuvering thrusters and impulse engines at your command, sir.”

It sounded good. Jim nodded and looked to the next station. “Chekov?”

“Course laid in, Keptin.” Chekov glanced over his shoulder at him.

They didn’t have a formal course so much as direction Starfleet had told them to start going in, but Jim still smiled before turning around to the comm station. “Uhura, are we good to go?”

She listened to her earpiece for a moment before nodding. “Dock control reports ready.”

Alight, it was looking good. One more check and they’d be able to go. Jim hit the comm button on his chair. “Scotty, how are we doing?”

A moment later Scotty’s voice came through. “Dilithium chamber at maximum efficiency.” The next thing Scotty said was less clear because it sounded like he was moving away from the comm panel, but it sounded like he was yelling. Jim hoped it was just Keenser climbing on things and not someone getting into real trouble already. He closed the comm channel.

Well, that was all the procrastinating Jim could do. Whatever—or whoever—Older Spock had told him to wait for clearly wasn’t showing. Might as well get going. “Mr. Sulu,”

Before he could finish giving the command, the turbolift doors opened. Since everyone who was supposed to be here already was (or at least everyone Jim knew was coming), Jim turned around to see who it was.

Spock strode onto the bridge, his blue uniform as immaculate as those perfectly straight bangs. Jim had to contain himself. The last time they’d spoken, he’d been lashing out at Spock, and that was almost a week ago. But unless Jim was misreading it there was something like understanding in his eyes. Spock paused and stood up perfectly straight as always, but his arms and shoulders seemed relaxed, not tense. “Permission to come aboard, Captain?”

Jim let himself smile slightly. This must be what Older Spock told him to wait for. “Permission
Spock began to walk to the center of the bridge, talking as he went. “As you have yet to select a first officer, respectfully, I would like to submit my candidacy.” He paused next to the captain’s chair and Jim stood up to face him. “Should you desire, I can provide character references.”

Again, Jim stopped short of full on grinning. “It would be my honor, Commander.” He’d deal with the paperwork later. For now, he was going to get this ship launched. He sat back down and turned towards the front of the ship. “Maneuvering thrusters, Mr. Sulu.”

Sulu, who like the rest of the bridge crew had been watching Spock and Jim, turned back to his station. “Maneuvering thrusters on standby.”

Here they go. “Take us out.” Jim sat back in his chair as the view shifted from the spacedock and Earth to the unexplored stars they’d be traveling to next. Jim glanced around the bridge as they left the Sol system and engaged warp. He was glad he had this crew with him. He glanced back over his shoulder to where Spock was now settling in at the science station. Jim had no idea what would come next between the two of them, but he was glad that Spock would be there with him for this.

Chapter End Notes

Well, it took longer than I expected to reach this point, but the ship is finally on her mission! Expect more time jumps up ahead; as many of you have been anticipating I will be doing the Into Darkness storyline (or at least a version of it), but there will be some things in between, and I think you’ll enjoy some of them...
Chapter 102

Chapter Notes

Well this chapter could have been up sooner, but I'm just starting the new school year so my schedule's in flux a bit. It should stabilize quickly though.

Also I know I said we were going to start doing time jumps to further along in the mission, but this is actually only a few hours after the last chapter. After this though, time jumps will happen.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once everyone was onboard and they'd taken off, that first shift went incredibly smoothly. Jim had to admit, he felt better with Spock on the bridge, and the rest of the crew seemed more relaxed too. Maybe it was just that Jim was more relaxed and it was spreading, or maybe it was that now they actually had a solid chain of command in case of an emergency, or maybe it was just that having more than one senior officer who'd actually spent time serving in space before eased people's nerves. Whatever it was, Jim was glad that Spock had changed his mind and decided to join them.

Jim suspected that he had Older Spock to thank for that. He'd shown up the day after the graduation/promotion ceremony and congratulated Jim before telling him that he would be leaving Earth to aid in the search for a new Vulcan home world; he didn't say so explicitly, but he seemed to be implying that he knew some locations that may work thanks to his time in Starfleet. Jim was tempted to ask the younger Spock about it, but he still wasn't sure if Older Spock had been serious or not when he'd told Jim that he was never to tell his younger counterpart about him. Either way, Jim decided that he'd wait for one of the Spocks to bring it up.

But there were other things to think about now as Jim's first shift as an official captain (if still in a probation period) was ending. Except for the slightly delayed launch due to Spock's late arrival, the first alpha shift had gone off without a hitch. Admittedly, all they were doing was traveling since even at warp it would take them a little while to get to the first of the M class planets that Starfleet wanted them to investigate, but Jim still counted it as a success.

So this called for celebrating. Jim decided that he would try to get a friendship going with Spock. After all, he and Older Spock had really hit it off. Why not try with this Spock now that they seemed to be past their problems?

They ended up being the last two leaving the bridge, which worked out well enough for Jim. He got into the turbolift next to Spock, who nodded at him but also stiffened almost too slightly to be noticed. Jim felt a bit guilty about that, considering their last one on one time had been him snapping at Spock. “So about what I said back at the Academy…”

“I understand that you were overreacting due to emotional duress.” For a moment Spock seemed more uncomfortable. “As you are aware, it is a fault I am not immune to.”

“Well then I guess we've reached a point where we can call it even.” Jim looked over at Spock and smiled. “I'm willing to move past it if you are.”

“I can agree to that.” Spock relaxed just slightly and glanced at Jim then back to the deck display.
Jim noticed that they were nearing the deck for the mess hall, which Spock must have selected since Jim didn’t remember saying a floor.

As awkward as this turbolift ride was (and Jim decided that even if Spock had been lying he really only had himself to blame for this; he really shouldn’t have snapped at Spock like that), Jim realized he didn’t really want to part with Spock like this. If he managed to get Spock as his first officer, maybe he’d be able to get Spock as his friend like the him in the other timeline had, or even like he had with older Spock. He would just have to find some way for them to spend time together outside of their shifts…

They’d sparred that one time and it had been pretty fun. Only thing was that Jim needed a cold shower after having Spock manhandle and pin him like that, which meant it probably wouldn’t be the best for keeping his head together. Jim would definitely be down to do that again, but he should find some other way to get to know Spock better too. Maybe something where they could talk while they did it…

Chess! Jim had played with Older Spock over the comm channel a few times, and it had been pretty enjoyable. Older Spock had even hinted that he and his Jim used to do it, so maybe it could be a good way for Jim and Spock to get to know each other. Plus, Jim was pretty sure that one of the many inventory forms he had to fill out or approve had said that there was a chess set in at least one of the rec rooms, so they could even play in a nice, neutral setting. It would be perfect.

The turbolift was slowing. The doors opened and Spock, apparently assuming that Jim was going to a different floor, got out before Jim without saying anything. Not wanting to miss his chance, Jim jumped out after him. “Spock, wait up.”

Spock paused and turned around, his hands resting at his sides. “Yes, Captain?”

The formality threw Jim off for a moment but he went on anyways. “Would you want to meet up and play chess? Me and…” Jim reminded himself not to mention Older Spock, “an old friend have been playing, but he’s moving so it may be a while before we get a game in. I heard a rumor that you played though, so would you want to meet in the rec room and give it a go?” He’d heard it from Spock from another universe, but hopefully it held up here.

“Tonight I have plans with Lieutenant Uhura; like you, she had been upset by my not revealing I planned to leave Starfleet, so according to her I ‘owe her one’ and she intends to make use of that tonight.” Somehow Spock had managed to make the air quotes without actually doing it; Jim thought that over while Spock paused again. “However, I would be amenable to doing that on another night. Are you free in two days?”

Jim hadn’t really made any plans yet, besides that he was counting on meals with various members of the senior staff depending on who was free. “That works for me.”

“Very well.” Spock nodded. “I will see you then, Captain.”

“Arigh.” Jim smiled. “And one more thing. We’re off duty. You don’t need to use rank.”

“If you wish.” Spock shifted his hands behind his back. “Mr. Kirk.”

Jim felt the shadow of a smirk cross his face. “I would say Mr. Kirk was my father, but since I never met the guy I can’t really say what he went by.” He paused in thought for a second. He had heard some stories after all. “He probably went by rank if he wasn’t going by his first name.” Jim shook off the train of thought and looked back at Spock. “Anyway, I meant that you can call me by my first name.”
“Very well.” Spock looked back to him. “James.”

“Oh my god.” Jim ran a hand down his face and looked at Spock through his fingers. “If I didn’t know any better, and I’m not sure I do, I’d say you were messing with me.” When the only response was an eyebrow raise, he dropped his hand from his face. “Jim. Call me Jim. Not even my mother calls me James.”

“As you wish.” Spock nodded and Jim swore he briefly saw something like the twinkle of amusement Older Spock sometimes got in his eyes. “Captain.” With that he turned and walked away, just as collected as ever.

Jim watched him go and shook his head in disbelief. Spock had a sense of humor. Spock had a sense of humor, and it was sneaky and dry as a desert. Jim almost wanted to tell someone, but he didn’t think anyone would believe him. He just smiled. It seemed like Spock was getting more comfortable with him. He wondered if he had Older Spock to thank for that too; it seemed like the old guy was really hoping for Jim and Spock to be friends (or maybe more; it seemed to Jim like he wanted that but was afraid of pushing them). Still, Jim and Spock were set up to play chess, and Spock seemed like he was getting more comfortable with Jim. Things were going well. Jim decided this was a good note to kick off the mission on.

Chapter End Notes

To be honest, I thought of the exchange between Jim and Spock over the name a long time ago and have been waiting to use it.

Also, Older Spock definitely gave Spock a list of pointers for getting along with humans, and one of them was "use humor" for sure. As great as that scene of advising would probably be though, I don't know if it'll explicitly appear in the story.
Chapter 103

Chapter Notes

Happy last update in August everyone! The crew is finally on their mission, and we’re finally getting a substantial time jump like I kept saying we were going to. We’re also getting a new POV, although this one might be a one time thing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Leonard sighed and took another sip of his coffee. They’d been on this mission about a month and a half so far, and his Sickbay had gotten way more use than he’d want. Jim and Spock each practically had a biobed on reserve, and they’d already encountered one anomaly that had them almost full to capacity.

Not to mention that the morgue was already getting used. There hadn’t been many deaths yet, just Ensign Palzar from security who got shot on an away mission by some locals who didn’t turn out to be friendly. But Len knew there’d be more. After all, space was mostly just danger and disease and the occasional angry Klingon. He already knew that that was going to be the worst part of his job. The only person who seemed to take it worse than him was Jim, but that poor bastard had to write letters to the families of dead crew, so that probably made it worse. They’d made a good dent in the whiskey stash that night.

That had been a week ago, but now Len needed to get back to business. He’d reached Sickbay and headed straight for his office to see what was waiting for him today. “Computer, read schedule.”

Always started with the obvious ones. Len checked the time; he was a bit early today.

The computer continued. “0930: Commander Spock physical exam.”

He sighed. Spock had been seriously injured on the last mission as well. He’d woken up from a healing trance after just over a day and insisted he was ready to return to duty, but Len had had him on light duty after making him have a day off. Since they were currently traveling to their next location it wasn’t like there was much to do, but Spock was insistent that he be allowed to do his full duties again. Never mind that he’d nearly sent the Sickbay staff into a complete panic when he came in practically comatose. Thankfully they were able to check the Vulcan medical database and find out the necessary information about healing trances and that Spock was not in real danger. Leonard would have to see about getting a Vulcan specialist onboard to prevent that sort of incident in the future; there had to be some who weren’t busy helping to establish the new colony. But for this checkup Len would be able to handle it himself.

He realized that he’d missed most of what the computer had said while he’d been distracted. What was the point of having the damn thing give him his schedule if he didn’t listen? He should at least hear what he had for the rest of the morning. “Computer, repeat schedule starting at 1000.”

“1100: Ensign Chekov physical exam.1300—”

“Computer, stop reading the schedule.” Len paused and took another sip of his coffee. An easy
morning. Just two appointments, and Spock would be the only difficult one. Since Chekov hadn’t stopped aging yet (and dear god, why did they let kids that young go into space?) his checkup would be pretty straightforward and not too in-depth. Len would just have to make sure his hormone therapy was progressing alright. Still, easier than Spock, who was nearly as bad as Jim about fighting to get out of Sickbay as soon as he got in.

They were the worst of the senior staff, although Len knew that some of the engineers and security officers probably got injuries they didn’t come to him about. Still, the rest of the crew seemed to take care of themselves well enough.

At that moment there was a chime at the door to Len’s office. “Come in.”

Spock stepped in, hands behind his back. “Dr. McCoy. I am here for my examination.”

“Good morning to you too.” Len checked the time on his computer. “You’re 15 minutes early. I haven’t finished my coffee yet.”

“I wish to go back to duty.” Spock didn’t budge from the doorway. “Shall we proceed?”

Len wanted to object that like most of the senior staff, Spock had the day off today and couldn’t get back to duty anyways, but he decided it was hopeless. “Fine. Get to biobed 7; that energy weapon they used seemed pretty nasty and I want to do a thorough scan to make sure you weren’t adversely affected in ways the usual scans would miss.”

“Very well.” Spock turned, presumably to go to the biobed, and Len sighed. Well, may as well get this over with. The sooner they started the sooner they were done.

He pulled up Spock’s records on a padd so he’d have them on hand for comparison and walked out to the biobed where Spock was already sitting. “Lay down so I can get better readings.” Spock laid down and Len set up the advanced scanner attached to the biobed. “Hold still.” It wasn’t like Spock needed to be told since the hobgoblin barely moved anyways, but it was part of the procedure. Len activated it and watched as the stats started to filter onto his padd. He’d gotten Spock’s stats from his last thorough exam, which had been months before the destruction of Vulcan. It was good that Len was doing this; it was probably time for Spock to have a thorough physical anyways.

“Have you completed the scan yet?” Spock had been good about not moving, but clearly he thought it didn’t extend to his mouth. It didn’t, but Len enjoyed most people thinking it did so they’d be quiet.

“Not yet; I’m still getting the results.” Len’s brow furrowed. Some of the readings were off from before. They weren’t off in the same way Ensign Palzar’s had been though; she’d been the only other one hit with the weapon and although it had killed her quickly, it still had a noticeable physiological effect. But not hormonal changes like Spock was showing. Could this be a delayed effect?

“Is there a problem, Doctor?” The scan had ended and Spock was now sitting up.

May as well be completely honest. “Maybe. I’m not sure yet. Some of your hormonal levels are off from before but I want to check if they’d present any danger to you.” Off the top of his head Leonard was having problems remembering what each of the Vulcan hormones did; he’d always had trouble differentiating the purposes of them because he got the Vulcan names confused.

“May I see it?” Spock was holding out his hand expectantly. “I may be able to assist you.”

“Why not?” Len handed it over. “I’ve pulled up your hormonal readings for the past ten years;
they’d been steady but now those ones,” he highlighted them on the chart, “are showing different activity levels. Do you know of any reasons for that?”

Something had crossed Spock’s face at the mention of fluctuating hormone levels but when he saw which ones were highlighted it went away. A moment later his brows furrowed slightly in what must have been confusion. “Those are hormones involved in growth for Vulcans.”

Growth hormones. Could it be… “If you were fully human, I’d tell you that your aging just restarted. Or maybe started a little bit ago; it’s hard to tell since we haven’t been scanning for aging for you.” Scanning for aging was standard procedure for human checkups but rarely done for nonhumans; there wasn’t a procedure for human hybrids since they were so uncommon. Len might just have a landmark case here; figures it would be the hobgoblin. ”Have you noticed not aging?”

Spock was quiet for a moment. “Vulcans age more slowly than humans. I had assumed any changes were due to my reaching adulthood, but…”

Well this was a rare moment. Spock was speechless; Len almost wanted to take a holo to capture the moment. Still, he had a job to do. Better stay professional. “Well, it seems like there might actually be an area of your physiology where you’re more human than Vulcan. Congratulations.” Len slapped Spock’s shoulder. “You might just have a soulmate out there. I would tell you the timeframe for when you could have met them, but I don’t think I’d be able to figure it out like I would for one of the human crewmembers since Vulcans have never bothered figuring out how to pinpoint when aging stops and starts since they don’t need to. All I can tell you is that it happened sometimes since your last physical, which was about half an Earth year ago.”

“Thank you, Doctor.” Spock seemed stiller than usual; maybe Len had actually seriously surprised him for once.

Better wrap this up. “Well, good news is is that’s the only thing that seems off, so you’re in good health once more and approved to return to full duty.” Len carefully took the padd back from Spock and went through to find the proper forms. “I’ll make it official and you can get out of here until the next time you get yourself nearly killed.”

Len glanced back at Spock as he walked away. Spock was moving mechanically; probably surprised by the news still. Len was surprised as well; he really felt for whatever poor sap would end up with the hobgoblin as their soulmate. It wouldn't be easy for them.

Chapter End Notes

Have I said that I love dramatic irony? Cuz I do love it.

Anyway, I wanted to include trans!Chekov in this fic since percy-art on tumblr has made me love the idea with their awesome comics, but it probably won't be a huge thing in the fic since Chekov is more of a supporting character than a main one here. But if you want to see more trans!Chekov, check out percy-art's comics cuz they're great.

Of course, that probably wasn't the revelation most of you are focused on after this chapter...
Hello everyone! You all seemed to enjoy Spock finding out he was aging, which I'm glad for. To be honest, I wasn't initially going to do a chapter of Spock dealing with the revelation, but it felt right to do it so here we are. It should be pretty enjoyable...

Spock was unsure how to process the information Dr. McCoy had given him. There had been times when he'd considered the idea that he had a soulmate, but typically such thoughts were purely theoretical. He’d wondered what it would be like if he’d inherited the human trait of having a soulmate; he’d never seriously considered the possibility that he did.

So finding out that he was aging, or rather that he had not been aging and now was, was almost… unsettling in a way. How had he not noticed that he had stopped aging for approximately ten years? True, he had attributed it to Vulcans’ aging more slowly than humans, which was factual, but surely the difference was not so great so soon. Additionally, his alternate self had aged according to human aging rules. Why had he been so certain that he would be different?

This was not what he should be focusing on though. If he was aging, that meant that there was someone who was his soulmate and had prompted his aging. Spock wondered what sort of soulmate he had. The most common forms of soulmate were romantic, although there were people who had platonic soulmates. Another uncommon possibility was that he was a person who had multiple soulmates; in those instances they would only begin aging once all soulmates had met each other. However, Spock assumed that he only had one soulmate. That was the most likely scenario.

Who could his soulmate be? Were they romantic or platonic? It was difficult to determine; the time in which he could have met his soulmate spanned multiple months, and in that time much had happened. Spock had met many humans, Vulcans, and people of other species. It encompassed major events such as the destruction of his planet and the beginning of his time aboard the Enterprise as first officer.

One notable event which did not fall into that timeframe, however, was his meeting Nyota. The beginning of their romantic relationship did fit that timeline, but as Spock had had her as a student prior to their dating there were several months where they knew each other that would be while he was still apparently not aging. It could be possible that his aging process worked different than humans or Vulcans and that Nyota could still be his soulmate; he would have to see if she reported beginning aging at a time that worked with his aging.

As if the old human adages about thinking or talking of someone causing them to appear were true, the next corner in the corridor Spock rounded led him right to Nyota. She smiled upon seeing him. “Hey Spock. I was just coming to see you; how’d the physical go?”

“It went well. I am in good health.” Should he tell her about aging? There were still too many uncertainties; it would be best to wait until she reported aging and discuss it then. “I am cleared for full duty and will report to my next scheduled duty shift cleared to complete it.”

“That’s great!” Her smile widened. “I know how much you dislike missing out on full shifts, even if
“It is doctor’s orders.”

Spock nodded. “It is illogical to force officers to be unproductive by not allowing them to complete their full duties once they are cleared from Sickbay.”

“Right.” Nyota’s expression shifted to what Spock believed would be termed a ‘knowing smile’ before she continued. “Anyways, it’ll be good having you back on the bridge full time. I think Kirk’s been getting antsy without you there to act as his backup self-control. I mean he’s still been doing well, but I think he’d rather have you there. We’re all happier with you on the bridge with us.” She smiled at him again. “So, we both have the day off. Want to get lunch and then see if we can find something to do for the afternoon? With this much of the crew having the day off there must be something planned.”

“That would be agreeable.” Spock tried to think of any events that he had heard of that Nyota would appreciate; as he and Kirk were the ones tasked with approving onboard events he was aware of all official ones. “I believe there will be a movie screening in rec room 3 at 1400 hours.”

“That sounds great.” Nyota smiled in approval of the suggestion. “So off to the mess hall for lunch first?”

“Yes.” Spock gestured for her to lead the way. “I will let you chose which one.”

“Always the gentleman.” She leaned in to give him a quick peck on the cheek, human style, before turning and beginning towards the nearest turbolift. “Mess hall 2 should be pretty open; no one goes there this early typically.”

“Very well.” Spock moved to follow her. Again he wondered if he should tell her about his aging. It was possible for them to be soulmates, even if the aging didn’t quite align and she had made no mention of aging yet. Even if they were not soulmates, that did not mean their relationship must end. Not everyone had romantic soulmates, so not everyone ended up in a romantic relationship with their soulmate. However, if she was not his soulmate, who was?

“Bridge to Spock.” The familiar voice of Captain Kirk came out of the nearby comm panel.

Spock turned to Nyota, who stopped and gestured for him to answer. He stepped over to the comm panel and hit the button to respond. “This is Spock. What is it, Captain?”

“Hey Spock.” Kirk paused a moment before continuing. “Also, we’ve been over this. You’re off duty, you don’t have to call me Captain. Call me Jim.”

“You are on duty, so it is proper to call you Captain.” This was an argument, if it could be called such, that they had been having since the day the mission began. Spock suspected that they were both too suborn to give in.

“Plenty of people call me Jim while I’m on duty. Well at least Bones does, but still most people call me Jim off duty, which is what the whole thing was about.” He paused for a moment as if dismissing the subject. “Anyways, how did the physical go? Are you cleared for duty?”

“I am.” Spock looked over at Nyota, who had begun talking with a passing crewmember. He was glad that his conversation was not inconveniencing her. “I will be able to complete next shift in full.”

“Awesome!” It was easy to imagine Kirk smiling as he said it; it was a common expression for him. “It’ll be good to have you back on the bridge, not to mention on the next landing party. Although this time you have to promise that you’ll find a way for neither of us to get hit by the weird energy weapons, right? No more of you diving in front of it so I don’t get hit. Just tell me to duck or
“Your reflexes may not have been fast enough had I warned you, and it is the duty of the first officer to ensure the captain’s safety. My actions were logical.” The last away mission had been stressful; after Ensign Palzar perished Spock did not want to risk the same energy weapon striking the captain.

“Yes they were. Just don’t do it again; I—we’ve missed you on the bridge. Don’t make me make it an order to keep yourself safe.”

“That might just be what it takes, Kirk.” Nyota had come up next to Spock, her conversation with the other crewmember evidently finished.

“Uhura? I didn’t know you were there. I’m not interrupting anything, am I?” The Captain sounded almost embarrassed; Spock was unsure why.

“Don’t worry; you just caught us on our way to lunch.” Uhura smiled at Spock again before turning back to the comm panel. “Why are you on duty again? You gave the rest of us the day off.”

“We had to have someone with experience stay on the bridge, so why not me?” Spock could hear Kirk shifting slightly in the chair; how long had he been there?

“It is important that you rest, Captain.” Spock wondered if Kirk had been working more hours to compensate for Spock’s reduced duty. He hoped it had not caused the captain undue stress.

“I will, don’t worry.” Kirk paused a moment before continuing. “I should let you two go. But Spock, how does chess tomorrow after Alpha shift sound? I could reserve the board in rec room 2.”

“That would be agreeable.” Spock looked back at Nyota; it was uncommon for them to spend multiple nights in a row together, so it was unlikely she would object to it.

“Great! I’ll do that once my shift ends. Don’t worry about doing it; I’ll let you two enjoy your date.”

“Thanks Kirk.” Nyota was smiling again; Spock was glad that she and the Captain were getting along better now than they previously had. “By the way, Gaila said that you owe her a movie night.”

“Right.” There was another sound on Kirk’s end, but Spock could not tell exactly what it was. “I’ll get back to her after my shift ends. I’ll let you two go now; Kirk out.”

The comm panel went quiet and Nyota turned back to Spock. “So, lunch?”

“Yes. I believe you said mess hall 2?” Spock gestured for her to lead the way to the turbolift once more.

“I did; let’s go before it gets busy.” She turned and headed towards the turbolift and he followed her.

Chapter End Notes

After this we should actually be getting a time jump to later in the mission, but I’d thought that would happen after last chapter so I guess I’m not a reliable source on that. Anyways, I do have a few things I want to hit before we hit Into Darkness, so stay tuned!
Chapter 105

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and welcome to the eve of the one year anniversary of the fic! To be honest, if you’d have come to me a year ago and told me that I actually started posting that spirk fic that had been bouncing around in my head, let alone that I’d still be writing it in a year, I probably wouldn’t have believed you. But what can I say, the spirit of Trek’s 50th anniversary moved me. So here’s to the one year anniversary of the fic, the 51st anniversary of Trek, and especially to all of the people who have read and supported this fic. I honestly cannot express how much I appreciate all the support this fic gets; it genuinely amazes me. Seriously, you’re all the goddamn best; thanks for sticking with me this far and I hope you’ll continue following along with this fic!

And for the fic itself, we’re in for another time jump, bigger this time. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was January again. About 6 months into the mission and also the month of Jim’s birthday. A date that used to be so exciting as a kid, at least for other kids who didn’t have it coincide with their old man dying from heroic self-sacrifice. Still, everyone else always seemed so excited about being another year older as a kid, but for Jim his birthday had lost its excitement long before he’d ever stopped aging. Maybe it never had excitement, what with the day of his birth hardly being a day to celebrate in his family.

But now, for the first time in years, he would actually be physically older on his birthday. Not quite another year older exactly since that would fall on another date a couple months away, but still.

And god, what a horrible day him being actually a year older would fall on. It was a day so many people died and a freaking founding planet of the Federation was destroyed. God, such a horrible day.

Not like his actual birthday was any less associated with death though. God, he really did have the worst luck with this stuff.

At least he’d talked Bones out of a crew party for him. Even though most people on the crew probably knew his birthday or could have looked it up, what with the Kelvin incident being so famous, Jim was glad that most people seemed to be following his lead and not doing much. Besides, they’d just had a ton of parties. The party for the Terran New Year had been just a few days ago, and before that they’d had a lot of groups on the ship throwing parties for their religion or culture’s holidays.

Jim had been to almost all of the parties. Spock had insisted that Jim attend because “it was important for morale that the Captain attend” while avoiding all parties himself since he insisted they still needed someone experienced on the bridge. Jim hadn’t managed to talk Spock out of that, just like he still hadn’t managed to get Spock to call him Jim yet. So thanks to that stubborn bastard, Jim had probably been to at least a dozen different parties in the last month. He enjoyed seeing all the different cultures and traditions that existed on his ship, but still.

At this point Jim was pretty partied out. He was glad that the only celebration he was having for his
birthday he was just having a drink with Bones, as had been their custom since they’d met. Jim remembered how it had all began. He’d been thrown off at first when Bones asked him if he had anything planned.

“How the hell did you know what day my birthday is anyway?” Jim leaned back in his desk chair to better see Bones, who was sitting at his desk on the opposite wall.

“Well for starters, I have access to your medical records. Despite how much space it takes up, your list of allergies isn’t the only thing in there.” Bones paused for a moment before continuing, a bit gentler now. “Also, the whole Federation knows the story, kid. I mean, I was young at the time but I still remember all the talk about dramatic sacrifice and the whole tragic thing about him never meeting the kid. Plus, I think they’re doing a memorial thing on campus.”

Jim knew about the on campus memorial since he’d been personally invited, but he didn’t want to think about that now. “I don’t think I can picture you as a kid. I mean yeah, you look young but I kinda thought you’d always been a grumpy old man deep down.”

Bones lobbed a stylus at him for that. “Shut up. Besides, I’m not here to talk about you being the tragic hero’s son. I’m here to see if my friend Jim wants to do anything for his birthday.”

Thanks to Riverside being his dad’s hometown and Jim spending almost all his life up until now there, Jim had never really had a birthday without George Kirk’s death looming over him. It actually sounded kinda nice. But he couldn’t quite escape George’s ghost yet. “I think Pike wants me to go to the thing on campus. He knew my old man and he was just saying how it would mean a lot if I was there and stuff like that.”

Bones snorted. “That sounds like a real downer of a way to spend the day. Want to grab a drink afterward?”

He definitely would want one, but still, he had obligations. “I don’t know… Day of my mom usually expects a call. With my dad dead and my brother god knows where, we’re kindof all we’ve got left.”

“Wow kid. You’ve got a real downer of a family situation there.” Bones grimaced.

Jim rolled his eyes. “I bet you get all sorts of compliments on bedside manner from your patients.”

“Shut up. We’re going out for a drink this weekend. If anyone else comes is up to you.” Bones turned back to his work then, grumpy exterior fully back in place.

Jim couldn’t help a small smile in response. “Thanks Bones.” All he’d gotten was a grunt in response, but that still started what had become an annual tradition.

One that Jim was about to continue now. He’d arrived at Bones’ door and he’d already called his mom, so there was really no need to do anything else but get a little drunk. Neither of them had duty in the morning so it should be fine. He hit the buzzer and waited for Bones to open the door.

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A few hours later Jim walked back to his room still feeling a bit buzzed. They hadn’t drank much, but Jim still hung out and reminisced with Bones for a bit before going back to his quarters because he didn’t want to be wandering the corridors tipsy.

As per tradition, Bones hadn’t given him anything except the alcohol they drank and some company. Gift giving fell mostly under the category of “making a big deal out of things” for Jim when it came to his birthday, so he was fine with that.
Which was why Jim was surprised to walk into his quarters and find a brand new chess set sitting on his desk with a small bow attached to it. He walked over and noticed a note on it; an actual paper note that looked like it had handwritten words on it. It was hard to tell since it was folded in half and only part of the message was showing; Jim sat down and unfolded it.

Sure enough, it was a handwritten note. Jim smiled at that and began to read.

“As gift giving is traditional for birthdays on the part of Earth that you come from, I have decided to honor that custom. I believe you will appreciate this as we will no longer have to compete with the crew for the boards in the rec rooms. Happy Birthday, Jim.

Sincerely,
Spock.”

Jim grinned. It was rare that they actually had to reschedule a chess game because someone else had the board, especially since most people were willing to give up the board for them. But still, Jim appreciated that Spock had taken the time and thought to get him something, even if he didn't really go for gifts normally. And Spock had finally called him Jim! It wasn’t to his face per se, but it still counted. Plus, that was classic Spock to finally call him Jim in a sneaky way like that. Jim was really growing to appreciate Spock’s sense of humor, subtle as it was.

He would have to thank Spock the next time he saw him. Hell, maybe he should handwrite him a note in return and invite him to chess in his quarters.

Either way, this chess set was definitely going on a place of pride on Jim’s shelf. And if he kept the note and the bow too, well that was his business.

Jim smiled to himself as he got ready and climbed into bed. This was a good birthday.

Chapter End Notes

This was another chapter that I'd had written forever and had been meaning to put in, and I feel like even though the timing is mostly coincidental it's appropriate for today.

Anyways, whether you've been here from the start or if you just joined this week, I'm glad you've all decided to start reading this fic and stick with it. I'm virtually toasting all of you right now (in the raise a glass sense). Cheers everyone!

Happy trek day eve, or happy trek day if it's already September 8th for you!
Hello everyone! First off, thanks for all the comments last chapter! I think that may have been a new record as far as this fic goes, so here's another reminder that I think all of you are awesome.

We're in for another time jump; we're almost at the end of the one year between the '09 movie and Into Darkness now.

“Are you sure that you think you should go down instead of me?” Jim leaned against the conference table in the briefing room and he and Spock were talking about their next mission in. He generally trusted Spock’s judgment of situations, but that didn’t mean he always wanted to go with it.

“Yes. This mission will require diplomacy, and I have more diplomatic experience than you.” Spock was standing a bit away from Jim with his hands behind his back like usual.

“C’mon Spock, we’ve been out here almost a year; I bet we’ll only have a mission or two before we get called back to Earth so they can do the big performance review or whatever.” Jim crossed his arms. “Surely I’ve accumulated some diplomatic skill by now. I’ve handled missions like this before.”

“That is true, but the occasion was different. This planet has high dilithium concentrations of a high quality that is difficult to find or obtain. It is crucial to the Federation and Starfleet that we obtain access to the dilithium by establishing good diplomatic relations with the Halkans and to do that it is best that I lead the landing party as I have more diplomatic experience.” Jim was beginning to hit Spock’s stubborn streak now; they’d been discussing it for a while now with no real progress.

“But how am I supposed to gain diplomatic experience if I don’t even get to see the negotiations?” Jim was tempted to throw in comments alluding to Spock’s potential future as an ambassador, but he still wasn’t sure if he was supposed to let this Spock know so he held off. Clearly Spock would end up good at this diplomacy stuff though; it probably would benefit Jim to see him in action.

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“While that is a logical point, this is not the proper situation. The Halkans are a highly peaceful people, which means that as a Vulcan I may be better able to relate to them given Vulcan’s longer history of peace than humanity’s. Additionally, any shows of frustration, even from those who are not the lead negotiator, could be seen as the first step to violence. As they abhor violence, we must avoid that at all costs.” Jim could tell that Spock was beginning to clench his hands tighter behind his back as Jim started to irritate him; they’d been through this enough times that Jim knew how it went.

“If you think cooler heads are better though, what’s with the landing party you picked?” Jim picked up his padd and scrolled through. “Uhura I get; she’s not easily frazzled, but Scotty can be short tempered if you provoke him right, and Bones is probably worse than me when it comes to temper.” Jim held out the padd and raised an eyebrow. “All of them are good but not me?”

“They are all necessary. Lieutenant Uhura will be there monitoring the universal translator and ensuring that it does not malfunction and negatively impact our negotiations, Lieutenant Commander
Scott will be there to check the quality of the dilithium to see if it is indeed of the quality we were
told, and Doctor McCoy, while he does present the risks you mentioned and has been briefed about
the need for control on this mission, is necessary because he will tell them about the possible medical
technology we would be willing to trade.” Jim was about to interrupt but Spock held up a hand to
stop him. “Additionally, you are required on the ship. There is an approaching ion storm that could
cause damage to this ship in ways we cannot yet anticipate. Having an experienced officer on the
bridge will be essential.”

Jim dropped his arms back to his sides; Spock had a point, like usual. “It seems like your logic has
won out yet again, Spock.” He smiled a bit. “Although I am taking it as a bit of a victory that you
now count me as an experienced officer able to handle emergencies.”

“You earned the rank of captain by successfully commanding the ship in an emergency, so there
should have been no doubt as to your abilities in that area, especially now that you have continued to
command the ship for 11.3 Terran months and done it in a way that has met, if not exceeded,
Starfleet expectations.” Spock also seemed to be relaxing; his hands fell back to his sides. “Do not
take my assertion that my diplomatic experience exceeds yours to be a slight against your ability to
captain a ship; rather, it is largely reflective of my upbringing in the world of diplomacy due to my
father’s position.”

“I guess you do have the advantage there.” Jim straightened and rolled his shoulders to get rid of
some of the tension there. “Alright. We’ll go with your landing party picks.” Jim ran a hand down
his face and sighed. “I just think this ion storm thing has me on edge. Space storms never amount to
anything good; even if this isn’t exactly the ‘lightning storm in space’ that heralded the Narada.”

“Your tension is understandable, Captain.” Spock stepped closer, now seeming to project calm in a
way that Jim always found reassuring. “I do not believe you are the only member of the crew who is
experiencing this. That is also why I believe it would be better for you to remain on board; you have
a remarkable ability to ensure that crew morale is not overly damaged by what we encounter.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at Spock again; he always seemed to know exactly what it was that Jim
wanted to hear somehow. Even if they were just platonic soulmates (despite certain feelings of Jim’s
asserting otherwise), he was really glad to have Spock here with him. “Now c’mon, let’s get the
landing party assembled.” They left the briefing room and made a quick stop at a comm panel before
reaching the transporter room.

The rest of the away team was already there when they arrived; they knew they’d been chosen so
they must have been waiting for the call. Uhura and Bones were just waiting by the transporter padd,
but Scotty was talking to the transporter technician. Jim walked over to them while Spock went over
to join the others, presumably to do a last-minute review.

“Worried about leaving the ship, Scotty?” Jim bumped shoulders with him before leaning against the
transporter console.

“No, just giving Lieutenant Marquez here some tips in case the ion storm tries to mess with the
transporter or other systems. She seems to have it down though, so I think we’re in good hands.”
Scotty smiled at the transporter technician, who nodded, before looking back to Jim. “I trust my team
to watch my silver lady while I’m gone, although it does help that this mission could mean I’ll be
bringing back something nice for her.” Scotty patted the transporter console affectionately.

Deciding he should cut in before Scotty started talking to the ship, Jim nodded before turning back to
Spock and the others. “Alright, I think you should all beam down to avoid being late to the
negotiations. We have the coordinates confirmed?” Jim glanced back at Lieutenant Marquez, who
nodded once more. “Good.” Jim turned back to the crew. “Best of luck on the negotiations, and I’ll
be waiting here for a full report once you return.”

“We will be ready to debrief once we’ve returned.” Spock nodded at him and checked the tricorder he had before looking back up to Lieutenant Marquez. “Energize.”

Jim watched them disappear before turning back to the transporter console. “I’m going back to the bridge, but comm me before you beam them up, ok? Especially if there’s any problems; that ion storm seems to be getting closer.”

“Will do sir.” She nodded. “Lieutenant Commander Scott already briefed me on potential problems and how to deal with them, so I don’t anticipate anything I can’t handle.”

“I trust you, it’s that ion storm that has me wary.” Jim nodded at her before turning and leaving the room. Everything seemed to be going how it was supposed to, but he had a bad feeling that something was about to happen….

Chapter End Notes

As per usual, the name of the random crewmember who will barely show up is random, but the alien species mentioned earlier is one that I pulled off of Memory Alpha. That's because I can generally be a stickler for timelines (as far as in official material and my fic; I'm not one of those people who will grill others on random trivia), but the random characters who appear briefly don't matter all that much in the grand scheme of things probably.
Chapter 107

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! So we're just about into a section of the fic that I thought of probably about a week after I started writing. It took longer than I expected to get here, but I hope you all enjoy it! Some of you have already guessed what it is...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

In the end, Jim didn’t need Lieutenant Marquez to call him because the landing party ended up calling the bridge before they beamed up. It was a pretty routine call, although they did express some concerns about the ion storm, which was just about on top of them now.

Still, Jim told them to prepare for transport and called the transporter room to tell them to beam up the landing party. When he got there, Lieutenant Marquez was still at the controls and seemed to be in the middle of beaming up the away team, but she seemed a bit concerned. Still, once they materialized her concern disappeared.

But that was when Jim’s concern started. As soon as the landing party finished beaming back to the ship, Jim could tell that something was...off. He couldn’t put his finger on what it was or how he knew, but something was off. Something in the way they were standing or something subtle like that... Plus they all seemed to be taking in their surroundings in a wary way as if they didn’t recognize the transporter room they’d beamed down from only a few hours before.

Jim turned to the transporter technician. “Lieutenant Marquez, were there any problems with the beam-up? It seems like that ion storm is really going outside.”

She shook her head. “There was a moment where it seemed like we were getting interference mid-beam, but it went away and other than that everything was within normal parameters, Captain.”

“Why did she just call you captain?” Jim turned back to the transporter pad to see Spock’s eyes narrowing in a way that did not look happy. Uhura, Bones, and Scotty were looking a bit confused and... distrustful? as well.

“Because I am the captain?” Something was definitely off here. Had they forgotten the entire last year? It would be odd for the transporter to leave people physically intact but scramble their memories. Still, transporting during an ion storm wasn’t something done often; maybe there were weird side effects? “What’s the last thing all of you remember? It isn’t new news that I’m the captain.”

“You dare-?” Spock’s face contorted in a way that definitely set off alarm bells for Jim. “You dare challenge me to become captain?” He began to advance slowly; the rest of the away team held back, watching the encounter with something like shock. But there was also a certain guardedness to them, as if they were waiting to see how it would end.

Without fully taking his eyes off of Spock, Jim turned to Lieutenant Marquez. “Call security. Tell them to send a full team, armed, phasers set to stun.” He looked over to make sure she was doing it before directing his attention back to Spock, who was now within a meter of him and mumbling menacingly. Like hell was he facing an enraged Vulcan alone again. Jim stepped away from the
transporter console; while he didn’t want to face this alone he didn’t want anyone else getting unnecessarily hurt either.

“How dare you, my own-“ Spock froze when he was barely an arm’s distance away from Jim. “You are not him.” There was another snarl and flash of rage in his eyes and the next thing Jim knew he was slammed against the wall with a hand against his throat. “If you dare harm a hair on James Tiberius Kirk’s head, I will end you in the most painful ways possible. So where. Is. He?” The last bit was growled out in way that Jim might find attractive if he wasn’t concentrating on not passing out. Spock began to raise a hand in a position Jim recognized as the proper form for initiating a mindmeld; between Spock doing it on some missions and his own experience with Older Spock, Jim could recognize it by this point. “I am not afraid to extract the information from your mind by force. If you have harmed Kirk, you will be met with harsh punishment.”

This was really not how Jim pictured him and Spock melding for the first time. “The only one-“ Jim gasped for breath; getting strangled against a wall was definitely worse than getting strangled against a console. “-hurting Jim Kirk right now-“ That didn’t seem to help; Spock began to lift him off the ground by his throat, “-is you!” There was a moment of surprise or confusion at that; Jim took advantage of it and managed to kick Spock in the chest to knock him backwards. As he slumped to the ground Jim took a deep breath; the kick he’d gotten in was right over Spock’s heart (or as close as he could get while flailing and trying to breathe), which should buy Jim a few seconds. He stood up quickly; Spock looked like he was starting to get back up. “I don’t know what the hell is going on, but I am James Tiberius Kirk and I am the captain of this vessel!”

Spock made that growling noise again. “I do not know what you have done, but I will end you.” He looked like he was getting ready to charge again.

Jim braced himself for the impact, but it didn’t come; before Spock could reach him there was the blast of a phaser going off and Spock dropped to the ground, out cold but still breathing. Jim looked over to Lieutenant Marquez, who must have grabbed the emergency phaser kept in the room after she called security. Jim nodded breathlessly, still a bit overwhelmed with adrenaline. “Nice save.”

She smiled at him. “Thank you sir.”

Jim quickly looked back to the rest of the away team, who all seemed to be different degrees of calculating, enraged, or alarmed. He saw Uhura reach for her boot before angry shock crossed her face. “They took our weapons! I don’t know how but he did!”

Scotty and Bones looked at her with alarm before patting themselves down and apparently reaching the same conclusion. Jim wondered what the hell was going on; it was supposed to be a peaceful negotiation and they definitely hadn’t beamed down with any weapons.

There was definitely something wrong here. It almost seemed like they were gearing up for an attack. Something must have gone seriously wrong here.

At that moment four security officers entered the room. Jim was really going to have to talk to them about emergency response times. For some reason, security coming in only made the remaining away team members more enraged. Uhura looked at him with the kind of fire in her eyes that Jim really wished to never be on the receiving end of. “You’ve turned the security forces against him?” She looked at the other two and shouted something that Jim couldn’t quite decipher before they all charged.

If it seemed like the security was behind on response times in getting to the room, their reflexes were at least alright in an emergency. One quick order from the team leader and the other officers spread out and fired quick phaser shots, dropping each member of the away team. Jim looked down at the
stunned away team, unsure how to proceed now they were past the basic “threat neutralized” stage.

He looked up at the lead security officer, who was clearly awaiting answers. “Something went majorly wrong with the away team, we think on beam-up. Take them to…” He almost said Sickbay, but if they woke up and got violent again he couldn’t risk them hurting anyone. “Take them to the brig. But be careful with them; we don’t know what happened to turn them violent.” He looked down at Bones’ still form, unsure what to do with his usual go-to on people behaving oddly out of the question. “Call Dr. M’Benga to look them over. I don’t know if this problem is medical or what, but we’re going to find out.”

The security team nodded and each picked up a person to take to the brig; luckily it wasn’t too far from here. With one last nod to Lieutenant Marquez (Jim would have to give her a commendation or something; she just might have saved his life there), Jim walked out of the room. As soon as he was out of sight of anyone he allowed himself to collapse back onto a wall. What the hell was going on?

Chapter End Notes

Unrelated to the fic, tomorrow (Sept. 15th) is the 50th anniversary of Amok Time, which also means that it is what the fandom has dubbed Spirk Day! So happy Spirk Day everyone, and if you're on tumblr check my page out (link in the end note) because I might be posting something on Sunday, which has been deemed the day for posting fic. It's not related to this fic; this is just a shameless plug.

But back to the fic, some of you have already guessed what comes next. For those who haven't, I'll leave you to reflect on it over the weekend...
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I feel like I've been saying this a lot lately, but we've been getting a lot of comments lately! I'm even seeing some new names, so that's exciting. Seriously, whether you've been here from the start, you just found this fic, or something in between, you're awesome and I love all the support. Of course, a lot of you just seem excited about the arc we just started...

I think by now just about all of you know what's going on, although we aren't quite going through the looking glass yet...
Instead have another chapter that got more emotional than I intended. It's also far longer than I typically make the chapters, but I don't really feel like splitting it up cuz there wasn't a good spot to. So enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once every test they could think to do yielded no real results that seemed to help them, Jim decided to call Older Spock, or Selek as he was now calling himself at the New Vulcan colony. As far as Jim knew, only he knew who “Selek” really was. Jim wondered if Scotty had figured it out. He'd figured out the time travel thing on Delta Vega, and it wasn’t like Scotty knew that many Vulcans who would recognize him on the spot. For a moment Jim decided to ask Scotty about it, but then he remembered he couldn’t.

Right. The landing party had come back…different; that was why he was calling Older Spock in the first place. Maybe he could provide some answers, or at least confirm Jim’s theory. From the medical scans M'Benga had been able to do while they were stunned and in the brig, the doctor had confirmed that they were the same people genetically and physically, which ruled out most forms of impostors, and that there didn’t seem to be any abnormal viruses or parasites infecting them. But M’Benga had also said that there were other possibilities; he’d recommended psychological or even telepathic evaluations of the landing party to see if there was anything medical scans could miss. Jim had sent someone to do psych evals once the landing party regained consciousness, but they were incredibly uncooperative. Still, the data they had gotten suggested that although the people who beamed aboard the ship were medically the same, psychologically they were different. But they still were able to recognize various crewmembers, state the name of the planet they were orbiting, give the current stardate, and provide other bits of information suggesting that they had at least some of the memories from the landing party. But they were still different, and it seemed like they were expecting differences too. While they were mostly silent and uncooperative, there was the occasional comment about someone looking different or the ship’s décor being changed. It was like they were the same people, but simultaneously…not.

Jim really had no idea what to do with this. But he had an idea of what could have happened, but he’d want to check it with possibly the only person he knew who could give him answers. Which is why he was currently checking the local time for the part of New Vulcan where Selek had settled in the main colony. Thankfully it wasn’t too late; Jim decided to just go for it and made the call on a private comm channel.

Selek picked up after only a few moments, his familiar Vulcna face that looked deceptively young
popping up on the screen. “Hello Jim.” Although his voice was even, his eyes had the sort of warmth that Jim had only just been starting to get hints of from his Spock.

“Hey Sp—Selek.” Jim ran a hand down his face. “Sorry. Still working on getting the new name down.”

“It is alright.” That warmth didn’t waver at all and Jim felt himself comforted by it. “If you so wish, you may continue to call me Spock.”

“Nah, it’s probably better if I get used to calling you Selek. Wouldn’t want to accidentally make a big reveal if I see you on New Vulcan, huh?” Jim smiled, but he felt like it wasn’t quite as bright as normal because the stress of the past day came through.

“That could be unfortunate.” Spock paused for a moment before his expression shifted and became more serious. “While I do enjoy speaking with you about any topic, something appears to be troubling you. What did you wish to speak to me about?”

Jim sighed and ran a hand down his face again. This Spock could read him too well; may as well get right to it. “Ok look, I know you said you wouldn’t reveal anything about the future to me because you want me to discover it on my own or whatever, but I’m out of options. This is just… weird and none of the usual explanations seem to apply. So I’m not so much blatantly asking about the future as I am trying to confirm a theory I have about what’s happening now. Is that ok?” Jim looked at Selek expectantly.

He seemed to be deep in thought for a moment, but eventually Selek nodded. “That would be acceptable. What is your question?”

“Have you ever encountered alternate universes?” After realizing what he said Jim held up a hand to stop Selek from responding. “Ok, stupid question when by your perception you’re currently living in one, but I mean in your time on the Enterprise. Did that ever happen to you or people from your Enterprise?”

Selek seemed about to answer but stopped himself. “Could you clarify your question? What has led you to your current conclusion?”

“It’s the landing party.” Jim ran a hand through his hair. “Things seemed fine when we were talking to them on the planet; they’d just finished talking to the locals and asked to be beamed back up. But there was an ion storm when we beamed them up; it seemed like it might be about to cause problems but then they appeared, physically ok but something was off. Spock almost tried to kill me and said I was an imposter. The whole landing party came back weirdly aggressive. We’ve ruled out medical causes, but something seems off psychologically. So we’re getting into the out of the box explanations like alternate universe bodyswaps or possession by something we can’t detect now.”

“Fascinating.” Selek was quiet for a moment, staring at his hands where he’d folded them on the desk in front of him before returning his gaze to Jim. “There was indeed a similar incident on my Enterprise. Our landing party also came back behaving oddly aggressively, and when they returned to themselves they reported that they had been in an alternate universe, leading us all to believe that their alternate selves had taken their places in our universe. There was a similar circumstance of transporting during an ion storm that we believed to cause that problem.”

“Ok.” Jim nodded, trying to process that information. “This is good actually. If you know what the problem is, you probably know how to fix it.” He looked back to Selek. “How did you fix it?”

“Unfortunately, I cannot help you.” Selek’s shoulders slumped minutely; he was clearly unhappy to
be the source of Jim’s disappointment. “While I did eventually learn of the entire story from my Jim, the solution came from their actions within the alternate universe. I apologize for being unable to assist you.”

“It’s ok; it’s not your fault and you’ve already been plenty helpful.” Jim slumped back in his chair slightly. All he could really do now apparently was wait, which wasn’t really his favorite thing to do. He sighed and looked at Selek. “So how have you been? How’re things on New Vulcan?”

“I am well.” Selek straightened in his seat somewhat. “As I still appear to be young by Vulcan standards, some have begun to inquire when I shall marry and aid in the efforts at procreating to sustain my species.”

Jim couldn’t help but laugh slightly at that. “Really? Well I guess that was bound to happen eventually. What’re you going to do?”

Selek sighed slightly. “While I have yet to find someone I would consider fully suitable, I may have to adjust my parameters and take a mate eventually. I have long ago accepted that no relationship I will have will truly compare to what I had with my t’hy’la, but I may still enjoy companionship with another. Additionally, to borrow a human expression, I am not getting any younger.”

“Yeah, but you aren’t getting any older either.” Jim felt himself starting to tense as the silence on Selek’s end began to drag on. Selek was also avoiding eye contact, which was unusual. He’d inherited human aging patterns, so he wouldn’t age since his soulmate was dead, right? Not unless he met someone. Jim sat up straighter in his chair. “Spock? What is it? Did you meet someone on New Vulcan?” While it wasn’t super common for a person to have another soulmate if theirs died, it wasn’t exceptionally unheard of either. Plus, who knew how crossing into an alternate universe could affect it.

“Not exactly.” The pause dragged out for a moment before he met Jim’s eyes once more. “The t’hy’la bond is rare and can only be shared with one person. I will not get another soulmate.”

Agitation was filling Jim’s gut. “So what is it then? How can you be aging if your soulmate is gone? Is it something to do with being half Vulcan?”

Older Spock paused to collect himself. He took a deep breath. “No, Jim, my heritage is not the cause of this. It was due to someone I met, but not on New Vulcan, but on Delta Vega.” His stare when he met Jim’s eyes again was weighted, but in a way that was gentle and not unkind.

Jim swallowed. The only people Older Spock had encountered on Delta Vega had been Scotty, Keenser, and Jim himself. Which meant… “How is this even possible? I’m not your Jim Kirk and as much as I like you, we aren’t actually each other’s soulmates.”

Selek smiled gently; there was something wistful or nostalgic to it. “While you are certainly different from my captain, you are still Jim Kirk, and that is enough.” He paused, clearly reading that Jim was still thrown off by the news. “It is better this way. I shall attract less attention and will not have to explain something that would only lead to more questions.”

He had a point as always; Jim could never deny that a Spock, regardless of age, would be logical. Still, Jim couldn’t help but feel guilty and worried about the whole thing. Selek aging again meant that other things would be coming. “Who knows how your aging process will react to being held back so long. What if you start aging rapidly? I don’t want you to die because of me!”

Again, Selek smiled, but this time it was bittersweet. “I will still have many years left.” He paused again, as if carefully considering what he was going to say next before he carefully looked back at
Jim. “As well, thanks to you, I am truly living for the first time in many years. I will not fault you for this. When you entered that ice cave I felt something I had not gotten to truly feel in nearly a hundred years. For that, I will always be grateful to you.” He took a moment to look Jim in the eye so he’d know he was being sincere. “I have lived far too long in a universe where my t’hy’la is dead. If I may spend my last days knowing that there is a Jim Kirk who lives and is satisfied with his life and living his best destiny, then my last days will be content.”

Jim had to look away from the screen. Damn sappy Vulcan. What the hell had Jim ever done to deserve this kind of love? A small, selfish part of him thought back to his own Spock, who he was nowhere near this close to. What had that other Jim Kirk done to win his Spock over that Jim had to do here? True, he knew Spock was still with Uhura and didn’t want to break that up if it made Spock happy, but hearing things like this made Jim wish that he could have what his counterpart had had. He finally looked back at Selek. “Your Jim Kirk was a damn lucky man to have someone like you. I hope he let you know how much he appreciated you, because if he was anything like me than I bet it was a whole lot.”

Again, the content but wistful look crossed Selek’s face. “I never doubted his affection for me once he professed it; indeed, I fear it was often me that gave him doubts. Still, our time together was the best of my life.” He stared off absently for a moment before looking back to Jim. “You and he are much alike. I am sure that you will eventually find the happiness that we had.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled, but it felt a bit hollow given how empty his love life was at the moment. “Course, to do that we have to get Spock back from wherever that ion storm sent him. Along with the rest of the landing party.”

“If they have visited a universe like my crewmates did, it will be treacherous. However, I have faith in the crew of the Enterprise to overcome the obstacles they are presented with.” Selek nodded reassuringly. “Do not worry, Jim. They will return to you.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled and it felt a bit more genuine this time. He glanced at the chronometer. It had been a little late when he’d first called Selek, and they’d been talking for a while now. He didn’t want to keep him up. “It’s getting late where you are. I don’t want to keep you up.”

“I will always welcome conversation with you, Jim.” That warmth was there in Selek’s eyes again. “However, I recognize that the odd turn of the current mission has likely left you with much work to do. So I will leave you to it.” He raised his hand in the Vulcan salute. “Live long and prosper, Jim.”

Jim returned the salute; after practicing for both diplomatic and other reasons, he could manage it pretty well now. “Live long and prosper, Spock.” At the use of his real name the warmth in Older Spock’s eyes flared up for a moment more before the comm channel closed.

Jim sat there for a moment after the screen went dark. He really did like talking with Selek, but god did it make him feel lonely afterwards. Just thinking about what he and his Jim must have had, based on the bits he’d gotten through the mindmeld and how Selek acted, made Jim feel an ache in his chest from how badly he wanted something like that. He sighed and rubbed both hands over his face. First things first, he’d have to get Spock and the others back from wherever they’d disappeared to. Jim just hoped they weren’t in too much danger.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone is curious why Spock Prime gets called Selek (since I’ve seen it a lot in the
fandom now), it comes from an episode of The Animated Series where Spock travels
back in time and saves his younger self. He goes by Selek and it's probably one of the
better TAS episodes, even if it doesn't quite hit peak weird trek like the rest of them do.
Seriously, if you like weird trek, check out the Animated Series. It's great; just prepare
for sentient plants and odd Vulcan school uniforms, among other things.

Anyways, prepare yourselves for a tone shift next chapter, because we'll see what the
Kelvin timeline Spock will be getting up to...
Chapter 109

Chapter Notes

Well, I think we're about at the point you've been waiting for... It also happens to be the introduction of a character that I consider possibly the most fun to write.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock was fairly certain that he and the rest of the landing party had entered an alternate universe. He had yet to ascertain the full extent of the differences, but they appeared to be extensive. For instance, he was captain of the Enterprise in this universe.

Along with the changes in décor and odd behavior of the crew upon his return, the pronounced lack of Captain Kirk was alarming Spock. Despite his initial impression that the Captain had wanted to prank him by changing the appearance of the transporter room, getting the crew to behave oddly upon the landing party’s return, and somehow changing the landing party’s clothing mid transport, Captain Kirk’s presence was typically difficult to miss and yet Spock had yet to see any trace of his presence.

When he had asked some crewmembers about Kirk’s disappearance (carefully ensuring he did not call him Captain so as to not arouse suspicion), all he received were odd looks or the occasional statement of or similar to “You would know better than anyone else, sir,” although those statements were quickly shut down with a harsh glare.

Based on a quick computer databank search of past captains and their fates which curiously did not include Kirk, Spock was beginning to believe that he had murdered Kirk in this universe. He did not wish for that to be true; as he began to know Kirk better his regret over his past actions that had nearly killed Kirk had deepened. He and Kirk had even begun to develop a friendship, much like his older self had promised. So if he had killed the Kirk of the universe, Spock was unsure that he would be able to control his reaction.

Still, his questions about Kirk had yielded no useful information, and the rest of the landing party did not report seeing Kirk or hearing much of him either when Spock checked with them to assess their situation. Mr. Scott and Nyota had both made their reports short, but Dr. McCoy seemed more disturbed, especially once he found about the usual way that people ascended to the captaincy in this universe.

“Dammit you hobgoblin, I swear if you killed Jim—” Spock was becoming tempted to adjust the volume on the communicator to accommodate McCoy’s raised voice.

“As I have said, Doctor, it would not have truly been me but rather a duplicate of myself native to this universe. Additionally, I would also not be satisfied with that discovery.” That was an understatement, but Spock did not wish to have this conversation with Dr. McCoy. Spock looked around the briefing room he was in; there were a number of unfamiliar instruments. He had left his security detail outside but it would likely be best to get to a more secure location. Dr. McCoy had begun to rant again but Spock did not have time for this. “We must focus on finding a way to return to our universe. I will use the computer in the Captain’s quarters to find more information; find Lieutenant Uhura or Mr. Scott and access the information you have gathered so far.” He closed the communicator without hearing a definite response from McCoy.
He exited the briefing room and was aware of the security officers behind him as he walked to the
captain’s quarters; he had had to remind himself not to go to the first officer’s quarters out of habit.
Once they arrived he entered the captain’s quarters and left the security officers stationed at the
doors.

In the captain’s quarters, the temperature was at a level that Spock found comfortable rather than
merely tolerable, supporting the idea that these were in fact his quarters in this universe. The lights
were dim, but Spock could tell that the room was also furnished as his quarters were, adding further
evidence that these were in fact his quarters. A notable exception was that the bed was larger;
additionally, Spock could see a figure supine on the bed. Given that there had already been an
attempt on his life in this universe, Spock carefully approached the bedroom section of the quarters.
Unsure of if he needed to maintain the act he had been performing to seem to belong to this universe,
he pulled the knife from his boot and held it with one hand while reaching out with the other to shake
the person awake.

The person had been sleeping on their side covered by a blanket with their back to him and an arm
partially over their face, concealing their identity, but after Spock grabbed their arm and shook it they
rolled over and blinked awake.

The familiar blue eyes of James Tiberius Kirk looked alarmed for a moment but then he grinned
sleepily at Spock. “Hey babe.” He nodded at the knife. “We doing the rough stuff tonight? I thought
you’d said you didn’t want to, but I’m down if you are.” He sat up and stretched, allowing the
blanket to fall off of him and reveal that he was wearing a skimpy outfit that Spock believed humans
would deem lingerie.

The surprise was enough that Spock backed away and dropped the knife, moving away until he hit
the partition that marked the edge of the bedroom section and averting his eyes from Kirk’s body
although it was not an unpleasant sight.

That seemed to be a mistake because a moment later Kirk was pressed against him with his own
discarded knife held to his throat. Spock shifted his eyes to meet Kirk’s and found them full of
something that seemed to be controlled rage. “Now I can tell you aren’t really Spock, even if you do
look remarkably like him. So I’m only going to ask this nicely once,” he applied noticeable pressure
to the knife as if to illustrate what not acting nicely would entail, “Where. Is. Spock? What have you
done to him?”

Spock carefully raised his hands from where they had been at his sides; he could easily physically
overpower Kirk but he did not feel that that would be the best approach. “I am Spock; however, I
believe that myself and the Spock of this universe have somehow changed places. If my theory is
correct I have come from an alternate universe where your Spock has now taken my place; I mean
you no harm and wish to explain, but I would prefer to do so without a blade at my throat.”

Kirk eyed him warily for a moment before backing away, lowering the knife but maintaining his grip
on it. “If you really were Spock and meant me harm, I’d be dead by now. I think we both know that.
So I’m willing to tentatively believe that you’re not trying to hurt me, but not the rest. I’m gonna find
something to cover up and you better figure out your story; if you lie to me you will suffer the
consequences.”

Kirk turned and headed towards the bathroom; Spock averted his eyes once he realized the outfit, if it
could be called that, that Kirk was wearing was no less revealing in the back.

Spock was uncertain how to proceed. Kirk was alive and seemed well, which was something the
landing party had sought to ascertain. However, he was reluctant to reveal where and how he had
found Kirk. Additionally, Kirk may be able to provide information on this universe in exchange for
information on Spock’s universe. He seemed to trust Spock in a way he may not trust the others; perhaps it would be best for Spock to get some answers before alerting the rest of the landing party.

Chapter End Notes

It's going to get explained more in upcoming chapters, but this mirror!verse Kirk and Spock will be very different than their TOS mirror!verse counterparts. There are reasons though...
Chapter 110

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and welcome to the first chapter of this fic to go up since there's been new trek! I've seen the new episodes so if anyone wants to talk about it hit me up in the comments or on tumblr (my url's in the end notes).

Another long chapter I wasn't quite sure how to split up, so you're getting it in full. It's probably better to do that than do two chapters that are basically just exposition (aka the timeline for the mirror!verse fic I may or may not ever write). Basically, this explains why things will be very different from the TOS mirror!verse. Possible vague spoilers for DS9 and Enterprise mirror!verse episodes because I have more trek knowledge than I know what to do with and like making conflicting canon work.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After what felt like a long time but most likely was not, Kirk emerged from the bathroom wearing a variant of the Starfleet uniform, except it was noticeably unlike the familiar gold tunic Spock was used to seeing on him. Instead, he had on black pants that seemed far tighter than Captain Kirk’s typically were, accompanied by a cropped top version of the uniform that Spock had mostly seen on female crewmembers. However, it was operations red instead of command gold. Spock raised an eyebrow at that. “You are not a part of the command division?”

Kirk raised his eyebrows at that. “You really must not be from around here.” He leaned against the wall near the door to the bathroom and crossed his arms; Spock noticed he still had the knife. “No. Never have been, never will be. I’m in security, although I probably know more about tactics than most command idiots.” He looked at Spock more closely. “My Spock would know all of this; I’ve been his secret chief strategist since we met. I’m beginning to believe you might be from another universe, if only because everything seems too different.” He paused to think for a moment. “Plus, you aren’t the first alternate Spock I’ve met.”

Another surprise for Spock. “You’ve met Ambassador Spock?”

“Ambassador?” Kirk’s eyebrows rose once more. “That’s a new title.” He shook his head. “No. The one I know my Spock introduced me to because he’s been trying to guide him to not make the same mistakes he did. Apparently he got talked into preferring peace by some guy who claimed to come from an alternate universe that had something called a ‘Federation of Planets’ or some pacifist hand holding thing like that. He still managed to make it emperor somehow, but he’d weakened the Terran Empire enough that it fell. Humanity got enslaved and even though he’d acted more Vulcan than human, he got captured right with them. The Klingon-Cardassian Alliance put him to work as a scientist since that was what he’d originally been good at; eventually in a move to gain power to try to aid the human resistance movement that’d sprung up, he and his team invented matter that could generate black holes on contact with any matter. He was going to take it to the Terran rebels after he did a test run in a Romulan system on a star that was going supernova anyways, but he got in a fight with a Romulan—”

“Nero.” This was beginning to fit with what Spock knew of his own counterpart’s experience, albeit highly distorted. “Did he travel into this timeline, attack the Kelvin, then eventually destroy Vulcan?”
“Looks like our universes aren’t so different after all.” Kirk shifted but stayed against the wall and did not loosen his grip on the knife. “The Kelvin was attacked, and then years later when the Other Spock came through Nero got ahold of the red matter and went after Vulcan. The Terran Empire let it get destroyed but landed some hits on Nero and scoped out his weaponry in the process. That way once they reached Earth, Starfleet was able to destroy them; my Spock was the one who went aboard the other ship, found the advanced ship with the red matter. He lured them away from Earth before using a small amount of the red matter to destroy them; he then brought the advanced ship and the red matter back to Earth to be studied, at which point the admiralty rewarded him with captaincy of the Enterprise.”

“What of Captain Pike?” Although he was not as close with Pike as he knew Kirk was in his universe, Spock was still curious.

“That weak man who somehow made captain?” Kirk scoffed. “He’d betrayed the empire by breaking during torture and giving Nero codes that allowed him to reach Earth. He died on their ship since he’d have been killed on sight anyways. Might as well die with the side he’d joined.”

Spock was horrified, but hoped it was not too evident from his expression.

Kirk still seemed to pick up on it though. “What, does that bother you? Did he mean something to you wherever you come from?”

“Yes, however he was far more important to you.” Spock paused when he realized the possible uncertainty there. “The Kirk of my universe. To him, Captain Pike, now Admiral Pike, is a role model and father figure. He would not have joined Starfleet if not for Pike, and Pike helped him reach the captaincy he now holds.” Spock was unsure how much to tell this other Kirk, but he had been forthcoming with information so Spock figured it may be best to be forthcoming in return. “Indeed, given that his father died only moments after his birth, I believe the Kirk of my universe would consider Pike the most important father figure he has.”

“Really?” Kirk raised his eyebrows in disbelief yet again. “His old man died in the Kelvin attack and he still went command track? What an idiot.”

This was not the first dismissive comment this Kirk had made about the command track, but Spock felt more defensive about the direct attack on his Kirk, illogical though it may be. “His father, George Kirk, is considered a hero because his actions while in command of the Kelvin lead to the majority of the crew living. What transpired here?”

“A completely different value system apparently.” Kirk scoffed but finally stood from the wall to step closer to where Spock sat on the bed. “They actually celebrated the majority of the crew fleeing a battle instead of staying to fight? What, are you from one of the weak Federation universes?”

Again, this attack felt more personal. “I am from a universe that has the United Federation of Planets rather than a brutish empire, but I fail to see how that makes us weak.”

“Huh. You and my old man may have gotten along then.” Kirk narrowed his eyes but sat on the bed, still far from Spock though. “After Nero made the captain of the Kelvin come over and killed him, George Kirk, who was only in command because the captain made him first because he thought him too soft to attempt to kill his way up the hierarchy, thought it would be better to run away and try to put off the fight til another day rather than face them directly. The crew obviously revolted at that and instead all gave their lives trying to take the enemy ship.”

“But if all hands were lost, how did you survive?” Again, this was a similar but distorted version of the history Spock knew. If the basic events aligned, Kirk would have been born at the time of the...
“Simple. My dad was a goddamn sap and tried to protect my mom because they were ‘soulmates’ or whatever. Plus, she was very pregnant at the time and he didn’t think she should have been going into battle like that. So he had a doctor he trusted knock her out and take her away in a shuttle, where she gave birth to me.” Kirk rolled his shoulders. “My mother, of course, was infuriated at the act of cowardice of him trying to take the ship away from battle, but decided to spin the story a bit so his and thus our reputation wouldn’t be totally tarnished. As far as anyone knows, George led the attack on Nero’s ship. The only people who could dispute it are my mother, me, and the other people on the shuttle, who I haven’t heard about in quite a while.”

This was more distorted timeline information to process, but one thing in particular stood out to Spock. “Did your mother kill those people?”

Kirk shrugged with a nonchalance that was alarming to Spock. “Does your universe have that expression about three people keeping a secret if two are dead?”

Spock had heard of that expression, but he knew it as an ancient earth aphorism from a more dangerous time. “Why are you telling me this? Do you wish to kill me?”

“Oh honey,” Kirk crawled across the bed until he was nearly in Spock’s lap and then tucked his face against Spock’s neck so he could whisper in his ear. “I’d never kill you. As I understand it, you staying alive is the only way I can get my Spock back once you bodyswap back to wherever you come from.” He pulled back just enough to look Spock in the eye. “And trust me, I want him back. But for now, you have to pretend to be him, and for that you need information.”

Despite his usual aversion to contact with others, Spock did not find himself trying to move away from Kirk. “Such as?”

“Well, it seems like we’re starting with my ‘tragic’ backstory.” Kirk pulled back further to sit upright and Spock had to resist following him. “But I’ll fill you in on more. For example, you’ll need to stop acting so stiff.”

The sudden change from seductive to almost instructing was jarring. “What?”

“All that Vulcan formality I can practically feel rolling off of you.” Kirk gestured up and down at him. “You need to relax it a bit.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Is my counterpart here not Vulcan?”

“Oh he is, and makes good use of it.” Kirk smirked once more. “We’re both really looking forward to when that seven year itch hits.”

Spock was certain that he had never heard someone refer to pon farr so casually; he was unsure how to respond.

“However,” His attention was drawn back to Kirk, “a hundred years or so ago was the last time a Vulcan was allowed to get any sort of power within Starfleet, and she used it to lead the other non-Terrans in a rebellion that was quickly put down. But naturally the admiralty has been a little uneasy about Vulcans in command ever since, so once Spock got his command he started playing up his human side more so that they wouldn’t order a hit right away.” He looked Spock over critically. “So you’ll need to relax, but naturally I can help with that.” He once more looked at Spock with a lewd smirk.

Spock found himself oddly entranced by it all, but the spell was interrupted by his communicator
going off. After struggling to break his eyes away from Kirk, Spock reached for it and flipped it open. “Spock here.”

“Thank god.” Nyota’s voice came through the other end. “I was getting worried about you; you’ve had total radio silence for a while now and we were getting worried that something had happened to you.”

“I am fine.” Spock found himself looking back at Kirk, who was watching him closely now. “I am in the captain’s quarters. I have been learning more about the history of this universe and was unaware how much time had passed.”

“Ok well I’m glad you’re alright.” Nyota’s voice came through indistinctly for a moment; she must have been with the others and conferring with them. “I think it’s time for a team meeting. Do you know anywhere safe to do that?”

“Yes, the captain’s quarters are secure.” Spock hesitated a moment. “I have more I wish to find out; we can meet in a half hour.”

“Sounds good. I’ll pass it on.” After a moment Nyota’s voice came through again. “Stay safe. I don’t want anything happening to you.”

“I would not wish harm to come to you either. Stay safe. Spock out.” Spock closed the communicator and looked at Kirk, who had moved away and was standing once more.

He did not seem happy. “So are you and her a thing?”

The phrasing was a bit archaic, but Spock understood the sentiment. “We have been dating for a year and two months.”

Kirk looked away and mumbled something that sounded like “That explains a lot,” but Spock was unsure if he heard it properly. After a moment, he looked back to Spock. “I have some things I need to take care of. Any last questions?”

There were many, but one major point was unresolved. “Why did you not attempt the command track?”

“Simple.” Kirk shrugged and tucked a knife into his boot. “I learned from my father’s mistake. Command gets a target on your back that gets you killed, other paths don’t. Better to seduce than subdue.” He looked at Spock with a dangerous grin. “I’ll still do a little bit of anything, but still. My dad tried command and got killed before 30, my mom went for the subtler route to the top and now she’s with an admiral that she thinks might make a move for the throne. Which works better?” He looked over Spock again. “All it really takes is finding the right man who could make it to the top and shaping him into an emperor. Which is why I need my Spock back; it’d be no use trying with you. Still,” he leaned in close to whisper in Spock’s ear once more and Spock once more found himself stilling instead of shifting away, “We’re going to have a fun time til you go back.”

At that, he nipped the point of Spock’s ear; it was an unfamiliar yet not unpleasant sensation that left Spock too stunned to respond; he was only able to watch how the tight black pants conformed to Kirk’s backside as he walked out the door.
Bonus points to anyone who can guess a particular trait of Kirk in both the regular and mirror Kelvin timelines. It may or may not get stated in the fic, but it's another headcanon/fanon thing that I've been incorporating into the fic and will probably end up just putting into the author's notes if I can't work it in.

Anyways, how are you all feeling about this mirror timeline?
Jim ran a hand through his hair and sighed. That conversation with Older Spock—Selek—had been way more emotional than he’d anticipated, but that was hardly out of the ordinary for the two of them. He really hoped that the old man would find happiness somehow, especially now that he was aging again.

Still, he had another call to make. Pike had asked for an update on the mission since apparently the possibility of high grade dilithium meant that this mission was extra important to Starfleet. So after a quick check of the time in San Francisco, Jim opened up the comm channel to Pike.

After only a moment Pike’s face appeared on screen. He smiled at Jim. “Captain.”

“Admiral.” Jim smiled back.

“I’m assuming you’re calling about the mission with the Halkans.” Pike shifted slightly on the other side and looked away; he must have been bringing up other information. “How’s it been going so far?”

“Well, it started out ok.” Jim took a breath. Start with the standard stuff. “We got in when we expected and made contact to let them know we were ready to set up a time for negotiations. They agreed, and once the time came a landing party beamed down. We sent Uhura because she could make sure the translator didn’t malfunction, Scotty to check the dilithium quality, McCoy to tell them about the medical technology we could share with them in exchange, and Spock as the landing party leader because he has more experience with diplomatic things than me.”

“Sounds good so far.” Pike nodded. “Good for you to know when to step down and let others with more specific experience lead missions; a sign of a good commanding officer is knowing when to let others take charge.”

“Thanks.” Jim really was grateful for Pike’s approval; he decided not to tell him about how much he and Spock had debated that decision.

“So what happened next?” Pike looked him over closely. “You don’t exactly seem to be in a celebratory mood, but I’ve got enough faith in you to not assume the worst.”

“I’m happy to hear that, sir.” It was far from the first time Pike had made that sort of comment, but it still made Jim feel good to hear someone having faith in him like that. He really hoped he wouldn’t disappoint Pike’s expectations, which was why he was a little nervous to say the next part. “So the landing party beamed down and we didn’t hear from them for a bit, which is hardly unusual for diplomatic missions. They still did regular check ins to let us know they were alright though, as is standard procedure, but we were also monitoring an ion storm that was rolling in.”
Pike nodded understandingly. “Those can cause some damage if the ship’s not prepared. Was the Enterprise damaged at all?”

“No, the ship is fine.” Jim decided to broach the next question carefully. “Sir, have you or anyone you know ever tried to transport during an ion storm?”

Pike paused to think about it. “No, not that I know of. Why?”

“Well, it would probably be a good idea not to.” Jim ran a hand down his face and took another deep breath before looking back at Pike. “The storm had reached us by the time we were trying to beam the landing party up. There was a moment of error, and then they showed up. But they were acting...different.”

“That’s concerning.” Pike sat up a little straighter. “Different how? Do you think the Halkans did something to them?”

“No, definitely not. The Halkans are super peaceful and don’t want to harm anyone; Spock even said that they were reluctant to give us dilithium if we were going to use it to power weapons that could kill even one person. They wouldn’t harm the landing party.” Jim paused again. “Especially with how they came back. They were oddly aggressive; Spock attacked me without any real provocation.”

“What?” Pike’s professional demeanor dropped entirely. “Jim, are you alright? I know this has happened before, but I thought you both said it would never happen again. We could court martial him if you want.”

“No no no, it’s not like that.” Jim realized he probably could have put that better. “It wasn’t Spock that attacked me, not really. The whole landing party was completely different when they beamed up; one minute we were talking to them on the planet and everything was normal, the next there was a slight problem with the beam up and the they weren’t themselves when they materialized. It must have been something that happened during transport because they were all affected.”

“Okay.” Pike seemed a bit calmer at that; at the very least he was shifting back into business mode. “What do you think happened?”

“Stick with me because this is going to sound odd, but I have my reasons.” That probably wasn’t the best thing to say to get Pike to relax, but oh well. Jim went on ahead. “I think they got bodyswapped with themselves from an alternate universe.”

There was a moment of silence on the other end. “What?” Pike seemed skeptical.

“Like I said, there’s reasons.” Jim held up his hand and began to tick them off on his fingers. “First, we did a complete medical scan of all of them and Doctor M’Benga said that physically they were the exact same; there was no evidence of diseases, toxins, or other entities in their bodies. Next, we did psychological profiles and while they were pretty uncooperative, we got enough to know that they seemed to have most memories but were still different psychologically, even on tests that aren’t supposed to vary over a person’s lifetime. They also seemed to think that the ship or crew was slightly different than they were expecting, as if they were used to it all being a different way.” The next piece of evidence Jim was a little more reluctant to add, but did anyways. “Also, I talked to someone I know who has experience with these sorts of things because he used to work on a ship. While not telling him the full story, he was able to go off of what I told him and said that my theory seemed like it could be true.” Selek had been a little more certain than that, but Jim still hadn’t told Pike the full story there so he held off. “Plus, it’s not like this is our first brush with an alternate universe. Nero came from one.”
“I thought he came from the future.” Pike seemed a bit confused.

“The way I understand it, he sortof did, but in doing so made an alternate universe by changing his past, which is our present? I’m not sure; time travel gets a bit complicated.” Jim knew that Spock had been the first to propose the alternate universe theory, but there were still people debating it.

“Anyway, back to business.” Pike waved off that conversation and looked back at Jim. “Any idea how to get them back? It’d be a bit difficult to finish your mission without your first officer, chief engineer, chief medical officer, and chief communication officer, and you’re in the home stretch now. A setback would just make you come back early.”

Jim sighed. “At this point the hope is that they’ll be able to get themselves back somehow. We wouldn’t even know how to start looking for them.”

“Maybe the first step would be to try talking to one of them.” Pike hesitated a moment. “Would that be possible?”

“Should be.” Jim thought back. “We had a bit of a problem earlier where they were all together in the brig and they tried to break out, but we separated them.” He paused for a moment. “Spock’s in a separate holding area than the rest of them; I can try talking to him.”

“Sounds like a plan.” Pike nodded at him. “This should be another interesting log to read.” He smiled. “For your sake, I hope the log for your next mission is completely routine.”

Jim assumed Pike just meant that he hoped the next mission would go smoothly, but he couldn’t help but worry that Pike was somehow getting in trouble for how odd Jim’s logs had been. He couldn’t help it; they encountered a lot of odd things. “Me too, sir.”

“Glad to hear it.” He shifted a bit, relaxing some. “So, now that we’ve finished the business, how have you been? Is the crew getting ready for their return home?”

Jim relaxed a bit in response to the conversation shifting. “I’ve been good. And yes, the crew will definitely be glad to see a familiar planet once more. How about you? How have things been back on Earth?”

“Good as well.” Pike smiled. “Number One wanted to see you before her ship left. There will be a bit of overlap between your arrival and her heading out; want to come over for dinner?”

It wasn’t the first time Pike had offered; while at the Academy he often invited Jim over, especially when it was a holiday and he knew Jim had nowhere else to go. Jim had declined at first because he didn’t want to impose, but after Pike insisted he usually caved. At this point a meal that was cooked instead of replicated sounded good. “We’d have to work out a time, but I’d say that you and Number One should start planning.” Jim smiled. “I’ll be there.”

“Great.” Pike smiled at him again. “It’ll be good to catch up; I’m sure you have more going on in your life than just what makes it into the captain’s logs.”

Jim shrugged. “There’s not much, I’m afraid.” He still hadn’t told Pike that he was aging yet, but he hadn’t really told anyone; Bones only knew because of Jim’s medical records. Jim figured he had a little while before it became obvious and he had to tell people. “Still, it’ll be good to see you. I’ll want to hear what you and Number One have been up to too.”

“Alright.” Pike looked over at the time. “I’m not sure what time it is on your ship, but I should probably let you go. Especially since you have a bit of a mystery to figure out.”
“That’s right.” The casual conversation with Pike had relaxed Jim enough that he almost forgot about the landing party. “I should probably get back to that.” Jim looked back to Pike. “It was good talking to you though.”

“You too, Jim.” Pike waved goodbye. “I’ll talk to you later and see you when you’re planetside.”

“Same to you.” Jim nodded and waved in response; after a moment the screen went dark. Jim stood up from his chair and stretched; he had a Vulcan to talk to.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing like a little fluff before we dive back into all the mirror!universe drama. We'll probably keep switching back and forth between the universes at mostly uneven intervals, so stay tuned. We'll be getting some interesting interactions soon...

Mostly unrelated, but on a tumblr post about Enterprise they called the admiral that the captain was friends with dadmiral, so that's how I'm mentally referring to Pike now. He's just dadmiral Pike.
Chapter 112

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Happy first update of October. We're back to the mirror!verse and the crew stuck there, as well as a certain someone who discovered their secret...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Not long after Kirk had left, the other members of the landing party began to arrive. Spock cautiously welcomed them all; he would have preferred some time to regain his control through meditation after his encounter with Kirk but he realized that they may have limited time. Once everyone was inside, Spock secured the door and turned to them. “What have you learned?”

“That I don’t want to stay here any longer than we have to.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “Sickbay is a goddamn torture chamber. They were betting over if patients would pass out from pain. It was horrific.”

“That would appear to be the general trend of this universe; that is why we must make our escape.” Spock turned to Mr. Scott. “What have you found about our current situation?”

He looked nervous. “We’ve only got a few hours until we can’t go back at all, but in order to replicate the conditions that got us here we’ll need to drain a lot of power. I imagine that sort of thing won’t go unnoticed.”

“I’ll be on the bridge so I could probably manage some sort of diversion. But we have another time problem too.” Nyota looked at Spock, her concern evident. “I intercepted orders from Starfleet Command that went to Sulu. You only have a few hours to take out the Halkans before he’s supposed to take you out.”

“Perhaps it would be best if we made our escape sooner.” Spock once more turned to Mr. Scott. “Is it possible to set it up more quickly?”

“If I had some assistance, possibly.” Mr. Scott still seemed ill at ease.

There was a logical option for Spock to take here. “I will assist you. It will help us accomplish our goals more quickly and it will get me away from possible harm.”

A sudden laugh from elsewhere in the room had all of them drawing their weapons.

“That won’t work. An act of cowardice like that would get you killed quickly for sure. You can’t just ditch the bridge.” Although none of them had heard the door open, Kirk had somehow entered the room. “Send the Doctor down to help instead.”

“Jim?” Doctor McCoy seemed relieved to see him, if also confused. He glared back to Spock. “I thought you said the room was secure.” When Spock was equally confused in response, McCoy turned back to Jim. “What the hell are you doing here? How did you get in?”

“I live here. And before you ask, I mean that in both the sense of this universe and these quarters. So drop the weapons; I could probably take you all out before any of you would be willing to fire a shot anyway.” He seemed relaxed but there was still something remarkably assessing in his gaze; It was a
look that Spock had only seen on his Captain’s face during dangerous away missions. “I already know that none of you are from around here. I didn’t actually know the full group for sure until now, but it’s good to know.”

Everyone looked to Spock, confusion evident on their features. He decided it would be best to clarify. “As we have discovered, in this universe James T. Kirk is not the captain of the Enterprise. However, he is still a crewmember aboard the Enterprise. He quickly ascertained that I was not, in fact, the Captain Spock he knew. We exchanged information and he is willing to assist us.”

Everyone shifted their attention to Jim, most likely about to express gratitude, but Jim held up a hand to stop them. “Before you get all sappy, I’m just doing this to get my own Spock back. This one’s far too stiff, and not even in the fun way.”

“Wait.” Nyota looked between the two of them; Spock could see she was putting the pieces together. “You said you lived in Spock’s quarters, and then,” she made a face, “that comment. Are you and the Spock of this universe together?”

“Yes.” Jim popped the ‘p’ in a way that was most likely intended to aggravate. “But don’t worry; I heard this one’s yours. Aside from when we need to keep up appearances in public, I’ll keep my hands off.”

Nyota’s eyes narrowed. “What exactly does keeping up appearances include?”

Jim grinned, and there seemed to be an element of danger to it. “Well you see, my Spock gets rather possessive. He likes to show me off and always keep me near. We do get a little adventurous at times, but don’t worry, I’ll tone it down for all of you.”

McCoy and Scott shared a look. Dr. McCoy decided to speak up. “Do we even want to know what ‘adventurous’ means here?”

“Probably not.” There was a certain gleam in Jim’s eye; he looked at Nyota before looking back at the rest of them. “There was the one time I rode him in the captain’s chair during Alpha shift, but we were both still mostly dressed and we’ve done that all over the ship, so I don’t think that counts. The really adventurous time was another time-“

“Alright. We get the picture.” Nyota looked at Spock. “Are you ok with this? I know you’re not usually into PDA.”

“Don’t worry; it won’t be that extreme.” Jim’s assessing eyes were turned on Spock now. “Generally just staying near you, maybe sitting on your lap at times, some light groping, just casual things. The occasional kiss, human or Vulcan style, if it seems like people are getting suspicious.”

“Really?” Nyota raised her eyebrow at Kirk before turning to Spock. “That’s way beyond your usual comfort zone.”

Spock looked down at the uniform he was wearing; it was a gold vest over a tight black undershirt rather than his familiar blue science tunic. He attempted to maintain his regular levels of control and looked up to see the assembled crewmembers staring at him; Nyota looked expectant and annoyed, Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott looked like they would prefer to not be there, and Jim was smirking at him. “Nyota, your observations are correct.” There was a palpable shift in the mood of the room, but tensions remained. “However, we must do what is necessary for survival in this universe. I am willing to risk discomfort if it ensures that we will all live long enough to return to our universe.”

The others seemed surprised, but Jim just smirked. “Don’t worry, if I have my way you definitely
won’t be feeling discomfort. Quite the opposite probably.” He winked at Spock in an exaggerated way before regaining some level of seriousness. “Besides, it’ll probably be best if I’m near you at all times; if people see how soft you’re acting assassination attempts could increase.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I am capable of defending myself. I am trained in-

“Whatever you know won’t cut it because you still have lines you won’t cross.” Jim crossed his arms; Spock’s eyes were drawn to his appealingly toned midsection, which was bared by the cropped top he wore. “You need protection, and that’s me.”

“What about the rest of us?” Nyota was irritated. “Are we not good enough targets or something?”

Jim looked over each one of them in turn. “No one really attacks the CMO because everyone needs medical treatment at some point and besides, doctors tend to know the best ways to torture and the worst ways to kill, so if McCoy can keep giving off those crabby vibes he should make it alright.” He looked at Mr. Scott next. “Scotty has explosives placed strategically around engineering and has to enter a code every day to prevent them from going off; no one has found them all yet and no one wants to risk destroying the ship, so he’s safe for now.”

“Laddie.” Scott looked alarmed. “I don’t know any codes.”

Jim waved his hand dismissively. “Relax, I got it. I actually disabled the bombs weeks ago, but Scotty’s a good enough engineer that Spock and I decided to let him keep thinking he was doing something because none of the other engineers are competent enough to replace him, so them staying intimidated works for the best.”

“And what about me?” Nyota had her arms crossed over her chest in a way that drew attention to how the cropped top of the uniform displayed her abdominal muscles. It was not unappealing. “Am I not a good enough target?”

“Hmm.” Jim looked over her for a moment. “Bridge officers can come under attack, but you’re far enough down the line that you should be safe.” He smirked. “Plus, if you keep being so easy to whip up into a murderous rage, I think the crew should be sufficiently scared to approach you just because you’re upset I’m getting all up close and personal with your boyfriend.”

“Really?” Nyota had raised her voice and eyebrow in a way that Spock recognized as her reaching high levels of irritation. This was unlikely to end well. “Just because I don’t want someone else throwing themselves all over my boyfriend and making him uncomfortable you think I’m reaching murderous rage?”

“No.” There was something condescending in Kirk’s smirk. “Not now at least. But if just talk about it is enough for you to start glaring at me like you want to stab me, I can imagine how actually having to sit there and watch will affect you. And if you do want to stab someone, feel free. That’s perfectly ok here, sweetheart.” Nyota tensed further at how his voice dripped condescension on the last word, but Kirk only seemed to enjoy the reaction. “Just remember that you can’t stab me, because I’m the only chance you idiots have at getting back ok.”

“I won’t be stabbing anyone.” Nyota narrowed her eyes. “Some people are able to control their emotions without resorting to violence.”

“Some people can’t handle a little blood, you mean.” The condescension was even stronger now. “But that’s ok, I can get you back to your universe where it’s all hugs and hand holding.” He glanced between her and Spock, that dangerous glint in his eyes had returned. “Or not hand holding. Am I going to get farther with your boyfriend than you have? Is that why you’re getting pissy with
This would not end well. Spock could see that Nyota was beginning to progress past mere irritation into something like true anger, so he decided to intervene. “Enough.” Everyone in the room turned to him; Nyota had not calmed, Kirk looked triumphant, and McCoy and Scott looked extremely uncomfortable. “Dr. McCoy, Mr. Scott, you are dismissed. Evidently there are matters that are best discussed between Uhura, Kirk, and myself.”

Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott looked grateful to leave, but Kirk just smirked. “What, don’t want an audience? You really are different than my Spock.”

“I do not disagree with you; however, I do not see that difference as negative.” Spock looked to McCoy and Scott once more. “Go to engineering and begin to set up our return. Do as much as you can, but I am willing to assist if necessary. Understood?”

“Aye.” Scott looked between Spock, Nyota, and Kirk nervously. “We’ll let you all settle this.”

Nyota appeared to be cooling down somewhat; the tension was leaking out of her frame as she watched Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott prepare to leave. “Stay safe.”

“We will.” Dr. McCoy once more looked over the triad who would be remaining. “I really hope I won’t have to make any house calls tonight though.”

“No promises.” Kirk’s smirk was beginning to seem ever-present. Still, despite the malicious intent behind it here Spock could not help but compare it to his own Captain’s similar expression, which was far more charming.

Dr. McCoy and Mr. Scott shared one more look, both appearing apprehensive, before they left the room together.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I should say something about the tragedy in Las Vegas this weekend, but god I’m just exhausted by it all. This keeps happening, everyone says it’s such a shame, and then the republicans earn their keep for the NRA by ensuring that nothing happens. At the very least, here’s a shoutout to everywhere that’s not the US for being far more sensible with gun control in response to this sort of thing. Hopefully one day we can follow your lead.
Chapter 113

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We're still in the mirror!verse, and now Spock and Uhura are alone with this Kirk. This ought to be fun...

It's another long chapter, but I didn't feel like splitting it so I guess the mirror!verse will just continue treating you all well.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock looked between his remaining companions in the room. The departure of the others had caused a momentary pause in the verbal sparring, but the tension in the room remained high. Despite Spock’s being the object of their disagreement, Nyota and Kirk seemed likely to ignore him in favor of staring each other down.

It was Kirk who finally broke the silence in the room. “So I guess soulmates don’t matter much on your world either.”

“What?” Nyota seemed genuinely caught off guard by the question, as was Spock.

“You haven’t figured it out yet?” Kirk was acting innocent in a way entirely unfitting of his behavior to that point. “Spock and I are soulmates.” He stood from where he’d been leaning against a wall and sauntered over to Spock, resting both hands on Spock’s shoulder then laying his head on his folded hands. “It’s true in another universe we’ve encountered, so I figured it’s most likely true in yours as well.”

Spock looked at Kirk. “Captain Kirk has made no indication that he is aging or that he considers me his soulmate. Additionally,” Spock shifted away from Kirk, “we have no audience here. There is no need for displays of affection.”

“Just because he hasn’t said anything doesn’t mean it’s not true. As for the affection,” Kirk maintained the innocent façade, fluttering his eyelashes at Spock, “you need to get used to it, so we should practice. Can’t have you flinching away from me on the bridge, now can we? We have to keep up the act convincingly.”

“This is absurd.” Nyota’s arms were once more crossed. Her levels of irritation seemed to be rising once more. “You can drop the act, Kirk, we get that you enjoy irritating me. There’s no need to keep dragging it out further.”

“Oh honey, do you really think this is all for you?” Kirk made a tutting noise and shook his head disapprovingly. “Me and my Spock are the real deal. And I bet that’s true where you come from too, but that your Kirk is just too spineless to do anything about it.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Captain Kirk is not a coward.”

Nyota did not seem pleased at his defending Kirk, but she did nod. “As much as I’m not feeling pro-Kirk at the moment, I have to agree with Spock there. Our Jim Kirk sometimes seems fearless to the point of being stupidly reckless.”
“Well if he’s passing up on Spock and going for the chair instead, I’ll certainly accept that he’s stupid and reckless.” Kirk stretched in a way that drew attention to his cropped top, smirking when he saw that Spock’s eyes had been drawn to his toned midsection.

“There is no need to make disparaging comments about our captain.” Both pairs of eyes were once more directed at Spock.

Nyota seemed to be looking at him closely for a moment longer before turning to the other Kirk. “This isn’t the time for this. What exactly will you be doing to help us get home?”

“Oh, I’ll be doing plenty. More than you probably.” He circled closer than her. “I’ll be making sure that Spock here doesn’t get killed. And I’ll also be staying on the bridge; when you fail to distract Sulu I’ll make sure that he doesn’t catch on.”

Nyota narrowed her eyes. “What makes you think I’ll fail?”

“It’s simple.” Kirk crossed his arms once more; Spock felt as if he should intervene but was unsure how he could. “What were you going to do, let your top slip a little lower and bat your eyelashes a bit?” He paused and looked her over as if awaiting a response, but spoke before she could. “Nice as what you’ve got is, that won’t do. Sulu’s not interested in that kind of thing; others have tried and failed. But rumor has it that he’s got a boy hidden away somewhere, so I think I just might try my luck. We’ll see how far I can get it; I’d probably be willing to take it farther than you would anyways.”

“Really?” Nyota raised her eyebrows. “What are you going to do, go down on him in the middle of the bridge?”

“Wouldn’t be the first time that sort of thing happened on the bridge.” Kirk shrugged nonchalantly. “Hardly be the first time my knees hit the deck either.”

“I doubt my counterpart would be pleased that you were…” Spock hesitated, unsure of the word to use, “with others.” By this point both of them had turned to him, Kirk looking smug and Nyota looking suspicious. He would need to explain himself. “Vulcans rarely approve of partners seeking or providing gratification elsewhere while in a relationship.”

“True, but this wouldn’t be the first time I got someone else off so we could get or stay ahead.” Kirk rolled his shoulders. “We have our arrangement worked out.”

“And what sort of arrangement is that?” Nyota crosses her arms once more. “You sleep around for your own gain and Spock acts like he doesn’t annoy him?”

“No.” Kirk cast Nyota a glance that was disapproving and superior simultaneously. “We let rumor get out that I’m not happy with him and that I’m looking for another captain’s bed to land in. For as merciless as you seem to think this universe is, there’s a lot of people willing to play white knight for someone with a sob story and a pretty face.” His expression shifted to a smirk. “Well, that and a talented body. And a skilled mouth. A nice ass. The list goes on.” Kirk had begun counting his assets out on his fingers but looked back to Spock and Nyota. “So they expect to be taking in the hero’s kid who also happens to be a good lay and won’t challenge their ship, but really it’s all an act. I feel out if they’re willing to enter an alliance with me and Spock, maybe have some fun with them, and if they’re interested we work out the details and I come back. If they’re against it or start getting a little too possessive, well then tragedy strikes.” He made an expression of clear mock sadness. “Everything will be normal when we go to their quarters that night, but then the next day someone will discover that some operative of Spock’s took them out and kidnapped me to bring me back here, or at least that’s how the story will go when someone new takes over that ship.” Kirk smiled. “It’s
worked for us so far, and the reunions are always so much fun.”

Nyota and Spock were both quiet for a moment, considering what Kirk had said. In an odd way, Spock could see how that strategy seemed like something that a Kirk warped by this universe would create. Still, he could not imagine the appeal his counterpart would see in this. Perhaps he was ceding to Kirk’s strategy? Spock considered but decided against asking questions. Nyota seemed to be doing the same.

After a moment of that, Kirk groaned and rolled his eyes. “Ugh, I can practically hear you two thinking and I’m not even the one who can read thoughts. Stop getting all worried about what my Spock thinks; I think I would know him better than either of you. He enjoys that he can focus on the captaincy and leave the alliance building to me; like I said, we have it worked out. We both know that in the ways that count, we’re only with each other.” He rolled his shoulders, seeming irritated, but then the usual smirk appeared. “Plus, if he’s really feeling possessive, it’s all the more fun for the both of us. Every now and then my return means I don’t get out of bed for days.”

“How can he run a ship if he is in his quarters with you for days?” Spock felt as though he was missing something, but he was unsure if wanted to discover what.

As if he had been expecting that, Kirk’s eyes took on a mischievous glint. “I never said he was in here with me the full time. But don’t worry, he leaves me plenty stimulated while he’s gone.” The suggestive meaning of his words was nearly palpable.

“Oh my god.” Nyota threw up her hands in what seemed to be a mix of annoyance and perhaps mild disgust. “I really don’t need to know all of this.”

“In that case, I’d suggest avoiding the box under the bed.” Kirk looked back over to Spock. “You can go ahead and take a peek though. Maybe you’ll get some ideas.”

Nyota made a noise at that and glared at Kirk. “If I didn’t suspect that you’d throw yourself on him as soon as I left the room, I’d leave right now.”

Kirk laughed at that and then looked back over to Spock. “Is she always like this?”

“Really?” Kirk looked interested. “That’s something you’ve got over our Uhura; either that or she learned in secret and has been listening in when Spock and I talk; I’ll have to test her when she gets back.”

“Same for your and our Kirk.” Nyota actually seemed a bit impressed. “He’s never shown much of an interest in languages, and Vulcan is known for being especially difficult for humans to master.”

It did not take much for Kirk’s mischievous grin to return. “It’s not the only hard Vulcan thing this tongue has mastered.” He waited for Uhura’s groan at his return to innuendos before continuing. “Of course, the bond helped. Nothing makes learning a language easier than being tapped into the head of a native speaker, and since no one on the crew knows it we figured Vulcan could function like a secret language between us. That was one motivator, and if I needed anything more my Spock can
provide **very** good motivation when he wants.” At that Kirk looked over Spock with a somewhat predatory expression.

Still, something he said had caught Spock’s attention so he decided to ignore the innuendos. “You and the Spock of this universe are bonded?”

“Have been almost the whole time we’ve known each other.” Kirk shrugged nonchalantly, as if he were not talking about a major commitment. “I’d sought him out because after the incident with Nero he seemed like he had potential, but we both realized the connection pretty quickly. He decided to claim what was his.” Kirk looked between them, the calculating look back in his eyes. “What, have you two not even talked about it yet?”

“It is not a decision to be made quickly or rashly.” Spock looked back over at Nyota, who seemed to be thinking and did not look back at him.

“Of course it’s not.” There was a triumphant glint in Kirk’s eye. “I would know, being bonded to a Vulcan and all.” He looked over at Nyota, who still seemed to be thinking and did not look back at him. He looked back to Spock and smiled. “Well, we should be getting to the bridge. I’ve arranged to take this shift with Spock’s usual security, so I’ll be there to make sure that nothing happens. You ready?”

Spock looked over to Nyota, who made eye contact and nodded. He looked back to Kirk. “We are ready.”

Kirk looked slightly displeased at the moment of agreement between them, but he covered it quickly. “Let’s go then.” He turned and led the way to the door, swinging his hips as he walked in a way that Spock did not believe his captain did but drew attention once more to how tight the pants were across his backside. He shouted back over his shoulder once he reached the door. “Are you coming, Captain?”

Spock returned his gaze to Kirk’s face and saw he was smirking. “I will follow you.” He looked back at Nyota, who looked between them once more but moved to follow them once they left the captain’s quarters.

Chapter End Notes

I'm glad all of you (or at least the people who comment) seem to be enjoying mirror!Kirk. He's really fun to write; Jim normally is easy to write for me, but here he's different because he grew up in harsher universe, embraced his devious side, and also focused on becoming a WMD of weaponized sexuality.
Chapter 114

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We are just past the 13th month anniversary for this fic, and also apparently we just passed the 50th anniversary of Mirror, Mirror airing for the first time. So exciting milestones all around, and how about we celebrate by getting to something I know a number of you have been waiting to see: regular timeline!Jim interacting with mirror!Spock! I know a number of you were getting a bit attached to mirror!Jim, but don't worry, we'll get back to him...

Also, another long chapter because I don't feel like splitting it up. I'm probably spoiling you all for when we get back to normal chapter lengths, but oh well.

After a little more deliberation, Jim finally decided that he might as well stop putting it off and actually go see Spock, or whatever version of Spock was currently locked up in the brig. Or at least, a part of the brig separate from the rest of the landing party since they’d had to be separated after trying to break out earlier. Still, even if he was pretty sure that they were from an alternate universe, Jim wanted to know what kind of alternate universe his crew was stuck in. Plus, he wanted to know how that Spock had seemed to know so quickly that something was off; he seemed to know before anyone else, and there was only so much Jim was willing to attribute to Spock being observant.

Which was how he now found himself in the room, staring at the forcefield and beyond it Spock’s back; he was facing the wall sitting in a meditation posture. Jim glanced over at the security officer they’d posted to make sure there were no more breakout attempts. “Have you had any trouble?”

The ensign shook his head. “No problems at all sir. He’s just been sitting there; hasn’t even said anything.”

Well, hopefully that would change. “I want to talk to him to see if I can figure out what’s going on with the away team.” Jim could tell the ensign had questions, but he didn’t really feel like getting into it. “There has to be some sort of explanation for their behavior.”

“Well, hopefully that would change. “I want to talk to him to see if I can figure out what’s going on with the away team.” Jim could tell the ensign had questions, but he didn’t really feel like getting into it. “There has to be some sort of explanation for their behavior.”

“Alright.” He seemed wary. “I’ll be here if—”

“I will only talk if I am alone with Kirk.” They both turned at the sound of Spock’s voice; he hadn’t moved, but neither of them had expected him to actually be listening.

Jim looked over at the ensign. “Give us the room.”

“Sir, are you sure?” He seemed wary. “He’s been violent and tried to escape before.”

“You can leave me a phaser if you think it’ll help, but I don’t think he’s going to try to hurt me.” Jim glanced at the still seated Spock and then back at the ensign. “It’ll be fine. And if it’s not, just say I ordered you out of the room. Or I will order you out of the room.” Despite how odd the situation felt, Jim did his best to summon something like his usual commanding presence. It must have worked because after a moment the ensign carefully placed a phaser on the console before turning to leave.
After the doors closed, Jim looked back in time to see Spock turning and standing in one graceful movement. Despite looking and dressing like Spock, there was a certain dangerous feeling that he gave off that reminded Jim that this wasn’t his Spock, not that Spock was his. This person was close to the Spock he knew, but there was something different still.

Jim felt the other Spock’s eyes traveling up and down his body in an almost hungry way. It made him a bit uncomfortable. “You know, my eyes are up here.”

“I am aware; they are some of your more appealing body parts. For other of your appealing body parts you would have to face the opposite direction. And perhaps disrobe.” The other Spock put his hands behind his back in a way so much like Jim’s Spock (not that Spock was his, dammit), but the hungry look in his eyes remained. “I am unused to seeing you so fully dressed; it seems a waste of fabric to cover what should be displayed.”

Jim really didn’t know how to respond to that. He ran a hand down his face and sighed. “You know, I don’t know how they do things in your universe, but around here we don’t start conversations like that.”

“In my universe, prisoners would rarely be left so unharmed if we wished for information from them.” He raised his eyebrow, clearly unaffected by what Jim saw as the horrific implications of what he’d just said. “I assume you are just here because you would like information?”

Jim honestly wasn’t completely sure why he was here. He’d said he’d wanted information, sure, but that didn’t feel like all of it. He paused, unsure of how to respond.

Not-Spock, though, interpreted his silence another way. “Unless you have another reason for visiting? I suppose I wouldn’t be opposed to a conjugal visit; it would be fascinating to see how you differ physically from your counterpart in my universe.”

“Oh my god.” Jim covered his face with his hand again; he felt like he was beginning to turn red. He removed his hand from his face and was surprised to see not-Spock smirking; it was somehow both slightly terrifying and kinda hot.

“Oh, that delectable flush.” That hunger was back in not-Spock’s eyes; it felt predatory. “I love seeing how much of your skin I can get to flush that red for one reason or another.” His eyes roved over Jim’s body once more. “I believe at one point I managed to make it spread from your face all the way down to your—”

“Ok that’s enough.” Jim still felt his face flush for a variety of reasons, but he really didn’t need to hear this. “Do you have anything to say that isn’t just sexually harassing me?”

“I did not intend it as harassment.” Not-Spock had returned to infuriating calm once more. “I merely intended it as an offer. I know approximately what you have under that uniform and I am very much interested.”

“Well I’m not, and continuing when I’m clearly not interested makes it harassment.” Jim crossed his arms. “But this isn’t what I came here for. My working theory now is you and the rest of the landing party came through from an alternate universe and somehow bodyswapped with my crewmembers during the transport. You seemed to think something was off as soon as you started talking to me, so I was wondering what tipped you off.”

“There were many things.” Not-Spock seemed more serious now. “On my ship, I am the captain and it is rare for you to be either out of my quarters or so completely covered up. Additionally, the décor and procedures aboard my ship are different.”
Jim narrowed his eyes; it didn’t seem like that was the full story. “There’s more than that. You knew that I wasn’t the Jim Kirk of your universe long before anyone on the landing party even seemed to consider that they weren’t on the right ship. Hell, I only came up with the alternate universe theory since I’ve already gotten confirmation that alternate universes exist. So why did you know that I wasn’t your Kirk before you knew anything else was off?”

Not-Spock’s hands dropped from behind his back to his sides; something like defeat crossed his still mostly expressionless face. “You appear physically the same as my Kirk, even in age. I assume that the Spock of your universe is your soulmate as well?”

Jim stiffened. He hadn’t even been aging for a year; most people who didn’t know him well couldn’t tell yet, and even those who knew him hadn’t said anything for the most part. “What makes you say that?”

Not-Spock actually sighed and crossed his arms. “You lack the skills at deception that my Jim has. I can tell that you’re aging because as I believed I have made clear, I know your body exceptionally well. You cannot hide anything from me. I am able to see that you are at least roughly the same physical age as my Jim, and that physical age is not 18. Additionally, you have been behaving oddly in my presence, especially when I make comments about us being together physically. I know your expressions well enough to know that you are exhibiting not only discomfort but also certain amounts of arousal, suggesting you are indeed interested in me, at the very least on a sexual level.”

“Where did you learn to talk dirty like you were before anyway?” Jim really wanted to change the topic suddenly.

“My Jim and I have done much together, and talking is possibly my second favorite activity for him to do with his mouth.” That slight smirk was back. “But that is not my only evidence for the possibility of the soulmate pairing. I feel physically the same as I do in my universe, meaning that this Spock is also aging. It feels like he has been aging for less than a year, just like you seem to be. The logical conclusion of all of this information is that you and this Spock are in fact soulmates.”

“Spock’s aging?” Jim couldn’t help it, he was surprised. “Wait no, I always thought he was aging. He’d stopped aging at 18?”

“Of course.” Not-Spock was infuriatingly calm again, but the underlying smugness remained. “His human half, just as mine did, caused him to cease aging. I had not aged for nearly ten years prior to meeting my Jim and it seems to be the same here; surely you noticed how young he looked when you two first met?”

Jim was feeling a bit self-conscious now. “Vulcans age more slowly than humans. I just assumed it was that.” Jim paused, realizing they’d gotten way off topic from what he wanted. “What does this have to do with you knowing I wasn’t your Jim?”

“Just as in this universe, the Jim Kirk of my universe and myself are soulmates.” Not-Spock looked at Jim carefully. “However, as does not appear to be the case in this universe, my Jim and I are together.”

Jim raised an eyebrow expectantly. “I gathered that much from everything else you’ve said.”

“You did not let me finish.” Something dangerous entered Not-Spock’s eyes, as if he wanted to punish Jim for interrupting him. “As soon as I encountered him, I knew he was mine. I created a psychic link between our minds to tie him to me.”

That sounded a little too one-sided for Jim’s tastes. “You did that? What did he think?”
“He was quite willing.” That smirk was back. “However, he always gets incredibly pliant after several hours of—”

“Not the details I need to know!” Jim didn’t need those mental images right now. He’d be lying if he said he was entirely opposed to having them, but Spock was his first officer and a touch telepath. He didn’t need his mind wandering to that sort of thing.

“If a description is not enough, I would be entirely willing to provide a demonstration.” Not-Spock’s expression was almost unbearably smug and only seemed to get more so at Jim’s confusion. “I can read the arousal on your face as you imagined the scenario I mentioned; as I have said before it is an expression I enjoy quite often.”

Ignoring that, Jim latched onto something else he’d just realized. “Wait, you two are telepathically bonded? Isn’t that like being married for Vulcans?”

“It is.” Not-Spock’s expression had slipped into calm again, but there was something challenging in his expression.

“So you’re married, but you’re still here trying to get into my pants?” Jim felt like he sounded a bit judgmental, but he couldn’t help it. “While I can’t speak for other me, I don’t think I’d like my husband sleeping around like that.”

“I believe he would be just as fascinated by the opportunity as I am.” Not-Spock raised an eyebrow. “Additionally, he has been with others.”

“What, like an open relationship?” Jim couldn’t quite imagine doing that himself, but he knew some people who preferred non-monogamous relationships. “I guess it is another universe, but you don’t strike me as the type to share.”

Not-Spock’s eyes flashed with something dangerous. “He will always belong to me and I to him. It does not matter who uses his body because the rest of him will always belong to only me. Our loyalties lie with each other above all else.”

Jim really wasn’t sure how to respond to that. Still, it seemed he had his answer to his earlier question. “So the bond then? That’s how you knew I wasn’t him?”

“That is part of it.” Not-Spock smirked again. “It was confirmed when you struggled against my hold. He never resists my touch, whatever form it may take.” The look intensified as the predatory glint returned to his eyes. “However, if you free me from here I believe I could train you to be just as accepting of my touch. It would be pleasant for you as well.”

Jim decided that it was time to draw the line. He’d found out what he needed to know and this Spock was really starting to get to him. “Yeah, that’s not happening. I’ve got all the information I needed from you, so I’m leaving now.” He turned and walked away without looking back, but he could feel not-Spock’s eyes on him the entire time until he walked out the door.

Chapter End Notes

So I know this Spock may seem a bit ooc, but remember that 1) in this AU he normally acts less Vulcan than the regular universe Spock does, 2) he and his Jim are pretty open about their sex life, and 3) it’s probably safe to assume that any given mirror character is
trying to mess with/get inside the head of any other character they interact with; that's what makes it fun.
Hello everyone! First off, more people seem to keep discovering this fic, which is pretty amazing. Idk how you're finding out about this fic but I'm glad you're enjoying it!

Anyways, speaking of response to the fic, mirror!Spock seemed to be about as popular as his Kirk (if not more so), which is fun. Looks like I might just have to write that mirror!verse fic after all...

Anyways, normally I try to keep my fics to what I'd call an American PG-13, so mild swearing, some violence, and very little sexual content except for talk and the occasional implied thing. But the mirror!verse (and especially Kirk) seem to keep pushing that. So while I won't promise anything explicit and I don't think I'm doing anything that would warrant a higher rating, it does get a bit dirtier than usual this chapter. So consider this a head's up to those of you who don't enjoy that stuff; we're back in the mirror!verse...

While the three of them took the turbolift to the bridge together, Kirk put a hand on Spock’s chest once they arrived and gestured for Uhura to go first. After a moment, she went through the doors, although not without a pointed glance back at Kirk. Once she was out of the turbolift and at her station, Kirk gestured for Spock to go onto the bridge and followed him out.

Once on the bridge, everyone saluted Spock and he mirrored the salute, as Kirk had told him was proper. Once everyone had returned their attentions to their stations, Spock sat in the captain’s chair and surveilled the bridge. There were many noteworthy changes, mostly in décor and uniform, but he knew that it was also likely that how the systems themselves ran would be different. This Starfleet had had access to superior technology and studied it, which likely meant that they would have capabilities beyond the Starfleet he knew.

For a moment, Spock considered how Starfleet could have been different if he had attempted to salvage the ship from the future rather than destroy it by crashing it into Nero's ship. They likely would have made many advancements in engines and likely also in weapons. Ultimately, Spock did not doubt his decision to destroy the ship from the future, although at the time he was largely motivated by the emotional desire to kill Nero and less focused on the fate of the future ship itself. Still, the incident with Nero had showed the danger that powerful technology falling into the wrong hand could result in. Spock would have to remember that here, they did have powerful technology, even if their morality would likely mean that they would be classified as the “wrong hands” as well.

That thought served as a reminder that Spock should be focused on his surroundings, not on hypothetical scenarios or his past decisions. He looked over the crew specifically. Most people were at the same stations, with the obvious exception of himself and Kirk. Spock glanced over at the science station. Lieutenant Marlena Moreau, as Kirk had informed him her name was, seemed focused on her scanner rather than the rest of the bridge, although she had saluted when Spock came aboard. It was odd to imagine someone else as chief science officer, but Kirk had said that she reserved a portion of the labs for Spock should he ever want to do experiments. For a moment, Spock wondered what the Lieutenant Moreau of his universe was doing; it was not a name he
recognized as being in the science department on the Enterprise, but he knew the names of all of the officers who served under his command. He took a moment to wonder if she had perished around Vulcan, or if she had been one of the many pulled out of escape pods or segments of destroyed ships.

But if he was truly curious, he would have to investigate upon his return to his own universe. For now, he should focus on the bridge, especially since one of the other noticeable changes (and biggest threats, according to Kirk) was directly in front of him.

In this universe, Hikaru Sulu was not a lieutenant but rather a commander, and he served as the chief security officer and first officer. Because of that, he had the most to gain from Spock’s potential problems or death. Spock must remember to stay vigilant; while Kirk and another security officer guarded the back of the bridge and Spock knew Kirk would do everything he could to prevent Spock’s being harmed, it was still best to be on guard.

However, a moment later that focus was challenged by Kirk himself, who came over and sat down across Spock’s lap. “Hey baby. You were looking a bit distracted; I figured I could help with that.” He wrapped his arms around Spock’s neck and leaned in to whisper quiet enough that Spock could hear but likely no one else could. “You need to remember what we talked about. If you act too Vulcan the crew will think something’s up. But don’t worry, I can help with that.” Spock could practically feel Kirk’s smirk a moment before Kirk once more leaned closer to nip at his ear.

At this point Kirk shifted so he was straddling Spock in the captain’s chair with his knees against the back of it; his hands, which had been loosely held behind Spock’s neck, shifted so that one tangled in Spock’s hair and the other slid down Spock’s back until he was pressing against Spock’s lower back, encouraging him to shift his hips forward until they met Kirk’s. Spock found himself doing it; he was almost compelled by Kirk in a way that almost seemed to match accounts he had heard of people under the influence of pheromones from Orion women.

As soon as their hips met, Kirk shifted slightly so that Spock’s groin was pressed between his legs and began to make gyrating movements, rubbing them together. He had shifted his head to the other side and now leaned in to whisper in Spock’s other ear. “You know, you can touch me. This isn’t one of those places where you have to pay extra for that.” He gave that ear the same treatment he had given the other one before shifting his hands from where they had previously settled to run them down Spock’s arms where they had been resting on the armrests of the captain’s chair. He ran his hands across Spock’s in a gesture that was not quite a kiss but was still not something Spock would normally do in public before Kirk was grabbing Spock’s hands and shifting one to the skin of his side exposed by his cropped top and the other to his bottom, where he squeezed Spock’s hand over the cheek. He then leaned his forehead against Spock’s so Spock had no choice but to look him in the eye, something he had been avoiding, although there were not many places he could look without seeing Kirk. Kirk smirked at him and squeezed the hand he had over Spock’s on his rear once more. “Well come on, guide me. Don’t you want to take command, Captain?”

The question was punctuated by Kirk moving in to begin kissing and nipping along Spock’s jaw; he felt his grips on Kirk tightening almost involuntarily and between all the stimulation was nearly unable to respond. “I believe you are doing an adequate job.”

Kirk pulled back from his jawline. “Aww, just adequate?” There was a flash of something challenging in his eyes. “I guess I’ll have to do better.”

He shifted his hands again; one returned to the small of Spock’s back and pushed slightly and the other braced himself on the back of the captain’s chair; with his newfound leverage, he ground himself against Spock even harder. He leaned in to Spock’s ear once more. “C’mon baby, touch me like you mean it.”
Kirk retuned his attention to Spock’s jaw after that, but Spock found himself following what Kirk had instructed. His hand that had been on Kirk’s side began to shift upwards until his fingers slid under Kirk’s top and found warm, smooth skin. His other hand stayed where it was, but he began to wonder what he would find if he slid that hand under Kirk’s clothing as well…

As if he could notice the change, Kirk’s plump lips smirked against Spock’s skin. “There we go, baby. Just like that.” Not stopping any of his other movements, Kirk’s mouth came tantalizingly close to Spock’s but did not make contact. When Spock tried to lean forward to meet him Kirk’s hand that had been at his lower back came up to tangle in Spock’s hair, holding him back. “What is it? Wanna kiss me? Wanna make sure everyone on this bridge knows who I belong to?”

All the sensations Kirk was eliciting were nearly overwhelming; Spock had never felt attraction this strong. He was afraid that if he opened his mouth that no words would be able to come out, so he merely nodded as much as he was able with Kirk’s grip on the back of his head.

“Aww, that could be fun. I bet you’d love to just tear off my clothes and take me right here.” Kirk’s voice was barely above a whisper and he emphasized his word with a sharp roll of his hips before returning to his previous motion; Spock could practically feel the desire rolling off of him.

Spock found his grip on Kirk’s shirt and pants tightening slightly. It would be easy to do exactly what Kirk suggested…

Kirk had shifted from Spock’s face back to his ear; he was close enough that all Spock could focus on was the warm wetness of his breath on his ear. “Too bad though. Tempting as it is to do it now, I should probably save some things for your Kirk.”

Yes. His Kirk. Spock found his mind drifting back to the Kirk he knew, but with his current arousal levels all Spock could think of were the times the captain had been without his shirt, whether intentional or not, those plush lips, and those few times Spock had accidentally encountered him changing in their shared bathroom. It had been rare, but there were times an eidetic memory was beneficial. He thought of the curve of Kirk’s backside that he had seen through his tight boxer briefs and wondered if it would feel the same in his hand as the one that he held now, if it would feel the same as he squeezed it, if his Kirk’s breath would hitch like this Kirk’s did…

But a moment later there was a quick shifting motion and his hands were holding nothing. Spock looked up in confusion to see Kirk standing before him, a knife raised to Chekov’s throat. Chekov was standing there with one hand on the other wrist, as if he were trying to soothe the pain of something being twisted out of it. A quick glance showed a knife lying on the ground not far from them. Spock’s senses began to return to him enough that he realized Kirk was talking. “—realistically think you could get away with trying to assassinate the captain on the bridge? That’s pathetic. You let your ambitions get ahead of your sense, and now you’ll have to pay the price.” Kirk glanced back over his shoulder at Spock. “What do you think, Captain? The booth?”

Spock was unsure what the booth was, but at the moment he was still slightly dazed from Kirk’s…ministrations. “Yes. That will do.”

“Alright.” Kirk smirked and winked at him as if he knew exactly how much he had affected Spock, which he likely did, before signaling one of the other security officers who had been on the bridge. “Take him to the booth.” The other officer came forward, phaser drawn, and roughly grabbed Chekov’s shoulder to escort him off the bridge.

Once Chekov was out of sight, Spock’s eyes returned to Kirk. Would they resume where they had left off? Spock would not be opposed, and based on the look in Kirk’s eyes he would not be either.
But there was the sound of a throat clearing off to the side, and Spock looked over to see Nyota. There was the sudden realization that she had witnessed all of that; Spock felt himself sitting up slightly from where he had begun leaning towards Kirk. “Is there something to report, Lieutenant?”

“Yes, actually.” Nyota adjusted her earpiece; her face was unreadable. “There were calls on a private channel for you, but I told them you were otherwise occupied. Would you like to take them now?”

A part of his mind, the urges that he did not believe he would encounter this strongly until his Time, suggested that he would rather take Kirk now, but ultimately he regained control of himself. Nyota referring to a ‘private channel’ meant that either McCoy or Scott had attempted to contact him; that would mean that he was needed elsewhere on the ship to complete something for their mission home.

He nodded at Nyota. “I will go answer those calls; route them to a briefing room for me.” She nodded, but they both knew it was unnecessary. He would just need to use the communicators to contact the others. Then he would find out what he needed to do to get them home. He turned and left the bridge, aware of how Kirk’s eyes lingered on him as he left.

Chapter End Notes

Saving this for the end note because it's less exciting, but it really is awkward trying to write a semi-sexual scene from Spock's POV. At what point do you just drop the Spock-level vocab? It's unclear.

Also, probably not your focus here but props to whoever catches the reference to TOS in here.
Hello everyone! We're still in the mirror!verse, even if we are taking a turn for the dark rather than dirty this time because no one from the mirror!verse is really that good of a person. And we're getting a new POV!

Nyota was not the jealous type. She really wasn’t, at least not usually. But now…

It hadn’t exactly been fun to watch Kirk grinding all over Spock and slobbering all over his face. It really didn’t help that every now and then, almost like he knew she was looking somehow, he would look up and make direct eye contact while still mid-lap dance with Spock and do that goddamn smirk. And while encouraging Spock to feel him up. It might have been better if Spock hadn’t seemed so into it. But the way he was reacting was definitely stronger than anything she’d gotten out of him.

Admittedly, she and Spock hadn’t gotten all that far before. They’d kissed, more Vulcan style than human style, and even then typically just short touches rather than the full thing. Even when they had the time or opportunity to go further, they often didn’t. It was like they had skipped straight to the old married couple stage.

They got along well though. They could have plenty of interesting conversations about all sorts of topics, and there were few other people Nyota had met where they could just contentedly share space and do their own thing for so long without it being awkward.

And she did care about him. And she was pretty sure he cared about her too. But even after being together over a year and knowing each other longer than that she still wasn’t aging. But not all romantic relationships were between soulmates. So what if it wasn’t the dramatic true love soulmate fairytale that everyone loved hearing about? It still worked for them. Yes, it wasn’t the most passionate relationship (and every now and then it made her miss the arrangement she and Gaila used to have), but it wasn’t bad.

But was “not bad” and good companionship really all Nyota was looking for in a relationship? Spock was great, but was she just sticking with him because she was worried she wouldn’t be able to find anything better?

This was really not the time to be thinking of this. She needed to focus on getting home. Even if that meant dealing with a certain annoyance whose pastimes seemed to be pissing her off and draping himself all over Spock. Nyota couldn’t believe that he’d even said that he and Spock were soulmates; she still wasn’t sure what to think of that. Was he being honest then? Or was he just playing them? It was pretty hard to tell.

Almost as if her thoughts had summoned him, a moment later Kirk appeared, his clothes still a bit rumpled from when he’d gotten Spock to feel him up. Nyota tried ignoring him, but then he leaned against her console and crossed his arms, making it basically impossible for her to work. She looked up at him with what was probably closer to a glare then necessary. “What do you want? Shouldn’t you be off guarding Spock?”
He raised an eyebrow at her. “You know, if you want help relaxing, all you have to do is ask me to find us somewhere secluded. I could have that tension dropping off of your face pretty quickly.” He looked over her face with mock seriousness. “It’d be good too; it would be a shame for worry lines to mar that pretty face of yours.”

Nyota crossed her arms but made sure to keep her voice quiet enough that they wouldn’t be overheard. “What’s your point Kirk? And again, are you leaving Spock in danger?”

He sighed and rolled his eyes. “Relax princess, he’s fine. I left him with people I trust, and with one would-be assassin already in the booth I doubt anyone’s going to be making another attempt today.” He rolled his shoulders and looked her in the eye again. “I switched shifts so that I would be on the bridge, and that way when it’s showtime for distracting you know who I’d be here. You know, for when you can’t do what it takes.”

Nyota rolled her eyes. “What, one free show for the bridge wasn’t enough?”

Kirk grinned. “I’ve done more than that before. And anyways, was that you giving me a free pass to take over because you can’t do it?”

“Not necessarily.” Nyota glanced cautiously around the bridge, but no one seemed to be paying attention to them. “But one of us will have to signal the others once Sulu’s distracted so they can take advantage of the window.”

“Alright then.” Kirk pushed off of her station. “Make the call, I’m going in.”

Nyota was about to protest, but he’d already left. She watched him go over to Sulu but decided to wait a moment before making the call; they’d need to make sure Sulu’s attention was completely away from the console, otherwise he’d catch on to the energy transfer they needed to get back home.

Kirk leaned against Sulu’s station similar to how he had done with Nyota, but something about the way he was holding himself seemed a bit different. There was a bit more…intent there. After a moment of Sulu not responding, Kirk shifted a bit closer. “Hello there, Commander.”

Sulu kept looking between his console and the viewscreen. “You can drop the act, Kirk. As amusing as the free shows are, we all know the Vulcan’s got you on a tight leash.”

Kirk was unfazed. “Now how would you know about that? We keep that sort of thing to our quarters.” He sunk a little lower against the console so Sulu would have to look him in the face. “Have you been spying on us? Because if you wanted to watch all you had to do was ask.” Kirk’s voice had dropped to a purr. “And if you wanted to participate, well now may be your chance.”

The attention on the bridge had been drawn to Sulu and Kirk, but Nyota was still careful to be discreet when she pulled out her communicator. Would this be their chance?

Sulu’s attention had turned to Kirk. “Are you really offering that right here in the middle of the bridge? Aren’t you worried about his operatives dragging you back like they always do?”

“Meh.” Kirk shrugged. “A little variety is always nice, and if I can’t get to another ship I may as well do what I can here.” He eyed Sulu up and down and licked his lips in way that was probably meant to seem natural. “You’re a rather attractive option.”

Sulu scoffed, but he narrowed his eyes. “I think if I wanted a shot, I can wait til after your boyfriend fails and the Empire takes him out. With the way he’s acting, it shouldn’t be long now. I’ll be sure to take a turn before they ship you off to wherever the consorts of failed captains go.”
That actually seemed to strike a nerve for Kirk; he narrowed his eyes at Sulu. “Maybe I’ll be the one getting a shot at you, but in the less fun way.” He rolled his hips off of the console, looking over Sulu disdainfully. “Don’t say I never gave you the chance.” He looked back at Sulu before walking to the back of the bridge near the turbolift and Uhura’s station. Without looking directly at her, Kirk mumbled, “Your turn, honey.”

Nyota decided to ignore the pet name for now. She had a job to do. And while she’d need to do it soon since they had a time crunch and she didn’t want Spock getting killed or all of them getting stuck here, it seemed like it would be better to wait a bit so that Sulu didn’t get suspicious.

That, and she needed to think of a strategy. She remembered Kirk saying he’d heard rumors that Sulu had a boy somewhere, plus Kirk’s attempt had failed pretty spectacularly. So seduction was out. The Sulu she knew worked out regularly and had more combat training than her, and he wasn’t even on a murder ship, so she probably couldn’t take this one in a fight. Subduing him was also out. Nyota needed a different strategy…

She ran back over everything she’d thought and seen and then it occurred to her. She had a plan. Nyota nonchalantly leaned down, pulling the knife from her boot. It’d be better to go in armed. She stood up and stretched, leaving her communicator on her chair where Kirk could reach it to signal the rest of the team. She glanced back at Kirk, acting like it was disdainful (not that she had to act too much with how he’d been treating her), but whispered to him, “As soon as I get down there, get ready to signal them.” Kirk nodded minutely and she turned to head to the lowered central section of the bridge.

She knew she had to get attention, so she made sure to put an extra swing in her hips as she walked and throw her braid over her shoulder. Once she got to Sulu’s station, Nyota rested an elbow on the back of his chair. “I want to talk to you, Commander.”

Sulu glanced up at her, decidedly unimpressed. “First Kirk now you? What is it, try to seduce your superior officer day?”

Nyota rolled her eyes. “We both know I wouldn’t have that much of an effect on you. I actually do want to talk to you, although Kirk is part of it.”

“Yeah?” Sulu turned a bit more to her. “What about him?”

“Does he seem more desperate than usual today?” Nyota rolled her shoulders. “He was hitting on you, and he even propositioned me. A little below his usual targets, don’t you think?”

“Maybe.” The word was a bit drawn out, as if Sulu was considering it. He turned towards her. “What’s your point, Lieutenant? I don’t have time for games.”

Nyota grinned, trying to get that edge of danger Kirk had been taunting her with all day. “Trust me, I’m not playing around.” She shifted the knife in her hand, carefully holding the tip of the blade with her other hand. “Kirk’s looking for other options, Spock’s acting odd, it seems like there might be some problems.” She looked Sulu directly in the eye. “Problems that could mean you’d advance.”

“And?” She had Sulu’s attention now; she hoped Kirk was signaling the crew.

“‘And?” She had Sulu’s attention now; she hoped Kirk was signaling the crew.

“It’s simple.” Nyota kept playing with the knife, swinging it lazily with one hand again. “New boss about to advance, get on good terms with the new boss and maybe you’ll get some kickbacks under the new regime. Maybe next week you’ll be talking to Lieutenant Commander Uhura.”

“Oh?” Sulu raised an eyebrow. “And why would I do that?” He started to turn back to his console,
but Nyota stopped him with a hand on the back of his chair so that he stayed facing her.

She leaned in to whisper in his ear, shifting her hand to his shoulder. “I know about Ben. He seems a bit too good for you, doesn’t he? It’d be such a shame if something happened to him, especially if the wrong people found out about him…”

The hand on his shoulder was all the early warning Nyota got as Sulu rapidly jumped to his feet, actually looking mad. “You better watch your place, Lieutenant, and keep your mouth shut.”

Nyota backed up, trying to keep her posture relaxed but keeping her grip on her knife steady just in case. “You mind my place and I’ll watch my mouth. Keep that in mind.”

Sulu watched her as she cautiously backed her way to her station and she didn’t take her eyes off of him until she was back in her seat and he’d turned back forward again.

After a minute of sitting at her station thinking over what she’d just done, her communicator dropped into her lap. Nyota cautiously glanced up and saw Kirk standing a bit closer than before, still looking forward.

“That was just long enough for the boys to get the job done; good going.” Kirk glanced down to her, smirking a bit. “I don’t know what you said, but it sure as hell had an effect. Looks like you might just be able to fit in here after all, girlie.”

A quick glare got Kirk to back off before Nyota turned back to her station, resting her head on her hand. What the hell had she just done?

Chapter End Notes

I think everyone’s getting a bit eager to get back by this point, or at least eager to get out of this universe before it eats them alive.
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! The landing party might not be back in their universe yet, but we are now. And we’re seeing a character that I hope at least some of you enjoy as much as I do...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim needed a distraction. But basically all of his friends were on the landing party, so his options were limited. No drinking with Scotty, no drinking and talking with Bones (he had moment of realization that he should probably have more non-drinking hobbies), no chess with Spock (there’s one, although it wasn’t unheard of for him to drink during games), no good naturedly bothering Uhura. He could spar with Sulu, but Jim just wasn’t feeling that right now. But there was still someone on the ship he knew he could go to.

That was how he found himself outside of Gaila’s door. They’d visited each other occasionally when they were both free, but since she was usually working odd hours with the ship’s computer system their schedules didn’t always line up. Jim knew that he could change that if he wanted, but he didn’t want to show too much favoritism, although he knew there were captains who did. Still, he’d take advantage of having someone to talk to now.

Gaila answered the door a moment later, already changed into casual clothes instead of her uniform. Although she smiled when she saw him her expression dropped when she saw his face. She said something that might have been a curse word in Orion. “Jim, what’s up? You look terrible.”

“Can I come inside?” When she nodded Jim came in and plopped down on the bed, first sitting then letting his back fall onto it. That really only left the desk for her, which made him feel a little bad. He briefly thought about telling her they should go to his quarters where they’d have more room, but he ultimately decided against it. He was too tired to move now.

“Wow.” Gaila sat at the desk and looked him over. “So what’s up?”

He lifted his head to look at her. “Technically this is the kinda thing that only the senior staff should know, but the senior staff is short-staffed at the moment, so I’ll let you in if you promise not to tell anyone.”

“I’ll keep it to myself.” She hesitated for a moment. “Does this have to do with the landing party?”

Jim’s head snapped back up to her. “What makes you say that?”

“Well for starters, they’re all in the brig because they were apparently acting weird and violent as soon as they came back from the planet. Plus, they hacked into the computers to escape the brig, but yours truly shut that down, and now they’re all in separate cells.” At his incredulous look she just sighed. “Jim, this isn’t that big of a ship. You’re from a small town; you should know how quickly interesting gossip can spread.”

Jim felt himself making a face as he considered that. She had a point. “Ok, so you know that much. Anything else?”
“Not really, but I bet you’ll tell me if you really want to.” She got up from the desk chair and sat beside him on the bed. “Unless you don’t want to talk. If you want, I could do that thing that always helped you relax back at the Academy.”

He rolled his head to look over at her. “The thing with your hands or…”

“The other thing,” Gaila smiled at him mischievously.

Jim groaned a bit before it turned into a laugh. “Maybe I’m getting old, but I think talking might be better now.”

Her eyes widened slightly at that, but he could tell it was mostly for effect. “Really? You never used to turn down that thing.” She looked him over closely. “Course from what I’ve heard, you’ve been turning people down more often than not, no matter what the offer.”

He looked at her in confusion. “Where do you hear this stuff?”

“Like I said, it’s a small ship.” She smirked at him. “Plus, Orions never give away their sources. Now scoot over, it is my bed after all.” He moved over and Gaila plopped down on the bed next to him so their shoulders touched. “So what’s really bothering you?”

“The thing with the landing party is definitely part of it. But it isn’t all of it.” Jim looked at her out of the corner of his eyes for a moment. “What do you know about humans and soulmates?”

“Well.” She shifted a bit, turning her head to look at him. “I know you can never really tell how old a human is, because your aging process is really weird. It just stops until it apparently gets triggered by meeting with someone, which could happen at any point. I know most people we went to the academy with still look the same as when we started there, even though it’s been years.” Gaila paused, the gears clearly turning in her head as to why he brought this up now.

“You’ve got the basics down.” Jim shifted an arm to pillow his head.

A moment later Gaila shot upright into a sitting position and looked at him with wide eyes, this time not just for effect. “Wait a minute. You joked about getting older a minute ago. Humans don’t make those kinds of jokes casually.” She looked at him carefully now, studying his face. “They only say that kind of stuff if they think they’ve met the one, or ones.” Her eyes narrowed. “Jim, are you aging?”

Jim sighed and pushed himself upright so he could look her in the eye. “You got it.”

“So who is it? Do you know?” Gaila grinned at him for a moment before her smile faded at his lack of response. “Is this what’s wrong?”

“Got it again.” Jim looked around her room for something to drink but decided against it and fell back down on the bed again. “Let’s see if you can guess who now.”

“Well, if it’s coming up now, it’s probably someone on the landing party.” She laid down next to him again. “You’ve known Nyota and Len for years, so I think I can rule them out.” She made a considering noise. “You met Scotty and Spock at around the same time, so that could add some challenge, but I’m pretty sure Scotty’s single unless you count the ship, so you wouldn’t be angsting like this. I also heard that you just went to see Spock alone.”

“What?” Jim twisted to look at her. “Seriously, where do you hear this stuff? You better not be hacking into the computers.”
She turned her head and raised an eyebrow at him. “Really? Not that I’m doing it, but you’re gonna get all high and mighty about hacking, Mr. seduced-me-to-get-my-Kobayashi-Maru-access?”

“You’re still hung up on that?” He raised his eyebrows at her and she made a face and shrugged to let him know she was mostly joking. “Plus, I seduced you before that for other reasons.”

“And you weren’t always the one doing the seducing either.” Gaila looked at him and smiled. “You were a fine looking man Jim Kirk. Too bad now you’re aging and it’ll all go away. I bet you’re gonna overeat your metabolism and get fat.”

“Shut up.” He grinned at her and slapped her arm. “I’m gonna have the body of a god forever.”

“Anyways.” She rolled onto her side and looked at him directly. “Was I right? Is it Spock?”

He sighed and raised an eyebrow at her. “Are you sure Orions aren’t telepathic?”

“I think I would know if I was.” Gaila looked at him for a second before her gaze went serious again. “So I’m right?”

“Yeah, you are.” Jim put a hand over his eyes. “Bones knows about the aging, but he doesn’t know that I know who it is. Or at least, I’m like 90-something percent sure he hasn’t figured it out.” He looked at her from between his fingers. “And I don’t think Spock even knows anything, so let’s keep this one out of the rumor mill, ok?”

“You got it.” She rolled back onto her back but looked at him out of the corner of her eye. “You know, I’m definitely not the expert here since this isn’t a scenario I’d ever even be in, but maybe you should open up to someone who would understand. I don’t know if many other people onboard have met their soulmates, but I bet some of the other humans would at least be willing to hear you out and have a better context for understanding it. If I remember right, way over half of the holovids from Earth feature some sort of soulmate drama thing, so it’s clearly a big deal for you guys. Someone would be willing to help you out. I mean, if Len already knows you’re aging, he’s already halfway there, right?”

“I could tell him.” Jim mused it over in his head. “He and Spock don’t really get along well though; although I can’t tell if they still hate each other or if they’re arguing for sport at this point.”

“I think they also made holovids with that.” Gaila sounded serious but then shot him a grin. “Do you know how many pirated holovids I saw when I still lived on Syndicate planets? That’s how I learned Standard.”

“I don’t know if it counts as pirated if you can get them for free in the Federation anyway.” Jim glanced back at her with a smile. “Fine. I’ll tell Bones.” He started to get up but then he remembered his best friend’s current state. “Or at least I will if he gets back to normal.”

“When.” Gaila shoved his arm. “This crew can get through anything. Have a little faith in them.”

“You’re right.” He wanted to believe her, but Jim’s mind was still running through worst case scenarios.

“You’re still moping.” Gaila looked at him for a moment before getting up and digging through her desk. “I know just what to do.” After a moment she triumphantly pulled out a disk. “One piece of twentieth century Earth sci-fi. We can watch it and debate if they got more wrong or right technologically.”

Jim felt himself smiling as he sat up. “They were always so optimistic about when flying cars would
show up. So wrong, but so optimistic.”

“That’s the spirit.” Gaila readied the movie then sat back down on the bed next to him. “Now come on, it’s starting.”

He shifted to see better and smiled at her over the opening credits. “Thanks Gaila.”

She smiled back. “Anytime.”

Chapter End Notes

So from the movies we have no idea what Gaila was going to do since we barely see her, but since she seemed to be involved with programming the Kobayashi Maru I have a vague idea of her doing something with the ship's computer systems.

Any guesses as to where we'll go next once the mirror arc ends?
Hello everyone! First off, it's been a bit since I said it so I just want to say again how much I appreciate all the feedback this fic gets. I know I mention commenters a lot (and I do love all of you), but again, even things like kudos, bookmarks, and subscriptions keep happening, which blows my mind. You're all awesome and make my day!

Anyways, the mirror!arc is coming to a close, although it seems like it could have some lasting implications...

A different POV than one of the usual ones here, but not one I've never done before.

Finally, it was time to get out of this goddamn universe. Nyota rolled her shoulders and shifted her arms where they were crossed over her chest; as far as she was concerned they couldn’t leave soon enough. She didn’t like it here; she didn’t like this Kirk and she definitely didn’t like the way she was starting to act here. Maybe it was the irritation she was feeling with Kirk reacting with her nerves, but she felt like she was getting ready to snap. She couldn’t believe what she’d already done; even if she’d never met the Ben of this universe, she knew how important he was to Hikaru in their universe. He was even talking about popping the question once they were back on Earth.

So thinking about threatening a man who always just seemed sweet and even tempered and utterly smitten with his soulmate was making Nyota feel a bit uneasy with herself. Sure, it had been for the mission and she was sure no one else had heard Ben’s name so he’d probably be safe, but who knew in this horrible universe?

Spock had been talking with Kirk at the transporter console, but evidently they’d finished because now he walked over to her. At least it seemed like Kirk hadn’t been getting handsy this time. Spock paused next to her. “You seem distressed. What is wrong?”

She raised an eyebrow at him. “Did Kirk tell you about what happened on the bridge?” When Spock shook his head Nyota sighed and looked down. “His attempt at distracting Sulu didn’t work. So I did it, and worked. But I did it by threatening Ben.” She looked back up to see Spock’s reaction.

Spock seemed surprised by that but otherwise he was difficult to read. He did seem to pick up on what was upsetting her though. “Nyota, we are all just doing what we must to survive in this universe so we can return to our own. Do not judge yourself so harshly.”

“Yeah.” Nyota scoffed. “I’m sure everyone here says they’re just trying to survive. But does that really justify it?”

That actually seemed to make Spock pause a moment, but he stayed as calm as ever. “What we have done is nothing compared to what the inhabitants of the universe do.”

Nyota had to contain a bitter laugh; Len and Scotty were talking to Kirk about the transporter and she really didn’t want to get all of their attention right now. She looked back to Spock. “That’s easy for you to say. All you’ve done is get a lap dance from someone who looks like the captain. I
threatened an innocent man!”

Everyone looked over for a moment in response to her raising her voice slightly; once they went back to their conversation Spock turned back to her. “We do not know the nature of his character here. He is likely very dissimilar to the Ben we know.”

That was probably true; it was like everyone’s virtues got swapped for vices here. But still… “It doesn’t matter.” Nyota shifted her arms a bit, wrapping them tighter around her chest. “I know nothing about him, but that didn’t stop me.” She shifted and looked toward the others, who seemed to be finishing up. “I don’t like what I’m becoming here. I just want to get out of this universe.”

“Amen to that.” Len and Scotty had come over, but Kirk was at a comm panel on the wall. Len stopped next to her. “I can’t wait to get back to a Sickbay that’s not a damn torture chamber.”

Nyota was about to respond, but then Kirk was coming over and somehow taking off his top and projecting an air of command anyways. “You all need to go with what I’m telling you to do right now. Spock, get against the wall.”

A quick shove to the shoulders and Spock was doing just that; Nyota got a quick look at what looked like a tattoo on Kirk’s chest before he was pressing his full body against Spock and shoving his face against Spock’s neck, probably doing something that’d leave a mark. He grabbed Spock’s hands and put them on his own hips.

Everyone backed away, but before anyone could ask what was going on, the doors opened, revealing a smirking Sulu with a phaser. “I knew something was going on here.”

Kirk looked back over his shoulder and smirked, but didn’t stop the grinding movements he’d started on Spock. “Sulu! You weren’t invited to watch this time, but honestly all you have to do is ask. Between this and the bridge you certainly seem interested.”

“Cut the crap, Kirk. I know something’s going on here and certain members of the landing party aren’t exactly what they seem.” He smiled. “The three boys here didn’t even seem like enough of a threat to warrant bringing backup.”

The three boys? What about her? Nyota was going to ask, but before she could Kirk spoke up again.

“Don’t get cocky; you’re still outnumbered.” Kirk still hadn’t gotten off of Spock, even if he did seem more focused on Sulu at the moment. “It’s five against one.”

“Oh god, did he actually think she was from around here? How horribly had she been acting? Nyota quickly shook off those thoughts; this was a time for action, not rumination. She needed to use this opportunity. Hoping the surprise hadn’t shown on her face, Nyota smiled. “You know it.” She walked to stand by Sulu, glancing over her shoulder to convey to the rest of the crew that she had this handled.

Evidently they had a bit to learn about this sort of thing still. “Nyota!” Scotty shouted out after her and she almost felt bad. “How could you?”

“Yes!” She glared at them, hoping they’d get it was for show. She glanced at Sulu before looking back. Len and Scotty looked a bit confused and hurt, and Spock looked a bit confused too. Kirk had a closed off, calculating look on his face. Let’s hope they’d get it this time. “I’m just trying to ensure my place on an Enterprise with the right man in the captain’s chair.” That earned a smirk from Sulu when she looked back at him as she got to his side. She really hoped her crew got the hint
this time. Nyota reached for the knife in her boot.

Sulu glanced at her out of the corner of his eye, but his focus was still mostly on the group in front of them. “Got your target picked out?”

She glanced at him but looked back to the rest of the crew and smirked; they seemed to be tensing up. So much for her hints. Nyota pulled the knife from her boot a bit more. “I sure do.” As quickly as she could Nyota turned and brought her knife up and sliced up across the side of Sulu’s face; he turned to her in surprise, clearly about to speak, but her focus was on using her free hand to wrestle the phaser from his grip before he could shoot her.

It was a bit of a struggle, but the pain must have been throwing him off because Nyota managed to get it out of his grip and before she knew it Nyota had both the phaser and the knife pointed at him. She was practically growling when she spoke. “If you know what’s good for you, you’ll get out of here before a facial scar is the least of your worries.”

Sulu’s hand was now on the side of his face. “What the hell, you goddamn—”

Nyota was damn sick of the names men were calling her in this universe. She fired a warning shot from the phaser at his feet. “Run! Or the next shot won’t miss.”

That seemed to do the trick, because the next moment he was scrambling for the door. Once he was clear she shifted her grip on the knife so she could enter the code to lock the doors and then turned back to the team. Scotty, Len, and Spock all looked surprised and maybe a little scared or concerned (with varying degrees of expression of course) and Kirk looked impressed; given what he thought was impressive Nyota decided not to be happy about it.

She tucked the knife back into her boot and powered down the phaser. “I am damn tired of this universe. Let’s get back to our own, ok? Kirk, you can work the controls. Boys, get on the transporter pad.” Despite being possibly the lowest ranked person in the room (she still wasn’t sure about Kirk here), everyone snapped to follow her orders.

Once they were in place, Kirk began to set up the transporter. He looked over them. “Let’s hope this works. Are you ready?”

Nyota was calming down (and she was sure that it would hit her soon that she’d assaulted and threatened an alternate version of one of her friends), but for now she just looked over the rest of the room. Everyone nodded, so she looked at Kirk. “Energize.”

The room began to dissolve.

Chapter End Notes

Looks like the combat training Uhura got paid off.

Also, anyone else keeping up with Discovery? Cuz I’m up to date and would be down to talk in the comments (or on tumblr)

Anyways, tune in next chapter to see if the transport is successful...
Chapter 119

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! This chapter will mark the formal end of our mirror arc, although there will still be implications to explore. The format of this will be a little different than past chapters, but you should still be able to get it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim had finished his movie with Gaila and was now just in his quarters thinking over what they’d talked about. It probably would be good to talk to someone. Bones would probably understand, assuming he’d get Bones back.

The next moment, he heard a familiar whistle from the comm panel in his room before a frantic voice came through. “Sir, this is transporter room two. we’re getting extremely odd readings from the transporter. It’s like someone is trying to beam in but the pattern isn’t complete.”

Jim sprung up from where he’d been lounging on his bed. Could this be the landing party coming back? “One moment; hold the signals if you can, and when I say to, beam the landing party from the brig to the transporter pad.” After a quick response Jim commed the brig. “You need to release the prisoners on my command.”

“Sir?” The officer sounded confused.

“Just trust me on this. Do it in exactly five seconds.” After quick agreement Jim switched back to the transporter room. “The landing party should be available to beam from the brig any second now; I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

Jim didn’t even wait for a response this time; he was already out of his room and on his way to the transporter room.

They must have both listened to him (and Jim would have to add to the list of people getting commendations after all of this) because once Jim got to the transporter room he saw four figures taking shape on the transporter padd. He almost breathed a sigh of relief when they materialized into the familiar forms of the landing party, but he was still wary since they’d looked right last time.

There was a tense moment when everyone seemed to be taking in the room and its inhabitants. No one seemed quite sure if it was all as it should be.

After a moment though, the tension eased. Jim smiled at them, glad he wouldn’t need a phaser this time. “Welcome back.”

They all focused on him and they somehow seemed both relieved and uneasy. Scotty finally spoke up. “Captain?”

“It’s me.” Jim looked across the group. “I guess going forward we’ve got a new rule about never transporting during ion storms, huh?”

“Indeed.” Spock was the first to step off of the transporter padd; Jim glanced at him and for a moment everything the other Spock had said flashed through his mind; when they made eye contact
both of them went quiet and for some reason Jim felt like he wasn’t the only one trying not to blush.

“It is good to be back.” Uhura seemed distracted as she got off the transporter pad. “Permission to go back to my quarters and save the report for tomorrow?”

She wasn’t looking at him, but it was late and god knows what they’d been through so Jim decided to not question it. “Granted. All of you should go get some rest; we can sort out all of this tomorrow.”

There was grumbled thanks from everyone (except Spock, who just nodded) and they filed out of the room, all seeming to go their separate ways.

Jim just looked at them leave before nodding to the transporter technician. “Great job; looks like we got them back alright.” Jim didn’t wait for much of a response before he was following the team out the door and making his way to his own quarters, exhaustion setting in as if he’d absorbed it from them.

Meanwhile…

As soon as his Spock (and the rest of the landing party, not that he cared as much) appeared on the transporter padd and he felt the bond hum into place, Kirk grinned. That other guy had been fun to mess with, but nothing beat this. “Hey babe.”

That subtle dirty smirk he loved covered Spock’s face. “Hello.”

Ignoring Uhura, Scotty, and McCoy as they stepped off the transporter pad, Kirk sauntered up to Spock and threw his arms over Spock’s shoulders before lifting his legs to wrap around Spock’s waist. Spock easily caught him and supported him with hands on his ass; Kirk really loved that Vulcan strength sometimes. “I missed you.”

He raised an eyebrow in response, both of them ignoring the other crewmembers leaving the room. “Did the other Spock not satisfy your needs?”

Kirk pouted. “He didn’t even seem interested.” He paused and thought a moment. “Well his body did, but he was too devoted to that Vulcan control of his. Didn’t act on anything.”

“It is his loss.” Spock began to mouth and nip at Kirk’s neck; he was probably going to leave marks. “Yeah.” Kirk didn’t bother hiding how his breath hitched. “I may have wrecked a relationship; he and his Uhura were together, but I don’t think they will be for long now.”

Spock lifted his head enough to meet Kirk’s eyes and raise an eyebrow. “That would explain why the Kirk of the other universe refused my advances despite showing interest; he must have been ceding to the other’s claim.”

“What an idiot. He doesn’t know what he’s missing.” Jim ground against Spock absently for a moment before glancing at the door. “We should probably head back to our quarters for this. That other you was acting so soft that you’re probably going to have to deal with more assassination attempts for a while. And while I know we can take anyone on this ship, I’d rather go somewhere where we can focus entirely on each other.”

Spock had turned his attentions back to Kirk’s neck, but the other side this time. “Agreed.” He began to shift his grip and Kirk allowed himself to get manhandled until he was over one of Spock’s shoulders; he stayed like that as they went through the corridors of the ship, Spock only briefly stopping to convey orders about their mission to the bridge. Once they reached their quarters, Spock
locked the door with every security code possible before throwing Kirk on the bed and looking over him with hungry eyes as they both started to strip.

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After they’d thoroughly worn each other out, Kirk rolled onto his side and absently ran his hand over Spock’s chest, playing with his chest hair some. “So what’d you think of that other universe?”

“It was odd.” Spock stared at the ceiling but wrapped one arm possessively around Kirk. “I was only able to briefly get into their computer systems, but I learned much. It seemed to be an incredibly weak world; they had weapons but preferred using words and forming alliances to simple conquest by force.”

Kirk wrinkled his nose. “How pathetic and soft.”

“I agree.” He looked over at Kirk. “And what did you think of your visitors?”

“They were soft.” He nuzzled closer to Spock. “They could fake it ok, but you could feel the fear and panic. If it weren’t for me I don’t think they would have made it, although towards the end their Uhura was showing potential.”

“And the other me?” Spock seemed interested.

“No, he seemed to hate the violence the most.” Kirk raised himself up on one elbow to look Spock in the eye. “Did you know that he spent time before they left trying to convince me that the Empire would fall simply because it was so founded on violence? He wanted me to get you to see the ‘logic’ of it so we could rise to the top and change things for peace.”

“Fascinating.” Spock raised himself on his elbows to look at Kirk. “And what did you think of his offer?”

“I think.” Kirk shifted on top of Spock and began to lavish attention on his neck, “that what we should do is go to this planet I just heard about.” He lifted his head to look Spock in the eye. “A scientist there invented something called a Tantalus field that you can use to make your enemies disappear. We should steal it before anyone else can.” He shifted his attention back to Spock’s neck, occasionally breaking up his attention to speak. “I know it’s less fun than the usual methods, but a clean kill could come in handy now and then.”

“Indeed.” Spock gripped Kirk’s hips. “I believe that would be wise.”

Kirk lifted his head to look Spock in the eye. “That other Spock was right about one thing.” He waited until he had Spock’s attention; he seemed distracted by the movements Kirk had started with his hips. “We should rise to the top. We were already planning to, but you’re gonna be a great Emperor, babe.” He grabbed Spock’s hand from his hip and caressed it for a second before bringing it to his mouth, not breaking eye contact.

Spock growled and rolled them over. “And you will be perfect at my side.” He smirked and Kirk groaned. “Or at my feet.”

“You know I enjoy variety.” Kirk returned the smirk and wrapped his legs around Spock. “C’mon, I think we’re both ready for another round.”

Chapter End Notes
Well guys, gals, and nonbinary pals (if I may borrow a phrase from Thomas Sanders),
that is probably the closest I will get to writing smut at this point. Things will probably
be decidedly more sfw again once we're fully back in the main timeline.

Tbh, one thing that got me when I rewatched Mirror, Mirror for this is that when they
beam back Spock’s just there operating the transporter on the other side. How did he
know? I just made up a scenario for how that would be here but it's one of the many
unexplained things in TOS.
Hello everyone! Happy last update of October, and happy Halloween eve to everyone celebrating Halloween (which I've heard is less of a big deal outside the US). Anyways, we're starting to move on from the mirror!verse, but we'll still be exploring the implications a bit.

Although they’d had to put it off a bit due to everything that happened, the landing party was able to beam down and finish negotiations with the Halkans the day after they beamed back. The Halkans had been extremely understanding about postponing the negotiations, especially when Jim had stressed that they were concerned about harm to the crew from the faulty transporters. Some of that understanding and openness must have transferred into the negotiations themselves, because the Halkans ultimately did agree to set up trade with the Federation for their dilithium.

Despite the success of the mission, that day was possibly the most awkward debriefing Jim had ever had to do in his time in Starfleet, if not his life. And that included both the time he and Spock had had to tell Pike they got into a nearly fatal fight on the bridge and the time he opened up to his mom about how Frank had been treating him.

Still, it wasn’t like there were any big secrets coming out this time. In fact, just the opposite. It seemed like they were only giving him the absolute basics of their trip into the other universe, which they must have agreed on because all of their stories were the same: It was an incredibly aggressive, violent universe. The Kirk from that universe helped them escape. It must have been the ion storm interacting with the transporter that caused the problem.

No matter how much or who he asked, he couldn’t get any more than that. After the meeting dragged on with no one really meeting his eyes or giving any information (although Jim could swear they were all looking at him when he was looking away, especially Spock, but as soon as he looked back they would look away), Jim dismissed them to make his report to Starfleet command.

Thankfully, that just meant Pike.

So before long, Jim was sitting in a briefing room, idly wondering why they decided to forgo the captain’s ready room on constitution class ships. Not that he really had a problem with it; he loved his ship just how she was. But still, a place to do this besides whatever briefing room was open or his quarters would be nice…

Jim was drawn out of his thoughts by Pike picking up on the other end. He nodded and smiled, trying to maintain some air of formality but knowing he didn’t really need it. “Admiral.”

Pike smiled back at him. “Captain.” He glanced down at the padd on his desk. “So you’re calling for a debriefing and new orders.” He looked back up. “You finally managed to wrap up that other mission then?”

“Yep.” Jim looked away for a moment; he really wished he had more normal news to convey to Pike. “The landing party reported that they did, in fact, end up in an alternate universe due to that
transporter malfunction. Sounded like a pretty horrible universe too, but they made it back alright.”

Pike shook his head, his expression somewhere between understanding and disbelief. “I’ve seen some odd things in my day, but your crew really does find the extremely weird ones.”

“Yeah.” Jim felt a little bad that Pike had to be the one to pass on all of his logs. “I bet you must have a hell of a time convincing the rest of the admirals that I’m actually encountering what I say I am and that I’m not just making it up.” Jim paused a second and froze in his seat, realizing how that could sound. He looked Pike in the eye. “I swear I’m not making it up, sir.”

Pike held up his hands in a calming gesture. “Easy Jim, no one’s doubting you. There’s no need to pick up that level of formality here. You typically have the evidence to support what you say, either through accounts from other crew or scientific data from whatever you encountered. Plus, everyone who goes out there attracts the occasional odd phenomena. Your ship just seems to attract more than most.”

Jim relaxed a bit at the reassurance, but he still felt a little on edge. Maybe it was just everything with the crew. “Yeah, and we should have more interesting data for the people at command soon. The landing party is going to go through another round of tests to make sure it’s really them this time, and then you’ll have to figure out how people’s psych tests can come back so different over such a short period of time. I really think it must have been the alternate universe thing; they all reported the same thing and it fits with how the landing party we initially beamed up was acting.” Jim looked back at Pike. “It sounds ridiculous I know, but it’s the only thing that fits.”

“I believe you.” Pike smiled reassuringly a moment before looking back at the padd in front of him. “So besides the landing party’s misadventure, how did the mission go? Did the Halkans accept the offer to trade?”

Jim rolled his shoulders and nodded. “Yeah, they’re open to it. Spock’s writing up the full report since he’s the one who actually went down, so you should be getting that soon.”

“Sounds good.” Pike shifted a bit in his chair and reached for another padd. “So, do you want to hear about your next mission?”

“Yeah.” Jim sat up a little bit. Hopefully this one would go better and things would start to feel like normal around here. “What do we have in store?”

“I’ll send it over to you.” Pike hit a few buttons on his padd and sure enough the briefing came up on screen in front of Jim. He read it over while Pike continued talking. “You’re supposed to be making observations of a pre-warp civilization on a planet called Nibiru; there are humanoid natives, but they’re still very early in their societal development. As such, any observations have to be made carefully so as to not violate the Prime Directive.” He looked up at Jim. “If you beam down to the planet at all, which you won’t have to, do not interact with the natives.”

“Got it.” Jim nodded. It wasn’t like he normally tried to anyways; he hadn’t gotten anything like a first contact yet.

Pike skimmed over the rest of the briefing before evidently finding something interesting. “It says here that there’s apparently there’s strong volcanic activity on the planet, so it’s possible that some of your science teams could study that while the xenoanthropologists are busy.” Pike looked up at Jim. “Should be a nice, routine mission. Sounds like you could use one of those.”

“Sure could.” Jim smiled. He really didn’t want to let Pike down by messing this up. He really hoped this would stay routine.
“Good.” Pike looked through the briefing on the padd once more before looking up to Jim. “The coordinates are at the bottom of the briefing; you’ll have about a week of travel but it shouldn’t be bad.”

“Alright.” Jim downloaded the info from the console to the padd he’d brought with him. “I’ll let the helm know about the course change so we can get on our way.”

Pike nodded. “I’ll talk to you soon, son.”

Jim smiled and it felt a bit more genuine this time. “I’ll talk to you soon.” He waited until the channel went dark before standing up and heading back to the bridge so he could give Chekov and Sulu the course change.

Chapter End Notes

I was gonna dive into the drama right away, but another Kirk and Pike scene happened. I guess Kirk need a bit of support right now.

Anyways, who wants to talk Discovery?
Chapter 121

Chapter Notes

Happy November everyone! A few of you picked up on what the next storyline will be, but we'll be moving along to there soon, so don't worry if you missed the clue last chapter. I hope you're as excited as I am...

After completing the psychological tests the captain had ordered upon their return to their own universe, Spock and Nyota went to his quarters to catch up on work. It was something they did often; a major element of their relationship was simply inhabiting the same space together while working on different tasks in relative silence. It was not entirely necessary today; the distance to Nibiru mean that they would have likely have significant amounts of downtime before they were occupied with tasks for their next mission. Additionally, neither Spock nor Nyota was likely to be required for the next mission, as it was simply observing a pre-warp society and drew on neither of their specialties. Spock would be selecting the team from the science division that would be investigating the volcanic activity on the planet, although that would not be an exceptionally difficult task. There was not really much need for Spock and Nyota to meet and do work, but Nyota had suggested it and seemed insistent, so Spock agreed.

Despite her insistence, Nyota did not seem very focused on work. She appeared deep in thought when Spock looked over at her, but she was staring into the distance rather than at her padd. Additionally, she typically hummed or quietly sang while working, something which Spock had initially found distracting but now found calming, but today it was absent. Spock suspected that she was still troubled by the events of the alternate universe.

Although it had only been two days since their return, Spock had noticed Nyota becoming more distant from members of the crew she typically interacted with. She avoided the Captain and Sulu, which Spock attributed to her negative experiences with their counterparts in the alternate universe, but she was also distancing herself from Dr. McCoy, Mr. Scott, and Spock himself. Most of her time off duty, at least that Spock had observed, had been spent either by herself or with others whose counterparts she had not interacted with, like her former roommate Gaila.

Despite his uncertainty of how to approach the topic, Spock decided that he must. Their earlier activities seemed like a good opening. “The Captain seemed relieved that our test results, along with the results from the rest of the landing party, had returned to normal.”

Nyota snorted but looked at her padd, not him. “I think we were all relieved that that universe didn’t permanently affect us.”

Spock paused at that; he knew Nyota had been distressed by her actions in the alternate universe. “Did you believe that you would be?”

“I don’t know, Spock.” Nyota looked up at him and sighed. She seemed frustrated, but more with herself than with him. “I did things there that I wouldn’t have thought I was capable of. I threatened an innocent man, I attacked someone who was an alternate version of one of my friends. I think I would have been a little relieved to hear that there was something different that they could put back to normal rather than that just being me.”
“You were acting in defense of yourself as well as the others of the landing party.” Spock put down his padd to better focus on Nyota. “Although he looked like the Hikaru Sulu we know, I do not doubt that he would have harmed or killed us had you not stopped him. We were in danger.” Spock held Nyota’s eyes to convey his sincerity. “As I was his primary target, I may owe my life to you.”

Nyota looked away, seeming unconvinced. “I don’t think that Kirk would have let him get you.” She looked back up to Spock. “Speaking of him, are you having any...lingering thoughts from that universe? I noticed things seem a bit off between you and Kirk.”

Spock supposed he had, in a manner, been avoiding the Captain as well. They had not spent any time together outside of their shifts since the landing party’s return two days ago; additionally, they had interacted less during their shifts than they typically did. He had attempted to avoid thoughts of the alternate Kirk, but it was difficult to look at the Captain without remembering what Spock had done with his counterpart. “My thoughts have been focused on the mission at hand; the negotiations with the Halkans were important.”

“Really?” Nyota shifted to face him directly. “You’re telling me that you haven’t thought of anything with that other Kirk? He said you were soulmates; even if he may have been lying or trying to mess with us, that’s not the kind of thing most people would just dismiss.”

Spock had thought of it. His meeting Kirk would fit within the window of when he started aging, but he did not know if Kirk was aging. The Captain had made no indication that he was aging or that he thought Spock was his soulmate, and if it had truly been approximately a year Kirk likely would have known by now. “I believe that he and his Spock were soulmates, but I do not have enough evidence to draw a conclusion in this universe.”

“So you have thought about it.” Nyota looked away. “And you certainly seemed interested in Kirk over there. Plus there was that tattoo he had when he took off his shirt; it looked like formal Vulcan writing.” She looked back to Spock. “Were you able to see what it said?”

“I was rather…distracted at the time. I am not certain what it said.” Nyota seemed mostly satisfied with the comment, but Spock knew it was only a partial truth. He had been able to read the tattoo, but what he read seemed improbable. Why would the alternate Kirk have the word t’hy’la tattooed on his chest, right over the human heart?

“Still.” His attention was drawn back to Nyota. “We both just have a lot to think about from that alternate universe.” She wrapped her arms around herself. “I feel like I don’t know myself as well as I thought I did, and you…” Nyota looked at him and sighed, her arms dropping to her sides. “Be completely honest with me. Not Vulcan honest where you say something that’s technically true but isn’t the full story, but 100%, completely honest. Do you think you would be happier with Kirk than with me? Because I want you to be happy, or whatever state like that that you’re comfortable with. So do you think you’d be better off with him?”

Spock was somewhat taken aback by the question. He had not fully considered the situation as a comparison between the two of them. He did enjoy his time with Nyota and value his connection to her. She had desirable qualities for a partner; she was intelligent, kind, understanding, and aesthetically pleasing. Kirk shared many of those qualities, but there was also a lack of control in him that was somehow both fascinating and occasionally alarming to Spock, in addition to the...physical reaction that the other Kirk had elicited that Spock had not experienced with Nyota. Nyota was, generally, a steady, calming influence. Kirk was not. He tested Spock’s control in many ways. And yet both were people he would consider positive influences in his life, people whose absences would severely negatively impact him. “I am uncertain.”

“Look, Spock…” Nyota took a deep breath and then looked him in the eye. “I don’t want to be one
of those couples who just continues on because of inertia or because it’s easier to stay together than
to make a change and break up. I don’t want either of us to have regrets and end up resenting each
other. I’d rather end it when we can still be friends then reach that point.” She looked away for a
moment, seeming deep in thought, before looking back at him. “I think it would be best if we took a
break. I’m not necessarily saying we end it forever, but we both have a lot to figure out and it might
be best if we do that separately. What do you think?”

Spock hesitated for a moment, considering it, before nodding. “I will defer to your judgment. That
seems like it may be best.”

“Alright then.” Nyota nodded before looking around the room for a moment. She stood and picked
up her padd. “I think I’ll head out.” She walked over to the desk, her hand reaching toward his for a
moment, but she stopped and rested it on the desk instead. She leaned over and kissed his cheek. “I’ll
talk to you later.”

He nodded before watching her walk out of the room. He thought of the kiss to his cheek and how it
compared to how the alternate Kirk had kissed and mouthed along his face and jaw while they were
on the bridge and in the transporter room. While the kiss from Nyota was not unpleasant, Spock felt
as if there was something missing.

Spock turned to his computer console. If he truly wished to make a decision, it was best to have all
the information. He needed to know if Kirk was aging. Spock had scrutinized his Captain’s face
upon their return to their proper universe, but he found that he did not notice changes from when he
typically viewed the Captain. Still, since Nyota had brought it up again, what the alternate universe
Kirk had said refused to vacate his thoughts. Could it be possible that he and the Captain were
soulmates?

Spock decided that the only way to approach this problem would be research. He knew that the time
frame for the beginning of his aging included when he met Kirk. The question was if it was possible
that Kirk began aging at that same time. While he had an eidetic memory, outside evidence could be
useful in this situation. Spock gathered padds to research signs of aging in humans. Finally, he turned
to the computer console on his desk.

“Computer. Retrieve image of Cadet James T. Kirk, at time of academic hearing concerning potential
ethics rules violation on Kobayashi Maru test.” He waited until the computer complied before giving
his next command. “Computer, retrieve image of Captain James T. Kirk, time of current mission.
Display images side by side.” The images appeared side by side on his screen, ideal for making
comparisons. But before Spock proceeded, there was one other area he wished to investigate. He had
to eliminate the possibility that Kirk began aging prior to meeting him “Computer, retrieve images of
Cadet James T. Kirk, time of entry into Starfleet Academy, and display all images side by side.”

With all the data that was logical to use as a basis for his conclusion in front of him, Spock began to
study the images closely for any sign of change.

Chapter End Notes

I think a lot of you have been looking forward to this. I really wanted to make sure I did
it right because I didn't want to be one of those people that just casts off or vilifies the
female characters so the men can get together. So while we're not quite at the point of
Jim and Spock getting together, we're getting there. It just might not be the smoothest
road...
Hello everyone! First off, I'm just gonna say again how awesome all of you are cuz this just hit 200 bookmarks and got a bunch of comments last chapter! You're all seriously great and seeing all of this makes my day.

Anyways, we're back to Jim's POV.

It wasn’t until they were already on their way to Nibiru that Jim was able to convince Bones to stop avoiding him and spend time with him off shift and outside of meal times. It had bothered Jim more than he’d like to admit that it was that difficult to get together. They were just traveling between missions; it wasn’t like either of them was all that busy. What had they encountered in that alternate universe that made them all want to avoid him so much? Had his alternate self done something that bad? If one alternate universe incident meant Jim couldn’t even get his best friend to spend time with him like normal outside of their shifts for days, what hope did he have of getting anyone else to spend time with him or move on if the real him messed up?

Jim shook his head to try to clear away the negative thoughts. This wasn’t what he needed to be thinking about right now; he should be focusing on setting up for Bones coming over. Neither of them had a shift the next day, so they were going to just drink and put on a movie like they used to do when they had free time back at the Academy. Jim hoped that he’d eventually get Bones to open up about what happened as well, but he decided not to get his hopes up. While finding out about what happened would probably help him sort things out with the rest of the landing party, for tonight Jim would be happy just to have his best friend back.

Things started out pretty normal when Bones showed up. They were both out of uniform and had already gotten dinner, so Jim just replicated some movie snacks and got the whiskey he’d gotten last shore leave out of where he’d stashed it. They settled in silently next to each other when Jim put the movie on; both commenting on it intermittently but never really saying anything else, even though Jim knew he had things he wanted to ask and it seemed like Bones had things he wanted to ask too. Still, they were on their second movie before he said anything, and what he said was not what Jim was expecting.

“It’s Spock, isn’t it?” Jim looked up at Bones, who was still focused on the movie but seemed serious.

“What?” Jim knew exactly what he meant, but he felt like feigning ignorance a little longer.

“Your soulmate.” The ‘idiot’ on the end was left unspoken but Jim could tell Bones meant it anyway. He looked over at Jim. “When you met him would fit real well with my estimate of when you started aging.”

“It would.” Jim decided to go for it; he’d already told Gaila he would do this. He took a deep breath; he was unable to meet Bones’ eyes so he kept watching the movie instead. “That’s because as far as I know, it is him.”
“Yeah?” Bones leaned over so his shoulder bumped Jim’s and waited until Jim looked over at him. “How’d you tell? I’ve seen his medical records and I barely figured out he was aging. Admittedly, it took a little longer to figure out what his baselines were since they didn’t really match human or Vulcan norms, but he still shows more change now than he did in his Starfleet records pre-the whole Nero incident, which is also pre-meeting you I guess.” Bones looked over at Jim. “So if I barely figured it out with all the right tools to figure it out at my disposal, how’d you figure it out?”

Jim looked away from Bones. Maybe it was the liquor talking, but he decided to be perfectly honest. “I felt something that day. I mean sure, all the other hints the universe seems to love throwing my way have helped, but that day… When we first made eye contact there was a feeling. I don’t know if I can describe it, but I felt…something. And not like butterflies or nerves or whatever; something big. But not in a bad way? Like a good something. Like the start of something important.”

Bones was quiet. It stretched on for long enough that Jim was starting to get concerned. “What is it?”

Jim turned to look at him. “That’s not a typical thing to happen for soulmates. Feeling a connection, sure. Tons of people report that they ‘clicked’ with their soulmates right off the bat, but I’ve never heard anything quite like you’re describing.” Bones looked at him seriously; a slight professional edge creeping in. “Are you sure you’re remembering correctly?”

“Yeah, pretty certain.” Jim shifted a bit. “Wait a minute though. How’d you guess it was Spock if it was so impossible to pinpoint when he was aging?”

Bones hesitated for a moment and Jim couldn’t tell if it was because he didn’t want to change the subject or if it was because he didn’t want to talk about how he knew. Finally, he began to talk, but he avoided eye contact the entire time. “It was because of what happened in the other universe. You know how Spock normally avoids physical contact like the plague, right? Says it’s a Vulcan thing or whatever.”

Jim didn’t really want to interrupt Bones, so he just nodded, hoping his friend would be able to see it out of the corner of his eye. It must have been enough, because Bones continued. “Well apparently over there, Jim—that Jim—and Spock are in a relationship. A serious one at that. And Jim—alternate you or whatever—he insisted that he and his Spock were all about PDA, so to maintain our cover he and Spock had to do it too. Uhura, of course, wasn’t happy about this, which is probably why she’s been avoiding you, plus that alternate you was a dick to her apparently, but as for Spock and the PDA…” Bones glanced at Jim quickly before looking away again. “Spock was surprisingly into it apparently. I’m sure if anyone asked he would have insisted that it was purely for our safety because we needed to maintain our cover, but I think he was going above and beyond the line of duty. He seemed really into it. Like, really into it. So it got me thinking.” He looked at Jim and sighed. “I don’t know exactly when the hobgoblin started aging, but the window we’ve narrowed it down to would fit with when you started aging. So I’m not saying it’s necessarily true in my medical opinion, but it was enough that I wanted to ask.”

Jim wasn’t quite sure how to take the news about the alternate universe. Still, there were other things to focus on. “So then what about the rest of the landing party? Do you think they suspect?” Jim knew he’d have to break it to the crew sooner or later, but he’d been hoping it would be later.

“I don’t know.” Bones swirled around what whiskey was left in his glass and looked at it instead of Jim. “If Scotty is avoiding you, then it’s probably just because he saw more than he wanted considering he doesn’t seem like a big fan of the dirty stuff, so as long as you don’t do any lap
dances or grinding around him it should fade back to normal soon enough. Plus, we were in engineering most of the time so he didn’t get the... full show so to speak. I don’t think he suspects it.”

“Well that’s good.” Jim was glad; he valued his friendship with Scotty and didn’t want to lose it because of an alternate universe.

“Uhura and Spock, on the other hand…” Bones trailed off and looked at Jim, who couldn’t help but tense up at Bones’ trying-to-break-bad-news-softly voice. “They both definitely got the full show. Uhura was on the bridge with them almost the full time, and Spock, well he got the hands-on experience. Plus, there was at least one time where the other you talked to them alone, so I have no idea what he could have said.” Bones looked a bit grim despite the way this sort of thing was typically discussed. “I know you don’t want to, but it might be time to have a talk with Spock.”

Jim grimaced. “Maybe. But we’ve got one more mission then it’s back to base to find out if I get to be a full captain with my probation period over; it can probably wait until after then.”

Bones sighed and finished his whiskey. “Wait and see isn’t exactly the typical approach to this kind of thing, but you know I’m not the type to fully endorse the soulmate stuff. Plus, it’s your life I guess.”

“Damn right it is.” Jim looked back down at his own glass before taking a final sip. “It’s late now. We should both get some rest. We may not have work in the morning, but aren’t you usually the one on my case about keeping a good sleep schedule and all that?”

“Of course you’re only responsible with your health when you’re avoiding things.” Bones grumbled but started to get up anyways. “I’ll see you tomorrow for lunch?”

“Sounds good.” Jim watched Bones leave the room and waited for the door to shut before getting up to get himself another glass of whiskey. It looked like he was going to have one hell of a situation to deal with. He took a long sip and grimaced. This was probably going to blow up in his face like a warp core gone wrong.

Chapter End Notes

Well, we finally got Bones finding out. I don’t think that was quite how all of you pictured it though hahaha
Happy 14 months of fic everyone! I remember back when I thought this would take like 6 months. So much for that I guess hahaha Anyways, if this fic is still going in another 14 months, things should be a little different in the story...

They’d arrived at Nibiru two days ago and were currently just in orbit while the teams on the surface studied the natives and the volcano. Since he wasn’t part of any of the away teams today, Jim was just on the bridge, overseeing the missions and the ship’s functions. It was pretty quiet on the bridge today; Spock was in the science labs and the rest of the crew wasn’t talking much. Jim glanced over his shoulder at Uhura; he’d been half tempted to apologize to her for what his counterpart had done in the alternate universe since Bones had told him, but they barely saw each other off shift since the landing party’s return from the alternate universe, so he hadn’t really had the opportunity to talk to her.

So it was just a bit awkward. She was, of course, still completely professional on the bridge, but the friendship that had been developing between them felt a bit cut off now. Jim drummed his fingers on the arm of the captain’s chair, careful to avoid any buttons. Wouldn’t want to freak out the crew by putting the ship on alert just because he was feeling restless and wasn’t paying attention.

Still, if there was enough reason Jim was going down to the planet with the next team. Nothing cured his restlessness like getting to go down to a planet and run around in natural air and light. It would probably get his mind off of everything too.

And Jim certainly had a lot on his mind. Uhura wasn’t the only one who was still avoiding him; while he could swear that he felt Spock watching him closely when he wasn’t looking, Spock had apparently been busy with a personal project and hadn’t had time to do anything else. Jim was beginning to miss their chess games; playing against himself wasn’t quite as fun.

Scotty also seemed to be avoiding the bridge some, but Jim bet that he would be over that soon. If what Bones had said was right, Scotty seemed the least affected by the alternate universe.

And that just left Bones from that landing party. He and Jim were getting back to normal, but since he’d found out the soulmate thing for sure it seemed like he wanted Jim to do something about it; he’d always look at Jim and Spock closely whenever they were together in a way he hadn’t before. Jim was half convinced he was rehearsing the shovel talk already.

But it didn’t matter, because as far as Jim knew Spock and Uhura were still together. Admittedly, he wasn’t exactly tuning in to ship’s gossip to find out for sure, especially since his main source of gossip was Gaila and he hadn’t seen her since their movie night. But Jim was sure that if something had happened that it would be big enough news on the ship that he’d hear about it.

But beyond all of his personal problems, Jim still had his career to consider. This would be his last mission before they went back to Starfleet Command to determine whether they’d make him an official captain instead of just this probationary thing. Admittedly, it didn’t seem like they’d treated him all that differently so far, but it might have been because he typically dealt with Pike and Pike
knew how to handle him. But Jim knew that any mistakes or bad decisions he made now could cost him the ship more easily than it would be for a normal captain.

So this mission would have to go really smoothly. It seemed routine enough; what could go wrong?

At that moment, Jim was distracted by the sound of the turbolift doors opening. He turned around and was surprised to see Spock, his expression unreadable but almost concerned or worried simultaneously. Jim tried to keep his expression neutral; he really hoped he hadn’t jinxed this mission. “What is it, Mr. Spock?”

Spock looked at him for a moment before shifting his arms behind his back. “I would like to speak to you in private, Captain.” There was a pause and Jim wondered where Spock might be going with this before he spoke again. “It is about our current mission.”

“All right.” It sounded serious, so Jim got up. “We can go to one of the briefing rooms.” He looked back to the front of the bridge. “Sulu, you have the conn.” As the helmsman got up and went to the chair Jim turned and followed Spock off of the bridge.

In the turbolift, Jim wanted to ask Spock what was so urgent, but he decided to hold off. Still, he could feel Spock studying him out of the corner of his eye. Jim wondered what Spock was up to. Was Spock preparing a report on him for the admiralty as part of Jim’s evaluation? It would make sense; Spock was one of the most experienced and high-ranking members of the Enterprise’s crew, and he worked with Jim closely, so he’d be a likely pick if the admiralty wanted someone on the ship to review Jim. He glanced at Spock out of the corner of his eye and Spock looked away; that was probably what it was.

Still, it didn’t matter because then the turbolift stopped and Spock led Jim to a briefing room. Once there, he began to pull up data on the consoles on the table.

Jim walked over and looked over Spock’s shoulder, but he couldn’t quite make out what he was supposed to be seeing. “What are we looking at?”

Spock shifted aside to let Jim see better before turning to face him. “The inhabitants of this planet are in grave danger, Captain. The volcanic activity is evidently more serious than we initially believed.”

Jim sat down in one of the chairs that was still close enough to see the console. “How serious is it?”

Spock remained standing and launched into an explanation of that his teams had found; as Jim listened he agreed with Spock more and more. If they didn’t do anything, this society may be completely wiped out. That wasn’t something Jim could stand by for.

Once the explanation was finished, Jim looked up at Spock. “So what can we do? That eruption would devastate their population.”

Spock began to switch through the presentation. “There is a device we could create to neutralize the volcano enough to prevent a major eruption, but it would require near-direct contact with the lava itself to be activated.”

“Would someone in a suit be able to survive that? They’re meant for extreme temperatures, right?” Jim began to think it through. “Using the transporters in the volcano would probably be too risky, but I bet Sulu could fly someone in in a shuttle.”

“Those are both theoretically viable options.” Spock began, but then paused.

“I sense a ‘but’ coming.” Jim shifted his seat to better face Spock. “What is it?”
“According to our xenoanthropologist teams, the volcano is of great ritual significance to the natives of the planet. They would likely notice an unknown object entering the volcano, and it is likely that they would attempt to investigate.” Spock shifted, standing a bit straighter. “Should they see the shuttle or landing party at this stage of their development, it would be a breach of the Prime Directive.”

“We can’t have that.” As far as Jim was concerned, lives were more important than rules, but with his big evaluation so close it might be better to play it safe. “What if we sent in people to create a distraction? We should have enough data at this point to make a small landing party of one or two people blend in.”

“That is possible.” Spock shifted and crossed his arms as he considered it. “However, these people have been shown to react to unknown situations with violence. We would need a crewmember willing to risk injury.”

“I’ll do it.” Jim stood up and leaned against the table so he’d be more level with Spock. “Even if they do attack, I bet we can heal up whatever their pre-warp weaponry can do pretty easily. Just in case I could bring Bones though. Plus,” Jim looked over at Spock and couldn’t resist the urge to grin, “I can be pretty distracting when I want to be.”

For a moment he could have sworn that Spock’s cheeks colored slightly green, but it passed too quickly for him to be sure. Spock simply nodded. “This may be a viable plan.”

“Alright.” Jim grinned wider, already excited by the idea of getting to go down and explore the planet up close. “Let’s pull in some more members of the senior crew and get this going.”

Chapter End Notes

I think all of you know where this is going by now, but I will be making some changes...
Chapter 124

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I think by this point you all know what arc we've started hahaha We're still in Jim's POV, and I don't think I have much explaining to do...

One thing though: the ship is in orbit, not underwater. There was literally no reason for it to be underwater besides a dramatic reveal. This comes up in the chapter, I just wanted to make it clear earlier because that always confused me when I watched Into Darkness. It's just pointless, even if it does mean we get crewmembers in wetsuits

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Even though what he did was probably coming close to a prime directive violation, Jim couldn’t help but grin as he ran through the red forest. Sure, he’d snuck into what the xenoanthropologists believed to be a temple and taken some sort of scroll that had been above a main altar. He’d been disguised in local clothing, and now they had definite proof that the locals had developed a writing system.

But still, Jim was just excited to be actually off the ship doing something. Yeah, he knew that most of being captain would be the more mundane things like logs and paperwork, but he also knew that what he liked better was getting to go on missions and be involved. Well that and being with the crew, but since certain members of the crew didn’t seem to want to be with him lately, this was a good way to get his mind off of everything.

Besides, there were other things his mind needed to be on. Even though he couldn’t see much with the hood he had on, Jim glanced back at the rapidly approaching natives, who were shouting something. In order to minimize the risk of a prime directive violation, they’d agreed to not use any of technology within view of the natives, which meant that he couldn’t exactly pull out the universal translator. He assumed whatever they were saying wasn’t very nice though.

But a moment later Jim was reconsidering that technology thing and reaching for his phaser because something huge was rearing up in front of him. After a quick glance back to ensure that none of them were where they could see him, Jim took out the beast with a quick stun shot.

A moment later came something he definitely didn’t need the translator for. “Dammit man, that was our ride! You just stunned our ride!” Even through the thick robe and hood his friend wore, Jim would recognize Bones’ irritated voice anywhere.

“Great.” Before Jim could say anything further, he heard shout from behind him that sounded closer than a moment ago. So much for the lead he’d built up. “Run!” Thankfully, Bones was still willing to listen and took off after him.

After more pissed sounding shouts from behind them, Bones yelled again. “What the hell did you take?”

Jim was too focused on not tripping to look at the scroll, so he just answered honestly. “I don’t really know, but it was in the temple!”

Jim really wondered how the other half of the landing party was doing. As tough as he and Bones
had it running through the forest trying not to get caught, they were just the diversion. Everyone else was trying to save this society by neutralizing the volcano.

Sulu had ended up piloting the shuttle into the volcano, with Uhura there to compensate for any difficulties the comm system might have due to the volcano, and Spock there to actually set off the device to neutralize the volcano. But since they were too close to the natives, Jim couldn’t pull out his communicator. He just hoped that things were going as planned and that they’d proceeded into the volcano now that the natives were distracted.

A moment later what might have been big arrows or small spears started hitting the trees around them. Bones, ever perceptive, shouted again. “They’re trying to kill us! They’re trying to kill us Jim!”

Maybe he should have taken something less valuable to the natives. But if he’d gone for something less valuable, they might not have left all the village or the volcano. They could have seen the shuttle, or worse, gotten caught in the eruption. Jim would take a spear to the arm if it meant that this civilization wouldn’t get wiped out.

So he just focused on running, knowing that Bones would keep following him. Even if he was making a slight change of plans.

Bones picked up on it a moment later. “Jim, the beach is that way!”

“I know!” Jim wedged the scroll on a tree branch, letting the weighted bottom part drop it open. “We’re not going to the beach!” A glance back confirmed both that Bones was still with him and the natives were now distracted by worshiping the scroll, meaning that he could finally get out his communicator soon.

“Oh no no no!” Bones seemed to have worked out what Jim’s actual destination was, but he was still following. “I hate this!”

Jim glanced back, not breaking stride. The natives were distracted and Bones was right behind him. “I know you do!” As soon as they were off the cliff and plummeting through the air, Jim finally pulled out his communicator. “Scotty, two to beam up!”

Before they could hit the water, they dematerialized and instead landed on the Enterprise transporter padd. Jim looked up at Bones with a grin and got a scowl in return.

“Welcome back, Captain.” Scotty stepped around the controls. “Uhura and Sulu were having some trouble with the shuttle, but they made it back alright. That shuttle will need some work, but—“

“Scotty.” Jim couldn’t help but notice there was one person missing from that report. “Where’s Spock?”

He knew it was bad when Scotty’s face went serious. “Still in the volcano, sir.”

This was not good. When they’d first gotten to Nibiru the volcano had seemed ready to blow any moment, and Jim doubted even a Vulcan in a protective suit could survive direct contact with lava. This was bad.

Without even thinking of it Jim had gotten to the bridge. Even though they were still in orbit, they had the viewscreen set to monitor the village and Jim could see that the first chunks of rock were starting to come down. He really hoped he’d led the villagers far enough away.

But Spock was nowhere near far away enough. Jim saw that they still had Spock’s biosigns, which
was reassuring for now at least. He looked over at Uhura. “Lieutenant, do we have an open channel to Mr. Spock?”

She looked worried; it must be bad for her to be losing her cool on the bridge. Her voice even wavered a bit when she spoke. “The heat and interference are frying his comms, but we still have contact.”

That would have to be good enough; Jim tried to keep it together because he knew that if he panicked, the crew would lose it. Dammit, Spock was better at this. Jim hit the closest comm button. “Spock!”

“I have activated the device, captain.” His breathing was heavy, but Jim was sure that it was just getting hot even for a Vulcan in a specialized suit. “When the countdown is complete, the reaction should render the volcano inert.”

“Yeah, and that’s gonna render him inert.” Bones really was stating the obvious today.

Jim ignored him; he needed to focus. “Can we use the transporters?” He got negative responses from multiple places on the bridge, but they had to find a way. He was not losing Spock like this. “I need to beam Spock back to the ship; give me one way to do it.”

After what felt like a long pause but probably wasn’t, Chekov spoke up. “Maybe if we had a direct line of sight; we would need to enter the atmosphere and get closer, but—”

“Hold on wee man, you’re talking about an active volcano.” Scotty looked up at Jim, slightly alarmed. “Sir, if that thing erupts, I cannot guarantee that we’d withstand the heat.”

Sulu was the next to chime in. “I don’t know that we can enter at the right angle from here, or maintain that kind of altitude.”

The next commenter was unexpected. “Our shuttle was concealed by the ash cloud, but the Enterprise is too large. If utilized in a rescue effort, it would be revealed to the indigenous species.”

“Spock, nobody knows the rules better than you but there has got to be an exception.” There were exceptions to the prime directive, right? Jim couldn’t remember any off of the top of his head, but he was a bit distracted right now. Saving your soulmate who you were kindof in love with even if you couldn’t be with them seemed like enough of a reason to Jim.

“None that apply in this situation.” Even if Jim couldn’t see him, Spock sounded just as stubborn. “You cannot violate the prime directive.”

“Shut up Spock, we’re trying to save you, dammit!” Jim looked over at Bones in surprise. Bones didn’t typically get along with Spock, so Jim really hoped this wasn’t just Bones doing this for his sake…

“Doctor, the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few.” Damn the pointy eared bastard, this was not the time for Vulcan platitudes.

“Spock, we’re talking about your life!” Jim was losing patience.

“You cannot—” Spock began talking, but the line cut off.

That was the final straw. Jim looked back at Uhura. “Try to get him back online.” She nodded and Jim turned back to the front of the bridge. “Scotty, Sulu, Chekov, make your calculations and make them quick. We’re going down for him.”
Chapter End Notes

And so it begins...
Hello everyone! It's been a little bit since I left you with a cliffhanger, but since we're following (to a certain extent at least) an established script none of you seemed too worried. I may have to do something to get you back on your toes...

There was a moment of disbelief from the crew, but Jim was focused on the timer they had for the device that was meant to neutralize the volcano. If their timer based on when Spock said he started the device was right, they didn’t have a lot of time, only minutes. The device had been built with a delay that would allow the shuttle to escape without getting frozen, but it had also been made to work quickly so that the volcano would be neutralized before it erupted. Jim looked around the bridge. “Get to work!”

The crew scrambled to obey and Jim kept his focus on the timer. He could feel Bones staring at the side of his face, but he didn’t have time for a heart to heart right now. In a few minutes, he could stop aging again, and then he’d have plenty of time to talk. But hopefully that wouldn’t be how this would end. Jim had to focus to keep the scowl of frustration off of his face. Dammit, if Spock survived this, Jim was never letting him out of his sight again. Even if that meant he had to tell him everything.

After what felt like forever but was probably only about a minute, there was an excited shout from the huddle over the center console, where Scotty, Chekov, and Sulu had been working. Chekov turned around excitedly. “Keptin, we’ve got it!”

Jim sat back in the captain’s chair, not caring that he was still dressed from the away mission rather than his regular uniform. “Put it in and let’s go. Spock doesn’t have much time left.” His eyes were still glued to the timer; whatever maneuver they’d thought up would have to be quick. Jim hit the button on the armrest for the shipwide channel. “Attention all crew, we are about to enter the atmosphere. Brace yourself if necessary.” He flipped it off and looked at Scotty as he felt the ship begin to move and the scene on the viewscreen begin to shift. “Scotty, get to the closest transporter room. We need the best we’ve got on this.” Scotty gave a quick nod and left the room, hurrying towards the turbolift.

Their descent felt painfully slow. By the time they were in the atmosphere and the volcano was within sight, they were only about 30 seconds away from the device detonating. Uhura had been unable to get comms back online, so Jim had no way of knowing if Spock was even alive still. Some part of him was convinced that he would have felt it if Spock had died and he’d stopped aging, but there was no way to be sure…

When they were almost directly over the volcano and had 15 seconds left, there was another excited shout in Russian before Chekov turned back to him. “Sir, I have his biosign on sensors! Commander Spock is alive!”

Jim exhaled, not even realizing he’d been holding his breath. “Send it to the transporter room ASAP.” He practically jumped out of his chair, knowing that he wouldn’t believe Spock was alive unless he saw it with his own two eyes. “Bones, you’re with me. We have no idea how being in that
volcano has affected him.”

A quick nod and then Bones was following him into the turbolift. Jim had to resist the urge to fidget as he waited for it to reach the proper deck, but by the time they reached it he practically ran out the door and down the corridor to the transporter room. He got there just in time to see a confused looking Spock materialize on the transporter padd, kneeling and in full suit still but seeming unharmed. Jim let out a sigh of relief. “Spock! You alright?”

Despite the near-death experience, Spock seemed calm. “Did the natives see the ship?”

“I’m not sure.” Jim was amazed Spock could still focus on that sort of thing right now, but that steady, unshakable focus of his was just one of the things that Jim liked—loved?—about him. “My priority was saving you.” Dammit, Jim had to tell him. He had to—

“Bridge to Captain Kirk.” Uhura’s worried voice came through the comms and Jim remembered why he hadn’t told Spock yet. They were together, and Jim didn’t want to ruin that for either of them. If they were happy, he didn’t want to mess that up.

He tried to maintain his calm as he stepped over to the comm panel. “Yes, Lieutenant?”

“Is Commander Spock on board, sir?” She still sounded more worried than she typically would on duty.

Jim glanced back over at Spock, who had stood up and seemed alright. “Safe and sound.”

“Please let him know that his device has successfully detonated.” Uhura’s voice sounded a little relieved that Spock was back, but there was also something else Jim couldn’t quite pick up on.

Still, better to focus on the positive. He looked at Spock and grinned. “Hear that Spock? You saved the world. Congratulations.”

Spock, however, did not seem to be reveling in the victory. He still seemed concerned. “You may have violated the Prime Directive. You should not have risked the natives seeing the ship.”

“We don’t know for sure if they saw anything. Maybe they didn’t.” Jim really wished Spock would drop it, but he had other things to focus on now. “C’mon, Bones needs to check you out and I need to get back to the bridge.” He looked over at Bones, who looked at him a moment before gesturing for Spock to follow him. After one last glance at Jim, Spock followed him out of the room.

Jim watched both of them leave before finally deciding to leave himself. He did need to get back to the bridge; figuring out the how to save the natives of Nibiru had put them a few days behind schedule in returning to Earth. A little time at higher warp would fix that, but for now Jim was just going to focus on what they’d done. They saved the civilization on the planet, and they’d saved Spock. Even if they had a close brush with the prime directive, as far as Jim was concerned this was a high note to end things on before going back to face the admiralty once more.

Chapter End Notes

Also, before anyone says that Uhura and Spock aren't together anymore, remember that the characters don't necessarily know everything that's happening and that I really like dramatic irony.
Mostly the second one tbh
Hello everybody! I was just looking at the stats for this again and noticed that we're at over 175k words. I've got about 15k more than that that isn't even up yet (although some of those for are potential storylines after they get together, if you aren't totally done with this fic by then), so once again I'm gonna say this: if you've been with me since the start, you're awesome. If you found this fic later and caught up through all of that, you're amazing. And if you're reading this after the fic is done, you officially know better than I do at this point how long this fic will be, especially with potential future storylines that may or may not be added. And of course you're also incredible. Anyways, just trying to make clear once more how much I appreciate everyone who follows along with and engages with this fic. You're the best!

Jim sat on the observation deck, tapping his stylus against his lips. He needed to finish this log. Sometimes he just recorded them orally, but he felt like he should write this one out, in part so he could more easily edit it. Not that he was trying to hide anything, it was just…

Jim sighed and set the stylus and padd down on his lap. His shift had ended hours ago, but he was still working on this damn log. Jim had been there when Spock got cleared from Sickbay and once again he’d almost been tempted to tell Spock everything, but right when Spock got out Uhura showed up and told Spock she wanted to talk. Even though neither of them had said anything to Jim, he hadn’t really wanted to stick around. He still hadn’t talked to Uhura about what his alternate self had done, and while she’d started to act normally around him again, Jim still felt awkward about all of it and honestly wouldn’t blame her for avoiding him. So he’d quickly excused himself to go write his log so she and Spock could talk.

Which was where he still was. Jim just couldn’t figure out how much to put into this log. He was expecting a call from Pike any minute now, and while his log wasn’t necessarily due then, Pike might have questions as to why a log for a supposedly routine mission was taking so long.

And that was Jim’s problem. Pike was expecting a routine log, but in true Enterprise fashion they’d deviated from that a bit. Jim was pretty sure that they wouldn’t get mad at him for stopping the eruption; while it wasn’t the most common type of mission, it wasn’t unheard of for Starfleet to do mission to save pre-warp civilizations from disasters they didn’t know about and couldn’t prevent. So Jim was probably fine there.

But taking the ship into the atmosphere to see Spock regardless of if it meant the natives would see them? That was the kind of thing that could get Jim in trouble. He might think that the prime directive mattered less than saving lives, but he knew a lot of people at Starfleet didn’t exactly agree. So while Jim didn’t know for sure whether or not they’d been seen, it was still a risk that a lot of people would be mad he was even willing to take. And he really didn’t need admirals getting mad at him right when they were deciding whether or not they’d officially make him a captain with no restrictions.

Maybe he could just be a little vague with the details? Say that they stopped the volcano and
extracted Spock from inside within without saying everything? He didn’t always include a ton of
details in his logs anyways, so that would probably be fine.

As resolved as he was probably ever going to get, Jim started to finish the log. This was probably the
best option for his future within Starfleet. Yeah, a little over a year ago when he’d first had to take
command during the whole Nero thing he’d had no idea what he was doing, but since then he felt
like he really found his stride. It felt like this was what he was meant to be doing. Jim wasn’t sure
how much he believed in fate or destiny or whatever, but if he did than this was what he bet destiny
felt like. Being on that bridge, with that crew, in the captain’s chair…it just felt right.

The other maybe-destiny thing he had to sort out was Spock, but it was probably better to tackle one
issue at a time. While Nibiru had brought them closer to Earth than they’d been, they still had a few
days to go. He could probably find time to talk to Spock about everything, but he’d let Uhura talk to
Spock first. As far as he knew, she still had a lot more of a claim to Spock than he did. Still, he was a
bit surprised by the lack of touching at their reunion outside of Sickbay. They were probably just
waiting to go somewhere more private, but then, maybe Jim needed to catch up with ship gossip…

He was drawn out of his thoughts by the familiar whistle of the comm panel. “Bridge to Captain
Kirk.”

Jim got up and walked over to the comm panel. It was probably the call from Pike; he ran through
the ship mentally, trying to think of the closest briefing room where he could take the call. “Kirk
here.”

“Sir, we have an incoming subspace call for you from Admiral Pike.” There was a pause and then
they continued. “Where would you like me to direct it to?”

Mental map figured out, Jim hit the button to reply. “I’ll take it in briefing room 3.”

“Alright.” There was a moment of quiet while they redirected it. “The call is waiting for you there,
Captain.”

“Thanks. Kirk out.” Jim ended the call and headed to the briefing room, which wasn’t far. Once he
got there he sat down and hit the button to start the call with Pike.

A moment later, Pike’s face filled the screen. He smiled slightly at Jim. “Captain.”

Jim felt himself relaxing and smiling back. “Admiral.”

“So.” Pike reached offscreen to pull up a padd. “Last mission before heading home is done.” He read
over the padd in front of him. “It says you don’t have your log in yet though.” Pike looked up a Jim,
a small amount of concern there. “Everything alright?”

“Yeah, everything’s fine.” Pike bringing up the log had caused a moment of panic in Jim, but he
tried to smooth it out quickly. “The mission took a little longer than expected, so I was waiting to
finish my log until we’d finished the mission and had some time to debrief. I was actually just
finishing it up when you called; I should have it in soon.”

“That’s good.” Pike had relaxed once more as well. “No problems I hope?”

“Nope.” Jim felt like he was lying even if they hadn’t had any problems they hadn’t been able to deal
with. Plus, they’d extracted people from near-death situations before. Why would it be a problem
now? “We should even be able to make it back to Earth by our expected date.”

“That’s good.” Pike flicked through his padd once more. “Starfleet command has you and the senior
crew scheduled for a press conference the day after you get back; shouldn’t be anything too difficult; just some reporters asking about what the crew has been getting up to the past year. Ever since you beat Nero everyone seems to have taken a special interest in the Enterprise.”

Jim laughed. “I’m sure the crew will be very happy to hear about that. I think I can already hear Bones complaining.”

Pike smiled, warmer than the professional smile from earlier. “Well, they’ll still have shore leave to look forward to. You and Spock will have to come to me to talk about what comes next, but everyone else will have time to decide what they want to do next. Although from what I’ve heard, it sounds like a lot of your crew want to end up right back on the Enterprise.”

Jim knew that there’d probably be exceptions to that, but he smiled anyways. “They’re a good crew and any captain would be lucky to have them. I’d happily take them all back, assuming I get the ship.”

“Your odds seem good.” Pike looked back at a padd for a moment. “I think that’s all the official business we need to do now, so we can probably drop the formality.” Pike looked back at him and seemed a bit more relaxed now. “So Jim, you still planning on joining Number One and I for dinner while you’re planetside?”

Jim grinned. “I wouldn’t miss it.” He found himself relaxing more too; he still had some things to resolve, but he knew that now he and Pike would just get to talk more casually. They’d gotten into the habit of it over the year or so the Enterprise had been in space, and by this point it was calming for Jim. A lot of things may be up in the air right now, but he knew he could count on Pike to be one point that was more stable.

Chapter End Notes

Long and semi-sappy opening note means a short and semi-ominous end one.

They’ll be back at Earth soon. I think a lot of you can guess what comes next...
Chapter 127

Chapter Notes

Well I guess today would have been the appropriate day to say I was thankful for all of you, but I already did that last chapter. It's still true though; there was a huge bump in kudos last chapter, so another reminder that you're all awesome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It had been a long trip back to Earth. Well really it had only been a week or so, but with Jim and certain members of the bridge crew still sortof avoiding each other it felt longer. Spock had been more withdrawn since his near-death experience, so even though Jim sortof wanted to talk to him, he held back. Jim really wasn’t sure what he would say anyways.

But he couldn’t let his mind wander to that anyways. They were at the press conference Pike told them they needed to do and Jim had to be ready in case he got another question. This was one of the things Jim didn’t like as much about being captain. He’d managed to adjust to just about everything, but whenever they had to come to earth for new orders it meant a press conference. True, it was pretty rare, but Jim still didn’t like it.

It was just him and the senior officers, but most questions went to him, leaving everyone else to sit there and look pretty. It was something his crew could do easily, but it was also a major waste of everyone’s time.

So Jim was glad that this was winding down. There were only about five minutes left and then they would be able to have some leave. Jim pointed to the next reporter, an Andorian in the second row.

“Captain Kirk, do you have any idea what you and your crew will be doing next?” Their antennae shifted in a way Jim wished he knew how to decipher.

Jim leaned a little forward so the mic would pick him up well enough. “We don’t know for now, but my first officer and I will be reporting to the Admiralty for more information on our next mission soon. As for everyone else, I hope they stay on.” He looked down the panel at the other members of his crew, who were nodding to indicate that they planned to stay on. That was good news at least. Jim smiled and looked back at the reporters. “We’ve got an amazing crew on the Enterprise, so whatever comes next we’ll be ready.” He looked around to find the next reporter waiting.

“Captain Kirk,” Jim didn’t recognize this reporter; they had dark hair and looked human but he didn’t recognize the newsgroup they said they were from, “Captain Kirk, some people say that it seems like you’ve started aging. Is this true? If so, who is your soulmate?”

Jim tried to keep his expression neutral but he wasn’t sure how well he succeeded. It had only been a little over a year at this point; could people really tell? He could barely tell, but maybe it was because the change was gradual and he’d seen himself every day. Still, Jim realized he should answer before it seemed like he was hesitating too long. He broke out a classic grin, the kind that always seemed to charm people. “That’s hardly the kind of question that this press conference is about.”

The next reporter spoke up without Jim even calling on them, speaking up to be heard over the murmurs that broke out across the room. “That wasn’t a denial. Captain Kirk, do you know who
your soulmate is? Can you tell us who they are?”

This had really started going badly. Time to turn up the charm. “It wasn’t a confirmation either. As for who my soulmate is, and I’m not confirming aging.,” Jim consciously tried to keep his eyes from flicking to Spock, “I really couldn’t tell you. Just about all my time lately has been taken up by a certain silver lady, the Enterprise.”

Seeming convinced that they wouldn’t get a good answer from Jim, they set their sights on other members of the crew. They must have been eliminating members of the crew who would know before finally settling on Bones.

“Dr. McCoy!” One reporter spoke up, seemingly unfazed by Bones’ why-isn’t-this-over-I-want-to-leave face. “Dr. McCoy, can you tell us if Captain Kirk is aging?”

Bones looked about as annoyed by the question as Jim felt by it. “Are you asking me as his doctor or his friend?”

The reporter hesitated a moment, clearly trying to decide which would get a better answer. “His doctor?”

“In that case,” Bones leaned into the mic, “there’s something called doctor-patient confidentiality which I am not allowed to break. Unless I have clearance from my patient, I can’t tell you anything. And I don’t think Jim wants the press conference taken over by this.”

The reporter smiled in a way that was probably supposed to be endearing. “So I guess asking you as his friend wouldn’t get any better results?”

“No.” Bones was starting to tip over to the irritated side of professional. “I don’t play into gossip about my friends.”

Clearly deciding that that was another dead end, the reporters looked for their next target.

It was an interesting pick. “Commander Spock!” Jim had to give these reporters credit, even Spock’s blank but definitely disinterested face didn’t affect them. “Commander Spock! Do you know if the Captain is aging?”

Jim had to prevent himself from turning to look at Spock too much. As close as they’d gotten in the past year (even though the past few weeks seemed to set them back some), Spock still hadn’t said anything. Even though he had seemed to be studying Jim closely after that brush with their alternate universe selves...

“As the captain has said, personal questions concerning the lives of the crew are not the object of this press conference.” Spock remained calm. “If you have any questions related to current, past, or future missions of the Enterprise, I would be willing to answer. However, I believe we are out of time.”

A quick glance at the time confirmed that Spock was right. Jim decided that it was probably his job to officially end this. “Alright everyone, he does have a point. Unfortunately,” Jim tried not to make it sound sarcastic, “we are out of time. Any questions you have left will have to get addressed some other way. It’s been great though, thanks to everyone for coming out today.” The formalities done with, Jim nodded at the rest of the crew and they all stood up to leave.

Of course, he only made it as far as the smaller room adjacent to the conference hall before he felt the eyes of all the crew on him. He turned around from where he’d been leading them out and raised an eyebrow. “Well? You can go ahead and ask.”
Chekov was the one who actually spoke up. “Is it true? Are you aging?”

Jim had to resist the urge to sigh. “I’m sure some of you suspected it already and there’s probably even a betting pool about it among the crew by now, but yes, I have started aging.”

Everyone except Bones, who already knew, offered some form of congratulations. Jim noticed that Spock didn’t say anything, just nodded along while the others congratulated him. Uhura also seemed a little quieter than he’d expect, like she was thinking.

Sulu was the next one to be feeling bold. “So how long has it been?”

“Not sure exactly.” Jim hoped that it wasn’t obvious that he was avoiding eye contact with both his CMO and first officer; he looked down and ran a hand through his hair to cover it up. “Probably around a year now?” He looked back up at Sulu with a smirk. “Why? Is that important for the pool? Cuz I can’t get too precise.”

Sulu had the decency to look a little chastised then. “It’s not just for the pool; we do all care about you too.” He grinned. “Plus, I want to know if I need to tell Ben that someone else beat us as first soulmates on the crew.”

Jim smiled back. “I can’t be sure on the dates, but you definitely win for first together with your soulmate. So I think victory is still yours.”

“Thanks.” Sulu smiled in a way that Jim was pretty sure meant he was already thinking of Ben and what they’d be doing for their big reunion. After a moment he snapped back to the present. “Seriously though Jim, we are excited for you.”

There was a general murmur of agreement from everyone before Scotty decided to speak up; Jim noticed that Uhura was still a little quieter than normal. “So if you don’t mind me asking, do you know who it is?”

Again, Jim turned on the charming smile and tried to not look at Spock. “Like I told the reporters, I can’t really say. I’ve met a lot of people in the past year or so.” He could tell that the crew didn’t fully buy that, but Jim had no way of knowing who might actually suspect him beyond who he already assumed did. “Anyway, as fun as being the topic of gossip is, I don’t actually like seeing my face all over the tabloids unless I’ve earned it. So you can tell the rest of the crew and settle your bets, but let’s keep this on the down low, ok?” After getting nods and general noises of agreement, Jim decided that would be good enough. “Alright then. Shore leave starts now. Spock and I have to meet with Pike tomorrow morning so we can’t get too wild, but I’m still down to get a round with the best crew in the fleet. Who’s interested?”

Jim knew that by tomorrow, he would definitely be front page news, with every major outlet for that sort of thing comparing photos of him from the press conference with older photos like that was some sort of definitive proof. But for now, he had his crew and the city of San Francisco was theirs for the taking. Tomorrow he could deal with all of that, and maybe he’d even be getting that five-year mission there’d been rumors about. Things were looking good.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Thanksgiving to all of my readers in the US! To my readers elsewhere, happy whatever day you’re reading this on!
The next morning, Jim was up before he needed to be. He couldn’t help it; even though they’d been out late with the crew the night before, right now he was too excited to not get up. He and Spock were meeting up soon since they’d arranged to the night before and then they’d head to their meeting with Pike, where he’d find out if they’d finally make him a full captain or not now that the probationary period was done. Hopefully by this point even the admirals who’d been more wary about him becoming captain due to his relative lack of experience would be more open to it; he’d done a lot in the past year and while he’d been a bit nervous at first, Jim really felt like he knew what he was doing now.

Which was why he’d thrown on the proper uniform and was practically bouncing as he walked with Spock towards Pike’s office. Sure, things between him and Spock had been a bit weird lately, ever since their brush with the alternate universe really, but right now Jim was glad to have Spock with him. He looked over at Spock and grinned. “What if we end up getting that five-year exploratory mission they’ve been talking about?”

Spock raised his eyebrow and didn’t break his pace. “There are many ships and officers who are likely under consideration, some of which are better equipped and more experienced. It is not guaranteed we will get the mission.”

“Don’t be such a downer.” Jim turned around so he could walk backwards and face Spock. “We’ve got the best ship in the fleet, and our crew is hard to beat too. I think we could get it. I bet Pike will tell us that we got it today.”

“There are many things that the admiral may wish to speak to us about.” Spock almost seemed more blank faced than normal; typically by now he’d be reacting to Jim some.

Jim kept walking backwards; he trusted Spock to warn him if he was about to run into something. “I think we could get it. And imagine how exciting it would be!” He dropped back alongside Spock, still facing him some. “Just the crew, the ship, and uncharted deep space. I think it could be great.” They were nearly at the building for Pike’s office now; Jim let it drop as they went inside but couldn’t help but lean towards Spock as they rode the turbolift to the proper floor. “Just consider it Spock, that’s all I’m saying. Imagine the scientific discoveries you could make!”

Spock raised his eyebrow again, but this time it seemed to be in consideration. “It would be a fascinating opportunity.”

“That’s the spirit.” Jim grinned and turned as the turbolift doors opened. He confidently led the way to Pike’s office, but he felt his mood slip a bit at the grim look on Pike’s face. “Good morning.”

Pike merely nodded in acknowledgement. “Take a seat, gentlemen.” Once they were seated, he looked between the two of them. “So, before we begin do you want to go over what happened on your last mission?” He looked between them again before settling his focus. “Jim?”
Something was up. Jim could practically feel it rolling off of Pike and Spock seemed tense too. Better stick with his story. “Well, basically what I put in my log.” He paused, trying to find the right way to say it. “We observed the natives and the volcano for a bit, and when we determined that the volcano could be a danger to them we found a way to carefully prevent an eruption, as it can be Starfleet policy to save vulnerable populations in situations where they cannot save themselves and if it can be done without alerting them. All in all we hit a little bit of a snag but it was fairly uneventful.”

“Uneventful.” Pike nodded and looked at a padd on his desk. “Spock, would you like to share what your report says? It seems there are some details that Mister Kirk here did not include.”

This wasn’t good. Jim immediately slipped into damage control. “Sir, if there were any details I didn’t include—”

“I’m not talking to you right now.” Pike held up his hand but didn’t turn back to Jim. “Mr. Spock?”

Jim looked over at Spock long enough to see Spock glance at him before turning to Pike. “I was inside the volcano to prevent the eruption. I was in danger, and the Enterprise entered the lower atmosphere to save me.”

“Ah.” Pike looked back at Jim. “For future reference, that’s not the sort of detail you shouldn’t leave out.”

Jim wasn’t quite sure how to respond to that, so he turned to Spock. “You filed a report behind my back?”

“I had assumed you would provide a more thorough report in your logs, so I believed it prudent to submit additional material providing rationale for your actions.” Spock looked over at him. “I did not realize I had miscalculated what your logs would include.”

“Well sorry about that Spock, I didn’t realize me taking a risk to save your life was something that needed to be reported.” Jim didn’t want to look at Spock, but he could feel him staring at the side of his face.

Spock was still infuriatingly calm. “I am grateful for that, however—”

Jim scoffed and looked back at Spock. “Hell of a way to show it. You threw me under the bus!”

“Gentlemen!” Pike’s voice was stern and they both looked back to him. “Unless you got lucky and the natives somehow missed a starship dropping out of the sky, this is a possible Prime Directive violation. That sort of thing has consequences.”

“Should the consequences not be stalled until they are certain a breach of the Prime Directive has occurred?” There was a slight change to Spock’s voice from before that had Jim looking over again. Was Spock trying to be back on his side?

Pike rubbed his forehead. “Spock.”

“Admiral, it is illogical to enact a punishment when no punishment is due.” Jim raised his eyebrows as Spock continued. “It would be a mistake on the part of you or the admiralty to continue this without evidence.”

Pike looked up, his eyebrows also raised. “Are you giving me attitude Spock?”

That damn perfect Vulcan posture seemed to get a little more upright in the chair. “I’m expressing
multiple attitudes simultaneously, sir.” He tilted his head slightly. “To which are you referring?”

If the situation weren’t so serious, Jim would want to laugh. That sort of comment was typically reserved for Bones or Jim himself. But still, Spock was the reason Jim was in this mess so he didn’t exactly feel like smiling at him right now. No amount of sass would make up for the fact that he’d basically tattled on Jim.

Pike didn’t seem amused either. “You’re dismissed. Get out.”

Jim could feel Spock look at him as he got up, but he resisted the urge to make eye contact. In all of Jim’s experience getting in trouble with authority figures (which wasn’t insignificant) he knew that it usually got worse once you were alone.

Once they were alone in the room, Pike sighed. “Do you have any idea how much trouble you’re in?”

Never a good start. Jim focused on the desk. “I imagine you’re about to tell me.”

“Dammit Jim.” He looked up as Pike rolled back from the desk but made no move to go around it. “This is serious. Look at me.” Jim finally met his eyes. He did seem angry, but also disappointed. “Not only did you possibly violate the Prime Directive, but you made it worse when you lied about it. What’s the lesson here?”

Things were going so well til that damn report from Spock. Jim tried to lighten up the situation anyways. “Make sure your first officer doesn’t stab you in the back?”

“This isn’t a joke.” The irritation was becoming more clear on Pike’s face and in his voice. “I’m not the only one who reviews your logs. The discrepancy and possible Prime Directive violation got brought up to Admiral Marcus, who convened a meeting on it that I was not invited to.”

Jim did a quick review of Admirals in his head. Marcus was in charge of internal security and disciplinary action. If he was involved, this wasn’t good. “Sir—”

“This is out of my hands, Jim!” Pike raised his voice and Jim tried not to shrink back in his seat. "You brought this on yourself. You need to learn when to follow the rules. You can’t just act like they don’t apply to you!”

“There are things that are more important than rules.” Jim felt his own temper starting to show. “I thought my willingness to go into situations when necessary regardless of what the rules said was why you recruited me in the first place.”

“I recruited you because you had potential.” Pike’s voice was still harsh and Jim tried not to flinch at the past tense. “But you can’t just skate by on charm and raw talent. You have to learn to work within the system, or you’ll face the consequences.” Pike stared him down. “Do you know what the consequences will be for this?”

Pike’s voice had quieted in a way Jim didn’t like. “What?”

“This happened at the very end of your probationary run as captain, and it was a hell of a final impression to leave. Even normally this sort of thing, the coverup as well as the rule breaking, could result in a captain losing their ship and possibly their rank. But do you want to know what kind of message it sends for you in particular?” Pike looked at him expectantly.

Jim could already tell that he didn’t want to hear this. “What?”
“That everyone who said that you weren’t ready was right. That you have no respect for Starfleet or the captaincy, and that you just don’t care about the rules you’re supposed to be following. Or that you don’t understand them.” Pike scrutinized him. “Quite frankly, I didn’t want to believe that. I thought you were ready, and that you understood the responsibility I was giving you when I recommended you to be the next captain of the Enterprise. Or at least, I wanted to think that.” He paused. “But now, I have doubts. If you’re lucky, all they’ll do is take away the ship and your rank. Some even want to send you back to the Academy to see if it’ll stick this time. I’m honestly not sure what I’d recommend if they ask me.”

Jim looked away from Pike and swallowed. He couldn’t meet his eyes. “Am I dismissed?”

“Yeah, you’re dismissed.” He could tell Pike was still staring at him and he could feel the frustration coming off of him. “You’ll hear about what comes next soon enough, but for now you can go.”

Without looking back at Pike, Jim got up and turned to leave the room. As he walked out, he had to keep himself from thinking back over how horribly today had gone compared to what he’d expected. Looks like it wasn’t a good day after all.

Chapter End Notes

Even if I was changing this scene a good amount from Into Darkness, I had to keep that Spock sass in there. It was too good not to include tbh.

Anyways, this isn't looking good for Jim, huh?
Happy last update of November everyone! Last chapter was a bit more divisive than I would have guessed, but it's fun to see you getting engaged and making your arguments in the comments. Spock seemed to be the more controversial one, although a few of you looked at Jim too. But anyways, without further ado, let's get back to the action!

We're back with Spock this chapter...

As he sat in meditation attempting to process the events of the past few days, Spock was uncertain how to proceed. He had not intended to cause a problem for Jim when he filed his report, and yet it seemed as if now there was more of a problem than if he had not acted at all. Were he human, Spock may have allowed himself to be irritated with Jim. After all, had Jim been completely honest in his initial log, Spock’s report may have helped as he intended. By describing what had happened, he had meant to deflect blame to himself, not “tattle” on Jim as the captain had accused him earlier. But despite his intentions it had, to borrow a human expression, backfired spectacularly. Jim was in trouble, and it seemed to be at least in part Spock's fault.

And there was the other complication raised by the previous day’s press conference. While Jim had been being incredibly and possibly intentionally vague, there was now too much evidence to ignore indicating that Jim was likely his soulmate. He decided to review it.

1. The Kirk of the alternate universe had said that he and his Spock were soulmates, and that it was true in an alternate universe they had encountered. While Spock doubted the honesty of most in that universe, that Kirk did not seem to have reason to lie to Spock, nor did he seem to be lying.

2. The alternate universe he mentioned was likely that of their universe’s older counterpart to Spock, as that Kirk had mentioned him. As for Spock’s own counterpart (although he supposed that in a way all of the previous mentioned Spocks were counterparts to himself; however, he currently referred to the older version of himself who now resided in this timeline and went by the name “Selek”), he had stated that he had met his soulmate and aged because of them, but he did not specify who it was. This was likely due to his policy of not informing Spock or others about major aspects of their futures. Still, he had emphasized Spock’s relationship with Jim during their initial meeting when his older counterpart convinced him not to go to help the Vulcan survivors, which could indicate that Selek’s soulmate was also his universe’s Jim Kirk…

Still, what was true in alternate universes was not necessarily true in this universe; by definition the universes differed from each other. They would not necessarily differ in all contexts, but there would still be key differences. However, if the counterpart whose universe was most similar to Spock’s own (Selek) had said or implied that he and his Jim were soulmates, Spock believed that that could indicate the same was true in his own universe.

Alternate universe evidence was not the most reliable; it would be best to consider evidence from his own universe and weigh it more heavily than evidence from other universes. Spock continued his examination of the evidence.
3. Although Dr. McCoy had been unable to narrow down the potential window for the beginning of Spock’s aging due to the lack of data, the date when he first met Jim did fall within it, so it was possible that meeting him had triggered Spock’s aging.

4. Jim said he had been aging “about a year,” although he had seemed uncertain. Although not genuinely uncertain like Spock had seen him before, but more as if he was attempting to seem uncertain, which was curious. Still, as Spock and Jim had met approximately one year prior, Jim’s aging date would also fit within the proper time frame.

5. Jim had said that he “couldn’t say” who his soulmate was. That was not a denial of knowledge necessarily; it could even be interpreted as meaning that Jim knew who his soulmate was but refused to say who it was.

6. After the press conference, Jim had avoided looking at Spock. While typically in situations with all bridge crew present Jim looked at Spock slightly more often than other crew members while talking, this time he looked at Spock less. Why? Humans often avoided eye contact or looked away from someone either if they were hiding something or if they did not like what they were looking at. As Jim typically looked at Spock often without looking away immediately, this suggested that he did not find Spock’s appearance unappealing. The potential logical conclusion was that Jim was hiding something.

This evidence suggested that Jim knew who his soulmate was and that it likely was Spock, but that Jim was refusing to tell Spock. Spock was uncertain why this would be the case; many humans eagerly sought out those they believed were their soulmates and told them as soon as the knowledge was available. Spock had been in a relationship with Nyota when he and Jim met and through most of their acquaintance, but that was no longer true. It was possible that Jim was unaware of that, but that was also not necessarily a deterrent. Across various human cultures, indeed possibly in most of them, if a person met their soulmate while in a relationship with another person it was considered reasonable, normal, or even encouraged to end that relationship and begin one with their soulmate. While Spock would have likely resisted the idea when there was no evidence and he did not know Jim well, by the time he discovered his own aging and had spent time as Jim’s first officer and friend, he would have been open to the possibility of a relationship with Jim. He would have consulted Nyota before ending their relationship, but given that the possibility of him and Jim as soulmates had been one of their reasons for separating, she likely would have been open to ending the relationship for those reasons even then.

But how would he tell Jim that he knew they were soulmates? At their last meeting, which had been in Admiral Pike’s office while he…discussed the issue of the log discrepancy from their latest mission with them, Jim was angry at Spock. Often when he was angry Jim would prefer solitude, and he was not immune to holding grudges. That did not create ideal conditions for Spock to approach him.

Spock wanted someone to discuss this with. However, his options were limited. He would prefer to discuss this with someone human, but there were few humans he felt comfortable discussing this sort of… emotional matter with. Dealing with emotions was not something Spock enjoyed, and discussions with others were generally worse.

The first person he considered was his mother, but she was likely still occupied with the diplomatic work she and his father had been doing to help establish the New Vulcan colony and maintain Vulcan’s former diplomatic, economic, and other connections. He could attempt to contact his sister, but Michael was likely occupied on her own ship, and her mostly Vulcan upbringing meant that she may not have much more insight into human emotional matters or initiating relationships than Spock did.
As for other humans Spock knew and would consider having this conversation with, the options were limited. Admiral Pike had served as a mentor to him during his time at the Academy, but due to the Admiral’s close connection to Jim it could quickly prove difficult to discuss. Spock was willing to discuss emotional matters with Nyota due to their closeness, but it would seem…awkward to discuss a potential future relationship with her so soon after their separation, even if she had encouraged him to consider it. Additionally, she had said that there were things of her own she wished to work on, and Spock would not want to interrupt her introspection.

The other person Spock would consider going to for emotional advice was Jim himself, but he could not very well go to Jim for advice on dealing with or approaching Jim. The one person who would be the logical choice for advice on Jim was McCoy, but Spock did not want to approach him with this matter, even if the doctor already knew Spock was aging and was likely the one who discovered Jim’s aging as well.

There was also the possibility of his older counterpart, Selek, as he understood both Spock himself and Jim and also had most likely established a relationship with his own Jim. Still, Spock was unsure if this would be an area where he would refuse to disclose information so as not to unduly influence Spock’s life. He seemed insistent on allowing Spock to choose his own path, even if he did provide guidance when pressed.

Spock dropped his hands from his usual meditation pose and opened his eyes. This was proving incredibly ineffective. Perhaps this would be a matter where he would recognize the opportunity when it presented itself and he merely needed to wait. That currently seemed to be the easiest path.

With the matter as resolved as it seemed like it would be, Spock stood from his meditation mat and went to find a way to occupy his time for the remainder of the evening.

Chapter End Notes

I know a lot of you weren't expecting Spock to figure it out quite so soon (and I'll admit, I was tempted to save it for a dramatic warp reactor moment), but I did say I was going to shake things up...
Chapter 130

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! You all still seemed to have a lot of feelings on Spock after getting a chapter from his POV to clear things up, from the chapter before. We're in for a lot happening for the boys...

But first we're back to Jim

See the end of the chapter for more notes

He’d lost his ship and his rank. Jim sat in his apartment (which still didn’t really feel like his since he’d gone directly from the Starfleet dorms to the Enterprise) and started at the padd in his hand. The Admiralty had made their decision, and they hadn’t decided in Jim’s favor.

Still, he guessed it could have been worse. They’d only bumped him down to commander, and he wasn’t going to have to repeat the Academy like Pike said some of the Admirals were considering. He wasn’t going to have to repeat everything and then work his way up from ensign or something.

But he also didn’t have a posting. He’d probably have to wait and see whoever took him, but god knows what use they’d have for a disgraced former captain. Hell, half of Starfleet probably thought this was just him getting what he deserved or had coming to him.

He wondered what Spock thought. After all, when Pike first named him acting first officer way back during the Nero mission Spock had actually asked if it was a joke. Jim liked to think that since then he’d earned Spock’s respect, not to mention become friends with him, but after today…

That was a can of worms he really didn’t want to open. Spock had cost him his captaincy, but he probably wasn’t trying to. Still, he could have come to Jim about the report and tried talking with him or something. Jim knew that he’d messed up here, but he still would have liked a little more courtesy from Spock considering he’d risked everything trying to save Spock’s life. And to think that Spock was supposedly his soulmate…

But now that was another thing that had blown up in Jim’s face. Sure enough, since that press conference (and god, was that only yesterday?) everyone had been speculating about if he was aging. So much for keeping that a secret. Thankfully no one seemed to have confirmation, which must have meant the crew was keeping quiet, but Jim knew that thanks to today he’d be in the headlines for another week anyway. He could already see the headlines about how he was aging but alone and falling from grace all the while.

Well, it seemed like he didn’t have much to lose anyways, so he might as well have some fun. He tossed the padd on his desk and stripped out of his dress grays to go get some of his old jeans and a leather jacket out of his closet. If they wanted the image of the reckless idiot, he could certainly live up to it.

That was how Jim found himself sliding up to the bar in some place just slightly too classy to call a dive that he’d found during his Academy days. He hopped onto a stool and flagged down the bartender for a drink before looking around the room. He was feeling like a little company, and if the news hadn’t broken yet he could probably still find someone who’d think he was still the heroic
captain instead of a disgraced commander.

He had his whiskey on the rocks in front of him by the time he spotted the pretty face a few stools down. Dark hair, pale skin (and he was not thinking about why he was looking for those traits), and a smile that had him smiling back.

Jim was just about to make his move when his view got blocked by Pike rolling into the spot next to him looking none too excited to be there. Jim had to resist the urge to groan. There went his night.

He looked back to his drink and took a sip. “I didn’t miss dinner with you and Number One, did I? I thought that was tomorrow.”

Pike looked around but made no move to order a drink. “It is, and demotion or no you’re still expected to be there.”

“Good to hear.” It actually was, but Pike still wasn’t exactly who Jim wanted to be seeing right now. “How’d you find me?”

“I know you better than you think you I do.” Pike ordered a drink and looked back to Jim. “The first time I found you was a place like this, except you’d just gotten your ass kicked.”

“No I didn’t.” Jim remembered that fight. He wouldn’t say he was winning, but all things considered he’d been holding his own.

“No?” The disbelief was rolling off of Pike.

“That wasn’t how it happened.”

“It was an epic beatdown.” Pike still seemed calm, if a bit amused by his denial.

“No it wasn’t.” At this point Jim was half just trying to keep the friendly mood going.

“You were on your back across a table. When I found you to talk to you later, you had napkins hanging out of your nose.” Pike seemed more amused now.

Jim couldn’t help but smile a bit at the memory. At least he wasn’t quite as much of a mess now as he’d been then. “Yeah, that was a good fight.”

Pike just shook his head, but he was smiling a bit now too. A moment later it faded though. “They gave her back to me. The Enterprise.”

“Congrats.” Jim found himself unable to look away from his drink again. “She’s a great ship with a good crew.” He took a sip. “Might want to watch that first officer though.”

“I hope not, considering it’ll be you.” Jim looked up in surprise but Pike only nodded. “Spock’s been reassigned to someone else who needed science and first. You’re going to be back on the Enterprise.” When Jim didn’t know how to respond, Pike continued. “Marcus took a bit of convincing, but I was able to make my case.”

“What’d you tell him?” Considering Marcus had been the one leading the group who’d demoted Jim, he couldn’t imagine it would be an easy sell.

“The truth.” Pike waited til Jim met his eyes. “I believe in you, and if anyone deserves a second chance, it’s Jim Kirk.”

If anyone asked, Jim would blame the surge of emotion he felt at that on the alcohol, even though he
hadn’t had nearly enough to affect him yet. He looked away and took a moment to pull himself back together. “I don’t know what to say.”

Pike smiled. “That’s a first.” He patted Jim on the shoulder. “It’s going to be ok, son.”

From anyone but Pike that would feel insincere, but coming from Pike it just felt reassuring. Jim looked back at his drink, trying to figure out how to respond.

Before he could, Pike’s communicator beeped. He pulled it out and flipped it open to read the message. “Some sort of emergency. We need to report to HQ.” Pike started to roll back and slapped Jim’s shoulder. “Suit up.”

Jim nodded considered knocking back the rest of his drink, but got distracted when Pike rolled back.

He slid back where he’d been a moment before. “And I almost forgot, but congrats on aging. It’s always exciting to meet your soulmate; I’m surprised you kept it quiet so long.”

It didn’t feel like Pike was disappointed about not being told, but Jim still felt a little bad. “No one really knew. Besides Bones of course, but he’s my doctor so of course he knew.” Jim looked at what was left of his drink. “I still haven’t sorted out the actual soulmate bit of it, which is what I wanted to do before telling anyone.” He looked over at Pike. “You would have been one of the first to know then. Plus…” Jim looked back to his drink. “When the actual aging started was right around the time of the whole Nero thing. When a founding planet of the Federation gets destroyed, it seems like there are more important things to focus on than my personal life. Plus, with my career hanging in the balance after that it seemed more important to talk to you about that.”

“Hey.” Pike put his hand on Jim’s shoulder and waited until he looked at him. “No aspect of your life is unimportant to me, you hear?” He waited until Jim nodded. “I’m here for whatever you want to talk about, son.” He patted Jim’s back and shifted away from the bar again. “Now c’mon, we should get going.”

Jim nodded and left his unfinished drink on the bar before following Pike out.

Chapter End Notes

Tbh, I intended to change this scene more from the movie, but I liked it more than I remembered. It really is a nice moment between Kirk and Pike. It’s a nice bit of fluff before everything that’s coming...

In a non-story note, I’m in the midst of dead week and staring down finals, so if updates are less punctual than you typically expect you know why.
Chapter 131

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! As of tomorrow we're 15 months into this fic, but somehow the kudos keep coming, so just a reminder that I think all of you are awesome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim ended up meeting up with Pike after a quick stop at his apartment to get changed back into uniform. They went over to the meeting together and Jim almost stopped when he saw a certain person waiting in the lobby of the building they were told to report to. “What’s he doing here? I thought you said I was the first officer on the Enterprise now.”

Pike paused when he noticed Jim stopped and looked around to see who Jim was talking about. When he spotted him, he raised his eyebrows. “Must be here for another ship. They did call the captains and first officers of everyone nearby, so someone else must have picked him up already.” Pike looked back at Jim. “Spock is a talented officer; I’m sure you recognize that.”

Jim didn’t exactly want to tell his surrogate father and current commanding officer that he’d just rather not see Spock now, but he didn’t really have a good reason to avoid him, so he just nodded. “That’s true.”

Of course, by that point Spock had spotted them and begun walking over. Jim looked away, but a moment later he heard the familiar voice. “Admiral. Captain.”

Jim tried not to react to the title; Spock must not have heard then. He heard Pike greet Spock but couldn’t bring himself to do the same.

Pike looked between the two of them from his wheelchair; Jim could tell that he was picking up on the tension between them. Trying not to be quite as dramatic as he knew people said he was, Jim took a deep breath and turned to Pike. “Can Mr. Spock and I have a moment? I think there’s some things we need to discuss.”

Spock looked at Jim, but he remained focused on Pike, who continued to look between them. After a moment that probably felt longer than it actually was, he nodded. “I think that would be for the best.” He looked between them once more before settling on Jim. “I’ll meet you in the briefing room.” Jim watched as Pike rolled towards the turbolifts and finally got in.

“Captain.” Spock sounded a bit more insistent this time.

He should probably clear this up. “Not captain anymore, Spock. I got demoted.” Jim headed towards the turbolift and he didn’t have to look to know that Spock was following him. He found himself glancing back anyways. “I’m first officer of the Enterprise now and you’ve been reassigned.”

They got onto the turbolift and Spock paused before responding. “It is fortunate that the consequences were not more severe, considering your actions.”

Jim’s patience hadn’t been the best that day, but that remark used up the last of it. He slammed the stop button for the turbolift and turned to Spock.
“Look, I know I messed up, but this is still on you at least in part.” When Spock seemed confused, Jim took a deep breath. Might as well let out everything he’d been overthinking while he waited for the verdict earlier that day. He tried to keep his voice down because of the small space, but he wasn’t sure how well he did. “I get what I did wrong. But dammit Spock, you could have stopped this before it started! This past year was my first mission in command of a starship; my only other time serving had been during the Academy. But you—” Jim took a deep breath and reminded himself that he shouldn’t yell. “You had served and gotten actual experience; even if it wasn’t as part of a command team you were still a part of Pike’s bridge crew. You knew what to do or not do in times where I didn’t; that was part of the damn reason I wanted you on that bridge with me.” There were other reasons, but Jim was not starting that now. “You were supposed to help me, not go behind my back.”

“My intention was to aid you.” Spock seemed a bit stiffer than usual; Jim could practically feel his walls going up. “As I have previously stated, my report was intended to supplement yours—”

“You couldn’t have just come to me?” Jim raised his eyebrows at Spock but got no reaction. “Look, after getting an earful from Pike I know what I did wrong. Even if it turns out they didn’t see us, risking a prime directive violation is the kind of thing that captains get in trouble for, but it’s rarely career ending unless they majorly break it. You and I both know that.”

“Yes, and I informed you—” Spock started talking but Jim held up his hand to stop him.

“Yeah, you mentioned the prime directive, but I was a little too concerned with saving you at the time.” Jim took a moment to get his thoughts back together. He took a deep breath and looked back at Spock. “I was at the end of my probationary period as captain. We’d had some really weird missions toward the end there, some of which you were on the weirder end of than me.” Jim let that linger for a moment; he still didn’t know everything his alternate self had done with Spock, but whatever it was must have left an impression based on how weird Spock acted around him afterwards. “But I thought it would have looked better if we finished with a mission that went smoothly and ended well. So there I was, making what could be my final log as captain, and I decide maybe it would be better to leave out some details to make everything seem a bit smoother. You know who probably could have helped with that decision?”

Spock remained silent.

Jim let out a breath but decided to carry on anyways. “My goddamn first officer. But he’d been avoiding me since the last mission for god knows what reasons and I was on my own.” He felt like he was talking to a wall, but Jim continued. “Considering the stakes, I was nervous. I was unsure what to do, and a little advice would have been nice. Clearly it would have been helpful.”

“You are not typically the kind who missteps due to fear or anxiety.” Spock seemed to be letting his walls down slightly, out of curiosity if nothing else.

“Well, I’m human, and it happens sometimes. Besides, fear when facing down a Klingon warbird is totally different than fear when facing down your own future. You’d know that if you ever actually let yourself feel.” The words hung in the air for a moment and Jim resisted the urge to slap himself in the face as he felt Spock’s walls go back up; he didn’t think it would be possible for Spock to be any more closed off than a moment ago, but clearly he was wrong. “That wasn’t what I meant to say. Just…” Jim sighed and ran a hand down his face as Spock restarted the turbolift. This wasn’t going according to plan, not that he’d actually had a plan.

As the turbolift reached its destination and they got out, Jim glanced toward the briefing room, where it seemed like most people had taken their places. They probably couldn’t draw this out much longer. He looked back at Spock. This wasn’t how he wanted to end things on what could be the last time in
a while that they’d see each other. “Look.” Spock stopped and turned back to him. “Do you understand why I went back for you?”

Spock paused, but before he could respond, someone new came out of the turbolift and directly towards them, pausing in front of Spock. “Commander Spock? I’m Captain Frank Abbot of the USS Bradbury. You’re with me.”

“Yes, Captain.” Spock glanced towards Jim, who really hoped his face didn’t show how weird it felt to hear Spock say that to someone else. Thankfully, Bradbury seemed to get the hint that they’d been talking and left toward the briefing room without them.

Yeah, they really couldn’t keep drawing this out. Jim had to end this on a better note than it had been. He looked back at Spock, who didn’t seem much more excited than Jim was that he would be on a different ship, and decided to just go for it. “Look, Spock, the truth is…” Jim took a deep breath. How much truth was he really going for here? Might be better to keep it simple. “I’m going to miss you.” It was true, even if there was more he could say. But still, at the press conference it almost seemed like Spock may have known about the soulmate thing already…

Spock’s mouth had dropped slightly open at Jim’s words, but besides that he made no move to react. Did he know?

Whatever the case, this silence was starting to get drag on. Jim raised his eyebrows expectantly, hoping Spock would be able to say something…

But all he did was close his mouth without saying anything, or acting like he was going to say anything.

Jim couldn’t help the small groan of frustration that escaped him at Spock’s lack of response. A quick glance at the briefing room confirmed that they were basically out of time anyways. With one last look at Spock he headed in and took the spot next to Pike.

Chapter End Notes

This wasn't quite how I was expecting this chapter to go, but sometimes when inspiration strikes you just gotta roll with it. Plus it means a bit more time before we find out what happens in a certain situation...
Chapter 132

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I hope you're ready cuz we're really getting into it now. Stick with me...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim slipped in and took the open seat next to Pike, who nodded at him in acknowledgement.
“Everything alright?”

Jim glanced across the room at Spock, who was busy settling in next to his new captain. “I’m not sure. As good as it’ll get probably.”

Pike raised an eyebrow and looked like he was about to respond, but Admiral Marcus began to speak and everyone turned their attention to the front of the room.

“Everyone, thank you for coming on such short notice. By now, some of you have likely heard about what happened in London.” Marcus began to pull up images, which appeared on their screens. “The target was a Starfleet data archive; now all that’s left is a hole in the ground and we’re still tallying the casualties. However.” Marcus began to pull up more information. “I received a message from the officer claiming responsibility for the attack, and he says that he was forced to do it by this man, Commander John Harrison.” A personnel file appeared on their screens. “He was one of our own, but now he has declared war on Starfleet for unknown reasons, and he is not to leave Federation space.”

Marcus continued, but Jim’s attention had shifted to the personnel file he had sent out. The picture was of a South Asian man who appeared to be physically in his early twenties, although the listed birthdate had him slightly older than that. Despite being around Jim’s age, Jim had no recollection of him from the Academy. Also, nothing in his profile would suggest a reason for the attack.

Something felt off about this. Jim began to look through the information on the building that was attacked. Was there anything special about it? An archive seemed like an odd target…

“Why an archive?” Jim muttered to himself, continuing to go through the images and files. There had to be a reason…

“What was that, Jim?” He turned and saw Pike leaning in; it seemed like Marcus was almost finished talking.

“All of that information was public; it’s not like he was trying to destroy or access information. Why the archive?” Jim kept looking through, but it didn’t make sense. Unless it was just to get their attention; maybe it wasn’t the real target…

“You two have something to add over there?” Jim looked up and saw that Marcus was looking directly at him and Pike. He didn’t look too happy that they were talking during his briefing, not that Jim had ever known Marcus to look happy.

“Not at the moment, sir.” Pike glanced back at Jim. “Commander Kirk here was just thinking out loud.”
Marcus sighed. “If you have something to share, may as well just say it, Kirk.”

Here goes nothing. “Why attack the archive if he was trying to damage Starfleet? It only had public information, so it doesn’t make sense to attack; that wouldn’t really harm Starfleet. Unless…” Jim suddenly realized how this could be the first step and what this man could do next if he really wanted to harm Starfleet.

He finally seemed to have Marcus’ interest. “Unless what?”

“Unless that was only the first attack.” It was starting to make sense, but Jim really hoped he wasn’t right. “After an attack, protocol mandates that senior command gather the captains and first officers of nearby ships at HQ for a meeting on what to do next. If this Harrison really wanted to attack Starfleet like you said and do real harm…”

Jim was about to continue, but suddenly there was a loud low humming noise from the windows along the edge of the room and light from outside began to pour in. Jim turned and although it was hard to make out, he was willing to be that that was a ship. Probably with weapons.

Damn, Jim really hated being right sometimes. He stood up. “Clear the room!”

No sooner had he said it than the ship began to fire into the room. The glass of the windows shattered and the room filled with blasts, smoke, and screams. Jim saw Pike moving for cover and Spock starting to get others out of the room, but he knew that possibly above all else they needed to stop that ship. Jim turned and started to run from the room, passing incoming armed security forces.

One of them was shot as soon as they reached the room; Jim grabbed the dropped phaser rifle and began to circle around the hallway outside the room; if he was able to get perpendicular to the ship he might be able to take it down…

Once in position, Jim turned and shot out the window, ducking his head to avoid getting glass in his face. He started firing at the ship, but it seemed to make no difference. It must have been armored. He started looking for any vulnerabilities on the ship; there had to be something…

Jim spotted it. The engine had some sort of opening on the front that was drawing in air; it wasn’t much but it would have to do. Jim glanced around and noticed one of the panels nearby that had equipment in case a fire broke out; he could tie a hose around the phaser rifle so he’d get it back in case he missed.

His plan in place, Jim quickly prepared the phaser rifle. He had to hurry; every moment he wasted could be another person getting shot. Once he was ready, he turned and took a few steps to give him the momentum he needed to throw it.

Jim could swear that time seemed to stop as he watched the phaser rifle and hose get pulled in; it didn’t seem to be doing anything, but then Jim heard a loud crack from behind him and saw the entire panel with the fire and emergency supplies seemed to ready to break free from the wall. He ducked just in time and watched as it got pulled into the ship’s engine, finally seeming to do some damage.

There was a loud noise and smoke began to pour from the ship as it started to spiral out of control; Jim had just enough time to see the front of the ship turn towards him and make eye contact with the very man from the personnel file he’d just seen before the man began to vanish in the light of the transporter.

With the threat taken care of, Jim ran back into the room to assess the damage.
It was bad. There were blast marks everywhere; the windows were broken and most of the chairs around the table had been toppled. Jim’s heart stopped when he saw Pike’s wheelchair lying on its side with the man himself nowhere in sight.

But that was when he noticed Spock, who was pulling someone into an adjacent room. Jim ran in that direction and frantically searched for Pike, not even letting himself experience the relief that Spock was still alright. On some level he’d already known that Spock hadn’t died; he would have felt it if he had.

He saw Pike. There was a large blast mark on his chest that had Jim rushing to his side; his eyes already seemed to be losing focus and his breathing was dangerously shallow. Jim tried to remember anything he’d ever learned from Bones about first aid, but god he just couldn’t right now. His eyes were beginning to blur with tears and he just found himself scrambling to place his fingers on Pike’s neck, desperately trying to remember where it was you could find the vein or artery to check someone’s pulse because he was feeling all over and he wasn’t finding anything…

“Jim!” The sound of his name had Jim turning to see Spock standing behind him, his face mostly calm but concern clear in his eyes. Medics were beginning to pour into the room. “Jim.” His focus turned back to Spock. “Let them take him.”

He saw a team of medics there and Jim shifted aside, barely realizing that the crying noises he heard came from himself as he watched them take Pike away. He hadn’t felt a pulse. Pike looked dangerously still; the medical team was calling for emergency transport.

Would it do any good? Jim hadn’t felt a pulse and it didn’t look like Pike was breathing when the light of the transporter surrounded him. Pike was dead.

Jim took a deep breath and began to wipe at his cheeks, still sitting on the ground next to where Pike had been. It wouldn’t do to mourn now. Harrison had gotten away. Jim needed to stop him.

Chapter End Notes

This was honestly probably the hardest decision I had to make when writing this fic. Previously, I’d been set on killing Pike since I’d saved Amanda and others earlier on and I felt like I shouldn't let everyone live, but then I hit the bar scene with Jim and my resolve started to weaken, plus a lot of you were decidedly against it (at least the commenters were). Honestly, I didn't decide what I would do in this scene until about a day before writing this chapter. It was really difficult figuring out what to do, and I hope you'll stick with me.

In a less angsty note, Khan isn't white and should never be white if he's still supposed to be Khan. There's a lot of reasons for that, but just ask me on tumblr or in the comments if you really want that rant.
Well, last chapter was certainly an intense one. It was interesting going through all of your reactions to what happened to Pike and also to Khan not being white (because once again, he's Indian/South Asian). But anyways, the intensity isn't over yet. Let's get back to Jim's roller coaster of emotion:

The sun hadn’t even risen yet, but Jim hadn’t even considered sleep. He was feeling restless. He couldn’t get the image of Pike out of his head, lying there with unfocused eyes and too still to mean anything good with a giant blast mark on his chest.

They needed to catch the man who did this. Jim had seen him transport away; if he had a ship waiting who knows where he had gotten by now. They might be able to trace the transport and warp signatures, but only if they acted fast.

Without even caring about the time and the fact that it was probably both too early and too late to be up, Jim found himself pulling out a padd and drafting a message to Scotty. If there was anyone he trusted to be able to track the transporter signal and find the ship Harrison must have escaped on, it would be Scotty.

Within minutes, he had a response. Jim took a moment to be concerned about his chief engineer’s sleeping habits (would Scotty be his chief engineer if he wasn’t captain? What would Jim even be with Pike…gone?), but then he started to send him the information he needed. It would be best to work fast anyways.

He’d need to look for a transporter signal from the Starfleet grounds that wasn’t from a Starfleet transporter, which would narrow it down. Harrison probably had a ship with a transporter waiting, which meant that he’d have to have an accomplice to work the transporter, unless he’d timed it somehow. Even though Harrison may have had access to Starfleet ships, Jim doubted he’d taken one. It would be too obvious. So probably a civilian ship, and a smaller one so he wouldn’t attract as much attention.

Jim had made eye contact with Harrison. He would know he would be followed. If this guy was really enough of a threat that Admiral Marcus was concerned, he’d have to be pretty damn dangerous. Which probably meant he’d be smart; staging one bombing just so he could get high ranking officers in one place to attack them showed that.

So maybe it was best not to assume on the getaway ship. Who knows if he would try to avoid the obvious ship or if he’d anticipate that they’d assume that and pick something to throw them off. Jim went back and edited his message. It would be best to not focus on the ship now and focus on the transporter instead. They could use that to find the ship; plus that would be easier when they had more resources instead of just whatever Scotty could scramble up on his own.

That was assuming they could get more resources. Jim sighed and ran a hand down his face. He was going to need to talk to Marcus. Since this was technically an attack on Starfleet from someone who was part of Starfleet, as head of Starfleet security Marcus would probably have the authority to send
someone after Harrison. And if Jim had his way, that’d be him. If he was going to do this right, he was going to need his ship and his crew. He’d have to get Spock back from that other ship too; even if his own feelings towards Spock were complicated at the moment, he couldn’t think of anyone else being his first officer.

Jim’s padd lit up with another message and he looked to see who it was; he opened it when he saw it was just Scotty confirming that’d he look into the transporter signal and see what he could find right away. Jim sent back a quick message thanking him before putting his padd down. As soon as news got out about the attack at HQ he knew Bones would be messaging him for a checkup or to talk, but Jim didn’t want either of those now. He wanted to get Harrison.

As he waited for more information from Scotty, Jim began to mentally plan how he’d present this to Marcus. He’d have to be convincing…

An uncertain amount of time later, Jim’s padd lit up once more. Scotty had some information. Jim sent a quick message to Spock explaining the situation and asking him to meet him so they could go to Marcus together.

That was how right around sunrise Jim ended up meeting Spock outside of the same building that had been attacked last night so they could go in together.

Marcus was meeting with a group of officers when they got there, so Jim hung back, suddenly feeling self-conscious about the fact that he hadn’t put his uniform jacket back on since he took it off last night. But he hadn’t been able to look at it since he’d noticed that there was blood on the sleeve that wasn’t his, which could only mean it was from—

He wasn’t thinking about that now. The meeting seemed close enough to being over, so Jim charged forward, Spock a half step behind him like usual. “Sir, we’ve got a way to track Harrison.”

Marcus looked back at the assembled officers and dismissed them before turning to Jim and starting to walk away. “This had better be good, Kirk.”

“He transported out of the ship the moment before it crashed. That’s why they weren’t able to find any trace of him in the ship’s wreckage.” Jim had been skimming the updates all night. “I saw him transport out.”

“And you didn’t think to mention this earlier?” Great, Marcus didn’t sound happy and he hadn’t even broken stride. Jim was going to have to fix this.

“I was a little distracted at the time, but that’s on me for not coming forward with the information.” Marcus had turned around now, so Jim decided to just go for it. “I had the Enterprise’s chief engineer trace the transporter signal. Harrison beamed up to a ship, and if we act fast we can still follow its trail.”

“That is good information.” Marcus looked over Jim assessingly. “Any idea where this ship is headed?”

Jim took a deep breath. “Early scans seem to indicate that his trajectory would take him toward Klingon space but—”

“Do you think he intends to defect?” The mention of the Klingons had drawn Marcus’ attention even more; he almost seemed interested now.

“There are many less- or uninhabited planets or areas that still sustain life that could be his target destination.” Jim turned to look back at Spock, who’d be quiet so far. “He likely knows that Starfleet
cannot enter Klingon space without risking a war.”

“Starfleet’s already been risking war with the Klingons. With the way they expand their borders, they’ll probably be trying to claim Earth as Klingon space by next year. Harrison would just be bringing on the inevitable.” There was a distracted look on Marcus’ face and something dark came over his expression.

“Sir, if I may, that’s why it’s important we send a ship as soon as possible. If we can cut him off before he reaches Klingon space, we can prevent this from being a bigger problem than it already is.” Jim took a deep breath. “I request that you reinstate my command and let me take the Enterprise after him.”

Marcus paused and thought about it a moment. “I’ll grant your request. After all, Pike did put up one hell of a fight to have you as his first, so you’re probably who he’d want in command now that he’s in no shape to do it.”

Jim tried not to flinch at the mention of Pike, but it felt like he just barely managed it. “Thank you, sir. Permission to take Commander Spock back as my first officer?”

Marcus looked between them for a moment before nodding. “Permission granted. Now here’s how you’re going to take down Harrison.” He went over to his desk. “I don’t want either of you or your ship getting caught in the crossfire if Harrison makes it to Klingon space before you can stop him.”

He began to pull up some sort of schematics on his desk that quickly shifted into a display of a torpedo. “Harrison was in weapons development. This torpedo he was working on was supposed to be untraceable. If he gets into Klingon space, you stay in the Neutral Zone—or outside of it preferably—and fire at his ship til it’s gone. Hell, even if he doesn’t make it to Klingon space. Understand?”

He could tell that Spock was about to object, but taking out Harrison wasn’t the sort of thing Jim wanted to argue about right now. “We understand, sir.”

“Good. If you manage to do well on this mission, I’ll see what I can do about getting you back in that captain’s chair permanently, Kirk.” Marcus nodded approvingly at him. “Now go get your ship and your crew ready. I’m counting on you, son.”

It felt odd to be called that by someone other than Pike, but Jim just nodded. He looked over at Spock, who he could tell had some questions about their mission, but Jim just shook his head slightly and started walking out, knowing Spock would follow. If he could avenge Pike and get his captaincy back all at once, Jim was going to listen to the damn admiral. He was sure he could talk to Spock about it later.

Chapter End Notes

This is another of the smaller changes I'm making just because it doesn't make sense. The whole transwarp beaming thing and instantaneously being on other planets just seems like too much of a stretch. I know Kirk and Scotty beamed onto the Enterprise in the first movie, but I always assumed she was still (at least mostly) within transporter range and the only obstacle was that she was at warp. I know it's sci-fi and you're supposed to suspend disbelief some, but there are still internal rules. Maybe I'm just getting too caught up in this
Anyways, how do you think this will go for Jim?
Chapter 134

First off, Happy Hanukkah to everyone who celebrates it! I think I missed the beginning of it last week, but I hope you're having a good one. Anyways, a few of you wanted Spock's POV this chapter, but we're sticking with Jim for now. Enjoy!

Jim knew he couldn’t avoid Bones forever. Still, he managed to keep busy with preparations to get the ship back out and for their mission of tracking down and stopping Harrison. He’d even sent Spock off to do other tasks to avoid the awkward conversation about why he’d chosen to bring Spock back on as his first officer, and to avoid the conversation that he knew Spock wanted to have about Marcus’ orders.

So he’d been ignoring certain messages on his padd and communicator. But it was much harder to ignore people in person, which is why he had to avoid flinching when he heard a familiar voice calling out to him in the shuttle loading area.

“Jim!” He could tell it was Bones, and he could tell he was annoyed. “Where were you?”

He could guess what Bones meant, but decided to act like he didn’t anyways. “For what?”

“For your physical.” Bones had caught up with him and Jim could practically feel the irritated look that was burning into the back of his head. “Last night you were in a damn firefight, and now—”

“I feel fine.” Jim turned to look at Bones. It wasn’t quite the truth, but he said it anyways. “There’s no need to worry, Bones.”

Bones’ eyebrow went up; Jim knew that it was probably better to not lie to him. “Like hell. You look terrible. Not to mention everything you’ve been through in the past few days.”

“I’m not having this conversation right now, Bones.” Jim turned and headed onto the shuttle, hoping that that would be the end of the conversation.

But of course his luck couldn’t be good even for the small things today, because Spock was on the shuttle. He nodded his head. “Captain.”

Jim tried to avoid the frustrated sigh he wanted to release. “Mr. Spock.” He took the seat on the end of Spock’s row, putting his padd on the seat between them so Bones couldn’t sit there and try to do an impromptu medical exam. He turned to Spock. “What’s the status of the ship?”

“The Enterprise should be ready for launch by the time we get there.” Spock took a breath like he was going to continue, but Jim didn’t want to do this now.

“That’s good.” He avoided looking at Spock or Bones. “Great crew we’ve got, getting ready to go so soon.”

“Indeed.” Spock responded and continued with less of a pause this time, probably so that Jim
couldn’t interrupt again. “I appreciate the opportunity to serve with them once more due to your reinstating me as first officer.”

Jim glanced over at him. Gratitude was something you didn’t usually hear from Vulcans; he should probably appreciate it. “You’re welcome.”

Then, of course, things stopped going smoothly for Jim. He heard Bones’ medical tricorder start to buzz from the seat behind him as Spock continued. “As your first officer, I must tell you that I strongly object to our mission parameters and believe we should adopt a different plan of action.”

“You’re welcome.”

Then, of course, things stopped going smoothly for Jim. He heard Bones’ medical tricorder start to buzz from the seat behind him as Spock continued. “As your first officer, I must tell you that I strongly object to our mission parameters and believe we should adopt a different plan of action.”

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“You’re welcome.”
here are my transfer orders.”

Jim took the padd and began to look over the transfer orders and personnel file attached to them.

“Captain.” Great, now Spock sounded annoyed. “Did you request an additional science officer?”

Jim shrugged. “She must have been transferred over when you got transferred off of the ship before all this happened.” Jim went back to skimming the personnel report. “Lieutenant Carol Wallace. Doctorate in applied physics specializing in advanced weaponry.”

“Impressive credentials.” Good, Spock was playing nice.

“Thank you.” Dr. Wallace smiled. If she weren’t a member of his crew and there wasn’t everything else going on, Jim would almost consider—

“But redundant and thus unnecessary now that I am back aboard the Enterprise.” Great, now Spock was being petty. Wait, was he jealous? Was Jim’s interest that clear? Maybe he did need to get some rest… Still, he smiled up at Dr. Wallace. “Despite what my first officer said, we’ll always welcome qualified officers on the Enterprise. Welcome aboard.” He took his padd off of the seat between him and Spock so that it was open; if Spock was being petty, then two could play at that game. “Take a seat.”

“Thank you.” She settled in between him and Spock, and thankfully her presence seemed to make Bones and Spock hold off on bothering him for a bit.

Jim settled into his seat. Without having to fend off his best friends, the shuttle ride would seem a lot shorter, and then maybe seeing his silver lady would put him in a better mood.

Chapter End Notes

Well, we’re sticking a little closer to the original movie than I intended, but I still have a few divergences planned. Stay tuned!
Chapter 135

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Things still don't seem to be going Jim's way...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim hoped that things would go more smoothly once they were back on the ship, but things just continued to not go his way. He’d barely made it off of the shuttle when he heard Scotty loudly arguing with someone, probably whoever Marcus had sent to deliver the torpedoes if what he was overhearing was right.

“Captain!” Scotty waved him over once he saw them, and Jim made his way over around the torpedoes that definitely hadn’t made it to the usual torpedo storage bays yet and were nowhere near anywhere that they could be fired from.

“What’s the problem, Scotty?” Jim looked between him and the officer who was delivering the torpedoes; he wasn’t sure who looked more annoyed.

“I was just telling this man here,” Scotty gestured over his shoulder to the officer who’d brought the torpedoes, “that I will not allow any torpedoes on this ship without checking their specifications first.”

“That is a logical objection.” Jim turned around and saw that Spock and Bones were still behind him; Bones was still trying to discretely scan him, but Spock had come forward more to look at the torpedoes. “It is merely another reason why—”

“Spock, McCoy, get to your posts.” He could tell that neither of them really wanted to go, but Jim just couldn’t deal with them right now. “That’s an order.” Before either of them could object, Jim continued; even with his bad mood, he didn’t want to be too harsh on his best friends. “We need to get this ship ready to launch quickly if we want any chance of catching Harrison, so it’s best if each of you readied your areas.” Hopefully that was a logical enough reason to appease Spock.

It must have been, because he just nodded and turned to leave with only slight hesitation. Bones seemed a bit more hesitant, but eventually with a strong look from Jim he caved too and turned to leave.

With a sigh of relief that he tried to conceal, Jim turned back to Scotty. “So what’s the issue?”

“My tricorder can’t show what’s inside these. And if I can’t determine what’s in the torpedoes fueling them or as explosives, I can’t determine if they could negatively impact our other systems. But if I try to ask what’s in them, all this man tells me is that it’s classified.” Scotty raised his eyebrows in frustration.

Jim probably did audibly sigh this time. “Scotty, they’re some new type of torpedo that’s supposed to be undetectable that Admiral Marcus authorized us to use. I bet it’s just the same sort of thing that we’ve always used with some new exterior plating that repels scanners or something, which is why the tricorder wouldn’t work.”
“Well, I don’t trust it.” Scotty crossed his arms defiantly. “I won’t sign for them.”

Jim turned to the officer that brought them. “Is it alright if I sign for them?”

He nodded, and Jim was just about to take the padd when Scotty objected again. “Captain, I must advise against that.”

God, Jim was getting a headache. “Why, Scotty?”

Scotty grabbed Jim by the arm and dragged him far enough away to be out of the torpedo officer’s hearing range. “Captain, I know the warp core seems like a stable enough system, but do you know how easy it is to mess it up?”

Jim ran a hand down his face. He knew the basics, but he didn’t know nearly as much as Scotty and they both knew it. “How easy?”

“How easy!” Scotty seemed genuinely agitated now. “I don’t like those torpedoes, and I don’t like this mission. It feels too much like a military mission; we’re supposed to be explorers!”

“Look, Scotty….” Jim took a deep breath. “I would much rather be out exploring strange new worlds or whatever, but when there is a tangible threat to the Federation, who is there but Starfleet to stop it?” He looked at Scotty expectantly but got no response. “I’m going to sign for those torpedoes, we are going to get this mission done, and then we can get back to our usual business of exploring.”

“I will not allow those torpedoes on this ship. If you let them on the ship, then I will leave.” Scotty still seemed worried, but there was something determined now too.

God, couldn’t Jim go twelve hours without someone abandoning or betraying him anymore? “Scotty, don’t force me into that decision.” He had to do this as Marcus ordered or god knows what Marcus would do to him. Plus, those torpedoes were their way of stopping Harrison.

“What will it be, me or the torpedoes?” Scotty crossed his arms.

“I have to let those torpedoes on board on orders of Admiral Marcus.” Jim could feel the tension building between his shoulder blades.

“Then I am handing in my resignation.” Scotty looked like he would rather not, but that he would stick with his decision anyways.

“Fine.” Jim’s headache was getting worse. “Choose your replacement and… and get off the ship. We have to leave soon.”

Scotty’s shoulders dropped, like he hadn’t actually expected Jim to accept it. “Alright then. But Jim…” He leaned in close. “Try to find a way not to fire those torpedoes.”

Jim just nodded, but he didn’t look back at Scotty as he turned and went to sign for the torpedoes.

Once Jim got to the bridge, things seemed to be going more smoothly. He’d gotten and approved Scotty’s chosen replacement, they’d taken off and gotten through the mission briefing. It seemed like Jim finally had a moment of smooth sailing.

But of course it couldn’t last. They were barely out of the Sol System following Harrison’s trail when Spock came up next to the captain’s chair.

“Captain.” Spock stood there, stiff and straight backed again. “Once again, I must say that I object to
the orders we received from Admiral Marcus. We should not execute John Harrison; we should take him into custody.”

Jim felt himself raising an eyebrow; although it wasn’t his intention, in his irritation he still felt like he was mocking Spock somehow. “Really? Why are you all about mercy now? It wasn’t like that a year ago with Nero.” Jim knew that was a low blow, but dammit, he didn’t have time for this.

“Captain.” Spock somehow seemed to get tenser. “The matter with Nero was different.”

“Yeah?” Jim shifted in his seat to better face Spock. “How so? They’re both murderers.”

“The scale is not comparable.” Spock seemed to be getting agitated. “Nero destroyed an entire planet, causing the death of billions, while Harrison’s alleged death count is far lower. Additionally, Nero admitted to his crimes and showed no remorse. Harrison has made no confession; by the regulations of Starfleet, Earth, and the Federation at large we cannot hold him accountable for a crime he has not been found guilty of. The situations are not the same.”

“He still killed a lot of people Spock. Where do we draw the line on how many people is too many to murder?” This was getting uncomfortably close to debates he’d had about Tarsus, so Jim decided to change tactics. “Besides, since when are you one for situational flexibility? I thought you were all about doing what the rules and regulations said, with no leeway for the circumstances.” That might seem petty after everything else that had happened, but in his current mood Jim decided he was still a little upset about that, dammit. Wasn’t there anyone on this crew who would actually stand by him?

Spock’s eyes narrowed; he clearly got what Jim was referencing. “Captain, if you are referring to the report I filed, I believed that we had reached an understanding—”

“You still went behind my back and you cost me my ship, Spock.” Jim felt himself growing as tense as Spock even though he was still in the captain’s chair rather than standing. “That’s not something you just forget. I mean—”

“You are once again in command of the Enterprise.” Spock’s eyebrows were beginning to get angry; that aggressive note in voice was more noticeable too. “There is no need to—”

“I’m only back in command because Pike is dead!” That was probably closer to screaming than Jim should have gotten. It was probably more than close to screaming, actually. Jim was suddenly aware of the entire bridge crew either watching him and Spock nervously or studiously paying very close attention to their stations. Jim took a deep breath and felt himself deflate some.

“Captain,” some of the tension had left Spock’s voice as well. “If you are compromised by the mission at hand—”

“I’m fine.” Jim ran a hand down his face and took another deep breath. “I’ll be fine.” He looked back to Spock. “There won’t be any strangling each other on the bridge today, although I think we both know who’d win that fight.” Yet another low blow. Jim knew he shouldn’t be talking this all out on Spock but he couldn’t stop himself somehow. Maybe he just needed a moment. He glanced around the bridge once more; everyone avoided eye contact. “I’m going to go to my quarters. You have the conn, Mr. Spock. Comm me if anything comes up or once we get close.” Without looking at Spock, Jim got out of the chair and headed to the turbolift. He didn’t turn around or look back until after he heard the turbolift doors close behind him.

Once back in his quarters, Jim leaned against the doors and sighed. Maybe it would be good to rest a bit before the inevitable confrontation. Plus, he still had to deal with Spock’s insistence that they should have mercy instead of just shooting on sight. Spock could be right; part of the reason Jim
valued him as a first officer (and as a friend or person more generally really) was because of his ability to keep a level head and see the situation more rationally when Jim started losing his cool. He should probably at least consider what Spock said.

Jim laid down on his bed, the exhaustion from everything in the past few days finally catching up to him. Maybe he should just rest his eyes a second…

Chapter End Notes

Yeah, we're getting into it...

Unrelated note, but I've been having laptop problems. It shouldn't cause any problems with posting, but if I miss an update day or post late you know why.
Chapter 136

Chapter Notes

Hello and Merry Christmas to everyone that celebrates it! Jim has finally gotten some sleep; let’s see if it helps...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The next thing Jim knew, he was getting a call at the computer terminal at his desk. He went over and opened it up to see the Beta shift communications officer. He must have actually fallen asleep. “Sir, we have a call from Commander Winona Kirk. Want me to put it through?”

Jim plopped down at his desk. “Yeah, go on ahead.”

After a moment his mom’s face appeared on screen, looking a bit subdued. “Hey Jimmy.”

“Hey Ma.” Jim ran a hand down his face. Even with his maybe-nap, he was still feeling pretty wiped out from everything in the past few days.

“I heard about Pike.” Winona’s voice was quiet, so unlike how energetic she usually was.

“Yeah.” Jim sat back in his chair. “It’s been quite the few days.”

“I know I’m not your go-to, but want to talk about it? Even just bullet points?” She did seem concerned.

“Sure.” Jim sighed. “The trip back to Earth was just horrible. First there was the press conference that blew up me aging, then thanks to Spock, my goddamn soulmate apparently, I got demoted, meaning I lost command of the ship. But Pike was keeping me on as first, which would have meant that Spock would get transferred to another ship because apparently no one thought of just keeping him on as a science officer. But then none of that mattered anyway because Starfleet got attacked, so then we had to have a meeting, and then…” Jim wasn’t quite sure he could say the words.

“I think I know it from there.” Winona’s expression was grim. “I’ve known Chris since the Academy; he’s a great officer and a good man. And I know how important he is to you. It’s a goddamn shame what happened to him.”

“Yeah.” Jim couldn’t meet her eyes.

“So if all that happened, why are you back on the Enterprise?” Winona looked a little confused. “I called your apartment and got no response, then I heard the Enterprise wasn’t at Earth anymore. It’s a little early for a new assignment.”

“Admiral Marcus has us tracking down the guy who attacked Starfleet.” Jim felt his rage return at the thought of all the damage the guy had done. “He suspects it was just one person behind both attacks and we’re currently pursuing the ship that the suspect escaped in; Marcus said his name was John Harrison.”

When Jim looked back to the screen Winona’s face was deadly serious. “Computer, secure communication channel to level theta. Authorization Kirk, Winona, theta iota 2 5.”
“Ma?” Jim was getting a little alarmed. Winona’s expression didn’t change, and the computer on both ends acknowledged the authorization code and indicated the channel was secured. “Ma, what’s going on? I don’t even have the clearance to establish that level of secure channel on my own; I thought you needed an admiral for that.”

“Jim, I need you to swear to me that what you hear now will not leave the room unless you have permission. You won’t tell Spock, you won’t tell Bones, you won’t tell that older Spock who goes by Selek.” Her eyes were hard, allowing no room for negotiation.

“What’s going on?” Jim could feel his alarm levels rising. “You only ever call me Jim if it’s serious. And how do you know about Selek?”

“You have to promise me.” Her expression didn’t break but there was a note of pleading in her eyes. “I’m not asking as your mother. I’m asking as a Starfleet officer in service of the United Federation of Planets.”

“You’re freaking me out.” When her expression didn’t waver at all, Jim sighed. “Alright, I swear. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Good.” After a moment she nodded in satisfaction. “What I’m telling you now could cost me my career and possibly endanger us both, so I hope you understand I’m not telling you lightly.”

“You really are starting to scare me now, Ma. What’s going on?” Jim leaned in.

“There is an organization that exists semi-independent of Starfleet that it is now important for you to be aware of. I do not know how big it is, nor do I know the full reach of its power. It operates with little to no oversight and claims to be acting in the best interests of the Federation, although if people knew what this group did that could certainly be disputed.” Winona watched him for a moment to see how he was taking this in. “This organization is called Section 31, and as far as I know Marcus is the head of it.”

“What?” This was difficult to believe. Jim knew that some other major powers in the galaxy had secret organizations like that, and he’d heard of a few in Earth’s history, but this didn’t fit with what he knew of the Federation or Starfleet. “What are you talking about?”

Winona sighed. “Jim, you gotta believe me. I know it sounds unbelievable, but trust me on this.”

Jim’s eyes narrowed as something occurred to him. “How do you know so much about this anyway?”

“Because I’m a part of it.” There was no hesitation and no indication of dishonesty on Winona’s part, just maybe a little regret. “Admittedly, I’m mostly part time with them; I’m generally only called in when they need an engineering consult, or sometimes for other things.”

“So how long has this been going on?” Jim was coming around; he wanted to trust her...

“A long time.” Winona looked away. “It started after George died. Someone who didn’t seem like regular Starfleet or even Starfleet Intelligence was asking about the ship that attacked us. I got called in to provide the details I knew, and I guess that established that they could trust me. It slowly escalated from there. A little extra training here, a side job or mission there, nothing major.” She looked back at him, her expression earnest. “You have to understand, I would have told you if I could. But this is one of those things that they absolutely cannot risk getting out.”

She was telling him a lot, but Jim was stuck on one thing. “My whole life?” Jim leaned away and fought the urge to get up and pace. “This has been going on my whole life?”
“Not the whole time.” Winona looked a little ashamed. “Most though.”

“Wow.” Jim couldn’t even figure out what he was feeling. “Whatever happened to not lying to each other?”

“This is different.” Winona’s face went hard again. “No one, and I mean no one, outside the organization is allowed to know it exists. If they find out that you know, they either recruit you or kill you. I don’t know which is worse.” There was an odd look in her eyes for a moment before she refocused on him. “If you knew the kinds of things they did, you’d know why I kept this from you. You wouldn’t have gotten to live your own life, Jim, they wouldn’t have let you. And you were so young; they wouldn’t have killed you. They would have molded you to suit their needs until there was nothing left that made you anything but an agent. And then they would have used you for whatever purpose they needed until you either burned out or died.” There was a certain fire in her eyes now. “I wasn’t going to let that happen to you. I was going to let you do your own thing, even if it meant that you just bummed around Riverside your whole damn life.”

Jim was taken aback. This was too much to believe, but he didn’t feel like she was making this up. “So why are you telling me now?”

“Because you’re in danger.” Winona’s face was deadly serious again. “You’re at risk right now, and I’m too far away to protect you.”

“What’s going on?” Jim felt himself slipping into professional mode; if something was threatening his ship and his crew he needed to know.

“Harrison isn’t who he or Marcus say he is.” Winona hesitated a moment. “I know you aren’t going to want to believe this, but his real name is Khan Noonien Singh.”

“Like the dictator?” Jim’s mind raced through his history lessons. It had been a while since he’d studied the Eugenics Wars or late 20th century history at all, but he knew that name. Singh had been one of the, if not the most notorious dictator of all the Augments. He’d conquered giant swathes of South Asia.

“Not ‘like;’ difficult as it may be to believe that man is the Khan of the 20th century.” Winona’s expression conveyed no possibility of question.

“How the hell is he alive?” Jim had heard of people having long lives after their soulmates died, but usually an accident, disease, or something would take them down when aging didn’t. Khan would be nearly 300 years old.

“Cryostasis.” Winona waited until Jim looked back at her. “You know those rumors of Khan and a group of Augments escaping from Earth in a ship? Well they found the ship after the destruction of Vulcan and woke him up. I know this Jim; Marcus had me work with him. They’re developing a ship that would outfly and outshoot anything in the Federation, maybe even in the galaxy. I’ve only seen pieces, not the whole thing, but the schematics I have seen are enough to make me wary.”

“So John Harrison is actually Khan.” This was so much to process.

“And Marcus is not to be trusted.” Winona looked at him in complete seriousness. “Always assume that he’s either withholding something or playing you. Have as many backup plans as you can.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded. “Anything else?”

“No. There’s no time.” Winona began clicking through something on her monitor. “They may already know I contacted you.” She looked him in the eye. “I need you to stay alert, alright? Do not
trust Khan, and do not trust Marcus. Trust only those closest to you; there could be operatives among your crew.”

“Alight.” There was a sense of foreboding filling Jim; he didn’t like this at all. “Stay safe.”

“It’s not me I’m worried about.” Winona stared him down carefully, her gaze almost assessing. “Be careful. Winona out.”

Before Jim could say another word, the transmission cut out.

Chapter End Notes

Well, they always say that you should spend Christmas with family. This probably isn't what they mean though.
Chapter 137

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Last chapter certainly seemed to catch your attention. I had to fight the writers block on this one, but it's something that I wanted to do and a number of you were waiting for, so enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock wandered the corridors of the Enterprise, unable to settle in his quarters to meditate. It was as if Jim’s agitation from earlier that day had transferred to him somehow, but that was not possible. Unless they were bonded, but Spock was aware of no such bond at this point. He and Jim had never done the level of mind meld required to form that sort of connection. The only other possibility for emotional transfer of that level would be if Jim was an empath, but Spock would have likely noticed that by now…

Spock took a deep breath. There were other, possibly more important things to consider now than Jim Kirk, the abilities he may have, and the potential connection between them. Although Spock had found his mind returning to that topic repeatedly in the days since the confirmation of Jim’s aging. He and Jim were likely soulmates. Spock knew it, and he believed that it was likely that Jim at least suspected the same, and yet Jim had been openly flirting with Dr. Marcus while in the shuttle with Spock. Did he believe Spock was unavailable or uninterested in a relationship? Spock would have to correct that misconception, especially if Jim was likely to attempt to form a relationship with Dr. Marcus because he believed he could not have one with Spock.

And she was indeed Dr. Marcus. Although the initial transfer papers and brief personnel file she had given Kirk stated her name as Dr. Carol Wallace, Spock’s further investigation had revealed that her transfer papers did not seem fully legitimate. He had told himself that his reasons for investigating were logical as she would be an addition to his department, but he was sure that some would say that he was acting out of jealously. Spock was not sure if he could fully deny it; after the turbulent past few days, his emotional control did not feel as strong as what he would typically maintain.

Still, there was no prior record of Dr. Carol Wallace; all previous records still listed her name as Dr. Carol Marcus, indicating that she had not completed full Starfleet protocol for a name change even though it was simple to do so. It was likely that she had changed her name upon transfer to hide her connection to Admiral Marcus.

Her reasons for doing so were unclear. Spock had initially believed that the admiral had sent her there to spy on them and ascertain the progress of their mission, but when he spoke to her she was adamant that her father did not know she was aboard the Enterprise. Although Spock did not fully trust her, he believed that she was being honest about that.

He also believed that her main interest lied with the torpedoes. She had shown an interest in them both when she initially arrived and when Spock later found her inspecting them. As a weapons specialist, this focus made sense, but she seemed to think something was wrong with the torpedoes just like Mr. Scott had. Perhaps Spock could use their opinions to help convince the captain that they should capture Harrison instead of using the torpedoes to kill him…

As if Spock’s thoughts had summoned him (which again would be impossible unless they had a pre-
existing bond or if Jim had some sort of psychic abilities of his own), Spock turned the next corner and nearly collided with Jim.

He still looked less…settled than he typically did, and he appeared to have slept in his uniform, but Jim seemed less agitated than before. He smiled slightly when he saw Spock. “Hey Spock. I was just thinking we should talk.”

“I also believe that would be beneficial.” Spock took in the captain’s appearance once more; he did appear to have just woken up. “Have you eaten? We could go to the mess hall.”

“Sounds good.” Jim nodded. “Lead the way, Mr. Spock.”

Although it was a more formal title, it was said in something like the playful tone he would sometimes use, which made Spock believe that Jim was no longer as angry with him as he had previously been.

Once in the mess hall, Jim stopped when he saw Lieutenant Sulu, who appeared to be animatedly wrapping up a story. “Hey there. What’s got you so excited?”

Sulu turned to him with a grin. “While we were back on leave, I proposed to Ben. He said yes!”

“What? Congratulations man!” Jim stepped forward and pulled Sulu into a quick hug before stepping back with a grin. “You know, Starfleet captains are technically allowed to officiate weddings in the Federation…”

Sulu laughed. “Ben and I will keep that in mind.”

“Good. And congrats again.” Jim smiled and turned back to Spock. “So, get some food and then talk?”

Spock nodded, and they went to the replicators then found a table in a corner of the mess hall.

“So.” Jim looked at Spock and picked up his utensils. “Business first. I’m coming around to your plan for Harrison.” There was a slight pause before he said the name, but Spock dismissed it. “While I wouldn’t hesitate to pull the trigger if it came down to one of us or him because I do think he’s dangerous, I’m willing to try to capture him or let him surrender instead of just shooting first. It could be good to get some answers.”

“That is true. Additionally, Dr. Wallace,” it felt odd to use the name given what he knew now, but he had promised her to keep her secret, “expressed some concern with the torpedoes. I believe it would be best to not use them.”

“Alright then. No promises if it comes to that, but we’ll save it for a last resort.” Jim nodded, then smiled. “I’m glad we’ve got this resolved, Spock. I would rather have you on my side for this than have to fight you and Harrison.”

“If there was no way to convince you, I still would have joined your side of the fight. Harrison is too dangerous to face alone, and I would not want to see you harmed due to my inaction.” Jim seemed to brighten up slightly more at Spock’s words.

“I’m glad to hear you’d have my back.” Jim smiled what seemed to be the most open, genuine smile he’d directed at Spock in days. “So, exciting news about Sulu and Ben. Always nice to hear stories about people finding their soulmates and getting happy endings.”

“Indeed.” The topic change was slightly abrupt, but Spock acknowledged that this could be the
opening he’d been needing. “Jim, I—”

“Bridge to Captain Kirk.” Spock thought that there had never been a worse timed comm call.

Jim smiled apologetically and got up. “Kirk here.”

“Sir, we’re almost within range of Harrison’s ship. Should we prepare to fire?”

“No, hold your fire.” Jim glanced back at Spock. “We’ve got a new plan.”

“Alright sir. We’ll await your orders.”

Jim seemed to be about to close the comm channel when suddenly the ship jerked roughly. Jim seemed to swear under his breath before hitting the button to speak again. “What was that? Was that an intentional drop from warp?”

“No sir.” There was the sound of general confusion and consoles being consulted on the other end. “We’ll have a report for you by the time you get up here, Captain.”

“Sounds good. Kirk out.” Jim shut down the comm channel and turned back to Spock. “Well, duty calls. Assemble the senior bridge crew; we’ll have to finish that conversation later.”

“Yes, Captain.” Spock would have liked to finish their conversation as he was unsure when they’d get another opportunity, but the mission was more important. They could talk when Harrison was in custody. Jim would likely be calmer then.

Chapter End Notes

Happy last update of the year everyone! I can't believe this year is already almost done, but I'm glad to see it go.
Chapter 138

Chapter Notes

Happy new year everyone! You all seemed to like Spock's perspective, but we're back with Jim now...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The plan was set; they’d had a quick meeting with the bridge crew to work it out and now they were putting it into action. Thankfully even though the warp engines had died out (and Scotty’s chosen replacement promised they were working on it, even if they didn’t sound too certain on what it was yet, which had Jim on edge), they were still within range of Khan—Harrison’s ship. Jim had to remember to call him Harrison, even with what his mom had told him. He’d managed to not slip up during the briefing, but it was close. Jim had to keep his focus now; he couldn’t let Harrison know that he knew.

But for now, Jim had other things on his mind. Harrison’s ship had stopped right at the edge of Federation space, and it wouldn’t take much for him to cross the border into Klingon space. But he was stopped, and not moving. It was another thing that had Jim concerned. Their current concern was that he was calling the Klingons for a meeting. God knows what sort of secrets he’d have to give to the Klingons if he’d tried to switch sides. Marcus had made it sound like Harrison was in some sort of weapons development, and from what Winona had said it seemed like Harrison might be even more dangerous than that…

Jim still had a bit of an urge to just shoot Harrison’s ship until it was space dust. If he was the Khan Noonien Singh from the 20th century Eugenics Wars, he could probably beat just about anyone on the ship in a fight. And Jim really didn’t want to risk any of his crew when he didn’t have to. He didn’t want anyone dying, especially not after what happened with Pike…

But he’d promised Spock that they’d take Harrison in alive if possible. Spock had, of course, made a logical argument about all of it which was hard for Jim to fight. And Jim realized that he’d been unnecessarily short with Spock before. He shouldn’t have taken out his bad mood on Spock; it was better when they were getting along.

Jim was sure that Spock had been about to say something at dinner before they got interrupted. Had he figured out the soulmate thing? Jim glanced next to him. Spock was part of the landing party, and this shuttle ride was starting to feel long with how much it seemed like both of them needed to say something…

But they weren’t alone; they had a few security officers with them, plus Uhura. They’d brought her along in case any Klingons did show up; even though they didn’t pick up on any ships nearby, if there were any Klingons about to show up or ones already waiting on Harrison’s ship, it’d be better to try to talk than to try to fight them in close quarters.

So Jim definitely wasn’t going to ask if Spock knew about the soulmate thing now, in front of his girlfriend. But Spock and Uhura hadn’t seemed quite as close lately, and didn’t he typically eat dinner with her as some sort of nightly “date” on the ship?

This was not the time. Jim was piloting the shuttle and they were almost to Harrison’s ship. It was
small, but it looked like they’d still be able to dock the shuttle. It did end up being a stolen Starfleet
ship, if only a small transport, but that would just make it easy to get on and override the security
protocols so they wouldn’t even set off any alarms. They could definitely use the element of surprise
here, even if Harrison would know they were coming. Jim glanced toward Uhura. “Lieutenant, any
sign that they’ve gotten Sulu’s message?”

“The message has been broadcast, but I’d have to have to check the bridge station to know for sure if
they’ve gotten it.” She adjusted some settings on the communication station next to Jim. “No sign of
a response yet.”

That could be a bad sign. Jim had to keep the mood light. “How’d Sulu sound? Did he make a
convincing captain?”

He could see Uhura smile out of the corner of his eye. “Definitely. Very captainly.”

“Good.” Jim smiled; he was glad that things were better between him and Uhura now after how
awkward things had been since that trip to the alternate universe. He really wouldn’t want to mess
that up by ruining her relationship with Spock…

But he wouldn’t think about that now. Jim wondered about Sulu. Would he stay with the ship once
he and Ben got married? He certainly did seem like he could handle a command of his own. Maybe
a station somewhere where Ben could live with him…

“Captain, we are nearing the ship.” Jim glanced over at Spock. “I believe I have properly identified
the class of transport and should be able to disengage the security system.”

“That’s good; I’d rather not have to break down the door.” Jim smiled over his shoulder at Spock.

His smile widened at Spock’s eyebrow raise. “I assure you, Captain, that will be unnecessary.”

“Good, because it’s time to dock.” Jim began the docking procedures for the shuttle as Spock
worked away at his station; either he made it work or they were expected because Jim was able to
successfully dock the shuttle. He glanced back at Spock. “Are you able to see life signs?”

“Yes; there are two human life signs aboard; no Klingons.” Even Spock seemed a bit relieved at that,
even though outwardly he seemed as calm as ever.

“Alright then.” Jim got up and turned to the rest of the shuttle. “We’ll split up and search the ship.
Put phasers on stun; we’re trying to take Harrison and whoever might be with him alive. But if it
comes down to him or you, don’t be afraid to take the shot. Understand?” Jim got a round of nods
and nodded in return; there was no use putting this off. “Alright then. Spock, open that door. It’s time
to do this.”

Spock hit a few keys; the doors opened. They picked up their phasers and entered the ship.

Chapter End Notes

Are you ready? It’s about to go down...
They’d split up as soon as they were inside the transport ship. It wasn’t big, but Jim didn’t want to spend any longer than he had to on the edge of Klingon space. The Klingons could show up any minute and Jim didn’t want to risk them misinterpreting anything. Spock and one security officer were headed to the passenger area, Uhura and another were headed to the cargo bay, and Jim and Lieutenant Leslie were going to the bridge.

He’d considered going with Spock, but Jim didn’t want to be… distracted right now. He knew that if he was alone with Spock that he’d be distracted by everything left unsaid between them, and he’d be worrying about if Spock was alright. He still was a bit, but Jim had also given himself the place where he thought Harrison was most likely to be. They hadn’t managed to lock down where the biosigns were after the initial scan, but Jim was willing to bet Harrison would be on the bridge.

So now he was on one side of the doorway with Lieutenant Leslie on the other. Jim nodded and he hit the button for the door to open and they charged in.

“Turn around and put your hands up! We are not afraid to shoot if necessary!” Jim was able to see that both people were indeed on the bridge; neither were facing him, but one had black hair and must have been Harrison and the other had brown hair and must have been the accomplice who transported him out of the crashing attack ship and piloted them away.

They both turned slowly; Jim noticed that the accomplice had a phaser and shifted slightly closer to a console that would offer him protection if a fire fight broke out and saw Lieutenant Leslie doing the same.

Still, it was Harrison who spoke. “How many torpedoes are there?”

“We can take them.” The accomplice, who was British apparently, gripped the phaser a bit tighter and looked over at Harrison. “It’d be easy.”

“Shut up, Steven.” A quick look from Harrison had the accomplice lowering the phaser. Harrison looked directly at Jim, something intense but unreadable in his dark eyes. “Ignore him. How many torpedoes?”

It didn’t seem like he wanted to fight, but this felt too easy. Jim didn’t lower his phaser. “Why does it matter?”

“The message from what I assume is your ship mentioned advanced torpedoes. How many?” Harrison’s voice was laced with something sharp.
“72.” Jim wouldn’t have known if he hadn’t signed the paperwork for them, but it had struck him as an odd number. It didn’t align with what the *Enterprise* could hold at her max or with how many torpedo launchers she had. Jim hadn’t felt like questioning Marcus after everything that happened though.

“Have you fired any?” Harrison almost seemed on edge; Jim wasn’t sure what to make of it.

Jim still didn’t trust this, but he was willing to play along. “No, and if you come with us we won’t have to.”

Harrison’s hands went up. “Then I surrender.”

Steven was apparently less willing to comply; his hands tightened on the phaser again. “I still say we should have gone with the plan where I pretended to be you and—”

“Did I give you permission to speak?” Harrison’s voice was sharp as he turned back to his accomplice. “Do as I say and surrender.”

He seemed hesitant, but Jim was more wary about the phaser he still had. Without drawing too much attention to himself, he signaled for Lieutenant Leslie to take the shot.

Steven stiffened and fell out of the chair, thankfully without his phaser going off. The only movement from him was his chest moving slightly with his breath.

“Well, you’re remarkably efficient, aren’t you?” Jim’s attention turned back to Kha—Harrison, who was still sitting with his hands up.

“If someone’s a threat, we have to protect ourselves. Make a move and we’ve got a shot waiting for you.” Jim was tempted to pull the trigger anyways; god knows Harrison hadn’t hesitated when he was facing a room full of officers or the archive, and from what happened to Pike Jim knew that Harrison’s guns hadn’t been set on stun. But he’d promised Spock that he wouldn’t use force unless necessary. Still keeping his phaser raised but with his finger off of the trigger, Jim nodded at Lieutenant Leslie. “Go cuff him. I’ll get Harrison.”

Lieutenant Leslie nodded and moved toward Steven’s still form while Jim advanced toward Harrison.

“Get up. Hands behind your back.” Harrison complied, but Jim still waited until Lieutenant Leslie had finished and had his phaser trained on Harrison to put his own back on his belt and get the handcuffs off his belt to secure him. Once that was done, Jim stepped back.

Harrison turned around and watched him closely. “You look familiar.”

“I was the one you made eye contact with after you slaughtered a room full of officers.” Jim’s hand tightened into a fist at his side; the temptation to hit him was so strong…

Harrison narrowed his eyes. “Perhaps, but more than that.”

Jim didn’t need to deal with this. He took a step away and pulled out his communicator. “Kirk to away team. We’ve secured the bridge and have both Harrison and his accomplice in custody. Finish clearing your sections then meet us here; we’ll take the transport back to the *Enterprise* with the shuttle attached.” No use making multiple trips. He waited until he had an affirmative response from both teams to continue. “Once we’ve regrouped, we’ll tell the ship to stand down and prepare for our arrival. Kirk out.” He closed the communicator, but got distracted as he was slipping it onto his belt.
Harrison was chuckling quietly; it sent a chill down Jim’s spine even though he tried to fight it. “Kirk. That explains it.” Harrison was eyeing him intensely again.

Jim glanced over at Lieutenant Leslie, who seemed preoccupied with finding a way to pick up and transport Steven, before looking back at Harrison. He knew he shouldn’t, but some part of him was curious. Wary, but curious. “Explains what?”

“Why you look familiar.” Harrison smiled in a way that was somehow both threatening and charming all at once. “Tell me, is Commander Kirk your mother or sister? I think the family resemblance is a bit too strong for it to be wife or cousin, although I suppose those could be possibilities with the same last name.”

Jim felt his shoulders tense. “None of your business.” Before he could say anything more, Spock and the security officer he’d been assigned entered the bridge. Jim had to stop himself from sighing in relief; he took a few steps to meet them halfway. “Get the prisoners secured; I’m going to contact the ship so they can ready the shuttle bay to accommodate this transport and the brig to hold these two separately.”

Spock had barely nodded in acknowledgement before Jim was moving to the communications console; he could feel both Spock and Harrison watching him as he moved, one concerned and one smug. Jim was ready for this mission to be over.

Chapter End Notes

This might be the last we see of Khan's companion; he's really just there to help Khan get away, although bonus points if you catch the joke I made with him.
Chapter Notes

Happy 16 month anniversary to the fic! We're getting into it now, and I honestly would not have believed this would still be going now if you told me so a year ago. But now I have over 200k on a word doc and all of you awesome people supporting this fic, so I don't think we're stopping anytime soon! But don't worry, certain developments you've been waiting for will be coming soon...

They made it back to the Enterprise and were able to fit the transport ship inside their shuttle bay with only a little bit of maneuvering. Once Harrison and his accomplice were being led away to the brig, Jim turned back to Spock and Uhura. “Alright, we shouldn’t stay here any longer than we need to. Get to the bridge and get ready to get the hell out of here. Uhura, contact Starfleet Command. Tell them that we have Harrison and his accomplice in custody and that we’re ready to head back. I’m going to go check in with Engineering; hopefully they’ve got the ship ready to fly. I’ll meet you on the bridge when I’m done.”

They both nodded and the three of them went their separate ways; unsure of where exactly in Engineering he would find Scotty’s replacement, Jim decided to just try the comm system. “Kirk to Engineering.”

There was a moment before the response came. “Lieutenant Torres here. What do you need, Captain?”

“How’s the warp system doing? I don’t want to be anywhere near Klingon space longer than we need to.” This whole mission had Jim tense, but he tried to keep his voice level. It wouldn’t do to stress out the crew. “How soon can we be getting back to Earth?”

There was a long moment of hesitation on the other end. “It may be a while, sir. To figure out the problem we shut the whole system down to examine it and run a diagnostic. I couldn’t even give you impulse right now.”

Great. Not the best if they needed a quick getaway. “Alright Lieutenant. Get everyone you can working on figuring out what’s going on here. I want us to have at least impulse back online as soon as possible. Can you do it?”

Another pause, but this one felt shorter. “We’ll do it Captain.”

“Sounds good. Kirk out.” Jim was about to turn and head to the bridge, but the comm panel whistled again.

“Brig to Captain Kirk.” That couldn’t be good.

“Kirk here. What’s up?” He really hoped there wasn’t another escape attempt; they’d already had to deal with that with the alternate universe versions of the landing party. God, had that really only been two weeks ago? Jim rubbed a hand down his face.
“The prisoner wants to speak with you, sir.” Not the worst news, but still not something Jim was excited to hear.

“Which one?” He could guess, but Jim wanted to put it off anyways.

“Harrison.” There was a long pause. “I understand that you don’t have to, but he’s being rather insistent and he says there’s something he needs to tell you.”

Jim sighed. “Alright, I’ll be right there. Let me get Spock.” It’d be good to have someone else there; Jim didn’t really want to face him alone.

“Actually sir,” the voice on the other end was clearly nervous, “he said he would only talk to you alone.”

Of course. “No problem. I’ll be there soon. Kirk out.”

After a quick call to the bridge (he was tempted to say yes when Spock offered to accompany him, but Jim knew it was probably more important to get information out of Harrison so he said no and told Spock to focus on the warp system instead), Jim headed to the brig. He dismissed the officer on duty and looked toward the cell, where beyond the transparent barrier Harrison sat calmly on the bench with his legs crossed and his eyes closed.

Jim tried to ignore that this was the same room he’d talked to alternate Spock in only weeks ago. Instead he just stared down Harrison and tried to act like he was annoyed at just having to be there.

“What do you want?”

Harrison’s eyes opened and he smiled; again it seemed both charming and dangerous. “Captain Kirk. I was hoping you’d come.”

“I’m just here because you confessing to everything would make this so much easier. I already saw you murder everyone, but confessions are generally more damning than eyewitness accounts, so you’d make this awfully easy.” Jim crossed his arms across his chest. “What’ll it be, Mr. Harrison?”

He just smiled. “That’s not my name.”

Jim wasn’t sure whether to give away if he knew or not, so he just raised is eyebrow.

“My name,” he stood, stepping closer to the barrier, “is Khan Noonien Singh.”

Jim was too tired to fake shock. It was only the two of them there anyways.

There was a moment where Khan seemed thrown off by Jim’s lack of surprise, but he recovered quickly. “It seems you already knew that though. I can only wonder how.” He narrowed his eyes. “Did your mother tell you?”

Jim stiffened slightly but kept his arms crossed over his chest. Khan hadn’t figured that out last time he and Jim had spoken. “Why does it matter?”

Khan smirked. “That must be it.” He sat down again, perfectly relaxed and leaning back with his hands propping him up. “I suppose I don’t have to tell you the whole story then. I’ll admit, while I didn’t bother catching up on much history, I did hear about the whole incident with your father; it seemed to be what sparked much of Starfleet’s paranoia and it’s probably the reason why they decided to actually bring me in rather than leaving me on ice.” Khan grinned, but there was danger in his dark eyes. “I didn’t connect the story with Commander Kirk until I met you, and then it all fell into place.” He looked Jim over. “The poor widow and the fatherless infant.” He shook his head and
looked Jim in the eyes again. “You both seem to have done quite well for yourselves.”

God, even a damn dictator from centuries ago was bringing up his damn dad. “Is this all you wanted to tell me? Cuz if so you’re not as clever as you seem to think you are; plenty of people have made that connection.”

There was a flash of anger in Khan’s eyes and he sat up instead of leaning back. “Be patient.”

“I don’t have to be here.” Jim stood still, knowing that all Khan wanted was a reaction. Anyone who sought dictator levels of power was about the spectacle as much as anything else. “I could leave you to stew all alone here, and I will unless you give me a reason not to.”

“Fine.” Khan was clearly getting angry, but it only encouraged Jim to not budge. “I suppose your mother told you not to trust me or Admiral Marcus?”

“Understandably.” He had no reason to trust either of them really; he was only going along with Marcus because he was Starfleet.

“And yet you still trust her, despite her affiliation with the same organization.” Khan let that linger for a moment before continuing. “But you’ll have to choose who you trust least between Marcus and I. So allow me to sway your opinion. I suppose you’ve been having some trouble with your ship, inconveniently stranding you on the edge of enemy territory? I wonder who could have done that. You didn’t encounter me until after that happened, I’m sure.”

How the hell would he know that? Jim tried to maintain no reaction. “ImPLYING that someone sabotaged the ship doesn’t make me want to trust you.”

“Well then allow me to present more evidence.” He stood again, rolling his shoulders and reaching his full height before sizing Jim up again. “Along with investigating the torpedoes that Marcus gave you, I suggest looking into these coordinates: 23-17-46-11. They are alarmingly close to Earth, and I doubt you’d like what you’d find there.”

Probably both worth investigating, but Jim couldn’t let him know that. “Unless you have any more vague nonanswers to give me, I’m leaving. You done for now?”

Khan narrowed his eyes. “Do as I say, or you will be finished.”

Jim rolled his eyes. “Yeah, you’re done. I’m leaving.” He turned and walked out the door, feeling Khan’s eyes on him the whole time.

Chapter End Notes

This was quite the scene to write since they’re both so dramatic hahaha

Anyways, anyone watch that discovery episode? Come scream with me
Hello everyone! Quite a few of you seemed to catch my Voyager reference with Lieutenant Torres, although it's probably not our favorite half-Klingon engineer what with her not being born for another 100 years or so. Maybe it's her great-aunt or great-grandmother or something....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once he was out of the brig room and had sent the security officer on duty back in, Jim leaned back against the wall and ran a hand down his face, glad that this corridor wasn’t used much and he could take a moment to think without needing to keep it together for the crew. He didn’t trust Khan still. Sure, he’d revealed his identity, but that could be for intimidation as much as anything else. But why go for intimidation if he was already captured?

So he didn’t trust Khan. But the information could still be legit; if he was trying to take down Admiral Marcus, he might give Jim valid information if it meant accomplishing his own goals.

But how would he check the coordinates? The torpedoes would be easier by availability, if more dangerous probably. But if they did it somewhere safely off ship…

That could work. But Khan made it sound like whatever was at the coordinates near Earth was dangerous, so Jim couldn’t just leave them uninvestigated. But that was too far away for the even the most long-range of the Enterprise’s scanners, and Jim couldn’t exactly explain to a science team why he’d need the scanning range extended. He couldn’t explain it to Starfleet command either; if this was some Section 31 thing it could get blocked before an examination even started.

But Jim did know someone on Earth, and he even had a valid excuse to talk to them. Jim grinned, pushed off the wall, and made his way to the nearest briefing room so he’d have some privacy. If Winona’s warning was right and there was someone from Section 31 on the ship, he couldn’t risk them knowing he was figuring things out. So a briefing room would give him some privacy.

Once there, he hit the button for the comm. “Kirk to bridge.”

The response came a moment later. “Uhura here. What do you need, Captain?”

Better to start it off with something more legitimate sounding. “Any response to our message to Starfleet Command yet?”

There was the sound of buttons being pushed as she checked. “Nothing yet, sir. Our message should have reached by now though.”

“They’re probably just figuring out the best way to respond.” With the way things were going, Jim felt like it could be something worse, but he didn’t want to say that; no use alarming the crew over a suspicion. “In the meantime, could you open up another channel to Earth? I need to talk to Scotty.”

Since she knew about the engine problems, Uhura didn’t sound all that surprised. “I can do that. Want to take it in the briefing room you’re in now?”
“Sounds perfect. Thanks Uhura.” He heard the comm channel close and waited for Scotty to come through. He’d probably have to apologize, but clearly Scotty was right to feel wrong about this mission, and maybe even the torpedoes. Jim probably owed him one all things considered, but he hoped Scotty was willing to listen.

When the other end finally connected, Jim heard a lot of background noise before he finally heard Scotty. “What?”

He sounded annoyed. And was he at a bar? Jim wouldn’t admit it but he was a bit jealous; he could use a drink around now. “Scotty, it’s—”

“I know it’s you, Jim.” Scotty paused, maybe drinking. “I was just out having a night to myself with Keenser than suddenly my comm goes off from my silver lady and Nyota says you need to talk to me. You better not have broken my ship already.”

Not a great start. “Well—”

There was some swearing that Jim didn’t quite catch. “Are you serious? What did you do?”

“No one did anything!” Honestly, with everything else going on Jim was starting to suspect foul play, but he couldn’t tell Scotty that. “Lieutenant Torres is doing a full diagnostic and checking out everything. We don’t know for sure what it is yet, but the warp system isn’t working.”

“Great.” Another pause, probably another drink. “Well, whatever happens Elena will probably work it out. Have you checked to see if it’s those damn torpedoes? I told you they could mess with the warp core.”

“Not yet.” Maybe they should open them up. If Scotty suggested it too, it was probably a good idea. “We’ll do that though. You may have been right about them.”

“Damn right. At least you admit it.” Scotty paused again. “Well if you just called to apologize and say I was right, then I’ll accept that, Captain Perfect Hair.”

Was that supposed to be an insult? It probably wasn’t worth getting into it now. “Actually Scotty, there is one other thing I’d want you to do. There’s some coordinates near Earth I need you to look into.”

“Of course.” Scotty scoffed. “What are they?”

“23-17-46-11.” Jim paused. “I don’t know what’s there, but I think you’ll know it when you see it.”

“Alright.” More quiet from the other end. “23-17-46-11?”

“You got it.” He hoped he wasn’t sending Scotty into danger. “Let me know when you find something.”

“You can’t give me orders anymore.” There was a moment where he thought Scotty was still mad. “But I’ll do it for you, Jim.”

“Thanks Scotty.” Jim should have known he could count on him. “Kirk out.”

Jim sat in the briefing room a moment. The only thing left to look into now was the torpedoes, and that was going to be more difficult. They’d need to find somewhere to open them that wouldn’t take out half the ship if something went wrong. And they’d need people who could open the torpedoes without setting them off.
It was time to bring in the senior bridge crew. Jim got up from the briefing table and headed to the bridge.

“Keptin on the bridge!” Jim smiled as Chekov announced him once the turbolift doors opened. At least some things were staying the same.

Spock got up from the captain’s chair when he saw Jim, but Jim wasn’t headed there. He walked over to Uhura’s station and Spock followed him over.

Uhura looked up as they approached. “How’d the call to Scotty go, Captain? Did he have any good ideas?”

Jim leaned against the railing separating the outer set of stations from the lower central section, trying to not get too close to where Spock was standing on the other side. He wanted to, but not in front of Uhura. “He didn’t suggest much; he said the engineers here could probably figure it out. But he did say to open up a torpedo to see if there was anything there that could affect the warp core.”

“That will be difficult.” They turned to look at Spock. “With the ship’s engineers occupied with the warp system, it will be difficult to find someone qualified to open a torpedo.”

“Yeah.” Jim glanced between Spock and Uhura. Why did he keep ending up alone with the two of them? Well he wasn’t really alone now, but whatever. “Let’s call a meeting with the senior bridge crew. With all of us we’ll be able to figure this out.”

Chapter End Notes

Teamwork! This crew is ride or die for each other; I love it.

Also, with Discovery airing again I'm gonna put a blanket spoiler warning on the comments cuz I need to talk about this show with other people and this is where I do it
Chapter 142

Chapter Notes

Another perspective switch, but we've had this one before. Been a little while though...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Len stared at the torpedo that was keeping him company in the back of the shuttle. He was supposed to be off duty relaxing, dammit. But when the senior staff got called in, he could hardly say no, even if his shift ended ours ago. They were just lucky he wasn’t sleeping when they called. Not that he could’ve slept with everything going on; there was too much tension on the ship.

The actual meeting with the senior staff had gone pretty smoothly though. Jim had told them that he planned to open up a torpedo, which Len had quickly declared a stupid idea. Jim clarifying that it had been Scotty’s idea helped some, since Leonard doubted he’d do or suggest anything to endanger the ship.

Unlike Jim, who nearly had them dive into a goddamn volcano to save his boyfriend who wasn’t even his boyfriend. Still, it almost seemed like there was a different sort of tension between them now, like they’d finally figured it out. Unlikely with how dense they could be though. If it wouldn’t be a violation of medical ethics, Len probably would have just told them about each other’s aging just to make them resolve the damn tension between them. But all he was allowed to do was confirm if one of them had figured it out or tell them if he’d gotten permission to, which neither of them had done. So even though he was probably the only one besides them who actually knew it, he couldn’t do anything.

A little bit of turbulence had him bracing himself against the bulkhead and the damn torpedo. He leaned forward to look into the cockpit. “Everything alright up there, Dr. Wallace?”

“Just fine.” She glanced back at him. “How about back there? And please, Carol is fine.”

“Peachy.” He’d rather not be here, but he couldn’t tell her that. “And if we’re doing first names, it’s Leonard.”

“Alright then.” She glanced back and smiled at him briefly before turning back to the controls. As much as he’d like to have a conversation with her, Len was a little glad for her shift in focus. Shuttle rides were bad enough without a damn unknown torpedo and a distracted pilot.

How had he ended up here again? Right, the damn meeting. After they’d decided that opening the torpedoes would actually be good, they’d brought in Dr. Wallace. It seemed like a weapons specialist would be good to have in on this, so she met with the gathered heads of everything but engineering, since they were still too occupied with the damn warp core, although Lieutenant Torres did agree to review the data afterward to see if anything from it could be affecting the warp core.

Dr. Wallace was the obvious choice to open up the torpedo, but when she said she’d need some help things got a bit more complicated. No one was really qualified like she was, but when she said all she really needed was someone with steady hands Jim got that look in his eye that Len knew meant that something he wouldn’t like was coming.
Which was why he was now touching down on a nearby planetoid with one beautiful woman and one torpedo. Take away one of them and he might actually have a good time. At least if it was a nice planetoid and not just the closest hunk of rock with breathable air that wasn’t in Klingon space. But they’d had to find somewhere to open the torpedo that wasn’t the ship, and this was the closest one the scanners found. They didn’t exactly have much time to waste, what with being in a possibly damaged ship on the edge of Klingon space with a dangerous prisoner aboard.

And they didn’t want to risk using the transporter and having something go wrong, which was why Dr. Wallace-Carol and Len were currently carrying the damn torpedo out of the shuttle and onto the planet’s surface.

As Len was going back to get some tools, his communicator went off.

“How’s it going, Bones?” Jim’s familiar voice came through loud and clear. At least some things were still working normally.

“When I thought about being on a deserted planet with a beautiful woman, there was no torpedo. A beach maybe, some drinks, but no torpedo.” Realizing that he was probably on with the whole bridge crew, Len decided to hold off on the complaining. “We haven’t opened it up yet. I’ll keep the comm channel open so you can follow along.”

“Sounds good.”

Len set the open communicator down next to the torpedo. “So how can I help you?”

Carol was studying the torpedo closely. “We’ll need to access the warheads and fuel to see what could be interfering with the ship. To do that, we’ll need to open it here,” she gestured to the base of the warhead, “but we’ll need to be extremely careful since one wrong move could make it all explode.”

“Got it. Tell me what to do.” He carefully removed the casing where she indicated and took a look inside; not the ugliest guts he’d seen.

“Alright.” She looked over the schematics on the padd she held. “On the bundle of cables directly in front of you, cut the twenty-third one down and don’t touch anything else.”

“No problem.” He waited for her signal, and then—

The hatch he’d just opened closed on his arm, and the torpedo made a concerning sound. Like a starting up sound.

He could hear Carol swearing, as well as the concerned questions from the communicator.

“Jim, the torpedo armed itself and I’m stuck! Beam her out!” He yelled in the general direction of the transporter, hoping they could hear.

“Don’t! I can save him!” Carol sounded about as frantic as he felt.

“Dammit, get out of here!” He probably outranked her, right?

He couldn’t see what she was doing, but he could hear the countdown. She had to get out of here; time was running out. Damn, he hoped Jim remembered to send the letter he had set for Jo in case this happened…

Carol swore again, and whatever she did worked because his arm came loose.
The torpedo had opened completely. After a moment to catch their breaths, he and Carol leaned in to see what was in it.

They were not going to believe this back on the ship.

Chapter End Notes

It's been a while since I did a cliffhanger. At least no one's in imminent peril this time, although they aren't quite safe either...
Hello everyone! Sorry this is late; my laptop decided to play dead for a few hours earlier tonight and make me panic before finally coming back. So that was stressful.

Anyways, we're at 200k here! Longer than I expected for sure, but I wanted to say thanks to everyone who's sticking with me and still reading or found this and made their way through it all. I know I mention comments the most, but don't think I don't see and appreciate all the kudos, subscriptions, and bookmarks. You all make me smile and motivate me to keep writing, even when my laptop won't cooperate. You're the best!

“Why is there a person in the torpedo?” Once again, Jim found himself alone with Harrison-Khan-whatever. It was his condition for speaking and they needed information. So although Spock was right outside and wanted to be in the room, Jim was here alone again.

Harrison looked up from where he’d been sitting cross legged on the bed. “There are people in all of the torpedoes.” He was calm, and he smiled in a way that put Jim on edge. “I put them there.”

“Why? Who are they?” Jim didn’t like where this was going.

“What, that charming mother of yours didn’t tell you the full story?” Khan stretched and unfolded his legs, letting them hang off the edge of the bed. He rested his hands by his sides. “When Admiral Marcus found me, I wasn’t the only one aboard the ship. I was merely the one whose pod got defrosted.” He smirked. “I suppose Marcus wanted to start with the best of us, but the others are all formidable in their own right. There was a reason the people of Earth turned on us and we had to escape.”

Jim had to resist the urge to let his expression drop. If what Khan was implying was right, then… “So the other 72 are all Augments too? More dictators from the Eugenics Wars?”

“Augments, yes. Dictators…” Khan shrugged. “We brought order to a world that needed it. Perhaps history has condemned that, but at the time…”

“At the time you just started wars with each other, causing the kind of damage that would destabilize certain areas and be part of the buildup to World War III.” Jim crossed his arms over his chest. “I know enough about dictators to know one when I see one.”

Khan’s eyes narrowed. “And what would you know of dictators, coming from this age of peace and pacifism?”

Enough that he still had nightmares from time to time, but Jim wasn’t opening that can of worms now. “I know enough.” Jim needed to change the topic. “What about your accomplice? Why isn’t he shoved in a torpedo? Is he your soulmate or something?” Curiously, Jim didn’t remember the history books mentioning the Augment’s soulmates like they often did for world leaders. Was it not a thing for Augments?
“Of course not. He was just convenient and easily controlled. My soulmate is long dead.” Khan seemed too…cavalier about all of this.

“I’m sorry?” Somehow Jim felt like that wasn’t the best response.

Khan’s smirk proved that. “Don’t be. I killed her myself.”

“What?!” Jim was startled enough that he actually showed a response, but he was too preoccupied to notice Khan’s look of satisfaction at finally getting a reaction from him. Killing your soulmate was…it was unthinkable. It was taboo in every culture Jim knew of. He couldn’t imagine…Without thinking of it, his eyes flicked to the door where he knew Spock was waiting. He could never…

“It seems your soulmate must be nearby for you to be gazing at the door like that.” Khan looked triumphant. “I could kill them for you and then we’d both be immortal. Would you like that?”

Jim’s eyes snapped back to Khan. “What the hell kind of question even is that?”

Khan rolled his shoulders, still sitting casually but eyeing Jim critically. “I suppose you’d lack the augmented immune system or the reflexes and strength that benefit me and prevent disease or attack from affecting me, but with aging out of the way there really isn’t much that would affect either of us.”

“But that’s your soulmate.” Jim couldn’t believe that still.

Khan shrugged. “It’s not like it’s all that hard to find someone willing when you look like this.” He gestured to himself; Jim could admit he’d be attractive if he weren’t such a damn creep. “Just wait til you reach your physical peak then end the aging. If you find someone who you like, kill their soulmate and then you can keep them.” He remained smiling casually but his eyes took on a predatory glint. “I must admit, now that I know the full story your mother is an even more tempting prospect. Forever in her mid-twenties, soulmate already out of the picture so there will be no graying in that hair or wrinkles marring that pretty face, not to mention the rest of her body will—”

“That’s enough.” God, could this conversation get any worse? “I don’t care that you’re from the past; we don’t talk about people like they’re goddamn conquests to be scoped out and taken anymore. Not in this century.” Jim couldn’t keep the scowl off of his face; he’d already wanted to punch this guy after Pike, now this? “Do you have anything useful to say at all?”

Khan looked like he was about to speak, but then the doors opened. Jim turned to see Spock and felt some tension slip out of his shoulders at his calming presence.

The tension was back as soon as Spock opened his mouth though. “Captain, an unknown ship at warp is approaching.”

Great. “Klingons?”

“No, they seem to be coming from Federation space, but they have made no attempts to contact us.” Even Spock seemed a bit confused.

“Shields up just to be safe. If the Klingons pick up on multiple ships, our luck at being undisturbed might run out.” Jim hoped that that was a rational enough explanation.

It must have been, because Spock just nodded and left, probably to relay the order.

“Come on, Captain.” Khan seemed amused. “We both know the real threat here isn’t the Klingons.”
“The shields are up for a reason.” Jim recrossed his arms. “Now, do you have anything useful to say?”

Khan leaned back on the bed, letting his back hit the wall it rested against. “No, I’ll just let the Admiral’s plan play out.” He closed his eyes and seemed to relax, but he must have noticed the tension in Jim’s frame.

Because he was definitely tense now. “What plan?”

“Hmm?” Khan cracked open one eye, still too relaxed, before opening them both and leaning forward with a smile. “You’re about to die anyways, so I may as well tell you. What do you truly think will happen here? A rescue? No.” His smile grew and Jim could feel the raw power behind it. “Admiral Marcus wants his war with the Klingons. And what will happen when he “finds” the remains of a Federation ship, a crowd favorite no less, destroyed by unknown weapons on the edge of Klingon space? Well people just won’t let all those poor young heroes lost go unavenged.” His eyes gleamed. “Admiral Marcus will certainly have his war.” Khan relaxed and sat back against the wall again. “I suppose it would have been better if you had provoked the Klingons, but from what I’ve heard they don’t back down from a good fight.” He grinned sharply again. “I look forward to seeing it myself.”

There was definitely more to dig into in that last comment, but Jim had heard enough. He turned and went to head to the bridge, waiting to run til he was out of the brig. He had to get there before the other ship reached them.

Chapter End Notes

One of my plot changes is coming into play; bonus points to whoever can figure it out...
Chapter Notes

We got a bit more engagement last chapter hahaha It seems I'm accomplishing my goal of enjoyably hateable villains. I hope you like my changes to the plot too; we're close enough to see down the hill on the roller coaster but still climbing...

Enjoy the ride!

Jim was glad for the turbolift ride (even if he was mentally willing it to go faster the whole time) because it meant he had a chance to catch his breath.

He needed that moment to think. If the crew really was in danger like Khan was suggesting, Jim would have to be level headed when he faced it. It wouldn’t help the crew if Jim was too frazzled to focus, even if it seemed like every single thing that happened in the past few weeks just kept putting him further on edge and making him question his own ability to command.

But as soon as those turbolift doors opened, Jim was slipping firmly into his role as captain. He tried to project confidence as he strode onto the bridge, and the crew did seem a bit calmer once he came in. He took the center seat back from Spock, who must have barely beaten him up to the bridge, and began to assess the situation. “Mr. Sulu, are our shields up? If the Klingons come to investigate why there’s ships on their border I don’t want to be caught off guard.”

Sulu did a quick check on his console. “Shields are up and at full strength. We may not be able to move much but we can protect ourselves.”

“Good.” He turned to the communication station. “Lieutenant Uhura, any word yet?”

“Nothing, sir.” She pursed her lips in frustration. “I’ll continue trying to hail them.”

“Keptin!” Jim turned back around to face Chekov. “They are dropping out of warp.”

“Onscreen.” Jim watched as it appeared before them; it was darker in color than most ships, almost matching the blackness between the stars; he wondered if the hull was a different material or if that was part of its stealth design. It also seemed much bigger than the Enterprise too, and Jim could guess that it was probably more dangerous.

“Captain, they’re hailing us. Should I put it onscreen?” Jim didn’t look back at Uhura, too focused on the ship in front of them.

“Yes. And…” Jim hoped that he wasn’t giving away too much. “Record it. I think Starfleet will want this on file.” He glanced back in time to see her look confused, but something in his expression must have conveyed his concern because she just nodded.

A moment later, Admiral Marcus’ face appeared onscreen. “Captain Kirk.”

“Admiral Marcus!” Jim hoped his surprise seemed genuine. “What are you doing all of the way out here? And is that a new class of ship? It must have been made when we were off on our mission.”
May as well lay some cards on the table. “I think I heard something about it though. Tell me, is it the one with the registration number ending in 31? I didn’t get a good look before you haled us.”

Marcus’ eyes narrowed. “I’m more concerned about your ship, son.”

It felt wrong to hear him call Jim that, especially so soon after Pike—focus. Jim smiled, trying to keep up the charming idiot act that he knew some people thought was actually him. “That must be why you’re here. Come to help us with the warp core? Or maybe tow us back; I’d rather not have all our missions end that way but it worked well enough last time.”

Marcus didn’t look all that amused. “I’m more concerned about a certain prisoner aboard your ship. One that I specifically ordered you to kill on sight.”

Jim noticed that Marcus didn’t say a name; did he know Jim knew? “Well sir, there were two life signs aboard the transport, and while we figured the second person was likely an accomplice, it’s not the Starfleet or Federation way to condemn someone to death without a trial, so we boarded the transport. Both men onboard surrendered, so we took both into custody. We planned to head back to Earth, but then the warp core—”

“Enough.” Marcus held up his hand to stop Jim. “Kirk, if you don’t tell me where Harrison is I am going to assume you are currently in league with him awaiting contact with the Klingons and I will act accordingly.”

Shit. Jim was trying to keep his cool but he could feel the bridge going tense. “Sir, why can’t you just help us with repairs and we’ll take him back together? Why leave a fellow ship stranded on the edge of enemy space? This seems like a dangerous place to leave us.”

“If I take Harrison,” Marcus seemed to emphasize the name even though it seemed like he knew that they both knew it was wrong, “You can focus on fixing your ship and you’ll probably be out of here in no time.” His expression shifted in a way that was probably supposed to be sympathetic. “Look, recruiting Harrison was my mistake and you got tangled in the middle of it. Let me finish this.”

“We could finish it together.” Jim could tell that Marcus’ patience was growing thin and that the crew could tell something was up. They were always smart. “Aren’t we supposed to be about cooperation and peace?”

Marcus’ eyes narrowed. “Captain James Tiberius Kirk, I have sufficient reason to believe that you are in league with the fugitive John Harrison and possibly conspiring to commit treason against the Federation. Unless you prove your innocence by releasing Harrison to my custody, I will be forced to use extreme measures. You have until the completion of my count. Ten.”

This was not good. Jim didn’t want to give in to Marcus, but he didn’t want to risk his crew either.

“Nine.”

“Admiral, this is highly irregular.” Even Spock’s voice was tense. “Why are you deviating from standard protocol for—”

“Eight.”

“Sir, he’s locking weapons on us, but it’s a kind and strength I’ve never seen—” Sulu’s voice had an edge to it.

“Seven.”
The bridge was slipping into gradually louder chaos as people began to pick up more concerning readings from the other ship and it seemed like Marcus wasn’t backing down.

“Six.”

Jim wasn’t going to let his crew die like this. He got out of his chair and ran to the front of the bridge, directly in front of the viewscreen.

“Five.”

Jim took a deep breath. “Alright, sir, he’s—”

“WAIT!” All eyes turned to the back of the bridge, where it seemed like Dr. Wallace had run all the way there. She took a deep breath, staring right at the admiral on the view screen. “Sir, you don’t want to do this.”

“Carol?” Admiral Marcus sounded genuinely surprised. He looked at Jim angrily. “What the hell is my daughter doing on your ship?”

His daughter? Before Jim could respond the woman herself did.

“Look, Dad, I heard what you said about making a mistake with Harrison. But you’d only be making a bigger one if you destroy this ship; no one on this crew is guilty of anything you’re accusing them of.”

His expression didn’t shift. “You don’t know all the facts.”

Dr. Wallace-Marcus? crossed her arms and straightened her back, looking her father straight in the eye. “I know enough to understand who’s in the wrong here. If you’re going to blow up this ship, it’ll have to be with me on board.”

Marcus sighed. “It really won’t.” He looked away, to somewhere on the bridge they couldn’t see. “Beam her aboard.”

Their shields were still up, but a moment later the golden light of the transporter began to surround her nonetheless. Her defiant expression dropped from her face as Dr. Wallace looked down at herself with disbelief and then a flash of panic. She looked at Jim. “Captain—”

“Stop that transport!” Jim wasn’t even sure who he was giving the orders to.

“Sir the shields are up, they shouldn’t even be able to—”

“I can’t block the signal! It’s—”

Both were cut off, however, by the sound of Dr. Wallace disappearing despite her attempt to move and interrupt the signal. She was gone.

“Now, where were we?” Admiral Marcus looked unfazed, even smug. “We’d probably be down to two by now, so—”

“Please!” Jim was sure there was desperation in his voice by now. “I will personally transport Khan to your ship. But leave the crew out of this; they don’t deserve any of it. I will personally hand myself over for whatever punishment you see fit; just spare the crew. They did nothing wrong.”

Marcus’ eyes had widened then narrowed while Jim spoke, but he didn’t realize his mistake until it was too late. Marcus had a calm expression on his face, but Jim could practically feel the malice
through the viewscreen. “A very kind gesture on your part, Captain, but I’m afraid it’s too late for that.” He looked at someone off screen again. “Lock on target and prepare to fire.”

The transmission cut out. Jim turned around to face the crew, trying not to let his shoulders slump. Look like the right kind of captain even if he couldn’t be it. “I’m sorry.” He wasn’t sure what for. For taking this mission. For failing his crew and putting them in danger. For causing their deaths. For not being the kind of captain they deserved. There was too much, and all of it was on him.

He looked back over his shoulder at the weapons unlike any he’d seen powering up and hoped it would at least be quick.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone catch Jim’s mistake? Let's hope it doesn't cost the crew their lives...

Also, Disco. Come scream with me.
Hello everyone! First off, this just hit 1500 kudos, which is genuinely mind-boggling. You're all amazing; have I said that lately?

Something you've been anticipating is coming this chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim closed his eyes and waited for the end to come.

But it didn’t come. He opened his eyes and looked over his shoulder again. Why hadn’t they fired?

There was a moment of tense silence on the bridge before a cacophony of reports started.

“Sir, no damage reported on any decks—”

“We don’t have record of any weapons being fired—”

“Their-their weapons have powered down—”

“The other ship’s shields are down; it’s like their system’s offline and—”

“Captain!” Jim turned toward Uhura; there was the same edge of confusion and panic to her voice that everyone else had, but also something like excitement. “Someone’s trying to contact us from the other ship, but it’s weak and audio only, like they were using a communicator or something.” Excitement, relief, and disbelief flashed across her face. “It’s Scotty!”

Jim’s grin in response to that was so wide it almost hurt. “Put him on so all of us can hear him!” She hit a few buttons on her station before nodding at him. “Scotty!”

“Captain!” Jim had never been more relieved to hear that familiar Scottish accent. “You’ll never guess what I found at those coordinates.”

Jim couldn’t help his relieved laugh. “Looks like we got some useful intel from Harrison after all.” He was careful to use the right name this time. “You’re on that ship?”

“Aye.” It sounded like he was on the move. “This ship is like nothing I’ve seen and I’ve been trying to lay low what with being a stowaway, but I couldn’t let them harm my silver lady. Or her crew for that matter.”

Jim’s mind started turning. They definitely couldn’t take that ship down from here, but from on it… “Do you think you can keep their shields down a bit longer?”

There was clear confusion on the bridge, and Jim could hear that Scotty was confused too when he finally spoke. “Probably? I reset the system.” There was a pause, and then he sounded hopeful. “Are you going to beam me back?”

“Not quite.” He looked around the bridge. “I’ve got a plan. Scotty, get somewhere where we could
“trace your signal and beam people over.”

“Are you mad Captain?” The incredulity was clear in Scotty’s voice.

“Maybe, but that was an order. I’ve got a plan; trust me on this.” The last bit was as much to the bridge crew as it was to Scotty. Jim hoped he’d accept it; they didn’t have time to explain everything. “Kirk out.”

He turned to the turbolift, Spock on his heels as expected. “Captain, I object to your current course of action.”

“I’ve barely said anything about it.” Jim glanced over at Spock. “What is there to object to?”

“We do not have the energy or transporter capabilities to send over a large boarding party at the moment, and you are unfamiliar with the design of the other ship.” He looked at Jim. “Even with Mr. Scott’s likely still limited knowledge of the other ship, your odds of returning unharmed are—”

“Probably higher than whatever you calculated, because you always forget to factor in my luck.” He looked over at Spock with a smile but didn’t get much of a response in return. He looked back toward the turbolift doors. “Besides, there is someone on board who knows the other ship and can hold his own in a fight.” He could feel Spock staring a hole into the side of his head and so he glanced over at him. “Besides, I did say I’d deliver Harrison to Marcus.”

“No, you said you would transport Khan to Marcus’ ship, a statement you have yet to explain.”

Damn that Vulcan memory. Jim ran a hand down his face and stepped out of the turbolift as soon as it stopped, Spock right behind him. “A statement I won’t explain.”

“Captain.” Spock’s hand on his shoulder turned him around. “Is the man in our brig using an alias? What is his true identity?”

Jim wanted to tell him, he really did, but… He looked Spock in the eye. “I genuinely can’t tell you. You have to trust me on this.” Although he felt Spock’s grip tighten for a moment, Spock must have been holding back because Jim was still able to shake his shoulder out of Spock’s hold and keep walking til he reached the brig, Spock still just barely behind him.

The brig was pretty much as Jim had left it. The officer on duty nodded at him as he and Spock entered and stepped out as that had been the established procedure. Khan looked up and smiled once it was only the three of them in the room (and Jim knew it would be impossible to get Spock to leave now). Khan’s eyes flicked between them before settling on Jim. “What can I do for you now, Captain?”

Jim crossed his arms over his chest. “You and I are going to Marcus’ ship to take it down.”

Khan stretched his arms over his head but didn’t stand. “And why would I do that?”

Honestly, this would be the more difficult part. “Because you want to take down Marcus as much as I do.”

“Hmm.” Khan crossed his arms and pursed his lips. “No. But I’d do it for the transport ship and all of the torpedoes.”

“No.” Jim shook his head, but knew he would have to bargain some. “A shuttle and a few cryopods.”
Khan narrowed his eyes. “That would hardly be sufficient motivation.”

“Whatever you say.” Jim shrugged. “I’m offering you a chance at freedom instead of letting this ship get blown up with you and all the torpedoes on it, but if you want to be stubborn that’s fine.” He looked away, as if thinking. “I might have been more willing to negotiate after we were in the clear, but…” He turned and nodded for Spock to leave, doing the same himself.

“Wait.” They were almost to the door and Jim fought to keep his face neutral at Khan’s voice.

“Yes?” He went for his best disinterested voice, hoping Khan would fall for it.

“I’ll do it.” Khan looked annoyed, but he had finally gotten up. “I’ll go with you.”

“Alright.” Jim glanced at Spock then back at Khan. “Someone will take you to the transporter room shortly.” With that he left the room, putting a hand on the shoulder of the security officer on duty before they could go back to the room. “Ensign.” Jim waited til he had their attention. “Escort Harrison to the closest transporter room. Have someone meet us there with four phasers locked on stun. Mr. Spock and I will meet you there in a moment.”

They were barely down the hall when Spock spoke. “Captain, we cannot give him the torpedoes or the transport.”

“I know that Spock.” Jim stopped and turned to Spock. “I’m not planning on giving him anything. Best case scenario, I give him to Marcus, Marcus is appeased, Scotty, Dr. Wallace, and I get out of there. Worst case scenario, I pit him and Marcus against each other and the rest of us are a low enough priority we can slip away.”

Spock seemed to think before speaking next. “I request that I be added to this away mission.”

“Denied.” Jim looked at Spock, hoping he could convey the sincerity of his next words. “Look, this crew needs someone who knows what they’re doing and won’t slip up on that bridge, and that’s you. So I need you to go up there and find a way to get us out of this mess, even if it’s just hiding in a nebula or something so Marcus and the Klingons can’t find the ship. We’re in a lot of danger now, but I trust you. I need you to get this ship to safety, even if I’m not back on it yet.”

Spock’s eyes rose up to his sharply. “Captain—”

“I mean it.” Jim held Spock’s eyes and straightened his back. “I will not place my own life above the crew’s wellbeing and neither should you. Don’t make me make it an order.”

“Very well, Captain.” Spock’s shoulders were stiff.

Jim hoped he would make it back, but he knew they both knew his chances weren’t great. He didn’t want to leave it like this, not if…

Without really thinking about it, Jim extended the pointer and middle finger of one hand and carefully ran it down the back of Spock’s hand where it hung by his side. Jim ran his fingers slowly from Spock’s wrist down to his fingers and gently back up and down again.

They’d exchanged enough casual touches to know that this wasn’t one. Spock’s eyes once more jumped up to his, this time with a barely concealed mix of emotions Jim couldn’t quite read.

Jim carefully withdrew his hand, not missing the way Spock’s trailed after it a moment before he regained control, and looked Spock in the eyes. “We’ll talk about this when I get back. All of it.”
There was still some uncertainty in Spock’s eyes. “Jim—”

“When I get back. I promise.” He looked down the corridor to where the transporter room was before looking back to Spock with a newfound determination. “For now we both have to do what we can to keep our crew safe. Understood?”

There was still a reluctance to Spock as he straightened up, but there also seemed to be determination. “Yes, Captain.”

“Good.” Jim smiled, resisting the urge to lean in and kiss Spock the human way too. “Let’s do this.” He led them into the transporter room and saw that everyone else was already there. He nodded at the security officer who handed him a belt with four phasers on it before turning to the transporter technician. “How much time til their shields go up?”

“Less than a minute, sir.” She readied the controls. “I’ve got the coordinates from the bridge; I’m ready when you are, Captain.”

“Good.” Jim secured the phaser belt around his waist before pulling off two. He handed one to Khan and kept the other in his own hands. “All of these are locked on stun, so don’t get any ideas.”

Khan eyed the others on his belt curiously. “Why only one each when you have so many?”

“The rest are for any friends or allies we meet along the way.” Jim half raised his phaser, finger not on the trigger yet, and nodded at the transporter console. “Ready when you are.”

Spock had taken over for the transporter technician. “Good luck, Captain.”

Jim couldn’t resist how that made his lips quirk up. He took one last steadying breath in the familiar environment of his ship. “Energize.”

Chapter End Notes

Who's ready for next chapter?
Happy last update of January everyone! We got quite the response to last chapter, but I think I can guess why... It's taken a bit (and longer than I'd thought), but I did tell you we'd get there eventually, so thank you for sticking with me.

Anyways, back into the action!

They materialized in some sort of hangar bay; Scotty was alone and seemed nervous, but was wearing his uniform. Jim’s eyebrows furrowed. “Why are you in uniform? I thought you took leave after…” Jim wasn’t sure what to call it.

“After you made me quit for something that you later said I was actually right about?” Scotty raised an eyebrow expectantly and only continued after Jim begrudgingly nodded in agreement. “Well I did, but you called me up like it was utterly important I check out those coordinates, but when I checked they were behind Jupiter and I can’t exactly fly there myself cuz I don’t have a ship of my own, so I had to borrow a Starfleet shuttle, but I couldn’t show up there looking like I’d been going out for scotch and music, so I put on my uniform so I could get a shuttle and check out those coordinates you said were so important, and here I am.” He paused. “Wherever here is. Cuz I’m betting we’re not by Jupiter anymore.”

Jim shook his head and wondered how much he could tell Scotty before they had to get moving. “We’re actually on the edge of Klingon space, and—”

“And we are wasting time.” Jim’s grip on his phaser had relaxed enough that it hung by his side, but Khan still had his at the ready. He raised an eyebrow at them. “Well, don’t you want to save your ship before it gets destroyed?” Without waiting for a response (probably because he already knew what it would be), he jerked his head and started moving. “Follow me. I’ll lead you to the bridge in a way that won’t get us caught or killed.”

“Who’s that mildly intimidating stick in the mud?” Scotty seemed a bit reluctant to follow, but still accepted the phaser Jim handed him and started walking when Jim did.

“He’s…” Jim wasn’t sure what name to call him, let alone how to tell Scotty what was going on or why he was there. Simplest was probably best. “His name is Harrison. He’s an ally, for now at least.”

Scotty glanced at Jim out of the corner of his eye. They were close enough behind Khan that they could see him and follow him well enough but far away enough that if they were quiet he might not hear them, especially if he was focused on getting to the bridge. Still, Scotty kept his voice low enough that Jim barely heard him. “I don’t like the sound of that. Are we helping him or is he helping us? Can we trust him?”

There was a commotion up ahead as they encountered their first group of troops; Khan went straight to hand to hand while Jim and Scotty used their phasers as much as they could. Their opponents were quickly dispatched and they were on their way again, with Khan sparing only the briefest of
glances back at them before continuing on.

“To answer your earlier questions,” Jim glanced at Scotty before looking back to ensure he didn’t miss Khan’s next move, “I’m not sure who’s helping who more. As for if we can trust him,” Khan was still far ahead and probably out of hearing range, but Jim dropped his voice anyways, “I don’t, and you probably shouldn’t either. Once we’re on the bridge and it’s safe, drop him.”

Scotty looked a little concerned but nodded anyways, and they continued on to the bridge.

They made it surprisingly easily; while the crew they encountered provided some resistance, there were far fewer people on board than Jim would expect if the numbers they met were any indication.

So now they were just outside the bridge, peering through a barely opened Jefferies tube hatch. There were maybe half a dozen people at stations on the bridge, along with Admiral Marcus and Dr. Wallace, who had a guard on either side of her restraining her.

“Alright. Jim glanced down the Jeffries tube at Khan and Scotty. “I’m going to start by taking out one of the guards on Dr. Wallace. Something tells me she’d be willing to join in on our side, and it should create enough of a disturbance that we’ll be able to come out without immediately getting shot. Take out everyone but Marcus; we need to have a chat.”

From his vantage point, Jim was able to get a clear shot at the guard on Dr. Wallace’s left, and in the ensuing chaos they scrambled out of the Jeffries tube, fanning out and dropping crew members. Jim headed toward Dr. Wallace with the intention of giving her the remaining extra phaser he’d brought, but before he could she’d stomped on the foot of her remaining guard to make them loosen their grip on her before driving her elbow into their stomach, then grabbing their phaser and stunning them for good measure. She then shot someone Jim hadn’t noticed over his shoulder; Jim looked around and saw that the whole bridge minus Marcus was down; Khan looked like he was about to attack, but Scotty dropped him and Jim sighed in relief.

He turned back to Dr. Wallace; she seemed alright, but it wouldn’t hurt to check. Plus, she had just saved him. Jim smiled at her. “Nice shot. You alright?”

She weakly smiled back. “I am a weapons specialist; it helps to know the practice and use even if you focus on the theory and mechanics. And I’m a bit better now that I’m not a prisoner.”

Before Jim could respond, the man who was apparently her father spoke. “What the hell are you doing on my ship?”

Dr. Wallace had raised her weapon defensively, but Jim gestured for her to lower it and tucked his own into the phaser belt before holding up his hands to show he wasn’t a threat. “I’m just trying to save my own ship. And I only want to talk.”

“Stunning my crew is a hell of a way to start a conversation.” Marcus crossed his arms but didn’t get up from his chair. “What do you even have to say that can convince me that you aren’t a threat now that you’ve stormed my ship in collaboration with the very man you denied involvement with?”

“Does it look like I’m working with him now?” Jim gestured to where Khan laid still on the front section of the bridge, Scotty warily standing over him. “I told you I’d deliver him to you, and I just did. Now let my crew live.” Jim could see that this ship’s weapons seemed to have powered back on, even if they had yet to lock on to the Enterprise once more.

“Hmm.” Marcus looked between where Khan was stunned on the front of the bridge and then back to where Jim was with Dr. Wallace on the back of the bridge. “You still seemed to be in possession
of certain knowledge that I can’t risk getting out. I can imagine you got it from that traitorous mother of yours, but I can’t know how much you told your crew. After all, you did use Khan’s real name in front of them…”

“Please, they know nothing!” Jim took a step closer, desperation starting to sink in. “Just let them go; I swear on my life I didn’t tell them anything!”

Marcus’s eyes narrowed. “Would you swear on your mother’s life?”

Jim didn’t like where this was going, but he nodded anyways. “Yes. You have my word, she told me but I didn’t tell anyone else.”

“Swearing on your mother’s life is impressive.” Marcus looked considering a moment before his expression shifted to something that sent a chill down Jim’s back. “But it’s also meaningless once I get back. Anyone who jeopardizes the security and secrecy of our organization doesn’t last long. And neither will your crew.”

“Please!” Marcus had begun to turn and activate a panel in the arm of his chair, but Jim lunged forward and grabbed his hand before he could hit any buttons. “I’ll do anything.”

Marcus sighed and roughly jerked his hand out of Jim’s grasp before pushing him back so he could access the panel. “If it’s any consolation, I never intended to spare you or your crew.” He hit a few buttons on the panel. "That’s not how my plan goes."

The viewscreen display showed exactly what Jim feared as a computer voice announced, “Weapons locked on target. Prepared to fire at your command.”

Chapter End Notes

Gotta keep that tension up...

Speaking of tension, Discovery. Scream with me.
Hello everyone! Hopefully the tension of last chapter didn't get to you too badly, because it's not stopping. There will be a death this chapter... (it's not too graphic, and you'll see it coming probably)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim was once more staring down the destruction of his ship, but this time he wasn’t even there to go down with her. Not that it mattered; if what his mom and Marcus had said was right he’d probably be dead soon anyways. He looked at the ship but didn’t see any escape pods going out; he knew his crew was loyal but he hoped they also knew there was a point where they had to stop that and take care of themselves.

“Ready weapons on my command.” God, how was Admiral Marcus so calm about killing his own damn people? Jim wanted to try to knock him away, but at the angle he was at he’d risk hitting the console on the captain’s chair and possibly incinerating his ship anyways. No way was he doing that.

Marcus continued, steady as ever. “In three, two—"

There was a sudden enraged scream from the front of the bridge, and before Jim even realized what was happening Scotty fell to the ground as Khan sprung up, probably taking out Scotty’s legs in the process.

Khan lunged forward over the navigation console and wrapped a hand on Marcus’ neck, hauling him out of the chair. By that single point of contact, he pulled Marcus up until his now somewhat worried face was only inches from Khan’s own snarling one. “What are you doing? We had an agreement.”

Jim had planned on trying to get them to turn on each other, but not like this. He reached for the phaser on his belt, intending to stun Khan (and maybe Marcus too while he was at it), but Khan saw it and hit a button on the console in the captain’s chair and Jim’s phaser blast hit uselessly against the forcefield that now protected the center of the bridge.

“You’ll find your weapons quite useless here, Captain Kirk.” Khan looked back to Marcus. “The Admiral and I designed this ship so that the commanding officer would be impervious to attacks if necessary. Although he did not seem to anticipate the manner of attack that I prefer.” Khan smirked and tightened his grip around Marcus’ throat, seeming to enjoy the way Marcus’ hands scrambled to his neck but were unable to dislodge Khan’s hand. “Admiral, would you like to tell Kirk and his crew what our plan was?”

He loosened his grip just enough for Marcus to breathe easier and respond, not that it sounded like he was breathing all that deeply when he responded. “Go to hell.”

“Look at you, trying to impose your culture’s afterlife on me. How typical.” Khan shook his head and clicked his tongue, looking at Marcus with exaggerated disappointment before slamming him into the captain’s chair with his grip still on his neck forcing him in place. “You may go to hell, Admiral, but regardless of my deeds I will not be joining you there.”
Marcus’ only response was a glare, but Jim knew he’d have to keep Khan stalling if he wanted to buy Spock and the crew enough time to figure out a way out of this. Phaser at the ready even though he knew it was useless, Jim looked between Marcus and Khan. “What plan? You already said something about that back in the brig, but if it concerns my crew I’d like to know more about it.”

Khan looked at him appraisingly, then glanced at Marcus. “I suppose you won’t tell him, and if he’s going to die anyways we may as well tell him why.”

Jim glanced at his remaining crew. Scotty was getting up, even if he looked a little shaken, and Dr. Wallace was still armed on the back of the bridge, even if the phaser she had would probably be just as useless as Jim’s against that forcefield.

“Your crew was never intended to make it out of this alive, Captain.” Jim’s attention switched back to Khan. “Marcus wanted his war, and I wanted new worlds to fight and conquer. We saw that there was a way that we could both get what we wanted.” He glanced at Marcus, who was starting to go limp, and loosened his grip enough for Marcus to take in a few deep breaths. “If we started the war, he’d get the fight with the Klingons and myself and the other augments could each get worlds to conquer and rule in what was once their Empire. We only needed the right provocation.” He looked at Marcus, who apparently had gained enough energy to glare at him. “Was it you or I who thought of the next stage, Admiral?”

Marcus’ glare was steely. “I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“What, have I deprived you of air enough to make you lose your memory?” Khan’s grip tightened slightly again before he looked back to Kirk. “We were collaborators. We knew that we just needed a cause that would make no one deny the need for war, and who should be slated to return then but the young heroes themselves.” Khan smirked. “It really could have been anyone, but nothing makes the people hunger for blood quite like dead idols that needed to be avenged. So we arranged it all. The initial attack, the meeting, the subsequent attack. I was to take an unassuming ship and lure you to Klingon space, or near enough that any attempt on your part to destroy my ship would get the attention of the Klingons. But you’d encounter unexpected problems. You’d be unable to fire or flee. So when the Klingons came to find the threat at their borders, you’d be unable to defend yourselves or escape, and Marcus would have the bloodshed necessary to start his war. Should the Klingons not arrive and you manage to send a distress call, Marcus could intercept it and use this ship to destroy you. Its weapon signatures match nothing within the Federation, and given the circumstances it would be simple enough to blame the Klingons. Marcus would still have his martyrs, and my crew would be protected within the torpedoes either way. I would use the transport ship to collect them from the wreckage of your ship, and we could all have our war.”

Jim didn’t want to believe this. Marcus had seemed sketchy, especially with what Winona told him, but conspiring with an ancient dictator to start a war? That seemed extreme…

“Do believe what you’ve been told.” Khan smiled in a way that sent a chill down Jim’s spine. “The only problem arose when your ship arrived with weapons intact. I realized that Marcus intended to cross me, but thankfully your compassion,” he spat the word out like something despicable, “your weakness really, allowed me to get on your ship and into your head. And you delivered me right to this bastard.” He glared at Marcus. “Any last words?”

Marcus glared right back. “You should have known I’d cross you.”

Khan sighed as if bored. “And you should have known from the moment you opened that cryotube, woke me up, and realized who you’d found that you’d never truly have the upper hand.” He smiled that dangerous smile once more. “Goodbye, Admiral. It’s time for you to sleep.”
With the forcefields still up, they could only watch in horror as Khan’s other hand came up and his grip on Marcus shifted, both hands settling around his head before there was a sudden movement and a loud crack before Marcus’ hands, which had been coming up to fight Khan’s hold, fell limp with the rest of him.

What happened next was almost too quick to process. Khan held Admiral Marcus’ body with one arm and reached into an arm of the captain’s chair with another, producing a phaser, before hitting the controls on the console. A part of the forcefield dropped and they all opened fire, but Scotty and Dr. Wallace’s shots continued to be deflected by the forcefield as only the section closest to Jim opened. Jim tried to get an even shot off, but Khan was using Marcus as a shield of sorts, and then shoving him toward Jim. In the moment it took Jim to dodge, Khan had slipped around him and raised his phaser to be level with Jim’s head. Jim tried to turn to fight him, but Khan grabbed Jim’s phaser hand and twisted it til he was forced to drop his weapon before pinning the arm behind Jim’s back, forcing him into an awkward position in front of Khan.

Jim struggled against the hold. “Take the shot! I don’t care if I get stunned in the process!”

“I wouldn’t do that.” He could practically feel Khan’s smugness. “Your weapons may be on stun, but mine is not. So unless you’d like your captain to be a demonstration of the sort of damage these can do at full power at close range, I suggest you both move to the back of the bridge.” They seemed hesitant, but Khan shoving the phaser into the back of Jim’s head hard enough to make him flinch must have been convincing. “Good.” He smiled when they complied before carefully maneuvering with Jim toward the captain’s chair again and shifting the forcefields so they couldn’t fire on him from behind. Settled into place and still holding Jim hostage, he glanced back to Dr. Wallace and Scotty. “Use the communication console back there to hail the Enterprise.” His focus shifted back toward the front and his grip on Jim’s arm tightened. “It’s time I get what I wanted.”

Chapter End Notes

The Marcus-Khan conspiracy came to me the last time I watched Into Darkness. I mean, why would Khan beam to the place Marcus wanted a war with if not to lure a ship there to help start the war? The movie would need more to support it, but hey, why not put it in the fic?
Well, next chapter will fall on a multi-month anniversary for this fic, but you're getting a long update now as an early present. It's partially a thank you to all the amazing people who have caused a bump in kudos, bookmarks, and subscriptions lately, and partially because this was where I wanted to cut it. Still, you're all awesome and you deserve an extra-long update!

We'll see if you're still thanking me at the end...

Also, POV swap in the middle of this chapter after the break. We've got both of our boys!

If Spock allowed himself to feel, he would likely be nervous presently. However, he could not allow himself to experience nervousness because the Captain had left the ship in his hands and he would not allow himself to become emotionally compromised. There was too much to do. Even if he likely should have heard from Jim by now…

No. He could not allow his thoughts to be distracted now. He pressed the comm button on the arm of the captain’s chair. “Bridge to Lieutenant Torres. What is the status of our warp engines?”

There was a sigh from the other end. “Still not great. I know we’re in dangerous territory so I’m doing all I can, but it’s not looking great. We might be able to manage a short trip, but I’m not sure I’d recommend it because even that could be risky.”

“Thank you.” Gratitude was not a Vulcan sentiment, but Spock had found that it was expected and appreciated by humans, especially in times of relative crisis. “I trust you will be able to return the ship to its fully operational state.”

“It’d be a lot easier if you hadn’t taken half my staff. We didn’t exactly have the people to spare. Sir.” The last word seemed to be an afterthought, possibly to soften the mild insubordination of her earlier words.

“Acknowledged, Lieutenant Torres. But as both tasks are of importance to our current mission, it was a necessary diversion of crew labor. Once they have completed their task, the other engineers will return to assist with the warp core repairs.” Spock should check the progress of that other task. “Spock out.”

The other task was based on what Spock had witnessed in the brig. It was clear that the cryotubes within the torpedoes were of some significance to Harrison, although Spock did not know how. Still, the Captain had seemed more willing to give Harrison the cryotubes than the torpedoes themselves, which was logical, so Spock had had teams of engineers and medical personnel work to carefully open the torpedoes and extract the cryotubes. Although Dr. Marcus was absent, they had her report from immediately after her return as well as Dr. McCoy there to ensure the process was replicated without endangering the ship.
Spock pressed the comm button once more. “Bridge to Dr. McCoy. What progress have you made with the torpedoes?”

“Well hello to you too.” There was some grumbling on the other end; Dr. McCoy did tend to be more short-tempered when stressed. “I think we’ve got most of them out by this point.”

“That is not very precise.” Perhaps Spock was exhibiting signs of stress as well. However, there was no time for rest or meditation at the moment. “There are 72 torpedoes; how many still contain cryotubes?”

“Listen, you green-blooded—” Dr. McCoy took a deep breath and exhaled slowly. “Look, this isn’t exactly easy work. One misstep and the ship goes boom. Now I can concentrate on that, or I can take a break to count cryotubes and talk to you. What’s more important right now?”

It was a surprisingly logical argument. “How much more time will you need?”

There was a frustrated sigh. “We’re working as fast as we can, but like I said this is delicate work. I can’t give you an exact number, but give us all the time you can. I don’t think we’ve got much to go.”

“Understood. Spock out.” He was not sure how much time they would have, but it was no use reminding Dr. McCoy as he likely already knew.

“Commander,” He turned at the sound of Nyota’s voice; there was something odd to the tone of it. “We’re being hailed by the other ship.”

Had Jim been successful? “Put it on screen.” He turned to face the screen, expecting the face of his soulmate.

Not like this. Jim’s face was distorted in discomfort, likely pain that he did not wish to fully express. One arm was bent at an awkward angle behind his back by Harrison, who also had a phaser held to Jim’s head. The light on the top indicated that it was not on a stun setting.

Spock’s heart rate accelerated and it took all his control to not grip the arms of the captain’s chair until they broke. Only his years of practice kept his face controlled, although by Jim’s wince it was likely that it had shown in his eyes still.

Mr. Scott and Dr. Marcus were also on the bridge, but if the slight flicker before them was any indication there was likely a forcefield preventing them from aiding Jim.

“Hello.” Spock’s attention turned back to Harrison as he spoke. “I don’t believe we’ve been properly introduced. My name is Khan Noonien Singh. If you do not recognize that name, consult your historical records. Improbable as it may seem, I am the same man that you will find there. And in those records you will also find exactly what I am capable of.”

The Enterprise’s crew was exceedingly efficient and competent, and soon a historical profile appeared onscreen alongside the man himself. It was not reassuring to learn that the man who currently held Jim with a phaser to his head was a 20th century Earth Augment and dictator who had played a major role in that century’s Eugenics Wars, was known to have killed multiple people personally in those wars, and was highly rated in both intellect and combat skills.

Although it was not Starfleet policy to negotiate in such circumstances, Spock found himself more open to that possibility than he typically would be in this situation. Logically, it was necessary to have more time to ready the cryotubes, but Spock knew his decision here was not based on logic alone. “What are your demands, Mr. Singh?”
“Call me Khan.” He smiled in a way that was likely meant to be charming. “My needs are simple. I no longer require the transport as this ship should more than suit my needs, but I would like all of the torpedoes. I trust you have not tampered with them?”

“The torpedoes are intact.” He did not need to know that the cryotubes would no longer be inside them. “However, I do not believe that ship requires additional weaponry.”

“Let’s just say I’m attached.” Again he smiled, but Spock could only focus on how Jim seemed to be subtly yet unsuccessfully trying to break from Khan’s hold. “Your captain knows why, but it seems he’s been keeping secrets from you if your surprise at my name is to be believed.”

“If Captain Kirk withholds information, it is typically for good reason. When it proves necessary, he discloses information to the proper people.” Jim’s eyes flashed to him at that, as if he understood the possible non-Starfleet things Spock could be referring to. Still, it was not the time for that. “If we were to give you the torpedoes, would you return the Captain and the other crewmembers unharmed?”

“Spock don’t do it he’s playing you! Get the ship out of—Ah!” Jim’s plead was interrupted by a shout of pain as Khan twisted his arm further.

“What mostly unharmed suffice?? The damage shouldn’t be permanent.” Khan smiled again but dropped it at Spock’s clear lack of amusement. “How about this?” He shifted back towards the captain’s chair, half dragging Jim with him by the arm still behind his back, and hit a few buttons on a console in the arm of the Captain’s chair. Alarms began going off on the Enterprise bridge. “You give me the torpedoes, or I destroy your ship.”

It was important that Spock remain calm. “If you destroy the ship, you will be unable to collect the torpedoes.”

Khan’s smile grew wider. “Not if I aim correctly.”

“Spock get out of here!” Jim’s voice sounded desperate. “Protect the damn crew!”

“Quiet!” Khan shifted his grip on the phaser enough to hit Jim on the back of the head hard enough to make him go concerningly limp, possibly only upright due to Khan’s continued grip on his arm. Satisfied, he looked back to Spock. “The decision is yours, although your Captain seems quite inclined to endanger his life.”

Spock knew several individuals, including himself and Dr. McCoy, who would be inclined to agree with that, but it was not the time. “Give me a moment to discuss the particulars of the transport with the crew.”

“Talk quickly.” Khan smiled at him and Spock turned back and signaled for the transmission to be cut, which Nyota nodded at and complied to.

As soon as Khan was off screen, Spock gave the order. “Mr. Sulu, engage warp engines and take us into Federation Space.”

Sulu turned around, surprised. “But the Captain—”

“Has given us his orders and will likely find a way out of this situation, as he has a talent for.” It was illogical to hope, and yet… “It will be irrelevant if Khan has destroyed the ship. Engage warp engines.”

“Aye sir.” Sulu turned around and within moments they were moving.
With one crisis dealt with, Spock had to face Khan’s desire for the torpedoes. “Bridge to Lieutenant Torres.”

“If you’re going to ask me to sustain this warp level beyond maybe 15 minutes, I already told you no. Commander.”

“I understand. However, I have a different task. Do you believe that you or a team of engineers could rig torpedoes to have a delayed explosion, ideally multiple minutes?”

When she spoke, there seemed to be amusement instead of the prior irritation. “I’ll see what I can do, Commander.”

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Jim came to fully when Khan dropped him on the deck of the still-unfamiliar bridge of the whatever this ship was called. A quick glance toward the viewscreen showed that the Enterprise was gone, both from the call and this section of space apparently. That was good.

Not good was what he saw when he turned his head next, which was Khan pointing a phaser that was still definitely not on stun at him. “Tell me why I shouldn’t kill you right now.”

Yeah, not good. Jim’s head was feeling sluggish from the hit and his arm was sore, so he definitely could not take Khan in a fight. “My crew will be a lot less willing to listen to you if you kill me.”

“They were hardly willing to listen to me with you alive.” Khan glanced back at Dr. Wallace and Scotty. “Although you have a point. Perhaps I should start by killing someone less valuable…”

“No!” Jim’s shout drew Khan’s attention back to him. “Why does it matter anyways, if the ship and the torpedoes are gone?”

“Another good point. Perhaps you are worth keeping…” Despite his words, a moment later Khan’s eyes hardened and he pulled the trigger on his phaser.

Jim braced for the blast, but it didn’t come. Had Khan missed his target?

A groan from behind him revealed that he wasn’t Khan’s true target. Jim looked over in time to see one of Marcus’ men who had begun to stir go still.

“Now, back to your ship. I believe it is time we caught up with them.” Khan holstered his phaser, evidently confident that no one on the bridge was in any position to attack him.

“You can’t possibly believe anyone here would help you fly this thing to endanger our own crew.” Jim felt a little off as he pushed himself onto his hands, but he still heard Dr. Wallace and Scotty agreeing from the back of the bridge.

“Oh, I don’t.” He hit a few buttons on the console of the captain’s chair before turning back to Jim. “You see, this ship was meant to be run by minimal crew, as I’m sure you’ve noticed. That means it can even be run by a solitary individual. So I don’t need any of you.” Jim felt the blood drain from his face as Khan turned toward the front of the bridge. “Computer, track the Enterprise and calculate its trajectory. Once that is established, follow at maximum warp.”

The computer voice Jim was starting to hate (was it really different than his own ship’s or was he imagining it?) responded. “Calculating. Course laid in. Engaging engines.”

The world around them jumped to warp and Jim felt a momentary thread of panic, only augmented
when Khan spoke. “It shouldn’t be hard to catch your ship. With the current status of her warp engines, we’ll be ready to catch her in no time at all.”

Shit.

Chapter End Notes

On a lighter note, I almost called this chapter the Khanfrontation (Part 1) because I love puns. But it didn't quite seem to fit the mood...

Anyways, anyone else audibly swearing during last night's discovery?
Chapter 149

Chapter Notes

One month shy of two and a half years in and we're finally hitting the really intense stuff! I never thought it would take this long, but the story does what it wants sometimes.

General disclaimer for the science here that I did minimal research, but should be mostly plausible. But hey, it's called science fiction for a reason, right?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was not long before Lieutenant Torres’ predictions proved true. Even Spock found himself holding on to prevent falling out of his seat as the ship fell (drop was far too graceful a word) out of warp.

Spock glanced out the viewscreen; they appeared to be in a dense nebula of some sort. “What are our current coordinates?”

Lieutenant Sulu and Ensign Chekov conferred over their consoles before they turned around and Chekov spoke. “Uncertain, sir. We are within Federation space, but because of the abrupt nature of our drop from warp the exact coordinates are unknown.”

Immediately prior to their drop from warp, Lieutenant Torres had confirmed that they had successfully developed a strategy to activate the torpedoes on a delay. It would depend on Khan opening at least one torpedo, but it was likely he would open at least one to check their contents, perhaps more as at this point the cryotubes had all been safely removed and he would find them all empty.

It was uncertain if the torpedo plan would be necessary given current circumstances, but if Khan did find them in this nebula it was possible that the explosion on his ship could react with the gaseous content of the nebula and endanger them as well.

Spock stood from the captain’s chair and proceeded to the science station, where the officer on duty stepped aside to let him view the scanner. They had already been scanning the nebula’s contents and attempting to ascertain its size, likely reaching the same conclusions as Spock if they had overheard the plan to detonate the torpedoes.

The danger of the nebula feeding and expanding the explosion was negligible, but present; the nebula had high concentrations of hydrogen gas and trace amounts of oxygen in concentrated pockets which could possibly allow combustion if ignited by the explosion, but the greater danger was likely from the shockwave from the explosion causing nebular debris to hit the ship at great speeds, which could cause damage or even hull breaches if they were not able to restore sufficient power to the ship’s shields.

At their distance within the nebula, it would be unlikely for them to be able to escape the shockwave on impulse power alone.

Still, all of that was dependent on Khan finding and confronting them. It was entirely possible that he would be unable to peruse or locate them and they would be able to stay hidden in the nebula to
make repairs as Jim had initially advised.

Jim. How would he and the others get free from Khan and find them? Despite Khan’s threats, Spock believed that Jim lived still. As they were soulmates, Spock would cease to age had Jim been killed. He would likely notice that change, although he hadn’t noticed the restarting of his aging process. However, on that day he was distracted by the destruction of his planet and the belief that his mother had perished. There was no sufficiently strong stimuli to distract Spock now.

There was muffled swearing from elsewhere on the bridge, then a shout. “Commander!” Spock straightened from the science station and turned toward the voice. “There’s an incoming ship, and I think it’s Khan’s.”

If Jim were here, he would likely attribute that to “bad luck,” and while Spock believed in logic over superstition, there increasingly seemed to be merit to Jim’s idea. “Put it onscreen.”

The ship that had previously confronted them appeared. Nyota spoke next. “They’re hailing us.”

“Onscreen.” Spock returned to the captain’s chair.

Khan once more filled the viewscreen. “You fled.”

“You had weapons targeted on us and seemed to intend to fire before we could turn over the torpedoes, which we do intend to do.” Spock paused. “Did you kill the Captain?”

“No.” There was a shout offscreen as he hauled up Jim by the collar of his uniform shirt; he appeared injured and in pain but still alive. “Your captain lives, and I will return him to you when you give me the torpedoes.”

“We do not currently have the transporter power to send over the torpedoes en masse. We would need to transport them in smaller sections.” It was true, and that would also allow them more time to assess and possibly repair the damage to the engines. “Would you return our crewmembers back to us?”

Khan sighed, looking annoyed, and dropped Jim, who fell out of view with another noise of pain. “We don’t need to rely on your ship for this exchange. My transporters are fully functional; I will transport the torpedoes and you will only need to concern yourself with recovering your crew members.”

That would not allow as much time, but with Mr. Scott back onboard the Enterprise it was possible that repairs would progress more quickly or that an…unorthodox yet effective solution would be found. “That is acceptable.” It would be best to have them return closest to Engineering. “Have transporter room three prepare to lock onto the signals of the Captain, Dr. Wallace, and Mr. Scott. Instruct Dr. McCoy to stand by for emergency medical treatment.”

“I’m glad you’re agreeing to cooperate.” Khan smiled in a way likely intended to be charming, but it did not compare to the Captain’s similar expression. “However, you should know that I will not hesitate to destroy you if I discover that the torpedoes have been tampered with.”

“They are your torpedoes. You may inspect them upon arrival.” Their plan depended on Khan performing such an action, but Spock could not reveal that.

Khan’s eyes narrowed nonetheless. “I shall.” He returned to the captain’s chair and hit a few buttons. “Lower your shields and we will begin the exchange.”

Spock cautiously waited for Khan to lower his own first, then lowered the Enterprise’s own shields.
“Sir, we have them!”

Jim looked up in the familiar environment of transporter room three. They were back on the *Enterprise*, but something told him they weren’t out of danger. He half shoved Scotty. “We need to get to Engineering.”

“Aye.” Scotty nodded worriedly and the two of them half ran towards the section of Engineering closest to the warp core; thankfully they were already on the right deck.

A frustrated looking Lieutenant Torres was already there, desperately running through diagnostics.

“Elena!” She looked up as Scotty shouted out. “What the hell is wrong with my ship?”

“The damn core’s misaligned! No idea how it happened unless someone messed with it back at spacedock.” She shoved a dark curl that had escaped her ponytail back behind her ear. “But we need a quick fix; those damn torpedoes are rigged to explode just after that bastard opens them, and if my scans of outside are right that means we could go down too unless we get this damn thing online somehow. But we can’t send someone in to align it without shutting down the system and letting the radiation drain, but we don’t have time for that!” She slammed a hand on the panel in front of her.

“It’s alright lass, we just need to think quick.” Scotty stepped up next to her.

Jim knew enough about engineering to know that there was only one quick fix for a misaligned warp core. “Lieutenant Torres, go prepare to reset the system. Tell the bridge to prepare to raise shields and that Mr. Sulu should be ready to punch it as soon as warp comes online.”

She looked confused. “But sir—”

“That’s an order, now go!” She reluctantly nodded and took off.

“Jim…” Scotty looked wary; he must have figured it out.

“There’s no time to debate this, Scotty.” When he looked like he was about to protest, Jim knew what he had to do. “I’m sorry about this.” Jim swung at him, glad he’d learned early on in barfights how to drop someone with one hit. He buckled Scotty into a chair and turned to open the first door.

Chapter End Notes

Are you ready for next week?
Hello everyone! There were an astounding 22 comments last chapter, which is a new record and made me do a little happy dance/squeal combo that would probably be embarrassing if I had any real sense of shame left. But seriously, all the response to this fic gives me life and you're all incredible!

This chapter is a little different stylistically, but I hope you like it...

Spock turned off the comm after getting confirmation of the Captain, Dr. Wallace, and Mr. Scott’s safe return. He looked back at Khan. “Is the transfer complete?”

Khan checked something on the console next to the captain’s chair. “Yes. I have the torpedoes.” He looked back up to Spock. “There is one more thing.” He hit a few more buttons on the console. “A surprise for you.”

Spock did not trust that; the next moment alarms went off and there was a bridge officer shouting. “Sir, he’s transported something aboard!”

Nyota spoke next. “The brig is reporting that people in unknown uniforms have suddenly appeared in all cells.”

Spock looked back to Khan. “What have you done?”

“Nothing too harmful, I assure you.” Khan smiled. “I simply won’t be needing the Admiral’s men aboard my ship now that I have a far superior crew. I considered keeping them around, but I didn’t want to deal with the annoyance of them attempting to mutiny if they discovered what I did to the Admiral.” He paused a moment. “Admiral Marcus is likely among them somewhere, not that he’s much good to anyone at this point. If he was ever good for anything, that is.”

“Did you kill the Admiral?” Spock would likely get the full report when the Captain returned to the bridge, but that seemed the logical conclusion of what Khan had said.

“It’s poor policy to let powerful enemies live.” Khan spoke with alarming nonchalance that conveyed total conviction. “Now, I am going to ensure that you have not tampered with my torpedoes. If you have, I believe we both understand the consequences.” He stood from the captain’s chair and paused. “I would instruct you to remain where you are and not attempt to flee, but I believe we both know that’s unnecessary.” He smirked. “You will hear from me soon.” He ended the transmission.

They did not have much time. Assuming the other ship’s turbolifts were at least as efficient as the Enterprise’s and factoring in the larger size of the other ship, it would likely only take Khan minutes to travel between the bridge and the weapons bay, and given his seeming knowledge of the torpedoes it would not take him long to open one. The delay between opening the torpedoes and their detonation was short according to Lieutenant Torres, and the detonation of the first torpedo would create a chain reaction with the others.
Spock looked up at Nyota’s voice. “Lieutenant Torres has orders from the Captain; he went to Engineering with Scotty.”

That would explain why he had not reached the bridge, although it was likely that he should have been seeking medical care. Spock nodded for her to patch it through to the captain’s chair. “What are our orders, Lieutenant Torres? What did the Captain say?”

“I’m resetting the warp core.” There was some sound on the other end, likely her performing the necessary steps. “Captain Kirk said to prepare shields and warp engines and activate both as soon as they come online.”

That would save them, but it seemed an improbably fast repair to a warp core problem that had been troubling Engineering all mission. “Did they find a solution?”

There was a noise of frustration on the other end. “I didn’t get the details, but if it keeps us safe when those torpedoes blow I’m doing it!”

There was logic to that argument. “Acknowledged, Lieutenant Torres. Spock out.” He shut down the comm line and looked around the bridge. They had likely all heard, but he repeated the orders regardless. “Prepare shields and warp drive. Engage when possible.”

-----

Khan smiled as he exited the bridge. Regardless of what was in the torpedoes, he didn’t plan to let the Enterprise and her crew live. They knew too much. Still, it would be best to check the torpedoes before destroying the Enterprise in case he needed to retrieve anything from that other ship. It was too bad he hadn’t seen more of her; perhaps some of the other crew would have been worth retrieving…

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Jim grimaced as he made his way through the containment chambers. There weren’t many between the outside and the warp core’s reactor, but they were designed to prevent people from the very exposure he was getting now. As he passed from the outermost to the next, he could almost feel the radiation levels increasing, and he made sure to close the door behind him. He didn’t want to endanger anyone else; the whole point of this was to save the crew.

-----

Khan strode out of the turbolift, already on the proper deck for the weapons bay. He had to admit, all this advanced technology was so much more efficient than what he was used to. He couldn’t wait to see the sort of damage this ship’s weapons would do to the Enterprise; they were probably even still close enough to the Klingon border that Marcus’ war would happen after all. That was good; it would give him and his fellow Augments cover to conquer new worlds. Khan couldn’t wait.

-----

Jim reached the final chamber and sealed the door behind him; he could definitely feel the radiation now, or maybe it was in his head. He felt kinda dizzy and tired, but that could have been left over from Khan knocking him out. But he had to save the Enterprise and prevent Khan from starting a war. Part of him wanted to stop and rest, but Jim knew this couldn’t wait. He started climbing the reactor.

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Khan surveyed the torpedoes in the weapons bay. It would be easy enough to open them since he’d been the one to design them. He approached the nearest one and got to work.

-----

Jim knew this wouldn’t be easy as soon as he saw how misaligned the reactor was. Why couldn’t it have been something simple like replacing the dilithium or something? He climbed up and prepared to work.

-----

The torpedo opened and Khan felt confusion set in only to be quickly replaced by fury. Who had they taken? He moved on to the next torpedo and repeated the process.

-----

Jim swung his whole bodyweight into the misaligned portion of the reactor, willing it to budge. It gave a little, starting to correct itself some. He just had to keep this up…

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Another torpedo, another missing cryotube. What had they done with them? Khan muttered curses and checked another. They’d pay for this…

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Another swing-kick, another few inches. Jim swore under his breath and did it again. He had to save them…

-----

Khan had seen enough. The torpedoes were empty, and he needed to get his cryotubes and his revenge. They would know better than to cross him. As he was about to leave, a beeping noise drew his attention and he went back to investigate.

-----

Another kick and Jim finally seemed to have moved it enough. It was aligned, and his crew could finally get to safety. He may have failed them as a captain by getting them into this mess, but at least he’d done some good for them and maybe they’d remember him well. There was a humming noise and Jim hoped it was a good sign.

-----

The torpedoes were set to explode. Khan knew he wouldn’t have time to get clear or even to prepare a strike against the Enterprise as he died. After all of this he was still bested and would have to surrender to death.

-----

The reactor flared to life and Jim was thrown backwards. He didn’t feel great. On top of his head, his stomach was starting to feel sick and he just wanted to close his eyes… He hoped he’d get to where it was safe to retrieve him before the exhaustion or worse won out…

-----
“Sir, warp core is back online!”

“Engage shields and engines. Clear the nebula.” Spock watched as the viewscreen shifted from the colorful inside of the nebula to the familiar darkness of open space. He was unsure if they could trust the sudden warp core repairs. “Drop out of warp.” Sulu seemed slightly confused, but complied. Spock turned to the science station. “What do the sensor readings report about the other ship?”

There was tense silence a moment while the officer looked into the viewer that displayed the readouts. They finally turned around, visibly relieved. “There’s only debris where the other ship was, and the nebula shows disturbance consistent with what the explosion would create.”

There was a tangible release of tension on the bridge. However, some tension returned when the comm on the captain’s chair activated. “Scott to Commander Spock.”

Everyone turned to watch him. Spock carefully hit the button to respond. “Spock here. Congratulations on restoring the warp engines.”

“I—” There was a pause. “It wasn’t me, not really sir. I—” Another pause, and there was something foreboding yet unreadable in his voice when he spoke next. “You better get down here sir.”

Chapter End Notes

I know what you're all expecting for next chapter, but I have an extra thing planned that might make it worse...

So the end of Disco had me running across the apartment to scream at my (unsympathetic) non-trekkie roommate, who made me wish I knew more trekkies irl. So, as trekkies I know, scream with me one last time (til next season).
Chapter 151

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Happy day after Valentines or day after Ash Wednesday depending on what you feel like celebrating. Or happy Thursday if this update is all you're celebrating, but it may not be happy for long...

Anyways, I know I said two chapters ago was the comment record, but last chapter just broke that. So whether you want to cry this chapter or if you're dreading a certain something, remember that I think all of you are awesome and hope you enjoy this chapter! I said on Monday that today would be worse, so here goes...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim thought about being with Spock a lot, even when he probably shouldn’t have. He thought about the highs, the lows, all of it. Days on the bridge, nights in their quarters, shore leave… All the extraordinary and ordinary moments, and what he’d consider his favorite parts of everything.

The best might be the days when Spock would come in late from the science labs or wherever he’d been working a shift without Jim and he’d try very hard to be quiet so he wouldn’t wake him up. Typically he would succeed, but some nights either his damn near perfect Vulcan reflexes would fail him or Jim’s own tendency to be a light sleeper would prevail and he’d crack his eyes open to see Spock carefully creeping around his—their quarters and try not to smile at the care he was showing, and just for Jim.

God, Jim would remember the days when he thought he’d never find this. How sure, he’d have friends and family who cared for him, and of course the knowledge that he cared for himself, but how it still felt like there was something missing. How it would feel like his lips needed to be kissed or how he just wanted some arms around him or legs tangled with his in bed; not even in a sexual way but just wanting to be held and cared for. He’d had people he could go to for that sort of thing, sure. He could find someone to have sex with easily enough, and he’d rarely turn down cuddling if his partner for the night was interested. But still, all the sex in the world couldn’t undo the longing he felt deep in his chest, like a physical ache.

He’d get so caught up in his thoughts that he wouldn’t notice that Spock had finished getting ready for bed until there were arms sliding around him, legs tangling with his, and lips briefly and gently pressing against his before parting just slightly, just enough for a forehead with smooth bangs that tickled his skin a little to press against his.

Spock would always be quiet a bit before speaking, and always in a whisper to avoid disturbing the intimacy of the moment. “You are distressed.” Just an observation; not a judgement or an attempt to pry, but an acknowledgement and an invitation to say more if he wanted. Jim would be pretty sure he loved that about Spock.

“You reading my mind?” Jim would still be half asleep, but he’d run his lower leg along Spock’s to let him know it was teasing, not an accusation.

“At this proximity and with this level of physical contact, it is difficult to not sense your emotions, particularly when they are strong.” Spock’s hands would run gently up and down his back and Jim would lean slightly more towards him, shifting until there was probably only a hand’s distance
between their bodies.

Jim would sigh contentedly before responding, his own arms starting to reach out for Spock instead of holding himself. “I’m fine now. I was just thinking back to before we got together. I can’t believe I almost let all of this slip away because I was afraid to do anything.”

Spock’s hands would stop their motion and their grip on him would tighten slightly, as if trying to hold him there and reassure both of them that it was real. “I do not often reflect on the events that led to the beginning of our relationship. Those were... challenging times.”

Jim would smile and nuzzle closer to Spock till all distance between them was gone and he could tuck his head a little under Spock’s. Like this, their hearts almost aligned. “I know. But it all worked out in the end. We have each other, we’ve got a kickass crew, and we’re both alright. Not perfect at all times, it who’d want that anyways?”

He’d get that tickle of warmth in the back of his head that’d mean he’d amused Spock, which would only make him smile more. Jim would be tempted to look up at Spock, but he’d be too comfortable against Spock’s chest to move away.

“See? We’re both good where we are.” And on some nights this sort of snuggling would lead to other things, especially since they wouldn’t tend to wear much to bed anyways (their quarters would be a little above human normal and they would always sleep under the covers, which Jim would use as a justification to strip down to his boxer briefs each night. It would still be a little cold for Spock, but Jim would remind him that skin to skin contact was one of the best ways to share body heat, and Spock would deem that a surprisingly logical argument, which Jim would count as a win).

But this night would not be one of those nights. They would both be too tired. “Indeed, t’hy’la. Rest; sleep will do us both good.”

Jim would mumble some sort of agreement into his skin, comfortable and already almost asleep again. He’d feel Spock’s breathing start to even out as well, and they’d drift off together surrounded by tranquility and contentness.

But that, Jim’s fantasies of an ideal life, would never happen now. He groaned; he felt weak and his legs didn’t want to carry him anymore. He pulled himself forward to the door of the outermost chamber and hit the button to close the door between chambers behind him.

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Spock stilled before the transparent aluminum. On the other side was Captain Kirk—Jim. He appeared extremely negatively impacted by the radiation poisoning that he was no doubt suffering, and yet his eyes were still so bright. Perhaps there was still a chance...

Spock turned to Commander Scott. “Open it.”

There was clear regret on Scott’s face. “The decontamination’s not yet complete. You’d flood the whole compartment. The door’s locked, sir.”

“Spock.” Jim seemed to have noticed his presence; he shifted against the door, perhaps attempting to sit up.

Spock moved to the door, as close as he could possibly get. He fell to the floor to be equal to Jim.

“How’s our ship?” Jim’s breathing was beginning to grow ragged.
“Out of danger.” Spock paused, knowing what his captain was truly concerned about. “You saved the crew.”

Jim smiled; it was a peaceful expression. “I’m glad.” His expression shifted minutely; the smile was there but something in his eyes was more rueful. “I told you we’d get the chance to talk.”

While he typically appreciated the Captain’s humor (although he did not let it show, even if it felt like Jim still knew), that was not what Spock experienced now. “This is not what I imagined.”

“Not quite what I imagined either.” Jim paused to take a breath; the sound was rough. He looked up at Spock. “Do you understand why I went back for you when you were in the volcano?”

That felt long, long ago. But Spock understood why. “Because we are soulmates.” Jim seemed to smile at that, but the moment of understanding seemed to only make Spock’s pain sharper until he could not suppress it and he felt a tear fall from his eye. If this was the pain of losing your soulmate, Spock could understand why Jim had gone to such great lengths to save him.

Spock found himself wishing the glass were not between them. If he could only touch Jim, perhaps he could preserve some part of him…

As if once more Jim could somehow sense his thoughts, he raised his hand to the glass, first pressing it against it, but then slowly shaping it into the ta’al.

But this could not be goodbye, not so soon after they’d finally…

Spock could neither live nor prosper without Jim. They belonged at each other’s sides. He held up his hand to mirror Jim’s, not intended as a goodbye but as a beginning; he wished to show Jim the full expression of intimacy between Vulcans, then maybe pull him closer and let Jim show him how humans did the same…

But their touch was blocked by the glass. Still, Jim seemed calmed by the almost contact; his expression took on a certain peace that was at odds with the roiling emotions Spock was struggling and failing to contain.

Jim’s hand went limp, and then slid down the glass. His eyes lost their spark.

Deep inside himself, Spock felt something stop.

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: the last line of this chapter was one of the first lines I thought of in this entire fic. The first scene of this chapter was a far more recent thing, and I was struggling to figure out where it’d fit with the weird tense it wanted to be written in. But then I got the idea you see here, and the rest, as they say, is history…
Chapter 152

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! First off, you're spoiling me with all of the response lately. Seriously, you're all the best, even when I'm apparently making all of you cry (which is its own form of high praise in a way).

Slightly spoilery warning in the end note.

The initial numbness wore off quickly and Spock let out a loud roar of grief, feeling it morph to rage at the one who had taken his other half from him. This feeling was strong and overwhelming; it was very sort of all-consuming emotion Surak had sought to tame. It was the sort of thing out of the old pre-Reform Vulcan stories his mother had found and read to him as a child. This was—

This was—

This was not just the loss of a soulmate. This was the loss of a t’hy’la.

The knowledge almost served to cleave Spock in two once more. There was a new emptiness in him that seemed like it could only be filled by the restoration of his lost love or the blood of the one who had taken him from Spock, although both seemed equally impossible at this point. Still, Spock knew the direction his rage was guiding him.

Khan was smart. If there was the slightest chance he had survived that explosion, Spock would ensure that this would still be his last day. He looked away from Jim’s unnatural stillness, not caring who he was giving orders to. “Prepare a shuttle. I will be going into the wreckage of the other ship.”

He stiffly stood, legs not wanting to move from where he’d fallen on the ground, but he could not concentrate on that. He needed weapons. And not energy weapons; something more personal; something that would make his enemy bleed…

He stood without looking back. He was unsure if the sight of his fallen t’hy’la would weaken his resolve or cement it, and he was unsure which possibility he preferred. He did not look back.

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Nyota hadn’t left the bridge yet, but the rumors were starting to filter up the decks of the ship one by one. She could tap into the ship’s comm chatter easily enough, and it seemed like Spock’s continued absence from the bridge was another sign. But still, if it was true, she needed confirmation.

So she went to the one place she knew she could get it. It was odd getting up from the bridge during what might have been the middle of a shift still (but god knows time didn’t seem to matter when they were in emergencies like this), but she needed to know.

Which was how Nyota found herself outside the door in Sickbay marked Leonard McCoy, MD, Chief Medical Officer. It was closed, but still opened when she tried it.

Len was behind his desk, a tumbler full of something brown and probably strong in his hand. Nyota knew many words in many languages that could have described him at that moment, but the only
thing that came to mind was less than eloquent but still accurate: he looked like shit. “So it’s true then.”

He glanced up at her with red eyes before looking back at the tumbler in his hands and swirling it around some. He didn’t have to ask what she was talking about. “We’re still waiting on the decontamination to finish so we can get him out, but...” he sniffed and roughly rubbed at an eye with the back of his hand. “Yeah.” His focus stayed on his drink. “They’re going to beam him here as soon as they can, but with how long he was in the warp core and the reports we’ve got...”

Nyota half-sat, half-fell into the seat across from him. She wasn’t sure if she should offer him a hug or ask for a drink. Maybe both. Still, one other thing was on her mind. “And Spock?”

He snorted. “Prowling the ship, terrifying the ensigns, and looking for weapons apparently. He won’t let us leave, even though we might have better chances with better facilities than what I’ve got here. He wants to go after Khan.”

“There’s nothing to go after.” Nyota ran a hand down her face and back over her neck. “He’s compromised. We need someone else to take over.”

“Yeah.” Len looked up at her, too broken to be fully bitter. “How and who? He won’t admit it, and I could recommend it but we’d need the acting first officer to go along with it. And who’s that? Scotty’s next by rank, but he technically resigned his post even if he’s back. I’m medical, so I get to skip all of that mess. Dunno who wins out between you or Sulu; you’re both senior bridge officers. He does have the command training though.” He laughed; it was concerningly unbalanced and hollow sounding. “We’re all gonna die in this damn tin can because of that damn Vulcan.”

Before Nyota could respond, the comm on Len’s desk went off. “Sir, he’s—he’s ready for transport.”

It was amazing how quickly the mask of professionalism dropped into place. In a moment, he had the sort of controlled, even seriousness she was used to seeing in sickbay emergencies. “Transport him to Biobed A. McCoy out.”

The idea of actually seeing—Nyota didn’t want to think about it. But she still felt herself being pulled along after Len as he rushed out the door and stood expectantly by the biobed closest to his office.

She lingered in the doorway, watching as Jim—the body materialized. He was pale, almost grayish, and unnervingly still. He was never still like that; he always seemed to be moving. Nyota looked away as Leonard reached out slowly, shakily and closed his eyes; it felt like she was intruding. She knew there was probably noise in Sickbay, but it felt like she couldn’t hear any of it.

Until there was one quiet blip that had Len gasping. “There’s still some brain activity.” Suddenly there was a flurry of movement and sound. He was calling for a cryotube, as if there was some chance they could save Jim. But he was already dead, it was too late; you couldn’t just bring back someone who was—

A half-remembered fragment of a story she’d heard from Spock came back to her. Something about his sister; there was an attack when she was a child...

Before she even realized what she was doing, Nyota was turning back into the office and slamming her hand on the computer console, hoping she hit the right button but unable to summon enough focus. “Computer, locate Commander Spock.”

“Commander Spock is in the shuttle bay.” The computer’s voice was calm as always, and it had
barely finished before Nyota was out the door. She had to get to him in time.

She didn’t even think about what it must have looked like as she ran through the corridors and slid down Jefferies Tubes when the turbolifts were taking too long to arrive. She just had to get there.

She arrived as he was in a shuttle, doing pre-flight checks with a bag containing god knows what next to him. “Spock! You can’t go down there. You have to save Jim.”

He barely looked over his shoulder in acknowledgement. “It is too late.”

“It’s not!” She paused, catching her breath as the exhaustion of everything started to gain on her. “Remember what you told me about Michael? You could save Jim! You have to try.”

He finally paused his actions. “I am not fully Vulcan. I could not.”

If someone had told her before she joined Starfleet that she’d one day have to convince her ex-boyfriend to do something that sounded like magic to save his maybe-(probably)-soulmate, Nyota wouldn’t have known how to respond. And yet… “Something tells me it will work. And isn’t it logical to devote your energy to something likely to yield results rather than something unlikely to, like looking for a survivor in a ship that we know got blown to hell?”

The almost-feral edge was slowly leaving his features. When he spoke again, his voice was soft, almost scared, instead of harsh like it had been before. “And if I am unsuccessful?”

Nyota carefully stepped forward and slowly raised her hand to put it on Spock’s back, making sure that he had time to move away if he didn’t want it. When he didn’t move away, she carefully rubbed a soothing circle on his back. “Then McCoy will finish putting him in a cryotube and we’ll take him to Starfleet Medical. We’ll do it one step at a time, and if we can’t do it we’ll deal with it then. But for now, we have to try.”

Spock still didn’t seem fully in control of himself, but he nodded and followed her back to Sickbay anyway.

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Spock was grateful that Dr. McCoy had agreed to give him the room alone with Jim. He was unsure how to proceed, and he believed that being watched would only make this more difficult.

He had never had this process fully explained to him. He knew from Michael that Sarek had saved her using a fragment of his katra, but he had never spoken to his father on the matter so he was unsure how to proceed. Still, he would give his entire katra if it meant that Jim would live.

McCoy had said that some fading brainwaves remained. That seemed a logical place to begin. Spock initiated a meld with both hands and concentrated, trying to find that one dying ember among the darkness…

There.

A small golden spark. It was beautiful, but it was fading. Spock needed to preserve it. He drew on himself and imagined wrapping around it, protecting it. And then slowly giving it fuel to spread, and catch, infinitesimal amounts initially so as to not overwhelm it, but then progressively more until—

It found its own resources and burst into a brilliant bonfire. It offered infinite warmth but did not burn Spock, yet still he felt himself drawing back for fear of being consumed.
He was no longer in whatever space he—they?—had occupied. He stared down at Jim’s face, shifting his hands to cup his cheeks rather than enter his mind. He waited for a sign of success or failure.

For just one moment, those beautiful blue eyes opened, and Jim’s lips formed something that might have been Spock’s name. Then they closed once more.

Chapter End Notes

Waring: this chapter draws on stuff that was background revealed in Discovery. So slight spoiler warning for that I guess.

I almost split this up after Uhura’s part ended, but I felt like that might be too cruel. Was it better this way?
Happy second to last update in February everyone! Or the penultimate one if you're feeling fancy; there's your vocab lesson of the night. Anyways, this continues to get an amazing, mind-blowing amount of support. It's got like 10x as much response as my next most popular thing on here (an old SPN fic from back when I did that) so let me say again that you're all amazing!

I think you'll like this chapter...

Things were fuzzy after the warp core. He remembered talking to Spock, then it all went dark, then one clear moment of Spock; he remembered Spock’s hands on his face and openly concerned eyes staring into his.

But then it was darkness again. It felt like there had been moments of awareness; snippets of Bones’ voice, long fingers tenderly passing over his own, and other familiar things that felt present but just out of reach.

But now that changed. Jim cracked open his eyes. He was in an unfamiliar bed in a clean white room with abundant sunlight streaming in. By his bedside was none other than Pike, who looked like he was dozing off slightly where he was sitting.

Naturally, Jim was a bit startled. He must have made some noise, because the next moment Pike was sitting up with a start. He smiled when he saw Jim awake.

Over the course of his life, Jim had heard a lot of different ideas for what happened after people died. A bright room with someone who you loved who’d died sounded like an afterlife if he’d ever heard it. “Am I dead?”

“No.” Pike’s expression shifted from his initial confusion to something a little more humorous. “And before you ask, neither am I.”

Jim didn’t even know what to say for a moment. “But I saw—”

“I was hit, and it was bad.” Pike held up his hands placatingly. “But the medical team did good work.”

“You didn’t have a pulse!” Jim wanted to believe, he really did, but he’d seen to many illusions and other false promises to not be skeptical.

Pike sighed. “Jim, where do you check for someone’s pulse?”

It sortof felt like he was getting lectured. If this was fake, they’d done an excellent job with Pike’s exasperated expression. “On their neck?”

Pike nodded, then gestured for him to continue. “Where on the neck? Show me on yourself.”
“Sure. It’s right…” Jim hesitated, running two fingers along the middle section of his neck, starting at one side and poking his fingers across. His neck was warm, but… “Maybe…” Was it under the jaw? He shifted his fingers up and kept moving and pressing, but nothing definite. He looked back at Pike, smiling nervously. “Are you sure I’m alive?”

“Positive.” Pike watched him poking at his neck for a moment before gesturing for him to stop. “The first responders said they saw you crouching over me, frantically grabbing at my neck and visibly distraught. Apparently they almost considered sedating you.”

Jim crossed his arms and looked away. “It was distressing circumstances.”

He heard a little noise and then Pike’s hand was on Jim’s arm and squeezing gently, reassuringly. “It’s ok, son. I’m here.” When Jim looked up, his expression was warm.

Jim uncrossed his arms and wiped at his eyes. “Why didn’t anyone tell me?”

Pike sighed again. “Since Number One is the contact person for me, she was called in and was up all night waiting to hear if they brought me back from the brink. When I finally came to and talked to her, I told her to get some rest because she looked terrible. She did, and once she was up again she thought to contact you. Problem was that the Enterprise had already left and there was a communication blackout on Marcus’ orders; we couldn’t get through if we tried.” His eyes turned serious. “And we did try.”

“Damn.” The thought of Marcus had Jim frantically turning back to Pike. “Admiral Marcus, he—”

“Hey, it’s ok.” Pike’s voice was calm and he put a soothing hand on Jim’s shoulder. “You’ve been out for a while; your crew has already told the Admiralty everything, or as much as they can. You’ll probably be pulled in once you’re well enough, but for now recovering is more important.”

Jim felt himself relaxing some; his head plopped back on the pillow. “I still can’t believe all this.” He gestured around. “You, me…” He gestured around the room. “All of it.”

“You really thought this was an afterlife for a second there?” When Jim turned his head toward Pike and nodded sheepishly, he smiled. “You didn’t think I’d get my legs back on the other side?”

Jim looked down at Pike’s legs; he’d just sort of assumed he was in a regular chair like hospitals (was this Starfleet Medical? It would make sense) often had, but it looked like he was still in his wheelchair. Jim looked back at him and shrugged. “I was caught on the “you” thing; the details didn’t seem as relevant.”

Before Pike could respond, there was the clattering sound of something hitting the floor that had both of them looking to the doorway.

Bones was there, already stooping to pick up the padd he’d dropped and rushing into the room. “How come no one told me he was awake?”

“It just happened.” Pike had shifted his focus to Bones. “We were catching up.”

“So he can hold a conversation? Coherently?” Bones was looking over the information on the biobed’s display above Jim’s head and making notes on the padd. “That’s good; scans didn’t indicate any major brain damage besides the concussion he likely sustained before entering the chamber.” He glanced back at Pike. “So?”

“He’s as coherent as he ever was.” Pike looked far too amused with all of this.
“Hey!” Jim reached out to slap Pike’s arm before looking back at Bones. “I’m right here you know. You can just ask me.”

“Vocal cords are functional.” Bones seemed to be making a note on his padd and then he looked up at Jim. “I’m sure you’ll make me regret that again soon.”

Pike, who looked like he was trying not to laugh, pushed back from Jim’s bed. “I think this is my cue to leave.”

“Aww.” Jim didn’t want Pike to leave so soon. He wanted to at least get to hug him before he left. He started to raise his arms.

Only to get shoved back down by Bones’ hand on his shoulder. “No movement.”

“What? Why?” Jim looked after Pike as he started to turn and back away. “Bye Pike!”

Pike looked back with a smile. “Goodbye Jim. I’ll see you again soon.”

Jim shouted one last bye as Pike left the room before looking back to Bones. “But seriously why?”

Bones paused his checks to give Jim an irritated look. “Do you have any idea how much radiation your cells absorbed?”

The exact calculations about how long he was in there and the radiation in each chamber weren’t something Jim wanted to do, so he just went with his best answer. “A lot?”

There was a grunt of disbelief before Bones dropped the padd to his side. “A large portion of your cells had critical or near-critical levels of radiation exposure or poisoning. You barely even had any brain activity left by the time Spock brought you back. We had to stick you in a cryotube to slow the cellular decay so we could get you to Starfleet Medical where they had the proper facilities to treat that sort of thing; your cells could have become mush. And then you’ve been comatose as your body recovered, so that’s extra time where your muscles weren’t moving. So basically, even though everyone wants hugs, no one gets any until you’ve passed the right physical therapy.”

“Geez.” Jim settled back against the pillows. “Radiation is so much cooler in old movies.” He looked at Bones. “Why couldn’t I just become a super strong rage monster?”

“Your boyfriend already has that covered.” Bones replied without looking up, but then he paused. “Someone should call the hobgoblin. He’s barely left your side; he even tried to use the soulmate thing to make the staff let him stay. Course since you two never officially acknowledged it, they couldn’t let him at first, but lately I think they’ve been letting him stay here out of pity.”

Spock. They really would need to have that conversation now… Jim looked up at Bones expectantly. “When can I see him?”

“Don’t look at me like that.” Bones raised an eyebrow. “Both of you need rest; they can practically only get him to leave when he’s about to drop from exhaustion, so we are not disturbing him or M’Benga will never let me hear the end of it.” He looked up at Jim. “Genuine rest outside of an induced coma would do you good too.”

Before Jim could protest, there was a hypo against his neck and he felt himself slipping under, but it felt more gentle or natural this time. He knew the darkness would be gone soon this time around.

Chapter End Notes
I'd initially been set on killing Pike, but my resolve weakened the closer we got. It was hard to think of a way to fake kill him, but it was easier once I realized I just had to make Jim think he was dead...

I could probably subtitle this fic "fun with the third person limited perspective" at this point tbh. It's generally more fun for me than for all of you though...

Additional fun fact: Jim's inability to find a pulse is based on the fact that I can't do it at all really. So I should never be the one to declare someone dead
The next time Jim woke up, the room was empty except for Spock, who was sitting by his bedside. Jim liked to think that he knew Spock pretty well at this point and had seen Spock in all sorts of states, but he was still thrown off by what he saw. Spock looked horrible. He seemed like he’d barely slept in weeks (was he nodding off in the chair?) and he gave off feelings of nerves and… sadness? Was this all because of Jim? Bones had mentioned Spock being mad when Jim died and staying in the hospital while he recovered, but did Jim almost dying really wreck Spock this much?

“You don’t have to worry, you know.” Spock’s eyes jerked to his as Jim continued. “Bones said I’m gonna live and that there shouldn’t even be any major side effects. And I do trust him as far as doctor stuff goes.”

There was now confusion added to Spock’s expression. Still subtle, but enough for Jim to pick up on. “Excuse me, Captain?”

This was not the kind of conversation Jim wanted to have while lying down. He reached for the controls and maneuvered the biobed until he was partially sitting up; hopefully that didn’t violate Bones’ no movement rule. “You looked worried. You don’t have to be; like I said I should be out of the critical range now.”

Spock nodded. “I am aware of that. And while I am grateful that you appear to be making a full recovery, that is not what I am preoccupied with.”

That threw Jim off a little, but he decided to roll with it. “So if me dying isn’t what you’re worrying about, what’s on your mind?”

“I assure you, your death with never cease to be on my mind.” Spock looked away and if he weren’t Vulcan (or half at least) Jim would bet he would have been fidgeting. Was he still that distressed by the thought of Jim dying? “Perhaps it is inaccurate to say that that is not what preoccupies me, because that is related to it.”

Yeah, this seemed like a serious conversation. If Spock was that worried about him, Jim should give this his full attention. He sat all the way up. “What is it Spock? You’re not usually this evasive. You know that if something’s bothering you you can just tell me, right?”

“I am aware.” Spock’s gaze dropped to his lap before returning to Jim, a new sort of determination there. “Prior to this…incident, when we were at the press conference about our mission, you were asked about your soulmate.”

Oh god. Jim closed his eyes and let his head thump back against the pillows. That felt like forever.
ago. “Yeah, what about it?”

“At the press conference, you avoided answering the questions.” Spock was trying to reach a point, Jim could tell. “However, afterwards you told the senior crewmembers that you were in fact aging.”

Jim cracked open one eye to look at Spock. “Yeah, and what I said was the truth. What’s your point Spock? You’re beating around the bush.” Before Spock could respond Jim held up a hand. “And don’t pretend you don’t get metaphors; I know you do.”

“Very well.” Spock sat up straighter in his chair. “Both at the press conference and when speaking to the crew, you stated that you ‘could not say’ who your soulmate was, not that you did not know.”

Damn Vulcan eidetic memory and attention to detail. They both knew now; why go over it? He closed his eyes again. “And?”

“Did you know who your soulmate was at the time?” Jim could feel Spock’s eyes boring into his face.

“Maybe.” Jim opened his eyes and looked at Spock directly. “Why? What’s with the questions about this now?”

“If you were aware that I was your soulmate, why did you not inform me of your suspicions?” Spock leaned in slightly; he almost seemed agitated now. “Why would you conceal it?”

Jim sighed and looked away from Spock. “There are plenty of reasons a person might not tell their soulmate. They could be unsure if they’re right about who it is, they could be unsure what kind of soulmate the two of them are, they might worry that their soulmate doesn’t feel the same, they might think that’s too much to drop on a person, they might think that it’ll screw up an otherwise good relationship…” He looked back at Spock. “Is that enough or should I go on?”

“What was the reason for you?” Spock’s voice was softer now. “Why did you not inform me?”

“Really?” Jim sighed and looked away again. “A mix of the reasons I said I guess. A lot of uncertainty about how you would respond along with all those other things, plus you and Uhura being a thing. Also the two of us didn’t exactly get the greatest start.”

That made Spock pause. “How long have you known?”

That was not something Jim necessarily intended to come out; not when Spock was being all interrogative. He looked away, down at his hands in his lap. “Well…” May as well be direct. He looked Spock in the eye, but it felt like he was lacking his usual confidence. “I felt something when we first made eye contact. Back during that academic hearing.”

Spock paused. “That was over a year ago. Have you truly known since then?”

“Suspected.” Jim held up a hand to signal for Spock to wait. “It was just a feeling, nothing definite. Plus, like I said, we didn’t exactly get along, and you and Uhura…” Jim shrugged.

Spock didn’t seem fully satisfied, but he nodded. “It is likely that I experienced a similar sensation, but was distracted by the destruction of my planet.” He’d looked away at the mention of…that, but after a moment he looked back to Jim. “Why did you kiss me outside of the transporter room before going to Marcus’ ship?”

“Because…” Because he thought he was going to die and thought he might as well experience it once before he kicked the bucket? Was his reason really that selfish? On some level Jim knew that
there was more to it, but he couldn’t escape his negative thoughts when he looked at how drained Spock looked, and all because of him. Sure, he’d get something nice before the end, but was it leaving Spock worse off to offer him that closeness and then die? Could Jim really be so selfish to leave Spock on the brink of breakdown like that? Maybe it was better if they didn’t do this; god knows Jim was in harm’s way often enough. He didn’t want to do that to Spock, especially if he could be happy elsewhere without Jim constantly on his nerves and stressing him out…

“Are you alright?” He looked up and Spock had concern leaking through; oh god, he was already stressing Spock out…

“I just came back from the dead.” And had he somehow not freaked out about that yet? It felt like something he should freak out about.

“I am aware.” Spock seemed like his control was starting to slip. “It was my katra that restored you and sustained you long enough for the healing to occur. A part of it remains with you.”

Katra was the Vulcan soul, right? Spock gave him part of his soul? That was too much. Did Jim really deserve that? He could feel his heart rate start to pick up, and his breathing felt faster. The monitors above him were starting to beep more.

“Jim.” Spock’s voice had an edge of concern—or was it panic? God, was he freaking out Spock? He didn’t want Spock to be distressed, dammit!

Spock reached for his hand, but Jim couldn’t have him feeling how distressed he was right now. He pulled his hand away, but then Spock had a hurt look in his eyes and dammit, he didn’t want to hurt Spock!

“What’s going on?” Bones came through the door, looking professional but concerned. God, he’d freaked out Bones too. “Jim, are you alright?”

He opened his mouth, but words wouldn’t come out. Why couldn’t he talk? He tried, but there were just gasping sounds. Was he having trouble breathing now? Could he breathe?

He could tell that Spock and Bones were saying something to each other, probably about him, but he was too focused on why he couldn’t breathe. He needed to stop freaking everyone out; he needed to breathe…

There was a hypo against his neck, and then things went dark.

Chapter End Notes

Warning: At the end of this chapter Jim has an anxiety attack. It's brought on by self-worth issues and the thought of his own death.

Anyways, I still have an alternate version of this scene saved from back when I had them not realize til the warp core and not get together til even later. I'm half tempted to post it somewhere, even if it does have similarities to this scene. Would people be interested?

Yeah, I really did have them taking forever to get together originally. There was gonna be a big jealousy plot and everything. But Into Darkness isn't the only thing I'm
changing...
Chapter 155

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! A number of you were interested in reading my "deleted scene," so I think I'll set up a thing here to post that. It'll probably just be the occasional extra thing I've thought of, and they might be rough or unfinished. But keep your eyes peeled; that'll be coming soon!

Now, back to our boys; this is a longer chapter than usual, but consider it a thank you to all of you for sticking with me...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Jim woke up again, it was just him and Bones in the room. He started to sit up but was stopped with a hand on his shoulder; Bones adjusted the biobed into a sitting position instead. With his new vantage point, Jim looked around the room, but it was still just him and Bones. “Where’s Spock?”

Bones sighed. “He got kicked out until I can figure out why the hell you started having an anxiety attack with him in the room.”

Now Jim felt bad. All Spock had been trying to do was talk to him, and then he just lost it. “It wasn’t his fault.”

“You don’t like talking to shrinks unless you’ve vetted and picked them yourself.” Damn, Bones knew him too well. “Now we could do that, and if you want to bring someone in we will, but for now this seems like something that should be addressed soon. What happened?”

Jim plopped his head back on the pillows and sighed. He could trust Bones, he knew he could… “I died.”

“I know that.” Jim didn’t look over at Bones because he didn’t know what sort of expression he’d have. “What does that have to do with Spock? You knew you died when you were talking with Pike and me, but you didn’t have an anxiety attack then.”

“I…” Jim took a deep breath and ran both hands down his face before dropping them back to his lap. “I heard how torn up he was when it happened, and then seeing how bad he looks now… What right do I have to put him through that? Or worse?”

Bones was quiet a moment. “What does that have to do with this? Everyone gets upset when someone they’re close to dies.”

Jim signed and finally glanced at Bones; his friend did look worse for wear, but it was still different
with Spock. “We’re soulmates. And now we both know it. And he seems to want to get together because of it, but what if something happens to me? What if we get closer and it only hurts him worse?” Jim looked away again. “We both know I don’t exactly avoid dangerous situations. It’s only a matter of time before my luck runs out.”

“Look kid, if anything Jim Kirk luck is always getting into life-threatening situations but somehow making it out alive.” Bones signed. “I’m trying to be the calm voice of reason because I think that’s what you need right now, but look at me.” He waited til Jim’s eyes met his. “What’s the real issue here?”

“I don’t know.” Jim looked away again. There was so much going on. “Why does Spock suddenly seem super interested in the soulmate thing? Is that the only reason he’s interested in me?”

“I highly doubt it, but what if it was?” He could hear Bones shifting back in his chair. “It’s hardly unusual. Hell, I bet some places still have those old laws requiring you to get together with your soulmate on the books. There’s worse reasons to start a relationship than being soulmates.”

Jim sighed in frustration and ran a hand through his hair. The last person he’d expected to get on his case about all of this was Bones. “You’ve really switched sides on this whole thing. What happened to the guy who used to agree with me when I said the soulmate thing was bullshit?” Before Bones could answer Jim crossed his arms, wishing he could get out of bed and walk away. “You still haven’t met anyone; you don’t know what it’s like. I don’t want him to feel obligated to be with me just because we made each other age.”

“I realize you’ve been out for a bit, but I forgot how much you’ve missed.” Bones shifted forward in his chair and waited until Jim looked at him. “I actually have met someone. Do you remember Carol, from during the whole disaster?”

“Yeah, Dr. Wallace-Marcus-whatever?” Jim was a bit thrown off by the sudden shift in conversation.

“Well, we’re both aging now and it seems like it might just align for us.” He paused a moment and smiled slightly. “We’ve started seeing each other. Would we have without the soulmate thing? Maybe. Are we going to run off and get hitched right away just because we made each other age? I doubt it. But could this aging/soulmate thing be a good way to point people to someone who’d be good for them?” Bones sighed, but it was soft instead of frustrated. “I’m starting to think that it just might be that.” He looked at Jim earnestly. “It’s only been about two weeks, but I can already tell that this is completely different than what I had with Jo’s mom, or than what I could have had with anyone I’d met and considered. It feels…better.”

Despite his previous tension Jim felt himself smiling. “Congrats man; I’m happy for you.”

“Thanks.” Bones smiled before his expression got a bit serious again. “But back to you. I think you should give the hobgoblin a chance. I know I’m the last person you’d expect to hear that from, but I do think so. He doesn’t just want to be with you out of obligation; I think somewhere in that oddly placed heart of his he does feel something for you. I mean, I already told you he’s barely left the hospital since you’ve been here. He tried to use the fact that you two are soulmates to allow him to stay in here with you so he’d be the first to know if or when you woke up. It didn’t work since there’s no official record of you two as a soulmate pair, but still. He’s been here as much as he can, and I think the hospital staff has taken pity and let him in more than that even. I think he really does care for you, Jim.”

Jim looked away again. “But people can be soulmates in multiple ways. What if we’re just platonic and he could be happier in a relationship with someone else, away from me and my…” Drama?
“Jim.” There was the slightest edge of frustration to Bones’ voice, but it didn’t feel like he was fully mad at Jim. “You two have tried the platonic thing over the last year, and it just left you pining and clearly wanting more. I don’t know what’s going on between those pointed ears of his, but something tells me you’re not alone in your interest. I don’t think you idiots are platonic soulmates.”

Ok, he had a point. “But—”

“Do you have any objections besides that he’d be upset if you died? Cuz I think there’s a famous old quote about it being better to love and lose than never love.” Bones sat back again. “I don’t know if the expression exists in Vulcan, but he’s gotten the chance to lose without loving. Why not try the other way around?”

Damn, maybe Bones had a point. “I don’t want to hurt him.”

“Look, Jim.” Bones put his hand on Jim’s arm and waited until he looked at him. “Why not let him decide if he’s willing to take the risk?” Before Jim could respond, Bones stood up and squeezed his arm before turning to go. “I think I’ve done enough playing therapist for one day. I’m sending him in so you two can actually talk.”

“Wait Bones—” But he was already out the door. Jim sat back against the pillow. Was he ready to talk to Spock? Talking with Bones had definitely given him some clarity, but he still had a lot to process. He had just died. But still, it’s not like he was uninterested in Spock...

At that moment, the door opened and the man—or Vulcan—himself came in. He stood stiffly by the door with his hands behind his back. “The doctor said you wished to speak with me, Captain.”

That wouldn’t do. Jim sighed. “Spock, we’re about as far from on duty as we can get right now. It’s Jim.” He gestured to the chair next to the biobed. “Come sit with me.”

No less awkwardly, Spock came over and sat in the chair. “What did you want to discuss?”

“I just…” How to even start? “I wanted to apologize for earlier. It wasn’t you that freaked me out; it was just that the dying thing suddenly caught up with me and… well, you saw what happened.”

“It was rather alarming.” And if Spock was admitting that, it had to be bad. “However, I am gratified that you are well.”

“Me too.” Jim smiled at him and relaxed when Spock seemed to soften up a bit at that. “But back to what we were talking about earlier.” Spock tensed a bit, and Jim sighed. “Again, I’m not mad at you, Spock. We did—do—need to talk about this thing between us.” He looked away from Spock. “We’re soulmates of some kind. And that’s important. But…” He looked back at Spock. “I heard how devastated you were by my death, and I can see how wrecked you are even now. I know I’m not exactly the safest person to get attached to, and I don’t want to be the cause of your suffering.”

Jim looked down at his hands on his lap. “So if you would be better off staying with Uhura and having us not go there, cross that line or whatever, I’ll… I’ll accept it.” Jim didn’t realize how much it would hurt to say that.

“Captain… Jim.” Spock’s hand met his in his lap and he waited for Jim to look up at him. “What you have suggested is impossible, as Nyota and I ended our relationship prior to the mission on Nibiru. Additionally, both of us have found our soulmates, so neither of us desires a romantic relationship with the other. We have decided that the ideal connection between us is purely platonic friendship.”

Jim couldn’t help the surprise that crossed his face. There was a lot there, but one thing stood out to
him. “Uhura found her soulmate?”

“Indeed.” Spock’s hand hadn’t left his. “She is a nurse who Nyota met while visiting you here. However, I believe Nyota would rather provide the full story herself, and I believe we have more pressing matters to discuss.”

Jim smiled again. “Well still, tell Uhura to come in sometime so I can congratulate her and maybe meet this mystery nurse.”

“I will.” There was a glimmer of warmth and amusement in Spock’s eyes, and Jim felt something in him warming in response.

“So about us.” Jim was tempted to look away again, but he held steady. “I do want to be with you Spock, but I just died. That’s a lot to deal with.” A bit of the warmth started to fade from Spock’s eyes and Jim knew he had to fix the misunderstanding here. “But I want this. So how about starting off slow? I know it isn’t exactly what you’d expect from my reputation, but…” He trailed off, unsure what to say.

The warmth was back in Spock’s eyes, even more than before. “As I am seeking a relationship with you and not with your reputation, I accept.”

Jim smiled. “Listen to you, you old sap.”

“It is merely logical. One cannot date an abstract concept like a reputation.” Still, the corner of Spock’s lip quirked up.

Jim grinned. He might just love this man. “Shut up and kiss me.”

Spock responded by sliding his fingers along Jim’s and leaning in to press their lips together.

Chapter End Notes

Well, it only took me 155 chapters. (145 to the first kiss, but still)
Chapter 156

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! You all seemed quite excited about last chapter, and understandably so! It was fun getting all of your reactions, so thanks again for all of your awesome responses!

We're getting an old friend showing up this chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

He and Spock spent a little while after that talking. They agreed that as part of taking it slow they’d keep it from everyone for a little bit. There were a few reasons for that; with Jim still in the hospital, they couldn’t do much anyways, plus neither of them wanted to deal with the inevitable paperwork from Starfleet yet. And while they were looking forward to telling the crew, everyone was still getting over Jim dying and coming back to life; it might be best to space out the big news.

Jim also had his own reasons for wanting to keep it secret. Despite how Spock had assured him it wasn’t true, a small part of Jim was still concerned that Spock would decide he wasn’t worth it, and if that happened Jim would rather not have everyone know. Their pity about it ending would be unbearable.

Still, Jim also had more positive reasons for liking that they were keeping it secret. Between his dad being a big hero, growing up in a small town, and then getting pretty well-known himself, Jim rarely had anything that was just his. So maybe he kindof enjoyed that this was just between him and Spock. There was finally something important to him that wasn’t something everyone knew the instant it happened. It was nice. Part of him wanted to try to talk Spock into keeping it just between them even longer, once he was out of the hospital. It would be a bit harder when they were actually dating and doing things, but back on the ship they could certainly make use of the bathroom between their rooms for some covert late night visits…

But for now, Jim was still recovering from…everything, which meant he definitely did not have the energy for late night visits. He couldn’t even handle the late night part now; by the time he and Spock finished talking, he was already feeling drowsy. So once Spock left, Jim found himself drifting off again, naturally this time.

He wasn’t sure how long he was dozing off, but when Jim next woke up he wasn’t alone in the room anymore. Spock was there, but not his Spock (and how exciting that he could finally actually call Spock his Spock now and finally mean it). Jim smiled at his new companion, who seemed to be meditating. “Hey, Selek.”

He looked up, only seeming slightly startled. “Hello, Jim. Dr. McCoy informed me that you would likely awaken soon. I am grateful he allowed me to visit you.”

“What?” Jim was confused. What did he mean ‘allowed’?

Selek seemed to pick up on his confusion easily enough. “Due to his concern for your recovery, Dr. McCoy has been screening your visitors and limiting who the staff here have allowed to visit you. He did not want to overwhelm you while you were still recovering.”
That would explain why the only people he’d seen so far besides Bones himself were Pike and Spock. He probably assumed they’d be calm enough to not stress Jim out. And why Spock had gotten kicked out as soon as Jim stopped being calm. Still, one thing didn’t make sense. Jim looked back at Selek. “How’d you get in? There’s no way Bones would know who you were, or believe it.”

Selek paused, as if thinking through what he was about to say carefully before speaking. “My younger self helped confirm my identity.”

“What?” That didn’t fit with what Jim knew. “How did he confirm your identity when you told me that you two were never supposed to know of each other’s existence?”

“You remember that.” Selek paused again before looking back at Jim. “I may have…exaggerated the importance of our not meeting. It would not necessarily endanger the universe for us to meet, but for that mission it was important that you and my younger counterpart learn to trust each other and work together. So had you relied on me to solve those problems, the two of you would not have developed the proper dynamic that would allow you to develop into Starfleet’s finest command team, as well as possibly develop a personal relationship beyond that.”

When he put it like that, Jim could hardly be mad at him. Still, he couldn’t help but tease some, even if he smiled as he did it. “So much for Vulcans never lying.”

Selek got that warm look in his eyes that Jim recognized as the Spock equivalent of smiling. “I did not overtly lie, I merely told the truth in a possibly misleading way. Additionally, I am half human, and humans do lie.” The corner of his mouth quirked up a bit in a way that had Jim grinning back.

“You know, I love seeing you so comfortable with yourself. As much as I love my Spock and how he is now, I think it’ll be good for him when he reaches the kind of place where you are now.” After he said it, Jim realized that he wasn’t exactly subtle. So much for what he and Spock agreed on…

Sure enough, Selek’s eyebrow rose. “Your Spock? With no denial or attempts to change that descriptor?”

“Yeah.” Jim looked away and smiled. Was he blushing? God, was this what it was like when things finally came together with someone you genuinely cared about? He looked back at Selek. “We just got together. Like in a relationship.”

Selek did fully smile at that. It lit up his whole face and suddenly all Jim wanted to do was some day make his Spock smile like that. “I am happy for you.” And Selek did seem genuinely happy.

“It’s exciting.” Jim felt like he couldn’t stop smiling. “It’s still so new, and I’m wary because of that newness and all of my own issues, but it feels good.” Jim looked over at Selek. “But you probably didn’t come here to hear about my love life.”

“I did not, although I do not object to discussing it, especially when the news is good.” Selek seemed to grow more serious. “I heard the news of your death, and I wished to ascertain how you were.”

Yeah, thinking about that could kill the mood some. Jim looked away from Selek. “It’s…it’s weird.”

Selek nodded solemnly. “A friend once asked about the experience of death and resurrection, and I told him I could not discuss it with someone who had not experienced it.” He looked away from Jim. “This was based in part on my own sister’s inability to explain the experience to me when we were children, but I found it true myself as well. After her passing in my own universe, I did not believe I would ever find someone with shared experience with which to discuss it again.” He looked back at Jim. “I am not sure if I am grateful that I once more have someone to share the experience with,
considering it is not an altogether pleasant experience.”

“That’s for sure.” Jim decided that for now he would file that sister thing away and ask Spock about it later. He looked back at Selek. “It does seem like having someone who experienced it too could help. Was that your way of offering to talk?”

Selek nodded. “I am here for you, Jim.”

Jim smiled. "I'm going to hold you to that. And seriously, thank you."

Selek's eyes warmed again. "It is my pleasure."

Chapter End Notes

Not the Spock you were expecting probably, but I hope you still enjoyed it!

Also, asking because a few people have commented on it: are people ok with two short updates a week, or would everyone prefer to possibly do longer, less frequent updates? I know what I prefer, but I'm curious what all of you would want
Chapter 157

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Happy International Women's Day and happy year and a half (if my math is right) anniversary to this fic! I have no idea how or if you're celebrating International Women's Day, but for fic anniversary I'd like to celebrate all of you! Whether you read, subscribe, comment, kudo, bookmark, or some combination thereof, you're awesome and the reason I'm keeping up regular updates here.

Speaking of, consensus of the comments seems to be keeping updates as they are. I probably could have set up a poll or something for people who read but don't comment, but I think keeping it works. I hope you all enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

After those first few days (and god, was it really only days? It felt like longer), Jim’s schedule started to even out. He slowly but surely started being able to stay awake for longer periods of time, and he started badgering Bones about being able to see more visitors or at least have visitors for longer. After all, once he was awake for longer periods of time, it got pretty boring to just sit in his room, even after he got Spock to bring him some books from his apartment (and tried and failed to not get excited about the fact that he’d just casually given Spock an access code to get into his apartment, because that was a big deal for relationships, even if Jim probably spent way more of his time on the Enterprise than in his apartment usually anyways).

Still, eventually Bones caved and started allowing Jim more visiting time, even if it was with the stipulation that Jim agree to start basic physical therapy “Before his body turns into complete mush.”

It was hardly the excitement of life in space, but Jim was still starting to enjoy his routine of physical therapy, visits, and nights spent reading or sleeping. He knew that all of this would help him get back to that, so Jim threw himself into it wholeheartedly.

Pike’s visits got less frequent as he got pulled back into full duties with his own medical leave over, but Jim still had Spock as a regular visitor. While he knew that they had to keep things pretty basic so that Jim’s heart monitor wouldn’t send Bones or someone else from Starfleet Medical racing into the room, they still found plenty of ways to pass the time. Jim discovered that he really liked it when Spock read to him, even if Spock’s smooth voice lulled him to sleep sometimes. They would also play chess or discuss whatever they were reading; Jim decided that he really liked Spock’s insights and could probably listen to him talk all day.

The visits with Selek continued too. It really did help to have someone who got what the whole dying and coming back thing was like when trying to process it, and Jim felt like he was slowly reaching some sort of new normal with Selek’s help. They’d also started playing chess together after Jim caught him looking longingly at the chess board Spock had brought him and remembered how the two of them had played some long distance games back when he was on the ship. To borrow Spock’s word, it was fascinating to play with both of them and see how their styles varied. Jim couldn’t help but wonder if Selek’s differences in playing style were influenced by him playing with his Jim, but he didn’t ask because he didn’t want to disrupt the peaceful mood between them with a question that he knew would only upset Selek. Whenever he thought of his Jim, Selek got this sad
wistful look that made Jim remember exactly how old he really was despite how young he looked, and made Jim realize how tragic it was that he looked that young when he was that old. Meeting with Selek was nice, but Jim just had to avoid thinking of all the tragedy there. Still, as bad as it sounded, there was a part of Jim that felt reassured by the idea that this Spock had lost his Jim but still didn’t regret their relationship and was eventually able to move on and find peace. It gave him hope that his Spock would be able to do the same if something happened to him, which helped Jim be more confident going into their relationship.

Still, they weren’t the only new relationship among the crew. One of the next visitors Bones finally allowed was Uhura, who entered his room looking uncharacteristically shy with a blonde nurse who was a bit taller than her in tow.

Jim grinned when he saw them walk in. “Uhura! And who’s this?”

She glanced back and Jim couldn’t help but notice how the nurse gave her hand a little squeeze before Uhura looked back at him and smiled slightly. “Good to see you too, Kirk. And this,” she pulled the nurse forward carefully and wrapped her arm around her waist before the nurse did the same, “Is Christine Chapel.” They shared a warm look before Uhura looked back at Jim. “She’s my soulmate.”

Jim felt himself grinning wider. “Congratulations!” He looked at Nurse Chapel. “I’m Jim Kirk, but I heard you were part of the team taking care of me, so you probably already knew that.”

She nodded. “A name’s not necessarily the most important thing to know about a patient, but it can be good to know.”

They all laughed at that, and Jim smiled at her afterwards. “But seriously, thanks. Even comatose I probably wasn’t the easiest patient, plus you had to deal with Bones.”

Chapel looked confused for a moment until Uhura leaned in next to her. “That’s his nickname for Dr. McCoy.”

“Oh!” Her confusion cleared and Chapel smiled. “He can be grumpy and not the easiest to work with, but you can tell it’s just because he cares.”

“Well, that means you probably understand him better than a lot of people already. If you’re not careful you’ll get recruited for Sickbay.” Jim looked at Uhura and back at Chapel. “And it looks like Uhura can now add me to the list of people she’s successfully translated for.”

“Nyota.”

“What?” Jim looked back at Uhura.

She smiled a bit at Jim. “Nyota. My first name.” When he still looked confused, she continued. “Before you say it, I know you know. But our little name game from the academy…It seems like it’s time for it to end. I know you’re not just some dumb hick from a dive bar in the middle of nowhere; the name game was fun, but if it was about earning it I think you’ve proved yourself. So my first name is Nyota.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled. “Technically it’s James, but my friends call me Jim when they’re not calling me an idiot. You can call me Jim.”

“Thanks.” She smiled at him before slapping his arm softly. “And we don’t call you an idiot!” When he just raised his eyebrows in response, she tilted her head in consideration. “Ok so Len does pretty often. And I’d be lying if I never thought of you as one, but mostly back in your cocky asshole days
before you got your act together. And maybe Scotty does now and then when he thinks you’re stressing the ship out. Probably Hikaru at least once. Maybe not Spock or Chekov though.”

She got interrupted by Chapel trying very hard not to laugh as loudly as she clearly wanted to laugh. When both of them looked at her, she seemed a bit embarrassed. “Sorry, it’s just… You hear so much about the Enterprise crew here on Earth, and this isn’t exactly what I’d expect.”

Jim grinned. “What, we don’t meet your expectations?”

“Oh no.” Chapel shook her head. “You, I’ve barely talked to, so I can’t judge yet. But Nyota…” They’d dropped their arms from each other’s waists and let them hang loosely at their sides, but Chapel took Uhura—Nyota’s hand and gave it a squeeze. “She definitely exceeds my expectations.” She looked back at Jim. “I mean, I heard the Enterprise’s communication officer was smart and probably the best at what she does, but somehow I hadn’t heard that she was gorgeous.”

“Aww, stop.” Nyota leaned up and gave her a kiss on the cheek. “Chris here is being too sweet.”

“You two are so cute!” Jim smiled at them. “I hope I’m able to get that with my soulmate someday.” For a moment Jim forgot that he actually already sortof had that, but he figured it was better for keeping things on the down low.

“You mean Spock?” So much for that. Nyota smirked at his probably surprised expression. “C’mon Jim, I was there when your alternate self was all over him and said he and his Spock were soulmates and that you two were probably soulmates. I was the one who had to reel Spock back when he wanted to track down Khan and kill him again. There’s definitely something there.”

Well she did have a point. “Ok but—”

“And he’s been telling basically anyone who tries to kick him out that you two are soulmates so that they wouldn’t kick him out, and instead of denying it Dr. McCoy just doesn’t say anything.” When they both looked at her, Chapel just shrugged. “What? It’s true. Plus, even for a Vulcan he seems in a noticeably better mood since you’ve woken up.”

“Alright, I guess he isn’t exactly subtle.” Jim shrugged. “Still…”

“Everyone can accept that you and Spock will just take things at your own pace.” If Nyota weren’t good at subtlety, she’d probably be winking. “Still, best of luck to you two. You’ll get there.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled. “Best of luck to you two as well, even if it doesn’t seem like you need it.”

“Thanks.” Chapel leaned down and gave Uhura a kiss on the forehead. “As fun as this has been though, we should probably let you rest before Dr. McCoy starts pacing outside.”

Nyota looked at her with a raised eyebrow. “He does that?”

Chapel made a face and nodded. “He’s a worrier.”

Jim sighed. “You’re going to have to learn to get around him if we’re going to have you in Sickbay.”

“Maybe.” Chapel shrugged. “But for now, I’m not going to cross him. Not until I figure out how to do it subtly at least.”

Jim grinned at Nyota. “You’ve got a good one here.”

She smiled, but she was looking at Chapel. “I know.” She looked back at Jim. “We’ll see you later.”
“Alright. You two have fun.” They both laughed as they left, and Jim smiled. Things were going well for his crew.

Chapter End Notes

I didn't plan it, but I guess this chapter works for International Women's Day some

Also, the Chapel/Uhura height difference is something I am definitely carrying over from TOS, even if we don't really have an AOS Chapel
Hello everyone! We're getting a little more of Jim and Spock together this chapter, which it seemed like you all missed going off of the response to chapters with both of them versus ones without both of them. Still, we're also getting someone else that I know at least some of you like...

Slowly but surely, Jim was able to see more of the crew. Scotty came and gave him updates about their silver lady, Sulu came in and assured him that he and Ben wouldn’t have the wedding until Jim was well enough to attend (but continued jokingly deflecting when Jim once more suggested doing the ceremony himself), Chekov came in and seemed nervous, but apparently that was due to Spock starting to pace outside the door because he was getting impatient for his turn to see Jim again.

Which led to Jim having the interesting combination of Spock and Gaila in the room at once. It wasn’t the fact that he’d had some sort of relationship with both of them that made it weird (at least, not for Jim; if he couldn’t get over the awkwardness of being around two people he’d had something with he never would have been able to go anywhere in Riverside. Small towns didn’t exactly offer big dating pools, even when gender wasn’t an obstacle). Still, their wildly different personalities meant this would be interesting.

It started with Gaila leaning in and giving Jim a hug, some of her hair falling out of its ponytail and tickling his face. “I know you’re not supposed to move much, but I’m still gonna hug you even if Len says you can’t hug back.”

“Thanks, Gaila.” Jim reached up and patted her on the back and became aware of Spock slowly holding his other hand with one hand and running the fingers of his other hand along the top of it.

Gaila’s seemed to notice it as she pulled back; her eyes lingered on it a second before looking between them. “By the way, congrats on finally getting together.”

Jim looked at Spock, who seemed as confused as he was. They’d agreed to keep it secret, and this was the first time Jim was seeing Gaila. Spock definitely wouldn’t have told her. He looked back at Gaila. “What?”

“It’s pretty obvious.” She looked between them. “Jim, you told me you two were soulmates way back during that alternate universe mix-up, and I know you haven’t been seeing anyone, plus Ny came to me when she and Spock split so I knew that he was available, and then now…” Gaila shrugged. “Orions can just pick up on these things.”

Spock raised an eyebrow and Jim just shrugged. “She’s the only Orion I know, so I don’t know if that’s true or not.”

Spock looked like he was about to answer, but Gaila cut him off, looking amused. “It’s not, but Orions do tend to gather info on how different species express intimacy, and I know that Spock’s hand fondling there isn’t exactly platonic for Vulcans.”
Spock’s hands stilled and he looked at Gaila. “That is correct; however, this is not inappropriate
behavior while courting a potential bondmate.”

“Hey, I’m not judging.” Gaila held up her hands placatingly. “I know this is a little weird cuz me and
Jimmy here are close and also used to have some pretty great sex—”

“Gaila,” Even for Jim, this seemed like odd talk with a new partner.

“—and your thing is still pretty new, and you’re probably taking it slow, well definitely because Jim
here isn’t allowed to move much.” She paused and thought a moment before grinning at Spock. “Not
that we didn’t have some pretty fun times where Jim’s movement was limited if you catch my drift
—”

“Gaila!” Wait did Spock look interested? Jim would have to remember that for another day…

“—but don’t worry, I only do homewrecking if I’ve been invited to.” She grinned again. “But in the
meantime, if you want any tips, I’m happy to share. There was this one thing I remember him really
liking where we would—”

“Gails, stop before he turns greener than you!” Spock was getting a little color to his cheeks, but Jim
wasn’t sure if it was embarrassment or something else. Either way, it was kinda cute.

“Huh.” Gaila was looking between them, definitely picking up on how they were both looking at
each other a little more closely now. “I guess this means Jim has a type after all.” When they both
looked at her expectantly, Spock with a raised eyebrow, she grinned mischievously and had to stop
herself from laughing when she spoke. “Green.”

“Gaila!” Despite trying to seem insulted, Jim couldn’t help but laugh, even if this was a bit
embarrassing.

“Aww, now Jim’s turning pink!” Gaila looked at Spock. “Aren’t humans just adorable?”

Spock seemed to be considering it. “While I may not typically use that specific descriptor, I find that
I do not disagree on this occasion.”

Jim shook his head playfully. “C’mon you two, stop talking like I’m the first human you’ve ever met.
You’re both well acquainted with humans and how we are, even if that last conversation definitely
wouldn’t fit with typical human norms.”

Gaila smirked. “Good thing we don’t have to stick to human norms then, right Spock?”

It was hard to tell, but it seemed like Spock might be warming up to Gaila more, despite how weird
he’d been acting when they came in. “Indeed, we do not.”

“I’m still human though.” Jim looked between them and smiled playfully. “Does that count for
anything?”

“Hmm.” Gaila looked at Jim, pretending to seriously study him. “I don’t know if I’d exactly count
you as a normal human, Jim. Not in a bad way, you’re just…different.” She looked over at Spock.
“What would you say? Is Jim a normal human?”

There was a bit of that warm amusement that Jim loved in Spock’s eyes. “No.” And he went back to
doing that thing with his hands and Jim somehow knew that Spock also mean that he was different in
a good way.
Jim must gotten a little absorbed in looking at Spock, because he didn’t even notice Gaila getting up until she cleared her throat and both of them looked at her. She waved. “Alright lovebirds. I’m gonna give you two some alone time, but don’t worry, I’ll help you two keep your relationship on the down low.” She paused and looked at them mock seriously. “Not that it will be easy if you two keep acting all mushy like this, but still.” Gaila dropped the serious expression and smiled at them. “I am happy for you two. I’ll see you later.” She waved as she turned to leave the room.

“How’s, Gaila!” Jim smiled and waved at her with his free hand and Spock merely nodded. Jim watched her leave the room before looking back at Spock. “So, what do you want to do now?”

Keeping one hand with Jim’s, Spock pulled up a padd and began going through it. “If you are not opposed, I can read to you.”

“That sounds great.” Jim tried to stifle his yawn; he wanted to hear Spock read, but he was getting tired. “It’s been a long day though, so I might fall asleep. You have a very relaxing voice when you read out loud.”

Spock simply raised an eyebrow. “If you need rest, do not fight to stay awake. Your recovery is of the utmost importance.” He paused a moment, adjusting the padd in his free hand somewhat awkwardly but still not letting go of Jim’s hand. “I will commence reading.”

Jim did try to stay awake for a while, but before long he started slipping. He remembered Spock adjusting the biobed to a better position without breaking his smooth reading of whatever it was (Jim’s focus was slipping too) before he went fully under.

When Jim next awoke, someone he didn’t expect to see (or want to see, really) was by his bedside.

Chapter End Notes

I probably have too much fun imagining how all the different cultural norms of all of these different people would interact, so I hope at least some of you enjoy it too.

Anyways, we’re starting to get out of the calm period and into the next little plot arc. Not as dramatic or deadly as Khan probably, but it could get intense still...

Who could it be that Jim woke up to?
Chapter 159

Chapter Notes

Happy Ides of March everyone! We just missed Pi day, which is the more fun one to celebrate. But still, eat some pie, stab a salad, and have a good mid-March. Hopefully all you awesome people find something more fun than my odd humor hahaha

Anyways, a more serious chapter this time.

Warnings in the end note.

It had been years—over a decade actually—since he’d last seen his brother, but somehow Jim recognized him right away. He was older, that was for sure, but Jim could still tell who he was. Maybe it was the family resemblance; he looked some like the old holos of their dad Jim barely got to see. He’d been looking out the window, but when he turned and saw Jim was awake he smiled in a way that was probably supposed to be apologetic, but it was a little late for that. “Hey, Jimmy.”

“No. It’s Jim.” He paused, unable to hold back some of the anger that was starting to bubble up. “Actually, it’s generally Captain Kirk to those who don’t know me.”

He looked a little hurt at that, but Jim found he didn’t care. Sam shifted a bit. “But I do know you, Ji—”

“Don’t.” Jim crossed his arms. “And you knew me. But I’m not a little kid anymore.” He looked at his brother. “You don’t get to act like no time has passed or like nothing happened; not after what you did.”

“What?” Sam finally seemed to be getting a little angry. “What did I do that was so bad? Run away from Frank? Did you know how he was treating me?”

“Yes, because after you left he did all of it to me!” Jim’s hands clenched into fists and dropped to his sides, but he fought to keep his heart rate down. It wouldn’t do to have someone coming in now. He looked at Sam, who actually did look surprised. “What did you think Sam? That he’d just give up? That he wouldn’t just turn to the next target, one even smaller and easier to bully and shove around?”

Sam at least looked taken aback. “He’d always focused on me, so I thought maybe—”

“Oh you actually thought about it?” Jim raised his eyebrows, unable to keep the venom out of his voice. “Thought about how you were just abandoning your little brother, leaving him all alone with a man you knew was capable of horrible things?”

“Jimmy—”

“NO!” Jim barely recognized the snarl in his voice. “There are very few people who get to call me that, and you aren’t one of them. You lost that when you left me with Frank.” He paused, cooling from a snarl to a sneer. “Thanks for leaving the medkit though; god knows it did me more good than you ever did.”

Sam’s anger was back. “What the hell was I supposed to do? Stay there and be a human shield for
you? Take all the hits and threats so poor little Jimmy wouldn’t? Is that what you would have wanted?”

“Of course not!” Jim’s nails were starting to dig into his palms. “All I wanted was to go with you! But you sent me back! And then I suffered, wondering why the hell my big brother abandoned me! I gave up hope that you’d ever come back, but god, did you even try to come back? Did you ever consider getting help, or was there just no looking back?”

Sam’s face was unreadable, but there still seemed to be some anger there. “Do you really think anyone would have listened?”

“Yes!” Jim unclenched his hands and slapped them against the biobed. “I know Frank had us convinced that somehow this was our fault, or that it was normal, or that no one would take it seriously, but god, did you never shake that off once you got free? Did you really believe that?”

Sam was starting to retreat in on himself. “I don’t know…”

“Well guess what? Want to know what happened when I finally told someone?” Jim stared him down, but all he got was a feeble nod. “There was a time things got real bad. Like real bad.” Jim looked away; out of the corner of his eye Jim could tell that his brother wanted more information, but there was too much there. He could already feel all the old nightmares from Frank getting dragged up; no need to pull up Tarsus too, even if they had connected into that…last incident some. “I did something drastic. And Ma came back. She was able to get it all out of me, and guess what?” He looked over at his brother. “There was a fight, some shouting, and then I never saw Frank again.”

Sam was quiet. “Just like that?”

“Just like that.” The years under Frank ended, as long as they’d felt, even with Tarsus breaking it up (and not exactly a pleasant break either), but Jim did never see Frank again. Never wondered what happened to the bastard either.

The room was quiet for a bit.

Eventually, Jim couldn’t take it. He sighed and looked at Sam. “Why the hell are you even here?”

Sam didn’t meet his eyes. “I don’t know. I heard you had a brush with death…”

“Hardly unusual for me.” Jim crossed his arms. “Happens enough in Starfleet, and god knows it happened before then too.” He looked at Sam. “So why now?”

He sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “I don’t know. Maybe I was scared to before.”

“George Samuel Kirk,” Jim paused, “Junior, can’t summon up a bit of courage?” Jim looked away. “Not living up to the family name, bro.” The last word came out bitter, more than Jim intended.

Sam’s eyes were stormy. “Don’t talk like you knew him.”

“I didn’t. I didn’t.” And god, they were dragging up this now, “because some asshole from the future came and picked a fight and killed him the day I was born!” Jim was angry again. “And don’t act like you have some high ground; you barely knew him either. You aren’t that much older than me.”

“Yeah, but all anyone cared for was the damn Kelvin baby! No one cared about the poor kid stuck with his goddamn name and his reputation.” Sam’s voice was getting louder.

“Yeah, cuz you sure stuck with that name and didn’t run away from it like everything else, Sam.”
Jim’s arms tightened across his chest. “And do you think it was fun being a media spectacle? Or that I never had to deal with the family reputation? Hell, I got pulled into Starfleet because of it, and it got held over my head every damn day!”

“Yeah, cuz you did so poorly because of that, Captain Kirk. And did you ever think that maybe it was just better for me to get away from that damn name? Our damn mother could barely say the name “George” when she got back.” Sam looked away and crossed his arms. “Did me a hell of a lot of good ditching the name too. I was able to actually be myself and not just fill in the family roles.”

“Oh, cuz they must be bad just cuz they aren’t what you want, right?” The bitterness was back with a vengeance. “Cuz what you want is always the most important. What, did you come to rescue me or something? Cuz it’s too damn late for that!”

“Oh come on!” Sam was angry now too. “We’re back on this? What the hell was I supposed to do, Jimmy? I was just a kid too!”

This was too much. It was too damn much. “Just get out. Just get the hell out. I have enough going on without you dragging all this bullshit back into my life.” Jim looked away. “I don’t need this now, so just leave. It’s what you do best anyways.”

There was a defeated sigh. “Ji—”

“Leave.” Jim still wouldn’t look at him. “Leave before I call security.” He didn’t look back up until he heard the door close.

Chapter End Notes

Warning: no direct/graphic descriptions of it, but there’s a lot of mentions of past abuse and aftereffects of trauma I guess? I don’t know how to put it but life was not kind to the Kirk family and it all comes up here.

This arc is moving faster than mine typically do, but it just practically wrote itself, which was nice. Not that it’s family drama, but easy chapters during busy weeks are nice.
Chapter 160

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I've got hectic week coming up but this arc seems to be flowing (I hope I didn't jinx it) so chapters should go up ok. But if it's late Thursday, I may have just accidentally fallen asleep or something (just kidding). It'll probably be fine though; I wouldn't want to let down all you awesome people!

Anyways, warnings in the end notes again.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim was in a pretty foul mood the rest of the day. He started off just angry, but then it started to sour. Was he being too hard on Sam? He had made some points; it’s not like Jim would have wanted anyone to be stuck with Frank. And they had gotten along as kids. Hell, Jim practically idolized him once. Of course, that was a long time ago, back when they were both much younger, and before Frank came and Sam left…

Jim didn’t know how to feel, honestly. He’d be angry, then mad at himself for being angry when Sam had been suffering too, then annoyed with that response because dammit, he had a right to be angry. It was a confusing mix of emotions, and it kept Jim so distracted he hardly noticed when his dinner came in later that night. He was too absorbed in his thoughts to eat and just started pushing the food around on the plate.

That is, until he got a visitor shortly after his meal arrived. “Eat. It is important that you receive proper nutrients to ensure a full recovery.”

For a moment Jim startled and tensed, but when he saw it was Spock the tension drained from his frame and he felt a certain measure of calm wash over him. “Hey Spock.”

A few fingers began to gently stroke over his where they rested on the tray. “Jim.” There was warmth in his eyes and Jim felt himself smiling in response.

Jim looked down at his food and back at Spock, smiling ruefully. “Not exactly how I pictured our first dinner together to go.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, but Jim felt like Spock didn’t genuinely misunderstand. “We have eaten together many times, including the evening meal.”

“Stop it, you know what I meant.” Jim smiled wider at the increased warmth in Spock’s eyes. “Our first dinner together as a couple.”

“Ah.” Spock leaned back and feigned only understanding then; Jim tried not to react to Spock’s hand leaving his, but was soothed by the slight upturn of Spock’s lips. “Then as I have already eaten, we may save the milestone of a shared meal for a more appropriate venue. Still, you must eat, Jim.”

“Alright.” Jim was pretty sure he loved this man. Maybe more than pretty sure. He wanted to live in this moment of playful bantering and care. “What will you do if I don’t, call Bones?”

Spock raised an eyebrow again. “As it is his day off and he stated that he planned to spend it with
Dr. Marcus, Dr. McCoy would indeed be irritated if we called him today.”

“That’s true.” Jim laughed, but stopped as something clicked. He looked away from Spock, caught up in his thoughts again. “That explains it…” Bones would have known better than to let in Sam. But if he wasn’t here and had taken away the visitor restrictions, Sam could have easily used the brother thing to get it. God knows the resemblance was strong enough for it to be believable…

“Jim?” Spock’s smooth voice drew him out of his thoughts. He seemed concerned; Jim looked back at him. “You appear agitated; are you alright?”

“I…” It would be easy to lie to Spock and say he was fine, and he doubted Spock would pry if Jim really told him to back off. But then again, Jim was looking for some advice… He sighed. “Not really.”

Spock shifted closer; Jim could tell he didn’t exactly seem eager or prepared to discuss what was definitely going to be an emotional matter, but still, he was willing to do it for Jim and that meant more than Jim realized to him. Spock rested a hand over his; it wasn’t a caress, but rather a gesture of support. “Tell me about it.”

Jim ran his free hand through his hair, grabbing it a bit at the top of his head. He looked away from Spock. Alright Jim, just tell him. He took a deep breath. “My brother came to see me today. I hadn’t seen him in over a decade; probably close to two now…”

Spock nodded. “You told me that he left you.” At Jim’s confusion, he clarified. “Our conversation following your first day as captain after the defeat of the Narada. When you urged me to not give up because it would satisfy those who sought to end me.” Spock paused, seeming almost sheepish. “You mentioned some aspects of your backstory.”

“Right.” The conversation came back to Jim at Spock’s prompting. “Remind me to never doubt your memory, Mr. Spock.”

“As I have an eidetic memory, it is a logical choice to trust it.” His expression softened. “However, that…encounter has also stayed with me for other reasons.” His fingers started to stroke over Jim’s once more.

Jim smiled, hoping Spock was able to pick up on that surge of affection he felt. He took another deep breath. He’d dumped his heart out to Spock before; he could do it now. “But anyways. My brother.” He looked away from Spock. “We were really close when we were little; my brother, my ma and me were all each other had. So when she started taking short off-world missions and leaving us with my Grandpa T, Sam and I turned to each other more. He just seemed like the coolest person ever to me; I mean, I was a little kid and he was my older sibling, so of course he did. Ma’s missions were still short, so we saw her often enough. But when she accepted her first longer assignment, she wanted us to have someone who wasn’t old and still grieving for their own kid to look after us. So she married Frank. He was great to her. They’d been seeing each other a while, and when she’d taken him to meet us it seemed good, so why not? It worked out perfectly timing wise.”

Jim paused and glanced at Spock; his hand had stilled on Jim’s and was loosely gripping it now. He was watching Jim attentively and nodded for him to continue.

Onto the more difficult part. “Things seemed fine at first. Frank was friendly, Ma checked in regularly, all was well. But then…” Jim took another deep breath. “Sam and I had different schedules; he was—is—about three years older than me, and we were involved in different things, so of course we did. But sometimes he and Frank would be together when I wasn’t there. And even when I was there, Frank would sometimes be short with us and snap at us or slam things or throw
them when he was angry. But I thought maybe that was just what dads were like; god knows I didn’t
have any firsthand experience. Sure, the ones in holovids and old videos and other things typically
seemed nicer, but there were meaner ones too so I didn’t question it. But Sam knew better. He’d
been little, but he remembered our dad and knew he wasn’t like that. So he and Frank always butted
heads, and there was sometimes screaming. I started to notice Sam had bruises that didn’t fit with any
of the ways we played around the farm or with any of his school activities; he was always the brainy
one and never all that into athletics. But he wouldn’t tell me how he got them.”

Jim looked back at Spock again. It looked like the pieces were clicking into place for him.

“I didn’t get at first why my big brother had started to act differently. I was still so young at the time
that I didn’t understand. But then, when he was 12 and I was 9, he ran away. I asked to go with him,
followed him out to the road, hell I begged because I would rather be with my big brother, different
though he was, than be with a man who was starting to seem meaner. But he told me no. He shoved
me back when I tried to hold on to his arm. He told me I was too young and that he’d do better
without me.” Jim smiled ruefully, trying to ignore how much it hurt. He ignored how his eyes
seemed to be starting to water too. He rubbed at them with his free hand. “Needless to say, once it
was just me and Frank I understood what had been going on with Sam. I got the firsthand
experience.”

Spock tensed, his hand tightening protectively over Jim’s. He looked like he was about to say
something.

Jim cut him off before he could. “Don’t freak out; you already know how it ends. It got worse before
it got better, but once Ma came back I never saw Frank again. I don’t know what happened to that
bastard, and I don’t want to know. But Sam…” Jim trailed off and then looked back at Spock.

“That’s my current problem. I spent years of my life hoping he’d get help or come back for me, then
years hating him because he didn’t. I accepted that I’d never see him again. I wasn’t even sure if I
wanted to. Then today he just shows up, acting like no time has passed…” Jim paused, glad Spock
realized that Jim just needed to talk now and have him listen. “I was mad. Hell, I was pissed. He
brought up things I never wanted to think about again. But still…” And here was the conflict. “I
think I still kinda thought of him as that incredible person I idolized as a kid. He seemed so strong, so
smart, so…everything back then. But looking back, he was just a kid too. I wouldn’t want him to be
stuck with Frank; I wouldn’t want anyone in that situation. So I can’t blame him for leaving
Riverside.” Jim paused; he wanted to stop but he couldn’t. "But why’d he leave me?" And there was
the question that cut Jim to the core.

Chapter End Notes

Warning: continued discussion of abuse; nothing too graphic but enough that I thought it
was best to do a heads up. It's mostly referenced/implied physical and verbal abuse.

Anyways, if any of you were scrambling to remember the conversation Spock mentions
it's in Chapter 51. I only know because I looked it up while writing this tbh

Don't worry, it'll get lighter soon. Probably...
Well, don't say I didn't warn you. I was barely home before my usual posting deadline, and with such a busy week I didn't have a finished chapter til just now. I hope you all enjoy! And don't worry, after this weekend I'll have plenty of time...

Jim was surprised when the next thing he felt were strong arms wrapping around him and holding him closely as a head of smooth hair brushed against his own. Not fully knowing how to respond, Jim wrapped his arms loosely around Spock as much as he was able to with Spock's arms half pinning his own to his sides. “What are you doing?”

“It is a hug.” Jim was about to comment that he knew that much when Spock continued. “It is a customary gesture of comfort for humans with proven beneficial effects.” Spock pulled away and returned to his seat next to the bed. “Additionally, I remember the positive feelings associated with the gesture when my mother would hug me as a child.”

Jim felt himself smile a little. “You? Admitting to positive feelings?”

Spock raised an eyebrow, but Jim could tell he was amused. “I did say I was a child.” He paused a moment. “Additionally, you should know that Vulcans do have emotions, we merely suppress and control them.”

“I know.” Jim smiled and reached his hand toward Spock’s; he felt a little warmth in his chest when Spock returned the gesture and began running his fingers along Jim’s hand, then pausing, at which point Jim attempted to copy the movement. It didn’t seem quite as smooth as when Spock did it, but it was still oddly soothing and nice. But as Jim relaxed a bit, his mind drifted back to where it had been before Spock gave him the hug. He dropped his hand with a sigh. “You’re a wonderful distraction Spock, but I feel like maybe I should face this one instead of avoiding it.” Jim ran his hands down his face. “Why the hell did Sam just leave me like that?” Even with that moment with Spock bringing him back to a better mood, just thinking about the question stung some. Why did his brother just abandon him like that?

Spock carefully rested his hand over Jim’s; there was less intention this time; it seemed like he was just trying to ground Jim. “I could not tell you. Only your brother knows his reasons, and to learn them you would likely have to discuss them with him.”

“You’re probably right.” Jim sighed. “Still, that didn’t exactly go well the first time around.”

Spock was quiet a moment. “Do you wish to reconnect with your brother?”

Jim looked over at him. “I don’t know. Part of me does, or part of me doesn’t…” He trailed off, conflicting emotions swirling inside him. He was still mad at Sam, that was for sure. But he also felt a little guilty about how he hadn’t considered Sam’s suffering that much. He’d been fine acting like his brother never even existed all these years, but now… Jim sighed again. “I don’t know.”

Spock seemed to be thinking over what he was about to say carefully; it was a while before he
spoke. “I have a brother.”

Jim had to avoid jerking upright in surprise. “You do? Older you mentioned a sister—thanks for
telling me you knew about him this whole time, by the way—but he didn’t say anything about a
brother.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I had assumed he would correct your misconception about us as he was
the one who created it.” Spock paused. “Additionally, we do not speak often. It is an odd experience
to speak with him, and he does not wish to overly influence me by speaking of his own life. Despite
possibly being considered the same person, we do not have much basis for conversation.”

“Huh.” Jim had never really thought of that. “Makes sense I guess. But your sister and brother?” He
looked at Spock expectantly.

“You may have heard of my sister; she is also in Starfleet.” When that seemed to capture Jim’s
attention, Spock continued. “Her name is Michael Burnham.”

Jim felt his eyes widen. “Who served on the Shenzhou with Captain Georgiou?”

Spock nodded. “That is her.”

Jim grinned, momentarily distracted. “That’s so cool! I’d love to meet Georgiou; she’s a legend.”

Spock raised his eyebrow. “In the eyes of some, so are you.”

“It’s not the same.” Jim waved his free hand dismissively. “But anyways, you have a brother?”

“Indeed.” Spock shifted back in the chair, but his hand stayed with Jim. “He is Sarek’s son from a
relationship prior to meeting my mother, so he would be considered my half brother if I remember
the correct human term.” At Jim’s nod, he continued. “He was raised by his own mother until her
death, at which point he came to live with our family. I grew accustomed to his presence, but he and
my father began to clash as Sybok grew older.”

“About what?” Jim’s eyebrows crinkled together. What would Vulcans even fight about?

Spock seemed to be carefully considering his words. “Sybok had a…different interpretation of
Surak’s teachings. He believed that emotions did not need to be suppressed, and he was often quite
expressive, which my father disapproved of.”

Somehow that seemed like a fitting thing for Vulcans to fight over even from the little Jim knew
them. “So what happened?”

“Despite our father’s orders not to, Sybok began to publicly share his views, and even attracted some
followers. However, he was eventually banished from Vulcan for his views.” There was a somewhat
faraway look in Spock's eyes. “As is expected with banishments, our family has not spoken to nor
spoken of Sybok.” Spock looked at Jim. “I do not know what became of my brother, or even if he is
alive or dead. There is nothing but uncertainty where he is concerned. On occasion, questions of his
fate will enter my mind, but I cannot seek resolution. He may live as he was not on Vulcan during its
destruction, but beyond that I do not know.”

“Huh.” Now Jim was the one pausing for thought. He looked at Spock. “So do you think I should
try to talk to him?”

“It is your decision, and I will support your choice.” Spock squeezed his hand slightly reassuringly.
“If necessary, I can be here when or if you speak to him.”
Jim smiled a little again. “What, so you can nerve pinch him if he starts stressing me out?”

Spock’s expression did not change, except for his eyes, which were warm and serious all at once. “I am not opposed to subduing and removing him if he causes you distress.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled at him and briefly moved his fingers over Spock’s before pulling his hand back. “But I think I have to do this myself. Although I’m hardly opposed to you being there to help me put it all together afterwards.”

“That is agreeable.” Spock clasped his hands in his lap. “However, that must wait for tomorrow. Visiting hours have ended, so you must finish your meal and rest so you can recover.”

“Yeah, I guess so.” Jim looked down at his neglected meal, which didn’t look all that appetizing after sitting out while they talked, but Jim knew he had to eat. He looked at Spock with a smile. “Thanks Spock. Goodnight.”

“Rest well.” Spock leaned in for a quick kiss before turning to leave.

Jim watched him go before picking at his food and eventually getting it all down. After a quick check in from a nurse, Jim slipped into an uneasy sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Are you ready for Jim and Sam to talk again? Do you think it'll be better or worse than last time?
Chapter 162

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We're getting into the last few updates of the month. This one did not want to be written, but that's life I guess.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning when Jim woke up he didn’t feel all that rested (the whole night nightmares had been lurking just around the edges of his mind, but he’d managed to fight them off), but he did feel resolved. He was going to talk to his brother.

Bones was also back, fussing over Jim (or checking in on his patient, as he’d put it) practically as soon as Jim woke up. Jim took a deep breath. “My older brother was here yesterday.”

Bones stilled. “How the hell did he get in?”

Jim shrugged. “There’s enough of a family resemblance. If he showed up and said he was my brother, it’s not like people would have a reason to doubt him.”

“Hmm.” Bones inputted something on his padd rather aggressively. “They would if they knew the history there.” He looked up at Jim, still holding his padd against his chest tightly. “How’d it go?”

“Well…” Jim thought back to the near screaming match and the turbulent feelings that followed. “About as well as you’d expect.”

Bones grumbled and hit a few things on his padd. “Want me to put him on the banned list? I could probably find the name he came in under and block him from seeing you.”

“No.” Jim held up his hand, surprising even himself. It would have been an easy way out… But he had to do this. Bones raised an eyebrow and Jim sighed. “I think I’m going to give him another chance.”

“What?” Bones sounded incredulous. “You had a clean break, and now you’re just going to bring him back in like nothing happened?”

Jim scoffed. “It was hardly a clean break, Bones. If this…encounter showed anything it’s that.” He looked at Bones. “Besides, I’m letting him in conditionally at best. I’m still mad, but…” Jim took a deep breath. “He was just a kid too, back then. And he was just trying to get way from something terrible. It wasn’t good that he left me, not by a long shot, but…” he looked back at Bones. “It was understandable. He wasn’t thinking about me or what the consequences would be. Like I said, it’s not good, but…” Jim shrugged. “I don’t know. If I see him and decide that I never want to ever see him again, so be it.”

Bones raised his eyebrows in a clear gesture of ‘it’s your decision to make but I can still think it’s stupid.’ After a moment he looked at Jim instead of his padd. “It’s your life. But I have to say, just because you have good memories with someone or because you once considered them family doesn’t mean you should just let them back into your life.”

Jim could tell who Bones was thinking of. He reached out and grabbed Bones’ arm supportively.
“Hey. This isn’t you and Jocelyn.” Jim gave his arm a squeeze before dropping it. “He’s my older brother, and before all of this we were close. Hell, maybe there’s even a part of me that I’ve been ignoring that’s been wondering how he’s been doing.”

“It’s your choice.” Bones still didn’t look convinced. “But just know that if it’s the brother thing you’re hung up on, I think I know a literal ship load of people ready to offer themselves up as surrogate siblings for you.”

“I know.” Jim smiled. “And let me guess, you’re first in line?”

Bones snorted. “Acting like we aren’t already family in every sense but legal is an insult to our friendship.”

“True enough.” Jim nodded then thought for a second. “How would we legally become siblings anyways? Is there some sort of fraternal adoption procedure? I know marriage would work, but I hope you won’t take it personally if I said I have other people I’d rather marry.”

“You and me both.” Bones paused, not looking up from his padd but still considering it to humor Jim if nothing else. “It’d be harder now that we’re adults, but I imagine it would have to be through parental adoption.”

“Makes sense.” Jim paused. “Would we talk my ma into adopting you or would I have to become a McCoy?”

Bones looked up at Jim at that, his expression so deadpan Jim had to prevent himself from laughing. “You clearly don’t know me as well as you claim to if you think I’m getting sucked any further into that high-drama Kirk clan than I already am.” He looked back at his padd and continued scribbling. “Besides, you already have a standing invitation to Georgia, you know that.”

“I know.” Jim smiled. “I think I’ll keep the Kirk though, I like the ring of it.”

“That’s just because you can’t consider the hobgoblin’s family name cuz you can’t say it, nor can any normal human.” Bones only looked up from his padd to check the stats on the biobed.

“He’d probably help me with it.” Jim thought a second. “Plus, I think Uhura can say it.”

Bones looked up, unimpressed. “I think we’d both agree that she’s not exactly a normal human when it comes to languages, and that we mean that in the best way possible.”

“True.” Jim nodded then looked at Bones. “Anything on my schedule today?”

“Let me see.” Bones flipped though the padd. “Nothing I can see. Just another day recovering in the finest facilities the Federation has to offer.” Jim couldn’t tell if he was being sarcastic or not; had Bones become attached enough to Sickbay to prefer it to a planetside hospital?

“Alright.” Jim settled against the pillow. “Keep it that way. The only person I want to see today, besides medical people and Spock probably, is Sam.”

“Can do.” Bones tapped his padd some. “Anything else?”

“Nah, I’m good.” Jim reached over for one of his books. “I’ll just read a while.”

He heard Bones mumbling a goodbye, but Jim was already getting absorbed in his story. It lasted a little while, but then he felt his eyes growing heavy and his grip weakening until the book slowly drooped until it rested against his chest. A nap would be a good way to pass the time…
This time when he woke up with Sam by his bedside, he was ready.

Chapter End Notes

Always interesting to get different perspectives on the same issue. It was fun considering Bones and Spock and how they’d oppose each other on this and why. And as always, I’m shamelessly stealing Jim and Bones’ dynamic from me and my best friend. Can you guess which one is me?
Happy last update of March everyone! Also somehow this passed 1701 kudos (which is freaking wild; how many of you are there?) without me getting to make a joke about it, so know that I would have if I weren't so out of it last week and the start of this week. Again, you're all awesome and I love you.

No warnings this time; just Jim and Sam talking...

Despite seeming relaxed while he’d been staring out the window, Sam tensed when he noticed Jim looking at him. “Hi.”

“Hey Sam.” Jim could feel himself tensing as well. But then he remembered something and patted his chest. “Where’d my book go? I was reading it before I fell asleep; I had it in my hand…”

“It’s over there.” Jim looked at Sam and followed where he was pointing; *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* was now sitting on the bedside table, the page Jim had been on marked even though the book was closed. “I remembered that as a kid you hated it when the spine got broken or the pages got bent, so…” Sam trailed off and looked nervous. “Was I overstepping? Is that even something that you care about anymore?”

Jim smiled a little despite himself. “It’s ok. And that is something I still care about; especially for that one since it was a gift from someone even more particular about that sort of thing than me. Are you still dog-earring pages and scribbling in the margins?”

Sam smiled. “I mostly keep up with the times and do digital these days, but if I do come across a hard copy I’ve been known to fold the page corners on occasion. It drives Aurie about as nuts as it used to drive you.” Sam leaned in a bit. “Whatever happened to the old Kirk library anyways?”

“You mean the Kirk bookshelf that was maybe half full?” Jim smiled slightly at the thought of it, but he was distracted by other thoughts that it brought up too. “It’s still back at the farmhouse, but the books are mostly in my room now. I brought them upstairs to keep them away from Frank when he was in his…moods, and it also helped keep me away from him if I was just in my room reading, or saying I was reading when I was sneaking out the window. I never bothered to move them back once he was out of the picture.”

At the mention of Frank, the tension that had eased out of the room returned. There was uneasy silence for a moment, then the brothers spoke at the same time.

“Listen, Jim, I really wanted to—”

“Sam, I really wanted to say—”

They looked between each other for a second, and then Jim gestured at Sam. “You go first.”

“Alright.” Sam ran a hand down his face and leaned forward, looking more at his hands clasped in his lap than at Jim. “I just wanted to say…” He took a deep breath and looked up at Jim. “I shouldn’t
have left you behind with Frank. I’m sorry about that, you have to believe me. I just…” He trailed off, looking back at his hands, which were fidgeting uneasily. “I was just thinking about getting away from Frank. I wasn’t really thinking about you, and I should have considered it. But I just needed to get away, and it seemed like dragging my kid brother along would attract too much attention and we’d both get thrown back with Frank. So I decided to leave on my own.” He looked at Jim again. “I’m sorry.”

“Thank you.” Jim looked away from his brother to where his own hands were fidgeting in his own lap. Time to get out everything he’d been ruminating over. “To be entirely honest, I don’t know if I can fully forgive you for leaving me with Frank and not trying to get help. Not now, at least. That was years of suffering that you could have prevented, but you didn’t.” Jim looked up; Sam looked a little crestfallen, but there also seemed to be a part of him that was expecting this. “But…” There was some hope in Sam’s eyes and Jim sighed. “I can see now that I might have been too harsh on you yesterday. I can’t blame you for trying to get away from Frank; anyone would want to. So if you genuinely want to try reconnecting, I’m… I’m not opposed. I might even want it too on some level. I don’t think things could ever get back to where we once were, to how close we were as kids, but I’m willing to try at least not pretending the other doesn’t exist anymore.”

Sam smiled, the relief flowing off of him in waves. “I’d like that too. I’d like that a lot. It’s more than I thought I’d get.” Sam looked like he kinda wanted to get up and hug Jim, but held back. “So where do we start? We have a lot to catch up on.”

Jim shrugged. “Maybe start with the basics now and go into detail later?” Jim thought a second. “You mentioned someone else who got annoyed with your book habits? Tell me about them.”

“Only if you tell me about whoever is giving you books.” When Jim nodded, Sam smiled wider. “Great. It’s a deal. I’ll start, I owe you that much.” Sam pushed his hair back from his face and his grin turned a little dopey. “So my book lover is Aurelan; I met her in undergrad when she was studying literature and I was still figuring out which area of biology I wanted to focus on. We pretty quickly figured out that we made each other age, and we got hitched after graduation.” He smiled sheepishly at Jim. “I’m actually not even Sam Kirk anymore; I took her name.”

It was an odd thought for Jim to consider, but he still felt himself smiling at his brother. “Honestly, it seems like it was good for you. You seem happy now.”

“I am.” Sam smiled. “Me, Aurie, and the boys are out on one of the colonies. Maybe you’ll be able to swing by in that star ship of yours and meet the family.”

Jim was about to joke about the Enterprise being not quite his to do what he pleased with (even though he’d swing it if he could) when something else occurred to him. “Wait, what do you mean by the boys?”

“Right!” Sam looked surprised, like he’d forgotten something important. “My sons. Aurie and I started pretty early; our oldest, Peter, is already starting grade school.”

“Damn.” Jim ran a hand down his face and laughed in disbelief. He pointed at Sam. “You’re a father?” Sam nodded and Jim pointed at himself. “That means I’m an uncle, right?”

Sam smiled. “If you want to be.” He paused and looked a little hesitant. “I haven’t really told the boys about it much because they’re big fans of yours and I didn’t want them to go bragging about it and then ask me questions I wouldn’t know how to answer, but if you want to meet them…”

“Yes, of course I do.” Jim grinned. “Maybe I’ll even be able to swing a tour of the Enterprise. Gotta secure that top uncle spot somehow, right?”
“I think it’ll be yours forever if you do that.” Sam smiled, more gently this time. “But tell me about yourself now; I’ve been following your exploits some, but not too closely cuz it felt like I didn’t have the right, you know?”

“Yeah.” And on a certain level, Jim felt like he did get it. “But it doesn’t have to be like that. Course from now on you’ll be able to get the inside scoop, at least for whatever Starfleet lets me tell.”

Sam nodded. “I think you have a cooler life than me. You definitely took after Ma and Dad more.”

“Nah.” Jim smiled. “We kinda split what they did; you took the settling down and having kids maybe too early,” he smiled wider at Sam’s annoyed look, “and I took Starfleet. Might be best to keep them separate anyways.”

“Yeah.” A more somber feeling descended over the room at that, but after a moment Sam looked back at Jim. “But it’s not like you’re totally alone. Who’s your book lover?”

“Right.” Jim looked over at the copy of Alice in Wonderland on the bedside table and tried not to smile too much. He looked back at Sam. “I found my soulmate too. We had a bit of a rough time working it out, but Spock and I just got together and it’s been great so far.”

“Spock?” Sam looked confused, but then it cleared. “As in Commander Spock, your first officer?”

“Yeah.” Jim smiled sheepishly. “It’s still new though, so keep it quiet.”

Sam smiled. “Will do. Not like I really have anyone here to tell anyways; the only other person I’ve talked to is that grumpy doctor who I think is also part of your crew. McCoy I think?”

“Bones!” Jim grinned. “Yeah, he’s great. He’s like a brother to me.” Jim froze, realizing how that could have sounded.

But when he looked over at Sam, his brother was smiling still, if wistfully. “It’s ok, Jim. I’m glad you found a family.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled back. “Honestly, I’m glad you did too. After what we’ve been through, we’ve earned it.” Sam snorted in agreement and Jim grinned wider before reaching out to slap his arm to make him look at Jim again. “Now tell me about this whole sitcom setup you have going on; if I’m gonna be the favorite uncle and brother-in-law I’ll need to be able to match the names up right when I meet them.”

Sam laughed. “Gladly.”

As he launched into his explanation and started pulling holopics from his pocket, Jim felt himself relax. He and his brother would probably never be quite as close as they were before Frank, and they may never fully be over the damage caused by Frank, but it seemed like they’d be ok anyways.

Chapter End Notes

For some reason Sam seems like he’d be the 23rd century version of that dad who carries pictures of his kids in his wallet. Or maybe just on the 23rd century version of a smartphone/camera phone. Still, he just has pictures with him

Also, Jim and Sam might have mostly worked things out, but I imagine him running into
Spock and Bones going something like this: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIVV3PEImbE (I couldn't find a better version than this for some reason. The Thor movies are so underappreciated, even if I'll admit this one wasn't great)
Jim’s time in Starfleet Medical slowly but surely kept passing. He was getting better too; he could go longer without feeling like he needed to sleep and his physical therapy was progressing, even if it would probably be a while for him to get back to the kind of shape he’d been in pre-warp core.

Still, the best part of his hospital stay (besides that he’d eventually get out and get back to his ship and the stars) was probably the visitors. They certainly made everything more bearable.

He mostly got the usual mix of visitors from the crew, but every now and then he got someone different. Today was one of those days.

Jim looked up from the padd he’d been boredly playing a game on (he’d need new reading material or something soon; he’d already gotten through what people had brought him) and tried to hide his surprise at who came through the door. “Ma?”

Winona smiled at him, looking amused. “Jimmy, I know we don’t exactly keep up normal family visiting schedules, but I think death or near-death warrants a visit. My ship finally got close to Earth, so I figured I’d swing by.” She leaned in and gave him a hug (which he returned since Bones had finally grumblingly allowed him more freedom of movement after passing a certain level of physical therapy). Once she was settled in the seat next to him, she looked him over. “How’re you feeling?”

Jim shrugged. “Better than I was. Still, Bones says they might hold me a while longer to see if there’s any residual effects of the radiation.”

“Probably for the best.” Winona nodded.

“Yeah.” There was silence a moment before Jim looked back at Winona. “What about you? How’ve you been?”

Winona sighed and rolled her shoulders. “Busy.” She looked at Jim and smiled, but it was a little strained. “Starfleet stuff.”

Part of Jim wanted to ask if she meant Section 31 stuff, but he got the feeling that he wouldn’t get an honest answer, or would just be told he shouldn’t ask. So he decided to change the topic. “Guess who came to see me a while back?”

“Sam?” Something about the way she said it made it seem like she already knew.

“Yeah.” Now Jim was curious. “How’d you know?”

Winona hesitated for a moment before replying. “He told me.”
Well, that confirmed some of Jim’s suspicions. He hadn’t asked Sam, but... “So you have been in touch with him. How long?”

Winona leaned back with a sigh, running a hand through her hair and grabbing it a bit at the crown of her head. “Since basically as soon as I was able to find him after he ran away.” She looked at Jim, more serious than usual. “It was probably within half a year of when it happened, but he was always vague with the details of why he ran away so I can’t be sure.”

Jim had half a mind to tell her that he could provide the date Sam ran away easily enough since it was a pretty memorable day for him, but he decided to try to keep the conversation moving instead. He had more pressing questions. “Why did you never tell me you were in touch with him?”

There was a long pause. “I don’t know.” Winona sighed and looked away. “It just seemed like…” She looked back at Jim. “Whenever I called, you seemed tightlipped about him, and he barely seemed to mention you either. I sortof assumed you two had some sort of falling out, and without more details I didn’t want to pry or try to force a reunion. I figured that if either of you asked I’d give the info for tracking the other down, but it didn’t feel like my place…” Winona trailed off, looking distracted. “In retrospect, that seems like a questionable decision to make for a couple of kids who were preteens at best. But at the time it seemed okay, and as time passed neither of you made any move to try to fix things, so I just sortof…” She shrugged. “I let it slip my mind.” Winona paused, seeming a bit reluctant when she finally spoke. “I was the one who told him about you dying—or almost dying, I guess—though. It seemed like he should know.”

“Huh.” Jim wasn’t sure how to feel about what she’d just told him. How would he have felt if she’d tried to force a reunion between him and Sam? Would he have accepted it? Would Sam? It probably would have depended on how old they were, and if Frank was still in the picture. Which made Jim come up with more uncomfortable questions that he felt he had to ask. “Did he ever mention…”

“No.” There was a touch of anger in Winona’s eyes, but Jim knew exactly where it was directed. “When I asked, he just said Riverside was too stifling and he needed to find somewhere new.” Winona looked uncharacteristically serious still, maybe even a little sad. “That had always been my excuse, so I assumed he was also starting to get haunted by the ghost of George Kirk too and didn’t push.” She let out a regretful laugh. “Maybe I should have.” She looked at Jim, completely earnest. “You have to understand, Jim, if I had known any sooner—”

“I know.” It was a conversation the two of them had had many times before.

Before they could fall into the routine, the door opened again. Spock took a few steps inward then paused. “Hello. I did not realize Jim had a visitor. Would you like me to leave?”

Jim looked at Winona, who shrugged. He turned back to Spock. “No, come on in.”

“Thank you.” Spock came in and walked to Jim’s bedside opposite Winona and started to drop his hand to Jim’s, but paused. “Have you informed her?”

“Not yet.” Jim looked up at Spock questioningly. “Did you want to?”

Spock’s reply was cut off by Winona. “Oh did you two finally get together?”

“What?” Jim looked up at Spock, but he merely raised his eyebrow.

“Oh come on.” Winona looked between them with her own eyebrows raised, seeming unimpressed. “Jim already told me you two were soulmates. When I got here I saw Lieutenant Uhura, who had been Spock’s girlfriend, getting awfully cozy with a nurse who seemed to be just coming off shift.
That made it seem like Spock was single, which would mean Jimmy here would have his chance. Add in the kind of dramatic circumstances that tend to lead to confessions and we’ve got a recipe for a relationship starter.”

Jim looked up at Spock, who seemed a bit impressed. “Logical.” He looked down at Jim. “I have already informed my mother.”

Jim shrugged. “Fair enough.” He brought his hand up to Spock’s before looking at Winona. “You’re right. We are together.”

Winona grinned. “I’m so happy for you!” Her expression settled into something more satisfied. “Both of my boys have found happy endings. I think I did well.”

A thought occurred to Jim. “So does that mean you already know about—”

“My daughter-in-law and grandchildren?” Winona looked at Jim expectantly. “Of course. I’ve met them.”

“Just checking.” Jim smiled. He looked up at Spock. “Did I mention that I apparently have a sister-in-law and some nephews I need to meet?”

Spock looked surprised. “You did not.”

“Huh.” Jim smiled at Spock. “We’ll have to see if we can swing the Enterprise by the colony they’re at so we can meet them.”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded, starting to slowly slide his fingers along Jim’s.

“Damn, if you two have started kissing maybe I need to leave.” They both turned back to Winona and their hands stilled out of embarrassment, but she just smiled. “Don’t freak out, I support it.” She turned to Spock, taking on a serious expression that even Jim couldn’t tell if it was mock serious or real. “Still, as Jim’s parent I’m obligated to tell you that if you hurt him, they’ll never find the body.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I have no ill intentions toward your son; I also seek to protect him.”

“Good.” Winona smiled, but Jim was still a bit embarrassed by his mother.

“C’mon Ma, did you have to?” He looked at her imploringly. “Does anyone actually think those threats are truthful anymore?”

Winona shrugged causally. “They never found Frank.”

There was a part of Jim that really, really wanted to know. “What?”

Jim could tell that Spock was a little intrigued too, and yet…”Captain, I believe it may legally be best if we know as little as possible.”

Winona smirked. “Looks like you got a smart one, Jimmy.” She stood up and gestured for Spock to take her chair. “I’ll probably be back eventually, but for now I’ll leave you lovebirds alone.” She walked out with a wave. “Bye!”

Jim returned it before looking back at Spock, who had settled into the seat Winona just left and seemed deep in thought. Jim squeezed his hand to get his attention. “So, that was my Ma.”

“She is an…intriguing woman.” Spock looked at Jim, still a little distracted but settling in.
Jim tried his best charming grin. “Does meeting her explain me some?”

A corner of Spock’s lips and one eyebrow quirked up. “Perhaps.”

Jim broke into a genuine grin. “Have I said lately that I love your sense of humor?”

“Perhaps.” There was a little more amusement to Spock’s voice.

Jim shook his head, still smiling. “Shut up and kiss me.”

Spock’s hand and lips met his and Jim tried not to let his smile disrupt the kiss.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, the honeymoon stage. It seems to be treating our boys well.

Anyways, someone asked for me to mention it here when I posted something to the extra scenes, so if you're interested check out the new chapter there and subscribe there if you want more random scenes mostly related to this fic. Enjoy!
Chapter 165

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I think we're starting to reach the end of Jim's time in the hospital. Apparently in the movie timeline he spends a full year recovering, but we're probably gonna skip around some. Also, since I mentioned it here, the response to the extra scenes basically doubled, so I hope you all enjoyed! The comments there technically tripled since there had been one comment (not counting my responses), so shoutout to all three of you commenters, as well as everyone else leaving feedback and reading there and here. You're the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Winona ended up spending a good chunk of her time visiting Jim and stayed for a while. It was surprisingly nice to catch up with her, even if they were mostly swapping Starfleet stories. Still, even though it started to feel like they were interacting like old crewmates, Winona would sometimes do things that definitely reminded Jim that she was still his mother. Like when she offered to help with his physical therapy.

“Ma, no.” Jim crossed his arms. They were going to transport him to his physical therapy session soon. “I swear I don’t need your help with this.”

Winona shrugged and smiled playfully. “What, I helped you get walking the first time around. I can help now.”

“It’s not like I don’t know how to walk.” Jim made a face. “It’s just that the dying then coma then everything else apparently really weakens you, and then you have to rebuild that strength.”

“Makes sense.” Winona made a considering face and then nodded. “Still, it could be fun to see if you fall more awkwardly now than you did as a toddler.”

“Ma!” Jim wasn’t sure whether to laugh or get annoyed, but he was saved from having to respond when Bones walked in. “Bones! Are you here to take me away?”

“Someone’s eager today.” Bones raised an eyebrow but quickly let it drop. “But I am.” He turned to Winona. “Sorry Mrs. Kirk, you’ll have to head out now. You can come back and visit Jim later.”

“Commander Kirk.” Winona looked unimpressed, but dropped it after a moment. “Or Winona if you want. But just because I’m here for personal reasons and out of uniform doesn’t mean I’m not still Starfleet.”

“Really Ma?” Jim looked at her incredulously. “What, are you trying to pull rank on Bones?” Jim tried not to laugh when his friend objected, still looking at Winona.

“Nah.” Winona shrugged good naturedly. “I mean I have earned the right, but if we started messing with rank you could act all high and mighty and then I’d have to call in Chris to put you back in your place.”

Now it was Bones muffling his laughter as Jim ran a hand down his face. “Alright, let’s not do that
then. We don’t need to drag Pike into this.”

Winona smiled. “He’d probably be amused. And plus, as much as he’s half-adopted you—which
reminds me, he told me to remind you about visiting him for dinner once you’re out—I bet he’d still
side with me.”

“That could be true.” They both turned toward Bones. “Regardless of whatever else, kids should
listen to their parents. Within reason at least.”

Winona grinned. “Jimmy, I like your friends.”

Bones smiled back. “Thanks, ma’am.”

“Alright.” Jim sat further up. “Before you two start swapping parenting stories, or baby pictures, or
whatever, I think I need to leave.”

“Hmm.” Bones pulled something up on the padd he brought. “Looks like you do. I’ll check in with
you later, Jim.”

Jim had never been more glad to go to physical therapy.

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When he got back, Spock was in the room. A little tired but still feeling good from his physical
therapy session, Jim grinned and spoke without fully thinking. “Hey babe.”

Spock raised an eyebrow but helped Jim settle onto the biobed comfortably and accepted his kiss
anyways. “I am not an infant.”

Jim could tell that Spock probably knew what he meant, but still, had he really not started using pet
names or nicknames yet? In his past relationships (not that he’d had too many serious ones) he’d
started using them pretty quickly. “I know that.” He smiled at Spock. “Have I really not called you
anything but your name since we started dating?”

Spock paused. “You have not referred to me with any term that you did not also use prior to the start
of our relationship.”

“Huh.” Jim leaned back, shifting a bit, before looking back at Spock. “Well if you don’t mind, I
might start doing it more. It may be a weird human way of showing affection, but I kinda like it.”

Spock’s eyes were warm in that way Jim loved. “I do not mind. And I am not unfamiliar with the
concept of terms to show affection; there are many in Vulcan, although they have largely fallen out
of favor since pre-Surakian times due to their blatant emotionalism. Additionally, my mother does
occasionally refer to my father as ‘darling,’ although typically only when they are in private or
among non-Vulcans.”

“I’m not gonna lie, that’s kindof adorable.” Jim grinned. “And I’m kinda hoping that I’ll hear some
of those Vulcan terms of affection someday.”

“You may.” The corner of Spock’s lip twitched up slightly and his hand reached down, fingers
extended, to run along Jim’s.

Jim returned the gesture, hoping Spock could feel how happy he was now and feeling like he could
somehow. “I’m glad.” Spock’s hand paused and Jim began to move his hand, copying Spock’s
movements in a way that he thought was smoother than it had been before, not that Spock had ever
complained. “It’s good to know that that’s not unique to humans. Even if you’ve already been exposed to some weird human things, like my ma jokingly threatening you.”

Spock raised an eyebrow consideringly. “I am not certain that the remark was entirely in jest, although as it was contingent on my harming you I am unlikely to find out.”

“Yeah, it’s a bit of antiquated thing, from back when there were more guns than people in the US and parents were overprotective of their kids’ love lives, especially for daughters.” Jim paused for a moment, lost in thought and stopping his hand without thinking of it, although Spock took over. “Do you think your mom would give me the shovel talk?”

Spock raised an eyebrow and was about to respond, but a voice from the door spoke before he could.

“Nah, she’s too classy; she’d probably get someone else to take you out. If she really wanted to though, she could probably get someone through the Vulcan embassy though.” Winona had been leaning by the door with her arms crossed, but after that she slowly walked into the room until she was by the biobed opposite Spock. “But then again, you are her baby, right? They say parents get more attached to their youngest, and if I remember our conversation about kids from years back you are the only one who’s her flesh and blood…”

Jim was a bit surprised at his mom’s presence and dropped his hand from Spock’s, but Spock merely raised an eyebrow at what she said. “My mother does not display favoritism between Michael and myself.”

Winona raised an eyebrow right back. “Doesn’t mean she doesn’t have a favorite.”

“Ma!” Jim crossed his arms. “What, do you have a favorite between me and Sam? Also, how long were you standing there?”

“I can’t tell you if I have a favorite.” Winona looked a little indignant, but softened a moment later. “And not long. I don’t exactly make a habit of watching my kids make out with their significant others.” When Jim went a little red at that, she grinned and ruffled his hair before looking back at Spock. “And don’t worry Spock, I do approve of you and Jim, not that you two need my approval.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “That was not the concern I expressed.”

Winona only grinned in response before turning back to Jim. “Anyways, I’m shipping out tomorrow. My ship’s passing close to Earth and if I don’t catch them now, it’ll be a long ride in a transport and they’ll be too long without their best engineer. So I figured I’d stop by and say bye.”

“Oh, ok.” Jim held his arms up for a hug, which Winona returned. “It was good seeing you.”

“You too, Jimmy.” Winona gave him an extra squeeze before letting go. She straightened up and tucked a stray lock of hair behind her ear. “I’m glad that your recovery seems to be going well; I bet you’ll be back in the captain’s chair in no time. The next time we see each other might be out in the black.”

Jim nodded. “Could be.” He straightened up a bit. “Still, we’ll probably talk over subspace or something.”

“Sounds good.” Winona nodded at Spock. “Good seeing you too, Spock.”

He nodded. “You as well, Commander Kirk.”
She laughed. “You’re dating my son. Unless we meet on duty, it’s Winona, Commander Spock.”

“Noted.” Winona seemed to get Spock’s humor, because she smiled before turning to leave the room.

Once she was gone, Jim turned to Spock. “So what now?” Despite himself, he yawned.

“Do you need to rest?” Spock looked over at Jim’s table-turned-bookshelf. “I can read to you if you’d like.”

“That sounds nice. No promises I’ll stay awake though; your reading voice is really relaxing.” Jim settled down on the biobed as Spock settled more comfortably into the chair.

“If you require sleep, do not deny yourself for my sake.” Spock waited until Jim nodded in agreement before picking up one of the books and opening it to the marked page.

Despite his promise to Spock, Jim tried to stay awake for a little longer. Still, he soon found himself slipping into peaceful dreams.

Chapter End Notes

It'll be a little bit before we see Winona again. Still, I have at least one little arc planned for her, even if I have it going after some of the others I have semi-planned...
Chapter 166

Chapter Notes

Well, if my math's right yesterday marked 19 months of this fic! Which is exciting and weird all at once. At least they're finally together, huh? Anyways, once again, thanks to everyone who's been with me since the start (that's some admirable dedication), everyone who's joined along the way (the people who read this all in short amounts of time are probably not to be messed with), and anyone who'll find this later (if you haven't already, take a break for food, sleep, or whatever else you need). You're all gods, goddesses, or deities of whatever gender applies. Anyways, if you're dedicated to being here til the end (whenever that ends up being), I salute you. You rock!

It was finally time for Jim to be released from Starfleet Medical. He still wasn’t cleared for duty and had to do more physical therapy and medical check ins, but he could at least get back to his own apartment and out of this hospital room. His stuff had already been cleared out and sent back there, and Jim would be back there soon. He was excited for it and hoped that soon enough he could at least start picking up some of his regular duties; he wanted to know how his ship was doing beyond Scotty’s informal reports. He really just wanted to do anything related to ship’s business; he never thought he’d miss paperwork, but he’d even willingly start looking over forms now without grumbling.

But here he was on the biobed for one last set of readings. At least he was allowed to wear normal clothes now instead of the hospital clothes he’d had to wear earlier on. He started to shift into a more comfortable position only to get his arm slapped by Bones.

“Stop fidgeting. It gets better readings when you’re still.” Bones continued looking over the biobed readings and making notes on his padd. “I know you’re ready to leave, but can you please cooperate a little longer?”

“Fine.” Jim did his best to keep still but looked over at Spock, who was waiting to accompany Jim when he was released. “Got anything planned for once I’m finally free?”

Spock was about to speak, but before a word left his mouth he was interrupted.

“Can you please discuss this later?” Bones looked up from his padd, exasperated. “I don’t want to know what you do in your free time. I mean, between being Jim’s roommate, best friend, and doctor I already know more than I probably would have ever wanted to know, but there are some details I don’t need to know.”

“I didn’t mean like that!” Jim tried to sit up only to get pushed back down by Bones; he crossed his arms and only got mild grumbling in response. He grinned. “But now that you’ve brought it up, Spock and I have been together for a little while now, and I’m not normally the type to take things slow, so—”

“Yep.” Bones didn’t look up from his padd.

“I didn’t even finish my sentence!” Jim looked over at Bones, who gave him a flat look over the top
of his padd.

“We both know I knew where you were going with that sentence. Hell, even the hobgoblin himself knew probably. Right Spock?” Bones looked at Spock but only got an unimpressed eyebrow raise in response; Spock was probably still annoyed at getting interrupted, not that he’d admit it. Bones rolled his eyes. “Whatever. You can’t do anything to get your heart rate up until you’re cleared for it. You died of acute radiation poisoning only months ago and barely made it back; we don’t need you straining your system.”

Like Jim wasn’t aware of that. “I’ve already started exercise in physical therapy though.”

“Yes, in a controlled, medically monitored setting where we can beam you to a waiting medical team the instant you need it.” Bones crossed his arms, padd dangling from one hand. “On your own, you should not do anything to raise your heart rate.”

Jim smirked. “Well I wouldn’t be alone—”

“Nope.” Bones was immune to his smirk now. Damn.

“But—”

“A-n-y-thing.” Bones sighed and rolled his neck. He looked back at Jim, softening a bit after a moment. “Look kid, I know how long you two have waited for this.” He looked seriously between Jim and Spock before settling on Jim. “But you’ll have to take it slow a little while longer. I’ll let you know when you’re cleared for...strenuous activities, but for the love of god spare me the details when that happens. Understand?”

Jim nodded. “I understand.”

Bones looked at Spock. “And you?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I would not endanger the Captain.”

Bones rolled his eyes. “I know you know his first name, Spock. No need for formality.” Bones tapped something and looked up from the padd. “Well, you are officially good to go. No need to hack the system to get your release like I know you’ve been itching to do.”

Jim laughed. “I wouldn’t do that.”

“You do have a history of hacking Starfleet systems.” Spock raised an eyebrow, but a moment later softened it with a slight upturn of his lips.

Jim grinned. “You still holding that against me?”

“As it led to our initial meeting, I find I cannot.” Spock reached down and began to slowly run his fingers along Jim’s.

“Aww.” Jim began to move his hand to match Spock’s, but a loud throat-clearing drew his attention away.

“Look, I know not everyone knows how Vulcans kiss, but I do, so please do that elsewhere.” Bones looked annoyed, but Jim knew he was happy for them deep down.

“Alright.” Jim separated his hand from Spock’s and sat up and swung his legs off the side of the biobed in preparation to get off, but stopped and turned towards Bones. “Wait, one last thing.”
“Oh god.” Bones pinched the bridge of his nose. “What now?”

“Relax, it’s a different topic.” Jim shifted more towards Bones. “How do you feel about another nurse in Sickbay?”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “Is this about Chapel? Because she’s been nothing but great to work with and I know how she and Nyota are; I definitely wouldn’t say no if her transfer request crossed my desk.”

“Awesome.” Jim grinned. “Obviously it’s whatever she wants, but if she and Nyota want to be posted together, I’d much rather gain an amazing nurse than lose an incredible communications officer.”

Bones nodded. “With how much you idiots get injured, I’ll never say no to more help in Sickbay, especially from people as qualified as her. Did you hear about her research background yet? It’s damn impressive.”

“I hadn’t but I’ll take your word for it; if she charmed Nyota so well she’s gotta be pretty amazing.” Jim finally pushed off the bed. “Glad we’re in agreement then; feel free to mention that the Enterprise has a spot waiting for her if she wants it since you’re more likely to see her than me now.”

“Will do.” Bones was making a note in his padd. “I’ll see you at your next check-in; if you have any problems you know how to reach me.”

“And I have for years now.” He turned and waved. “Bye Bones!” At the door, Jim paused and smiled again. “You know, being alone with Spock in my own place, it’s gonna be awfully difficult to follow those orders of yours…”

He didn’t even look up from his padd. “I know where you live, have an access code, and am not afraid to hypo you until you can’t move.” Bones finally looked up. “Just get out of here, Jim.”

Jim laughed and let Spock lead him out. When they were in the turbolift to the level where the aircar would meet them, Spock turned to Jim.

“Are you truly so eager to begin amorous activities?” From anyone else, the question might sound blunt or judgmental, but Jim knew Spock was just curious.

“Nah.” Jim grinned. “I mean don’t get me wrong, I find you incredibly attractive and have definitely imagined what it would be like, especially since we’ve gotten together, but I know the importance of me recovering, and I’m willing to wait til you’re ready and comfortable.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Then why the repeated inquiries?”

Jim shrugged. “Partially curiosity, partially just because it’s fun to mess with Bones.” Jim grinned again. “Don’t act like you don’t get that; I’ve seen you two bicker. You know how fun it is to get a rise out of him, especially when he’s playing along and dishing it right back.”

Spock raised an eyebrow consideringly. “Perhaps.” He did that little half-smile thing Jim loved.

If Jim ended up kissing him until the turbolift opened and they had to leave to get to the aircar that would take them to Jim’s apartment, well neither of them would complain.

Chapter End Notes
We'll probably only have a few more chapters til they're back in space. I won't promise pure fluff going forward, but basically any angst will be problems they face together rather than problems between them. I don't know how much longer this will go tbh; I have three or four little arcs semi-planned out. Is there anything people want to see?
Chapter 167

When they finally got to the apartment, Jim hated to admit that he was feeling a little tired. He was half tempted to use it to make Spock carry him into the apartment, but he decided not to. For one thing, he’d never hear the end of it if he admitted to Spock or Bones that he’d strained himself on his first day out of the hospital. He didn’t want to go back; he was going stir crazy cooped up in there. Plus, the whole “carry your lover across the threshold” thing felt too wedding-y. And while Jim was pretty damn sure he loved Spock at this point, he wasn’t even ready to say the words yet, let alone make a big step like that.

So he settled for following Spock’s lead of kicking off his shoes by the door and then plopping down on his couch as Spock went to the replicator in the kitchen to make himself some tea. Jim smiled at how comfortable Spock already was in his apartment. He leaned in as Spock settled onto the chair next to the couch. “You know, we could get you some real stuff if you want. I know my cooking equipment is limited, but there might be an old kettle somewhere back there.”

“The replicated tea is satisfactory.” Spock carefully took a sip. “Additionally, it is difficult to get the precise correct temperature with an unfamiliar kettle.”

“Fair enough, but if you give it some time it could become a familiar kettle.” Jim got up and couldn’t resist giving Spock a peck on the cheek as he passed by to get himself something to drink. “Just saying.” He glanced over his shoulder and smiled at Spock, who had turned to look at him.

“True, although soon we will return to the Enterprise, where neither of us have space to use anything beyond a replicator.” Spock sipped his tea again and watched Jim. “Are you getting a beverage compliant with Dr. McCoy’s current dietary restrictions?”

Jim groaned. “Yes, I am.” He brought it back to the couch and sat back down, getting comfortable. “What, were you going to tell on me if it wasn’t?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I too care for your health, Jim.”

“I know.” Jim made a face. “Still, I think Bones sometimes makes my diets stricter than they need to be.”

“He is an accomplished medical professional.” Spock sipped his tea. “However, I do not believe it would be entirely out of character for him to be stricter than necessary with your health.”

Jim ginned. “Glad you get it babe.” He settled back onto the table. “So, what do you have planned
for me?”

Spock picked up a nearby padd and began going through it. “I will not be able to stay with you often, as several members of the crew, myself included, have taken local assignments while the ship is repaired and updated and you recover. I have resumed my position as an instructor at the Academy, so I will not be able to spend much of the weekday daytime with you. However, there are still many people who wish to visit you, so it is unlikely you will be unaccompanied for long.” He held up the padd. “This is the most current schedule.”

Jim took it and looked through it; it was pretty extensive. “Bones really wants to make sure I’m not left alone to somehow spontaneously drop dead, huh?”

“That there are many people who would consider that unfortunate.” Spock took the padd from Jim and looked it over. “However, it would appear that there are no planned visitors for this afternoon, and it is just you and I.”

“Oh yeah?” Jim shifted closer, tempted to reach out to Spock even though he knew what he had in mind was off the table. “What do you have planned?”

Spock raised an eyebrow like he knew what Jim was thinking; he probably did in all honesty. “I have spoken with Lieutenant Gaila about programs you like, both old motion pictures and newer holovideos. I have selected some that I believe I would also enjoy.”

“Aww, that’s so sweet.” Jim smiled and reached a hand out to briefly run his fingers along Spock’s where they rested on his knee. “And I think I can speak for her to say that Gaila would probably laugh at you mentioning the rank. Unless we’re on duty, she tends to keep things casual. She thinks it’s more fun that way.”

Spock raised an eyebrow and seemed a little stiff overall. “Noted.”

Jim had a stray thought and couldn’t help the grin that broke across his face. “Babe, are you jealous?”

Spock’s eyebrow went up higher. “Are you accusing me of reacting emotionally to a past partner of yours?”

“That wasn’t a denial.” When Spock looked away, Jim had to calm his reaction. He didn’t want to actually upset Spock, even though on a certain level it was amusing seeing his normally calm boyfriend get a little agitated. “Hey, don’t worry. Yes, she’s my friend, and yes, we’ve hooked up, but what she and I had was totally different from what I have with you, from what I want with you.” He let his hand rest over Spock’s and leaned in to kiss him on the cheek. “Spock. Look at me.” Jim waited til he had his boyfriend’s attention and gave his hand a squeeze, smiling at how it made him blush just slightly. “You’re literally my soulmate. We made each other age. So don’t worry; you’re the only green alien for me, babe. The only person of any color, species, or gender really.”

“That is quite the assurance to make.” Spock seemed to be coming back around to Jim some; he accepted the human-style kiss Jim offered him, and Jim felt Spock start to move their hands together as well.

Jim parted the kiss but kept their hands together and their faces just barely apart. “What prompted this anyways? Did you talk to Gaila about those other interests of mine she happens to know about?”

Spock broke the eye contact between them. “I was curious and she was quite willing to share. However, I had not realized how…extensive the history between you two was.”
“Hey.” Jim brought his hand up to Spock’s cheek and made Spock look at him again. “That was pretty much all back at the Academy before I even really knew you existed. Yeah, Gaila and I have a history. But you and I have a whole lot of time to make a history that’ll be even more…extensive.” Jim smirked.

Spock raised an eyebrow. “After Dr. McCoy has cleared you?”

“Ugh.” Jim dropped his head forward and Spock leaned slightly to avoid being hit in the face, resulting in Jim’s forehead resting on his shoulder. “Soon babe, soon. I’m gonna kill it at physical therapy.” He sat up again and shifted back from Spock. “On that note, maybe we should take a breather for a sec to make sure I don’t get too ‘excited.’ We can start with other parts of our history. Even if that stuff will be fun.” Their hands remained together on Spock’s lap, but the movement was gentle.

“Indeed.” Still, Spock didn’t shift backwards from where he was sitting on the front of the chair, closest to Jim’s spot on the couch.

Before either of them could say anything more, the door chimed.

Jim looked at Spock in confusion. “I thought you said we had the place to ourselves this afternoon.”

Spock seemed as confused as Jim. “There were no planned visitors.”

Chapter End Notes

In random fandom news, what do people think of the new Discovery castings? I’m a little bummed we’re not getting AOS Pike back, but the guy they cast does look a lot like TOS Pike (pre-accident at least, which makes sense). I don’t know the other person they cast, but it’s exciting that we’re on the road to season 2!

Anyways, back to the fic. Who’s at the door?
Hello everyone! Here’s your regular reminder that writing is weird sometimes. For example, today I’d planned a short, easy, funny chapter. Instead we have this thing that fought me to get written and resulted in explicitly revealing something I’d meant to keep mostly as subtext. So a Jim sortof-secret gets revealed this chapter; if anyone wants to play a comment game, jump to the end and comment with what you think the secret will be (it’s something I’ve kept in mind while writing and hinted at) and then edit your comment after you read with your reaction to the actual revelation. Playing this isn’t mandatory, but I think it could be fun, at least for me when I read the comments on Thursday. Either way, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim paused, resisting the temptation to lean in towards Spock. “Computer, identify visitor.”

There was a moment before the familiar voice responded. “Visitor is Ambassador Selek of New Vulcan.”

Jim relaxed and looked at Spock. “I’ll go let him in.” He got a nod from Spock and leaned in to kiss his cheek again on the way to the door since Spock seemed to have tensed up a little at the mention of his counterpart.

At the door, Jim hit the proper button and it slid open. He smiled at the man on the other side. “Selek!”

“Jim.” His face did that warm thing and he accepted the hug Jim offered him.

Jim pulled back after a moment and led him into the living area. “So, what brings my favorite Vulcan ambassador by?”

Spock had shifted to the couch with his arm across the back and greeted Jim with a raised eyebrow. “My father is also a Vulcan ambassador.”

“Yeah, but I don’t think he likes me much.” Jim sat next to Spock and settled against him as he turned to face Selek some. He and Spock hadn’t gotten to just sit together much, what with Jim being in the hospital, but Jim enjoyed that they still seemed to fit together as well as they had on those stolen moments on away missions when they’d needed to huddle together for whatever reason. He looked back at Spock. “I mean, Sarek’s first impression of me was goading his son into a murderous rage by taunting him about his presumed-dead mother, Sarek’s wife. And I’ve only met him like once since then, and then only briefly. Not exactly time to build up a good reputation.” Before Spock could respond, Jim looked at Selek. “Did we ever get along in your timeline?”

Selek raised an eyebrow. “You are aware that I have sworn not to reveal particulars of my timeline unless absolutely necessary, correct?”

Jim tried for a charming smile, but let it be a bit more natural than usual because this was still Spock, or a version of him. “Good thing I’m asking for generalities and not particulars then.”
“You were always one to find loopholes and...alternative interpretations of rules when necessary.” Selek smiled at Jim with that smile that was not quite full but still very warm and somehow very Spock, even if his own Spock wasn’t quite there yet. “Very well.” He took a moment to think before responding. “My versions of my father and Jim met under better circumstances. Still, my Jim still found my father intimidating, although he eventually won his approval and support.”

Jim nodded. “So maybe in a few decades then the way this timeline’s going.”

“Jim.” Spock’s free hand had slowly shifted to rest on Jim’s knee in a clear invitation for Jim’s to join his. “My parents will accept you. It is illogical and unVulcan to harbor negative feelings towards one’s child’s t’hy’la.”

“Whatever you say.” Still, Jim smiled and let his hand meet Spock’s. He still wasn’t quite sure what t’hy’la meant, even though from how he’d heard both Spocks say it now it was definitely a big deal. Jim grinned, ready to change the tone of the conversation a bit. “Still, even if me and Sarek start getting along, Selek may have the advantage. I may be a little biased toward Spocks.” Jim had to resist the urge to laugh at the pair of affectionately raised eyebrows in response to that. He leaned in and kissed Spock’s cheek in the human way again before remembering their visitor and looking back at Selek. He was so comfortable around the old man he forgot that Spock typically didn’t go for PDA.

Still, Spock hadn’t seemed to object and Selek just seemed to be giving off those happy-warm vibes again. “I have not had the opportunity to see the two of you together since the beginning of your relationship. I would like to congratulate you and wish you a mutually satisfying relationship.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled and Spock seemed grateful as well, not that the stubborn Vulcan would admit it probably. “Still, if what I saw in that meld was any indication, we’ve got the potential for a lot more than just ‘satisfying’.”

Spock’s arm that had been over the back of the couch dropped and tightened some over Jim’s shoulders. His focus on Jim was surprised and somewhat intense. “You have melded with my counterpart?”

“Yeah.” Jim looked between the Spocks. “It was back on Delta Vega when we first met; it was to convey information.”

Spock looked to Selek, who seemed calm despite his younger self’s changed attitude. “Initially, I performed a surface level meld to inform him about the danger posed by Nero in a more timely manner than a verbal explanation would allow. However, due to our minds’ relatively high compatibility due to our similarities to each other’s t’hy’las, as well as Jim’s apparently natural slight empathic abilities, meant that he detected more of my connection to his counterpart in my universe than I intended. He insisted on knowing more, so I performed a slightly deeper meld to show him more about my t’hy’la and I.”

Jim and Spock spoke simultaneously.

“You melded twice?”

“Wait, my apparently natural what?”

Selek looked between them curiously. “Have you two never melded?”

“We have not.” Spock turned to Jim. “Why did you not tell me you two had melded?”

“Hey, until I was in the hospital I thought you two weren’t even supposed to know about each
other’s existence, so I think I can be excused for not sharing.” Jim looked at Selek. “But seriously, empathic abilities?”

Selek seemed slightly confused. “I had believed you were aware; they are not exceptionally powerful, but they are above human norms. My Jim did not have such empathic abilities, so I assumed they were due to the different circumstances of your birth.” He paused, picking up on Jim’s confusion. “Again, they do not seem particularly strong; I imagine they largely manifest in small ways, like being more easily able to detect the emotions of those around you and possibly able to somewhat influence the emotions of others on occasion, most likely through them seeming to pick up on your emotions and feel similarly easily.” Selek paused. “However, this is largely speculation based on my own experiences with empaths of varying strengths.”

“Huh.” Jim dropped his head to his hand, elbow resting on his knee. His other hand was still near Spock’s on his other knee, but they had long since gone still. “And here I thought I just had good people skills.”

“It is entirely possible you do; the two attributes are not mutually exclusive and may even be complementary.” Selek between Jim and Spock.

Jim glanced at Spock out of the corner of his eye; he’d seemed like he was annoyed or maybe even jealous earlier, but now he seemed to be putting that on a backburner because of Jim. Was this really not how it was for other people? Did they never just feel like someone else seemed like they were feeling a certain way without even needing to look at them? Did they really only rely on body language and tone and all that? Did they never feel like the emotions were just coming off of them in waves when they were really riled up or upset or anything? Were emotions actually coming off of him in waves when he felt like that? Jim looked up at Selek and Spock. “Can you feel my emotions right now?”

They looked between each other; Spock spoke first. “It is typical for Vulcans to shield, and we are likely both more adept than the average individual at reading your emotional state.”

“However,” they both looked at Selek, “upon lowering my shields, you do appear to be broadcasting a certain degree of confusion and possible mild alarm. But I must remind you, I am not a psi-null individual, and I am well attuned to you.”

“Still.” Jim looked between the two of them. “I don’t want to accidentally invade people’s privacy or mess with their emotions. I mean, it could be good to get a read on people during tense situations or be able to literally project calm to the crew during emergencies, so I don’t think I want away with this entirely, but..” Jim made up his mind and looked between the Vulcans. “I want to learn to control this.”

Chapter End Notes

Did anyone get it? It's something I've seen in fics before and kind of liked, so I decided to work it in here and mostly keep it subtle (until today I guess). Hopefully you'll see where I'm coming from and notice some of the basis I set up and not think I'm pulling a total J.K. Rowling on you. (I love her, but at a certain point you have to step back and let the work live on its own [as I'm nearly 200 chapters deep and show no signs of stopping...])

Anyways, blame any oddness on me nearing my last undergrad finals as I get over an
annoying cold/cough/sore throat one of my roommates so generously shared by never covering her mouth when coughing. Be considerate about germs people.
Hello everyone! I'm glad you all seemed to like empath! Jim; it's one of my favorite random tropes from AOS fic and honestly half the fun of writing fic is just squeezing in your favorite tropes because it's meant to be self indulgent. There's another one in this chapter...

The Vulcans looked between each other and back to Jim. Spock spoke first, letting his fingers start to slowly slide along Jim’s once more in a way that was somehow both intimate and calming. “I can teach you meditation and basic shielding techniques. It will be good for you to know for when we are bonded.”

“Thanks Spock.” Jim smiled and let his hand return the movement, deciding to let the bonding comment slide for now. He was pretty sure he wanted to spend the rest of his life with Spock, but that seemed like a big step. Plus, he wasn’t sure how he felt about letting Spock see everything in his mind; there was some stuff there he barely liked to look at. Sure, he’d told Spock about Tarsus and Frank briefly already, but telling was a hell of a lot different than showing.

“I am also willing to assist you.” They both turned toward Selek. “In my time as an ambassador, I encountered various telepathic and empathic species who each had their own approaches to their abilities; if the Vulcan way is not best suited to Jim, I can offer alternatives. If he does prefer the Vulcan way, I have trained under the Vulcan masters.”

Spock’s eyebrow went up. “At Gol?” Selek nodded. “Why did you seek to purge your emotions? You do not seem to have succeeded.”

Selek took a moment to consider his response. “I cannot reveal my reasons for going, but I ultimately found that it was not the right path for me. Thankfully, I had guidance to lead me back to where I truly belonged.” His face softened into a smile that was small but still carried great warmth. Even though it had been a long time since Jim saw his memories through the meld, he got the feeling Selek was thinking of his Jim.

The peaceful moment was broken a moment later by Spock. “It may still be best if I instruct him. When the Enterprise resumes her mission, you will not be there to assist as I will. Additionally, as Jim’s t’hy’la, his mind will instinctively recognize mine, easing the process of instruction when we meld.”

Selek’s eyebrows went up. “Our minds are not so dissimilar.”

Alright, Jim didn’t want tension between the Spocks. “You know, if someone told me that I’d end up alone in a room with two versions of my soulmate and have them fight over me, this probably wouldn’t be what I pictured.” He thought it over a sec. “There probably wouldn’t be much fighting actually. More sharing really.”

Selek looked amused, but Spock raised an eyebrow and tightened his arm over Jim’s shoulders just slightly. “That is irrelevant, as Dr. McCoy has not given us clearance for the activities you are
implying.”

Jim raised an eyebrow right back. “Cleared us?” He smiled to let Spock know he was teasing.

Spock’s eyebrow did not go down. “I assumed I would be your partner of choice, as indicated by your comments as we left Starfleet Medical and our current, if new, relationship.”

Jim couldn’t help but lean in and kiss Spock’s cheek human style, all while keeping their hands slowly moving. “You are. You definitely are.” He pulled back a bit, glancing at Selek who seemed perfectly comfortable with the scene before him. “I was mostly just doing it to ease the tension before you and Selek started actually fighting.”

Just like that, Spock shifted to looking unimpressed. “We were not about to fight. That would be illogical when words would suffice.”

Selek, however, seemed considering. “It is not unheard of for Vulcans to fight over mates.” When Jim and Spock both turned to him, he raised his hands placatingly. “However, I doubt anyone would seek to challenge your relationship, so fighting would not be necessary.”

“Okay.” Jim looked between them, getting the feeling he was missing something. “Doesn’t fit with what I know of Vulcans, but glad to hear we’re in the clear.”

Selek looked mildly amused and Spock seemed to be getting tense; he was definitely missing something. Selek looked between him and Spock. “It is not common, but it does occur.” He finally settled on Spock. “Have you not told him?”

“I will inform him when the Time comes.” Had Spock put extra emphasis on the word ‘time’ or was that just Jim?

“Or you could tell me now.” Jim looked between them; they seemed to be communicating through minimal expressions.

Whatever it was, Spock must have won; he turned to Jim. “It is…related to the ceremony that solidifies the bond between wedded couples on Vulcan.”

“Okay then…” Jim got the feeling there was more to it than that, but if it made Spock that uncomfortable he wasn’t going to push. Time to move on. “So what brought you here anyways, Selek?”

Selek seemed more serious at the question compared to his amusement the moment before. “I had heard that you would be released from Starfleet Medical soon and wished to see how your recovery was progressing; I am grateful that you seem well.”

Jim smiled. “I’m glad you decided to check in. And of course I have to thank you for helping with my recovery; it really helps to have someone who’s been there when you’re trying to process it all.”

Selek got that not-quite-smile again. “I am glad I can be of assistance.” He paused a moment, expression dropping some. “However, I will not be available to visit you in person much longer. I am returning to New Vulcan within the week.”

Jim sat up a little straighter, surprised at the news. “What? Why?”

“It is necessary to resume my duties rebuilding the colony; along with my ambassadorial duties, I have agreed to be an instructor at the new Vulcan Science Academy and must return before the school year begins.” Selek paused a moment as if he was going to say more, but stopped.
Still, Jim felt like he knew where this was going. “It's weird being here without him, isn’t it?”

There was something sad to Selek’s smile this time. “You are perceptive.”

Jim smiled back, gently. “I saw the memories, or at least some of them, remember? Plus, empath apparently.”

“True.” Selek nodded.

Jim could tell that his Spock was confused, so he turned to him to explain. “Along with on the Enterprise, he and his Jim lived in the city together some.”

There seemed to be understanding in Spock’s eyes; this time when his arm seemed to tighten around Jim just slightly, it felt different than before, more protective than anything else. “I see.”

Selek watched the two of them a moment, eyes lingering on their slowly moving hands, before straightening his already perfect posture in his chair. “I must return to the Vulcan Embassy to continue preparations for my departure.” He looked at Spock. “I suppose any in-person tutelage on mental controls for Jim will be in your hands.”

Spock nodded. “I will consult you as necessary.”

“I will ensure I am available for the two of you.” With one last look between them, Selek raised his hand in the Vulcan salute. “Goodbye.”

Jim copied the salute, watching as Spock did the same. “We’ll swing by if we’re ever near New Vulcan and can manage it.”

Selek’s face warmed in one last almost-smile. “I will look forward to it.” With that, he turned and left, leaving them alone in the apartment.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone’s curious, mirror!Jim is empathic to the same degree as this Jim, but since it’s the mirror!verse he shamelessly uses it for his (and Spock’s) gain while keeping it secret. But hey, manipulating people’s moods (like ramping up the lust in someone you’re seducing) or sensing moods (like otherwise concealed aggression) can certainly come in handy, and he and his Spock have certainly had time to train...
Chapter 170

Chapter Notes

Well, pre-finals week may be trying to kick my butt one last time, but I have kudos emails to give me a mood boost so it works out. And again, thanks to all you awesome people reading and responding to this fic; you're the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim looked at Spock. They were alone again. But what to do... “So now what? Still want to do that movie?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “You do not wish to proceed with your mental training?”

Jim shrugged as much as he was able to with Spock’s arm still around his shoulders. “I don’t know. It would be good to do, but are you really sure that you want to go diving into this mess?” He pointed at his head.

Spock’s eyebrow stayed up. “You did not have a problem letting my counterpart into ‘that mess’.”

“Really?” Jim raised his eyebrow back at Spock. “It was more me going into his head than anything else; he was trying to show me something to convey information.”

Spock didn’t look convinced. “His abilities are stronger than your own, and unless I am mistaken or uninformed this was your first experience with a mind meld.”

Jim didn’t like where this was going. “It was.”

“Then how do you know that he did not explore your mind?” Was Spock getting genuinely agitated by this?

“Really?” Jim turned to face Spock; this was the kind of thing you needed to look someone in the eye for. “Ok first, we had just met, so it wouldn’t make sense to do a jaunt down memory lane just for fun, not that going through my memories would be all that fun. Second, we had a time crunch. Nero, remember?” Spock’s face hardened at that and Jim knew he’d probably messed up some; he shouldn’t just throw Nero in Spock’s face like that. “Third, don’t you think I would have noticed someone rifling through my head?”

“He has admitted to being highly trained. It is possible that he knows techniques even I am not aware of.” Yeah, Spock was starting to bristle a bit. “He may have viewed your memories or even forged a bond without your knowledge. You were not aware you were an empath; it is possible there are other psychic events you are unaware of.”

“Oh come on.” Now Jim was getting annoyed too. “These abilities are apparently something I’ve had my whole life. And when a human is used to something their whole life, they assume it’s normal and don’t question it. That’s not the same as if someone put a link to themselves in my head when I had already lived for twenty-five years without it; I would notice that! And besides, he wouldn’t do that.”

“How are you certain?” Spock’s eyebrows furrowed together and his voice raised a bit. “Why do
you trust him?"

“Because he’s Spock!” The words left Jim’s mouth without really thinking of it. “And I don’t know
if you’ve noticed, but I tend to be a hell of a lot more lenient with Spocks than I maybe should be,
even if I get hurt because of it.”

That got Spock quiet. “Is that why you prefer him to me? Because I have previously harmed you?”
He looked away. “Perhaps you are correct in choosing him.”

Jim felt himself deflating and barely had time to pull himself together and grab his boyfriend’s wrist
before he finished leaving the couch. “Wait. What’s going on here? You think I like him better than
you?”

There was a bit of genuine hurt in Spock’s eyes. “You are openly physically affectionate with him.
You allowed him to meld with you.” He looked away from Jim. “He, as I understand, has supported
you, while my actions nearly undermined your career and I have previously harmed you in an
emotional state, while he is able to display emotions without losing control. The choice is logical.”
He pulled his wrist from Jim’s hand and turned to leave.

“Woah woah woah.” Jim jumped up from the couch and blocked Spock’s path. “Sit back down.”
When Spock didn’t immediately comply, Jim pushed him, wishing that he were the one with
superior strength for a moment. Thankfully, after what felt like a long time but was probably only
seconds Spock moved toward the couch.

He sat down on the side opposite where he and Jim had been sitting. “Speak.”

This wouldn’t do. Jim sighed and sat down close to Spock and took one of Spock’s hands in both of
his, just holding it. “I don’t like him better than you. Yeah, I can be affectionate with him, but no
more than I would be with Bones or my ma. He’s like family in a way, but a different way than you.
Sure, we hug because he’s comfortable with it and I’m an affectionate person, but that doesn’t mean
I want to do anything with him that I want to do with you. And sure, you and I’ve had some not-so-
great moments, but we worked through them and I thought we came out better on the other side. If
you don’t agree, I’m open to going back over those and talking them out again.” When Spock was
quiet, Jim continued. “As for the meld thing…” He looked away. “There are things in my head I
don’t like thinking about, that not even my Ma or Bones or Gaila or anyone else I’m close to knows
in full detail.” He looked back at Spock. “So the thought of you being there and having access to
those things? That terrifies me. I worry that if we go there, I’ll freak out and do something rash, or
you’ll decide you don’t like what you see and leave.” A cautious glance back at Spock made it look
like he was going to protest, so Jim held up a hand. “That’s my own stuff I gotta deal with. So
maybe in time I’ll be open to sharing, but for now, if we’re going to do this, we gotta find another
way. Can we do that?”

After a moment, Spock slowly nodded in agreement. “It could be possible to find a way to control
the meld so I could demonstrate my shielding techniques to you and guide you through constructing
your own. If that is agreeable.”

“Sounds perfect.” Jim grinned and felt the tension drop from his shoulders. With both of them
relaxing some, Jim cautiously looked at Spock. “What brought all this on anyways?”

“Your affection with my counterpart and the knowledge that you melded was part of it.” Spock
looked away and seemed hesitant, so Jim began to run his fingers over Spock’s in a way he hoped
would be reassuring. After a moment, Spock spoke again. “Additionally, I am still very aware of
the…emotions I experienced when I lost you. I would have done anything to regain you. I cannot
help but wonder if my counterpart has the same desire since his t’hy’la is deceased.”
Jim thought for a moment before carefully lifting Spock’s head to look at him with one hand while keeping the other with Spock’s. “Hey. If you’d found another version of me, and if I had died, would you want to be with him, especially if he was noticeably different from me?”

Spock’s eyebrows furrowed. “You are my t’hy’la. A duplicate would not be.”

“So no?” Jim waited for Spock to nod. “Well he’s not my Spock, and I’m not his Jim. We’re close, but we both know there’s no replacing the real deal. It would just feel wrong. Understand?”

After a moment, Spock seemed to relax. “That is…surprisingly logical.”

Jim smiled. “I try sometimes.” He leaned in for a human-style kiss and was glad when Spock returned it. After a moment, he pulled back just enough to talk. “C’mon. What do you say we try this meld? I think I’m ready to share a little something with my soulmate who literally gave me a chunk of his soul.” Jim paused. “Did I thank you for that yet?”

Spock leaned his forehead against Jim’s and let his fingers run along Jim’s. “Gratitude is unnecessary.”

“And yet I still feel it.” Jim grinned. “C’mon, let’s do this.”

Chapter End Notes

Dead week made me write angst but I’ll always love happy endings too much to quit them. Ready for the meld?
Well, dead week hasn’t killed me yet, but I think this last group project is trying. Just over a week til I’m done with undergrad though!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim took a deep breath and looked at Spock as he began to raise his hand in the proper position. He couldn’t help his sudden moment of doubt. “Ok, so we’re doing this to demonstrate shields, right, no memories?”

Spock nodded. “I would not push you beyond your boundaries.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded and gestured for Spock to come closer. “Let’s go.”

Spock’s fingers softly settled on his face, and Jim heard Spock begin to speak familiar words. “My mind to your mind, my thoughts to your thoughts…”

Wherever they were now, it wasn’t on Jim’s couch. It was a plain, bright space. Clean. There was a sense of order. It was unlike anything Jim knew, but it still felt familiar or comfortable somehow.

“We are in my mind. As I have the greater psychic abilities, I will control this session.” It was Spock’s voice, but Jim didn’t see him. “I have cleared my mind to allow greater focus. What you see is your mind attempting to process the experience, as unlike the last melds you experienced I am not currently providing any stimuli besides my thoughts, which you would likely interpret as audible stimuli.”

“Alright.” This was a little odd, but not bad. “How’d you know I was confused?”

“It is an unfamiliar environment, so confusion or inquisitiveness was a logical reaction.” There was a pause, then a faint but noticeable trace of amusement. “Additionally, we are in my mind, you are an empath, and my shields are lowered for the meld. It would be difficult to not notice your emotions.”

If he had a physical face here, Jim was sure he’d be smiling. Maybe he was, back in the physical world. “Makes sense. But there’s one thing you got wrong.”

He felt a little curiosity. “What is that?”

“This place doesn’t feel unfamiliar.” Jim spent a moment trying to find the words. “It wasn’t a location I recognized, I’ll give you that, but it didn’t feel weird. It’s familiar in a way I can’t place, like déjà vu or something. But comfortable instead of disorientating.”

There was warmth like Jim always saw in Spock’s eyes in those moments between them, but now it was like a physical presence. It combined with the comfort and the closest feeling Jim could think of was being wrapped in a soft blanket. Spock’s ‘voice’ only increased the sensation. “I am grateful that you did not experience discomfort.” There was a pause. “It is likely due to our being t’hy’la. Or…”

Now Jim was curious enough that Spock had to feel it. “Or?”
“It may be due to the piece of my katra that you carry with you.” Another long pause from Spock, as if he was considering his next words carefully. “Additionally, the process of giving my katra to you required a procedure similar to a meld.”

“Yeah?” Jim let a little amusement filter through. “So you’re saying you were jealous for nothing?”

He tried to send some reassurance to Spock to let him know that he was only kidding.

Thankfully, Spock didn’t seem annoyed. “As he has melded with you twice and I made no contact with your conscious mind, the comparison still reveals unequal contact.”

Jim wondered if it was possible to mentally roll his eyes. “It didn’t feel like this with him. There was some recognition, but mostly on his end.”

There was something like satisfaction coming from Spock and Jim had to contain his reaction. “As you reasoned prior to our meld, you are not his t’hy’la, so it is logical that you do not have that level of familiarity with him but do with me as I am your t’hy’la.”

“Of course.” Jim let his open affection and amusement carry over to Spock. “Now, we were talking about shielding?”

“Yes.” There was a sense of movement and then they were before some sort of wall (had there been any boundaries to this space before?) with doors along it. “I am continuing to allow your mind to visualize the space as I believe that will allow you to more easily process the experience and apply it to your own abilities. What do you see?”

“A wall with doors on it. Old fashioned, manually operated ones like we had back at the farmhouse. All different sizes and styles. Some are practically sealed shut, some are locked but look like you could open them with the right keys, some look like they’d open easily enough, and there’s a few that seem like they have screen doors too.” Jim paused. “Does that make sense?”

“It is fascinating.” There did seem to be some contained excitement on Spock’s end. “I have never heard Vulcan bonds described by a non-Vulcan outside of my family, who would already have familiarity with the Vulcan understandings of them. It is truly a gratifying experience to hear your unique perspective on something that seems ordinary to myself but is wholly unfamiliar to you.” He paused. “Fascinating.”

Jim felt himself not-smiling again. “Glad I can get you excited, Spock.”

He could feel the eyebrow raise. “It is not the time for innuendo, Jim. Although I do have one question.” Spock paused as if uncertain. “What is a screen door?”

“It is fascinating.” There did seem to be some contained excitement on Spock’s end. “I have never heard Vulcan bonds described by a non-Vulcan outside of my family, who would already have familiarity with the Vulcan understandings of them. It is truly a gratifying experience to hear your unique perspective on something that seems ordinary to myself but is wholly unfamiliar to you.” He paused. “Fascinating.”

Jim felt himself not-smiling again. “Glad I can get you excited, Spock.”

He could feel the eyebrow raise. “It is not the time for innuendo, Jim. Although I do have one question.” Spock paused as if uncertain. “What is a screen door?”

Jim felt himself laughing and could have sworn the whole place lit up some in response. “A technological solution from a simpler time. They’d fit a door frame with mesh and put it in the doorway so fresh air could get in but bugs and stuff couldn’t, or at least that’s the basics.”

“So it was semi-permeable or allowed selective admittance.” There was a reflective moment. “There are states of bond shielding that allow that, typically with close family. Your mind is perceptive and your explanations continue to be fascinating.”

“Thanks.” Could he blush in this space? All this praise would be getting to him out in the real world. “This reminds me though, I gotta take you out to the farmhouse before we go back into the black. I can’t say Riverside holds much in the way of local attractions, but it could offer more privacy than the city, and you could see a screen door in action.”

“I look forward to it.” Jim might just miss feeling this warm amusement directly. “However, I believe
we should attempt to construct mental shields for you now that you have an understanding of them. Each door you see is a form of shielding, although I can show you more complex techniques if you wish. You already have some degree of control of your abilities subconsciously, so you must master conscious manipulation of them. Are you prepared?”

“Yeah.” There was another shift. This place felt more familiar, and Jim imagined it was probably his own mind. It was noticeably less orderly; it seemed more fluid.

“Fascinating.” There was a sense of quiet awe from Spock, but he quickly contained it. “Now, picture what you saw in my mind. Imagine a door closing. We will begin with complete closure and experiment with other strategies later.”

“Okay.” Jim focused. He imagined closing off from everything else, and what came to mind was the old cellar at the farmhouse. He imagined climbing down til he couldn’t see out anymore, then pulling the heavy door down on top of him. It felt solid. “I’m ready. Let’s test this.”

Spock slowly, carefully broke the meld.

Chapter End Notes

This mind meld was an interesting challenge to write; I hope you enjoyed!

Now the question is if the shield holds...
Chapter 172

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! One test down in finals week and 4 and an essay to go. No promises about Thursday's chapter being on time, but I'll do my best. This chapter came surprisingly easy, so we'll see if the pattern holds. I wouldn't want to let all you awesome people down, right?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim blinked as he slowly came back to himself in his apartment. He and Spock were still sitting on the couch, and despite how it felt in the meld it didn’t look like much time had passed if the sky outside the windows was any indication.

Spock was watching him closely. “How do you feel? Is the shielding effective?’”

“I feel…” Jim trailed off. He wasn’t quite sure how he felt. There was a sensation kinda like his ears were plugged with something, but it wasn’t in his ears. It was like his perception of the world was… duller. “I think it’s doing something.”

“That is a highly ambiguous statement.” Spock was still watching him closely and he seemed… Well his eyebrows were starting to pull together. Concerned maybe? “Is the shielding effective?”

“I think?” Jim shrugged. “Everything feels a little different. But if it is all about picking up on emotions, maybe I need to test it with more contact. I mean, you’re not exactly the most emotional person, Spock.”

“True.” Spock paused a moment. “However, I am wary of straining your shields when they are so newly established. How would you wish to test them?”

“Hmm.” Jim glanced at the chronometer; it was early evening already. “Dinner, maybe a walk around the city? Not exactly how I pictured our first date going, but we could make it nice.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Exposure to the number of people we would likely encounter in a populous city such as San Francisco could be more stress than your shields are prepared to take, and the psychic strain of your shields breaking could cause harm that healers on Earth are prepared to deal with.” Spock paused and thought a moment. “Is there an alternative plan that does not involve masses of people?”

That would probably mean staying in, and after all his time in the hospital Jim was tired of being cooped up. “Counterargument: I can always drop my shields if it feels like too much since I’m apparently already used to being an empath in the city, and if I struggle with that my amazing telepathic boyfriend can give me a hand.” He gestured between Spock’s hand and his face. “Literally.”

Spock’s eyebrow went up a little higher. He seemed… unimpressed? Unamused? “Melding in public is against Vulcan customs, Jim.”

“Then we’ll find somewhere private.” Jim smiled at Spock, trying to convey how much he wanted
this (would that be affected by shields too? Was he ever empathically influencing people unintentionally?). “C’mon Spock, I’ve been stuck in a hospital room for months. Let me have a night out. Plus, aren’t bigger sample sizes better scientifically?”

“It is also proper scientific practice to not put undue strain on living test subjects.” Jim gave Spock another look and his posture softened just slightly; was he starting to cave? “However, I will acknowledge your desire to test this as well your desire to get out.” He straightened up slightly, back to his perfect posture of before (not that it had seemed all that imperfect before). “I will be supervising you and if there is sign of sufficient stress, I will insist we return to the apartment. I am also willing to call Dr. McCoy if necessary.”

Jim made a face. “I’d rather not have Bones along on our first date honestly.”

“Nor would I.” Spock looked at him seriously, but the concern was clear in his eyes. “You must endeavor to not overexert yourself.”

“I promise.” Jim leaned in for a quick human-style kiss before getting up from the couch. “You’re the best, babe. Now what do you want for dinner?”

“As a familiar environment would make you more comfortable and less stressed, I will allow you to decide.” Spock followed Jim from the couch.

Jim glanced over his shoulder at Spock. “That excuse won’t always work, you know.” He grinned at Spock’s confusion. “I’ll figure out the kind of thing you like eventually. But for now, how do you feel about Italian?”

Spock paused where he had begun pulling on his shoes next to Jim. “I am not overly familiar with it. My mother did not prepare Earth foods often, and I have not sampled many unfamiliar cuisines in my time here. Are there vegetarian options?”

Jim did a quick mental scan of his favorite place’s menu as he remembered it. “Yep.”

“Does it require eating using hands or utensils?” Spock watched Jim put on his jacket and Jim realized he must not have brought one.

“Unless we’re eating pizza, utensils.” Jim looked around for a spare jacket and shoved the first one he saw at Spock. “Here. I don’t want you getting cold when the fog rolls in; it’s logical to keep yourself warm.”

Spock raised an eyebrow but put it on anyways. Despite being a little taller and leaner than Jim, it fit him alright. Jim decided he could get used to Spock in his clothes, but before he could spend too much time checking him out Spock spoke again. “Very well. Italian is acceptable.”

Jim grinned. “You’re gonna love it babe.” He leaned in to kiss Spock on the cheek before leading him out of the apartment, yelling back for the computer to turn out the lights and lock the door after they exited.

As they left the building and made their way down the street, Jim couldn’t help but look at Spock with a smile; he was too excited to be calm now. He was finally out from the hospital, he and Spock were going on a date, things couldn’t be much better. He bumped shoulders against Spock to get his attention since they’d both put their hands in their pockets. “So, you have at least heard of Italian food, right? You have some idea what you’re getting into?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I have lived on Earth for many years and was raised by a human mother alongside a human sister. I am familiar with many human cuisines, especially the more common
ones, although I have not sampled them all.”

Spock’s sass only boosted his mood more. And god how Jim had missed non-sterilized, outside air; even on the ship he’d occasionally go down to the arboretum or other garden areas to get something like fresh air. He took a deep breath and looked at Spock again, smiling. “Just making sure. I wasn’t sure what I’d do if we got there only to find out you had no idea what a noodle was or something.”

Spock’s eyebrow raise was probably tempered by the fact that he could tell Jim was joking, or at least Jim hoped he could. Did other people really just go off of body language and that sort of stuff instead of just picking up on how people were feeling? “If I was entirely unfamiliar, which I am not as I have witnessed others eating these forms of food even if I have not consumed them myself, I would have simply observed your behavior and the behavior of others before acting myself. I have visited numerous worlds and cultures in my time as an ambassador’s son and Starfleet officer, including an alternate universe. A single restaurant would not be an insurmountable obstacle.”

“Of course. How logical.” Jim bumped his shoulder against Spock’s again, but paused and almost broke his walking pace as a thought occurred to him. “By the way, you ever gonna tell me about that alternate universe? I got a partial account from Bones, but he seemed to think there was more to it. Specifically, interactions between you and the alternate me.”

Did Spock just turn a little green? Was he blushing? Jim was tempted to crack his shields and see if he could dig some, but he didn’t have the practice to do so. Still, Spock was at least avoiding his eyes some. “Perhaps it would be best to discuss that in private.”

Jim was tempted to make a joke about how I had to be bad if Spock was getting shy about it, but he decided not to push. “I look forward to it.” He glanced around and grabbed Spock by the elbow when he noticed where they were. “Babe, hold up. We’re here.”

Chapter End Notes

I feel like we're slipping away from plot and into domestic adventures some, but on some level isn't that what fic is for? I think it is. I'm embracing the self-indulgent aspect of it all.

Anyways, who's ready for their date?
Chapter 173

Chapter Notes

Well, I wrote most of my final essay of undergrad today (it was 12 pages, but that's being an English major) and still managed to get this up on time, so I'd like to thank my writer's block for going away and all you awesome people for continuing to support me and this increasingly giant and meandering fic. Hey, at least now we're into the good stuff, right? Right. Enjoy!

They walked in and were greeted by a hostess Jim recognized. “Jim!” She smiled at him and looked between him and Spock. “Here with a date? Want your usual booth?”

Jim glanced at Spock, who was raising his eyebrow some and hopefully not drawing the wrong conclusions, before smiling back at her. “We’ll take it if it’s open, Katie.”

She glanced down at her padd, swiping around a bit before looking back up. “It’s been a slow night and we don’t have any reservations, so it should be all yours.” She paused, grabbing two old-fashioned paper menus from the bin attached to her podium. “Follow me.” Katie led them to a booth in the back corner, and Jim settled in with Spock across from him.

She put the menus on the table in front of them. “I’ll be back in a sec to take your order.”

Spock was looking around the restaurant and not at him. After a little bit, Jim got suspicious. The restaurant was small, as was the norm for old places in the city, and had pretty normal if old-fashioned décor. With Spock, it wouldn’t take him all that long to take it in, even if this was his first time at an Italian place. Since he couldn’t exactly feel what Spock was feeling, he took a guess. “Before you ask, no. She and I were never a thing, she only knows me because I like this place and she works here because she’s planning on taking over the place when her parents retire.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I was merely observing an unfamiliar environment. I had not intended to ask.”

Jim sat back against the booth. “Shields must be working then; I don’t usually misread you.”

“Indeed.” Spock glanced over the menu, fingers pausing some on the plasticky cover protecting the paper. He glanced at the candle in the middle of the table. “There are many aspects of this place that people would consider…antiquated.”

Jim smiled. “It’s a family place they’ve had for generations, so I think they’d call it ‘traditional.’ I kinda like it.”

Spock looked around again. “It does create a pleasant atmosphere.” He looked at Jim. “Although you do not have a history with our server, she did seem quite familiar with you.”

“Yeah.” Jim rubbed the back of his neck. “This used to be my go-to spot for dates, and even now I’ll try to swing by when I’m on Earth. But knowing me is mostly because if one of my dates ever went south she’d chat with me some to get my mood up. Or offer free dessert.” Jim smiled at a memory, but frowned a moment later. “I hope I hadn’t been accidentally psychically dragging the mood of the
place down or something.”

“Your powers are not incredibly strong, so unless you were greatly distressed it is unlikely others noticed.” Spock paused. “Did a past partner ever leave you greatly distressed?”

“Well…” The breakup with Gary had been ill-timed and uncomfortable, and Jim certainly had his share of breakup meals and cannoli here to console himself, but ‘greatly distressed’ might be pushing it. “Nothing too bad. The only person who came close ended up kicking the bucket during the battle with Nero, so there’s no need to track him down and kick his ass.” Jim smiled, but even with shields he could tell that the mention of Nero brought Spock down some. That wouldn’t do. Jim carefully reached across the table and laid a hand over Spock’s, human style. When he looked up, Jim smiled, letting a little bit of humor leak into it. “Then there was also this one Vulcan, half really, who I pined over for damn near a year. I don’t think he even noticed until I picked the right dramatic moment to Vulcan kiss him.”

There was a bit of warmth in Spock’s eyes and his lips tipped up the tiniest bit on one side. “Perhaps he noticed more than you realized. Or perhaps you should have been more forward with your intentions.”

For a moment Jim was tempted to rehash all his reasons, but he decided that they’d been over all of it enough. “Eh, it worked out. There was a bit of drama in the middle,” that earned an eyebrow raise from Spock, who must have realized he was talking about his death, but Jim continued, “but we got together once the dust settled and I think he’s really digging me now. And I feel the same way of course.”

“That is good, as I believe your observations are correct.” Spock began slowly sliding his fingers over Jim’s, and both of them began to lean in just a little…

They were interrupted by a quiet throat-clearing; Spock withdrew his hand and Katie looked apologetically at Jim. “Sorry to interrupt. Any idea what you want? Drink orders, food? Remember to get your orders in; we still make everything the old-fashioned way, so it takes longer.”

Jim grinned. “How can I forget? It tastes so good.” He glanced over at Spock and then down at the menu; they’d been a bit distracted. “I’ll start off with a water, but we’ll need a sec for the food I think.” He glanced at Spock for confirmation.

Spock looked at the menu and back up. “I would also appreciate more time with the menu, but would like water as well.”

“Alright, I’ll be back in a sec.” Katie made a quick note on her padd and turned to go.

When Jim back at Spock, he was looking over the menu intensely. “As I am unfamiliar with these dishes, I may defer to your expertise.”

Jim hummed and looked over the menu. “One of my usuals is the chicken parm. There’s an eggplant version that’s totally vegetarian, so we could even match.” He looked up at Spock with a smirk and was met by an unimpressed expression.

“I am open to your suggestion, but I question if it is within Dr. McCoy’s dietary restrictions for you.” Spock looked over the menu, obviously searching for the item in question.

Not how Jim wanted the conversation going. “It’s chicken; it’s healthy.”

That got an eyebrow raise. “That is a matter of preparation.”
Time to switch approaches. “What Bones doesn’t know won’t kill him.”

The eyebrow went a little higher. “It is not his health I am concerned with.”

“Aww.” How could Jim fight that? He slid his hand to Spock’s and gently ran his fingers over Spock’s in the now-familiar motion. “It won’t kill me either, babe.”

Before Spock could respond, a pair of water glasses were set on their table. They looked over to see Katie standing there, padd in her hand. She looked between them. “Ready to order?”

“Yeah.” Jim glanced at Spock, deciding to order for the both of them since Spock said he’d go with whatever Jim said anyways. “One chicken parm and one eggplant parm.”

“Alright.” Katie made a quick note on her padd. “That’ll be out soon.”

Jim thanked her as she left before turning to Spock. “So, what now? I would say that we know each other too well for all the usual first date conversations, but I also didn’t find out you had siblings until Starfleet Medical, so maybe small talk could still be good.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I believe it would be best to allow the conversation to guide itself rather than attempting to force it.”

“Sounds good.” Jim smiled. “And if all else fails, I can always show you why I like the corner booth.”

That earned another eyebrow raise, but Jim couldn’t help but smile anyways. They didn’t end up needing to default to why Jim liked the corner booth in the end; the conversation flowed well, even with the interruptions of dinner and dessert arriving. Spock refused the cannoli, leading Jim to wonder if certain rumors about Vulcans were true, but at the end of the night Jim only had one thing to say to Spock: “Told you you’d love Italian.”

Chapter End Notes

Bonus points to whoever guesses why I chose Italian for their first date.

Also, I’m feeling like celebrating the end of finals, so maybe keep your eyes peeled for something extra this weekend...
In an update on my life (for those of you reading this and mildly invested) I'm officially in move-out and graduation week; I survived my last undergrad finals! But since it's a busy week, I should warn you that I can't promise that Thursday's chapter will be on time. I'll try though; like I've said, all you awesome people are seriously great motivation to keep getting this up regularly!

The next day, Jim woke up with the warmth of Spock along his back. He wasn’t all that used to waking up to someone in his bed without having done something the night before, but he couldn’t deny it was nice. He shifted just enough to turn around without dislodging the arm Spock had over his chest. Jim rested one arm under the pillow and put his other hand on Spock’s side, close enough that he felt Spock’s heartbeat. “Good morning.”

Spock’s deep brown eyes opened. “Good morning.” His voice was somehow a little lower or rougher in a way Jim definitely liked.

Even if it felt like Jim’s body was definitely down, Bones would kill him if he tried anything with Spock without explicit clearance. Best to redirect the conversation then. “I thought Vulcans didn’t need as much sleep as humans.”

“I do not; I have been awake for approximately 3.5 hours.” Despite his words, Spock’s lazy movement suggested he didn’t seem fully up yet. “I did not wish to disturb you as sleep is important for your recovery, so I reviewed student assignments on my padd and meditated.”

“How courteous of you.” A quick glance over the side of Spock’s head did show a padd on that nightstand, but Jim still shifted a little closer and rested his forehead against Spock’s. “Doesn’t seem like the most conventional meditation pose though.”

“It is not.” Spock’s hand shifted and rested over Jim’s chest. “But the steady rhythm of your sleeping heart rate provided a good focus while meditating.”

God, how did Spock make everything sound so romantic? Jim couldn’t stop himself from leaning in and pressing a quick close-mouthed kiss to Spock’s lips, bringing a hand up to cover Spock’s on his chest. He hoped Spock could feel all the love he was trying to send his way, because shielding or no Jim felt like it was overwhelming him. Still, when they parted all he could do was smile. “Glad I could help.”

“Indeed.” Spock must have picked up on something, because his eyes were practically glowing with warmth.

Jim smiled again, nuzzling closer and tucking his head against Spock’s shoulder. “How long can we stay like this?”

Spock reached for the padd, but his other arm came up to wrap around Jim so he wouldn’t disrupt him too much. There was a moment of quiet while Spock presumably looked up Jim’s schedule,
which he totally had in his padd. Jim smiled against his shoulder and held him a little tighter. He
didn’t budge when Spock finally spoke. “That is dependent on how long you will need to get ready.
It is currently 0936 and Dr. McCoy will be here at 1000 hours to check on you.”

Jim reluctantly shoved back from Spock’s chest. “We should get up. But I’m not getting changed
because Bones has already seen me in pjs anyways.”

That got a raised eyebrow from Spock, but he didn’t protest as Jim moved off to go to the bathroom.
When Jim emerged, Spock had set out breakfast for him and moved to the bathroom to get ready, but
not before Jim could kiss him on the cheek and tell him he was the best.

When Jim was about halfway through his toast, the door chimed. A quick glance at the chronometer
revealed that it was time for Bones to show up anyways, so Jim didn’t bother checking who it was.
“Come in.”

It was Bones. He glanced around before taking the chair opposite Jim and setting down his bag on
the coffee table. “Where’s the hobgoblin?”

“Good morning to you too, Bones.” Jim finished chewing his current bite of toast. “Spock’s still
going ready. I took the bathroom first, so he had to wait.”

“How domestic of you two.” Bones reached into the bag and pulled out his tricorder, popping out
the scanner and running it over Jim. “How are you feeling?”

“Good.” Jim tried not to fidget. “Like I could definitely be cleared for at least light duty.”

Bones made a face at the tricorder. “One step at a time. You only got cleared to leave the hospital
yesterday; duty clearance is next.”

Jim wanted to protest that he could totally handle it, but he knew it would be useless. “Will I at least
be cleared before we’re due to start our next mission?”

“Should be.” Bones set down the tricorder and rifled through his bag. “Between your recovery,
Scotty’s new ideas for the ship, and everyone who agreed to take on classes at the Academy, I think
we’ll be here a little while. Pike could tell you better, but you’ll have to meet with him yourself.”
Bones pulled out a pair of hypos. “You need these, so please don’t make a big deal out of it.”

Jim crossed his arms. “Don’t stab me like you’re trying to kill me with them and I won’t.”

Bones rolled his eyes. “Don’t be such an infant.” Jim reluctantly leaned closer when Bones held out
the hypos and only winced a little as Bones gave them to him. When he leaned back, Bones looked
smug. “See? Not bad.”

“Whatever.” Jim frowned as Bones picked up the tricorder again, looking at it intently and scanning
Jim more. “What is it?”

“Something about you seems off, but I can’t put my finger on what.” He frowned at the tricorder.
“Damn machine says nothing’s wrong.” Bones squinted at Jim suspiciously. “Do I need to take you
in for an actual exam?”

Was Bones somehow picking up on the shielding thing? “No. I don’t think so.”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “And why not?”

Here goes nothing. Jim took a deep breath. “Because apparently I’ve been an empath all my life and
just found out recently because of a mind meld, so I talked Spock into showing me shielding techniques so I wouldn’t be bombarding everyone with emotion all the time.”

Bones’ eyebrow didn’t drop. “You better not be lying to me to be getting out of an exam.”

“Doctor, I can assure you that the Captain is being truthful.” Spock stood in the doorway from the bedroom, looking pristine and fully dressed. He came and joined Jim on the couch, wrapping his arm around Jim’s shoulders again. “If he were to cease shielding, you would likely cease to notice a difference.”

“Hmm.” Bones reluctantly shut down his tricorder. “I guess I’ll have to believe you two.” He paused, about to put the tricorder in the bag. “Wait. Why did Jim never end up with a high psi score? Surely it would show up.”

“As those tests are designed to detect telepathic and not empathic abilities, it is entirely possible that his abilities were missed.” Spock paused. “And as I have already begun to show Jim how to control his abilities, they should not be a problem.”

That earned another suspicious squint from Bones. “Whatever you say.” He shifted in his chair, maybe going to get his bag, but paused. “Actually, I guess what you said makes sense. I just did that test as part of a standard new crew physical and it did seem more telepathically focused.”

That caught Jim’s attention. “New crew physical? Who’s joining us?”

Bones smiled. “Christine Chapel, RN. It’ll be good to have another competent set of hands in Sickbay.”

“That’s awesome.” Jim grinned. “I’m sure Nyota’s excited.”

“I am certain she is.” Jim couldn’t tell because of the shielding, but he bet that Spock was happy for Nyota too.

Bones grabbed his bag and started to stand up. “Well, speaking of Chapel, I’m due at Starfleet Medical soon for my shift.” He looked between Jim and Spock in a way that Jim imagined he’d probably been saving up for when Jo started dating. “Remember, you two can’t do anything Jim’s not cleared for.”

Jim’s “Got it, Bones.” was almost at the exact same time as Spock’s “Understood, Doctor.”

Bones still looked between them a bit suspiciously, but he seemed satisfied enough. “Alright. I’ll see you later.”

“Bye Bones!” Jim watched him leave with a quick backward wave before turning to Spock. “Well, whole day to ourselves. ‘What do you want to do?’

Chapter End Notes

Btw, if anyone's interested in Chapel, you might just enjoy the extra scene I posted this weekend...

Anyways, what will the boys do next?
Chapter 175

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! If anyone pays attention to word counts, you might notice that this chapter is a little shorter than usual. But I'm officially graduating from college tomorrow, so I might be a bit distracted. Still, I wrote this instead of packing for move-out, so I think that says something about my priorities, how much I value all my awesome readers, or a bit of both. Anyways, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock just looked back at Jim. “I am amenable to many possibilities; is there anything you would wish to do?”

Jim groaned. “Did you really just put it back on me?” He leaned back against Spock, noticing that Spock’s arm dropped from where it had retreated to the back of the couch back to Jim’s shoulders. Jim pointed at it. “What’s with this, by the way? I’m not against it, but I didn’t think Vulcans were into PDA.”

Spock paused as if carefully considering his words before just going with what seemed like denial to Jim. “I am uncertain what you are referring to.”

“Oh come on.” Jim turned toward Spock, reluctantly dislodging the arm around his shoulder. “This.” He gestured to Spock’s arm. “I wouldn’t have guessed you had a possessive streak, but suddenly you turn on the PDA around certain people like you’re trying to call dibs.”

Spock raised his eyebrow. “That is a rather crude way of stating your observation.”

Jim shrugged. “And that wasn’t a denial. You’ve got a bit of a possessive streak; even if it’s illogical, I don’t mind it.”

“And while I am gratified that my behavior does not upset or disturb you, I disagree that it is illogical.” Spock shifted to face Jim and paused again. “It is not something we speak of, but the practice of competing for potential mates still exists among Vulcans. The behavior you have deemed ‘possessive’ is actually logical as it suggests a strong connection between partners, thus discouraging potential opponents from issuing a challenge and allowing mating or bonding to proceed more successfully.”

“Huh.” That wasn’t really something Jim had heard of, but Spock did say they didn’t talk about it and Vulcans were known for being pretty secretive. “I guess I’ll take your word for it.” He kinda wished he could get a better read on Spock; Vulcans could be damn good at masking their body language and expressions when they wanted. But the thought occurred to Jim that he could get a better read on Spock; all he had to do was take down his shields. Spock still shielded and wasn’t exactly an open book, but Jim could still usually pick up on some of what was going on with him. He turned to Spock. “I thought of something to do today. Let’s meld again.”

If had to label Spock’s reaction, Jim would guess ‘surprised but not opposed.’ He took a second to respond. “Is there a particular reason you wish to meld?”
“Yeah.” Jim looked at Spock, trying to not alarm his boyfriend. Was Spock alarmed? If Jim did this right he’d have a more certain answer. “It’s about my abilities. I’m still all for learning to control them, but I kinda want to take down my shields, and yesterday you made that sound like something I’d need supervision for. So melding.”

Was Spock wary maybe? “The initial meld will be weak as we are both shielding. I will not be able to provide much assistance if there is difficulty with your shields.”

Jim shrugged. “Still more of a safety net than I usually have for my shenanigans.”

Spock raised an eyebrow at that; Jim definitely recognized that one as ‘unimpressed.’ “That is correct, but that does not make it ideal behavior.”

“Fair enough.” Jim tipped his head in acknowledgement.

“There is an additional risk.” Spock seemed…serious, but not bad-serious. Like if it was important for Jim to know, but not something actually dangerous.

“And what would that be, Mr. Spock?” Weird mental stuff and location aside, this kinda felt like the familiar pattern of a pre-mission briefing. Jim couldn’t wait to get back out in the stars with Spock.

“We are t’hy’la, and as such, our minds are highly compatible.” Spock waited until Jim nodded to prompt him to continue. “It is possible that a bond will spontaneously form between us during a meld.”

“Like a marriage bond?” Jim tried to think back to all the ‘doors’ he had seen in Spock’s head. What would his look like?

“Not precisely.” Spock actually frowned slightly. “Translations into Standard are difficult; the connection is more than an engagement, but less strong than an actual marriage bond unless formalized and consummated.” He paused. “Betrothed perhaps.”

Jim took a second to think before responding. “I’m alright with that.” He looked at Spock seriously. “We’re soulmates, t’hy’la, and everything else, and I do really like you.” He smiled at Spock to let him know he was teasing on the last bit. He still wasn’t quite ready to drop the big ‘L’ word yet, even if Jim was pretty sure he felt it. “Besides, it’s not like we have to act on it right away.”

Spock paused again. “We do not, but action will be necessary when the Time comes.” Did he put extra emphasis on ‘time’ again?

“Okay.” Jim looked at Spock. “We can deal with that when we get there.” He took one of Spock’s hands and squeezed it. “For now, let’s do this.” He pulled the hand up to his face. “Meld with me.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I will begin by assessing the status of your shields, then aiding you in lowering them if necessary. Understood?” Jim nodded (which was an odd thing to do when you were holding someone’s hand to your face), and Spock adjusted his fingers to the proper position and said the necessary words to start the meld. “My mind to your mind; my thoughts to your thoughts…”

Jim was definitely in his own head this time. It felt kinda similar to before, definitely different than the calm environment of Spock’s mind. Still, he could pick up on his shield; there was a closed feeling that wasn’t there before.

And then there was knocking. Jim moved toward the sound (could it be considered a sound in his head?), knowing it was probably Spock testing his shields. They still seemed intact; in his imagined
cellar doors there were no holes, cracks, or anything like that. While it was kinda satisfying to know he could shield well, Jim had other concerns now. Like taking down those shields. Slowly, carefully, Jim started pushing the doors open.

Chapter End Notes

Will Jim do it, or will he accidentally mess up his mind? Will a bond form? Tune in next time to find out! (And/or comment your thoughts below)
First off, thanks to everyone who congratulated me on graduating! It's weird that it happened, but time to be off to the next adventure I guess. And speaking of next adventures, I think we'll be doing some time jumps pretty soon until we're back on the ship. But not quite yet; have some more domestic Spirk/Jim working out his abilities. They deserve some gentle good times.

It felt a little odd and took Jim a second, but the doors gave way and seemed to melt to nothing once they were open.

The first thing Jim was aware of was the familiar, calm presence of Spock’s mind. There was some background noise or feeling that must have been from nearby people, but Spock was central, probably because of the meld.

He was getting notes of concern; it felt like Spock, with the barrier between their minds gone, was trying to check his mind for any signs of injury; it reminded Jim of getting patted down for injuries after basically any away mission. He tried to mentally shrug Spock off, unsure how successful he was. “Babe, I’m fine.”

“Fine has variable definitions, and you often say that despite being mildly injured in order to avoid visiting Sickbay after away missions.” Still, Spock must have been nearly done because the checking seemed to be slowing. “Additionally, you are relatively inexperienced in this area and may not know how to properly check for damage. As I have more experience with the psychic plane, it is logical I ensure you are uninjured.”

Jim felt a burst of warmth that had to come from himself; he was sure he’d be smiling if he had a face right now. “Whatever you say. You wouldn’t want anything to happen to this great mind of mine, huh?”

Jim had been teasing, but he felt nothing but sincerity from Spock. “I would not.”

He was getting better at not shying away when people openly praised him or admitted they cared, but Jim still found it easier to deflect. “Not even if it meant you could actually beat me at chess?”

“The difficulty of our chess games is part of their allure, although the draw of the companionship would still remain.” There was a slight pause as Spock seemed to be finishing his mental checks. “As your tactical skills are also one of your many assets that aid you as a captain, I would not be alone in mourning their loss.”

“Way to bring it back to business, Spock.” Jim was sure that he’d be making a face if it were real life. “But anyway, do I seem ok like I told you I was?”

There was a pause, like Spock was assessing the data he’d gathered. “Your shield was well-formed and resisted my attempts to pry well, and you seem to have suffered no damage from it.”
Jim couldn’t help but feel smug, and he knew that like this Spock would feel it too. “Told you so.”

“And as I told you, it is common for you to pretend to be uninjured despite experiencing some form of physical harm, so it was logical to check for myself.” Spock didn’t seem genuinely irritated, maybe just some leftover concern.

It was enough to get Jim to stop trying to tease him. “So what now?”

Spock hesitated. “I believe all that is left is to break the meld.”

Jim could understand his hesitation; it was kinda nice to just be in their little shared mindspace. The temptation to draw it out and linger there was definitely strong. “Time to test everything in the real world?”

“Indeed. I will now break the meld.” Part of Jim wanted to hang on, but he allowed Spock to slowly separate the meld.

When Jim came to, he watched Spock’s hand drop from his face to his own lap. He was tempted to reach for it, but decided to hold off. He wanted to see what his head felt like, and it would probably be best to do that without the distractions.

If Jim concentrated, he could kinda pick up on different people, but not distinctly since no one was close. He could feel Spock really well, but that was probably just because he was nearby. He looked up at Spock, who was watching him closely. “So what now?”

Spock seemed to relax just a little when Jim seemed normal. “If you would like, we could continue your mental training and see if you are able to shield and remove your shields without assistance or support, or we could test your abilities in other ways, like attempting to focus on a single person versus a group or all those around you.”

Jim glanced around the room. “Wouldn’t we need other people for that?”

“That is a logical observation.” Spock paused. “We could go somewhere more public where there are other people.”

“We could.” Jim thought it over a second. “I wouldn’t really want to test on unsuspecting people though. So maybe not.”

Spock nodded. “It is your decision. Is there an alternative activity you would like to do?”

Jim looked around the apartment. “To be honest, I kinda feel like having a lazy day today. You have to go teach tomorrow, right?”

“As it will be Monday, yes.” Spock was watching him closely.

“Alright, then I say we have a lazy Sunday.” Jim looked down; he was still in his pjs. He glanced up and remembered that Spock had already gotten dressed, but that didn’t really matter. “I’m gonna stay in my pajamas with no intention of leaving the room, and you can stay like that or put on something more comfortable if you want.”

“I am comfortable.” Spock looked like he was about to point out that it was illogical to wear uncomfortable clothing or something like that, so Jim decided to cut him off before he could.

“Great! Then let’s lay down on the couch and put on one of the movies you said you talked to Gaila about.” Jim had been complaining about having nothing to do in the hospital, but being stuck doing
nothing and choosing to do nothing were entirely different, especially if the first one was alone and the second had someone else to do nothing with.

Spock watched Jim get up with a raised eyebrow. “Lying down is not a position ideally conducive to movie viewing.”

“No, but it is good for other things, and I’m lying down whether you do too or not.” When all Spock did was scoot toward the side of the couch and rest his arms on the armrest and the back of the couch, Jim decided to just lay down with his head on Spock’s lap. They could build up to cuddling while watching movies. Once he was comfortable, Jim decided to set things up. “Computer, lights to minimum. Dim windows by 75%.” He glanced up to Spock. “You pick the movie.” He grabbed the control for the entertainment system off of the coffee table. “Just scroll through, select what you want, and hit play.”

Spock took it without comment, and Jim shifted a bit as he waited for Spock to pick and the movie to start. He was sure that soon enough he’d be getting cabin fever again, but for now Jim was happy to just enjoy a lazy Sunday with his boyfriend.

Chapter End Notes

I dropped hints about something this chapter; feel free to speculate...
When Jim woke up the next morning, Spock was gone. Jim checked the time and debated going back to sleep. Spock would still be teaching at the Academy until the evening, and Jim didn’t have anything planned today.

Without getting up, Jim decided to test his abilities some. From talking with Selek and Spock and working with Spock, Jim knew that his abilities were more proximity-based than touch-based like Vulcan telepathy was, but he’d never fully tested them. Since he didn’t think he could get back to sleep yet, wanted to do something, but didn’t want to get out of bed, Jim decided to give it a try. He thought about the basic mediation tips Spock had given him last night after they finished their movies and holovids and tried to use them to help him focus.

Jim took some deep breaths, but didn’t bother adjusting his position from where he was sprawled on his front in the bed. He kept his eyes closed and focused first on his own mind, on the open doors he imagined where he could be shielding but wasn’t. Outside, it was mostly empty. He got the feeling that there were some people not too far away, but they were vague and he didn’t get anything specific; he probably wouldn’t really feel anything unless they were closer or felt something very strongly.

But still, it was kinda cool that he could focus enough to pick up on that, even if it was weak. The closest people in apartments wouldn’t be far; Jim had a corner unit, which meant his room was only close to horizontal neighbors on one side, but he still had people directly above and below him who wouldn’t be that far away, only a few meters if they were in their rooms. Still, even being able to pick up on people like that could be useful on missions if Jim trained it more; there were definitely situations where knowing someone was waiting for them or watching them could have come in handy on missions, maybe even saved lives. Plus with any accident on the ship that cut off sections or blocked communication it’d be good to know where people were, or even if he got better to distinguish who was where since Jim was willing to bet that as he got better with this he might be able to guess who was around him because they’d feel different.

Or maybe not. Selek had said that Jim’s abilities weren’t too strong, so maybe he’d just be stuck at the general feelings and picking up on people thing. Still, that would be useful.

But it did seem like there was one person Jim could differentiate. He blinked and pushed himself up onto his elbows, breaking his impromptu mediation session. “Spock?”

Jim shoved one arm out to Spock’s side of the bed, dropping back onto his chest in the process. He looked at that side of the bed in confusion. It was cold, or at least not warm like it would have been if Spock had just been there. Plus, when Jim checked the time earlier it was hours after Spock would have gotten up for work. Spock wasn’t the type to be late or even really take sick days. But why did Jim still feel him?

Now too curious to ignore it, Jim got out of bed. He looked into the bathroom, but it was empty.
“Spock?” Jim walked into the living room, but he didn’t see anyone there. No one on the couch, no one in the chair, and a couple more steps and a little more looking around confirmed that no one was in the kitchen either. But he could have sworn…

“Computer.” One last way to test. “State all current occupants of this apartment.”

There was a slight pause as it processed the command. “Kirk, James Tiberius.”

So much for that. “Computer, is there anyone else currently in this apartment?”

Less processing this time. “Negative.”

“Huh.” So unless Spock had slipped out in the time it took Jim to get up, there was no way he could have felt Spock earlier. Unless he was imagining it. But it felt so real…

The rumbling of Jim’s stomach distracted him before he could consider more options. He’d get back to it after a quick breakfast.

Jim went to the kitchen and replicated some toast, tempted to add more but wary of Spock and Bones bothering him about his dietary guidelines for while he was recovering. Breakfast and coffee in hand, he wandered back to the couch and sat down, debating pulling up something on his padd or the entertainment system to do or entertain him while he ate, but deciding to just eat quickly instead. The sooner he was done, the sooner he could figure out what was going on.

So he ate and decided to throw on some real clothes for good measure before returning to the couch. There, Jim settled into a comfortable position and again followed the mediation steps Spock taught him.

But this time, he didn’t immediately go to the part of his imagined mental landscape where his empathic abilities were. He looked to see if he could still feel Spock and decided to follow that.

It didn’t lead where he expected. Instead, he found himself in another, deeper part of his mind.

There was a doorway. There was a door there, another old fashioned manually operated door, but it was a bit ajar, like it could swing open easily.

Even more curious, Jim approached it. He pulled the door open, only to reveal—

Another door. It was like the system Jim had seen in conjoined rooms in old hotels with two doors that each locked on either side of a doorjamb. But what was on the other side? This was definitely where he’d felt Spock, but did that mean what he thought it did?

Jim reached out and tried the handle, but it was locked. Forcing it would probably cause problems, so he tried knocking instead.

Jim became vaguely aware of his communicator going off back in his apartment. Thankful for Spock’s lessons and tips, Jim led himself away from the door and opened his eyes, grabbing his communicator just before it stopped going off and flipping it open. “Kirk here.”

“Jim.” He relaxed at the familiar sound of Spock’s voice. “Are you available to speak over a video link?”

Jim smiled; Spock probably knew he had nothing better to do. “What, miss this pretty face already?”

“I did not contact you to discuss your aesthetic merits, although they are noteworthy.” There was a
slight pause. “Are you available?”

“Yeah, of course babe. One sec.” Jim got up and moved to his desk in the corner of the room, pulling up what he needed on the console. “Ready when you are.”

Only moments later, Spock’s face was on the screen; Jim recognized his office behind him. “Did you notice anything unusual when you awoke today?”

Jim could guess where this was going, but went with it anyways. “Yeah. I was testing my abilities and felt you, but you weren’t here.”

Spock nodded. “And what you doing immediately prior to my comming you?”

“Meditating actually.” Jim decided to cut to the chase. “Does this have something to do with the new thing I found in my head?”

Spock’s eyebrow went up a little. “If it resembles how you pictured the bonds I showed you in my mind, then I believe you have just confirmed my hypothesis.”

“It did.” Jim ran a hand through his hair. “What’re you thinking?”

“That the meld did create a preliminary bond between us, as I suggested it could.” Spock didn’t seem too affected by the news and Jim kinda wished to get a better read on him, but he guessed he was shielding and controlling himself more because he was working. “It is likely that we did not notice yesterday as my shields were relaxed and we were in close proximity, so any heightened awareness could be explained by your lack of shielding. I was shielding all bonds this morning as I typically do, but I believe I felt you investigating the bond, which prompted me to contact you.”

“Huh.” Jim sat back. It was what he was expecting, but it still felt odd. “So we’re basically engaged by Vulcan standards now?”

Spock tipped his head in consideration. “As I stated, the term is imprecise, but one of the closest terms in Standard for the concept.”

“Wow.” Jim looked out the window then back at Spock, smiling some. “While some people probably bet on me getting accidentally hitched, I don’t think accidental engagement was something anyone would expect.”

Spock seemed to be ignoring the first part of that comment. “Our minds are highly compatible, so it is not entirely unexpected.”

“That’s true. You did say this could happen.” Jim smiled. “I guess I’ll see you tonight, fiancé.”

Spock’s eyes softened. “And I you, Jim.”

Jim couldn’t help but smile as he shut the comm connection down. He might freak out about this later, but for now it was unexpected but not totally unwelcome.

Chapter End Notes

Well that didn't take them long. Quicker than I'd originally thought to be honest, but I think it works for them.
Chapter 178

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Look at me, getting a chapter up earlier than usual. Having writing time is nice. And so is having awesome readers who keep up a steady stream of comments, kudos, bookmarks, subscriptions, and hits. You're all the greatest!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim slowly but surely settled into a routine. He and Spock spent what time they could together in the apartment or exploring the city, and when Spock went to work Jim passed the time with visits from friends and doing things to help with his recovery, like more physical therapy and check-ins at Starfleet Medical.

He and Spock were also getting used to being bonded. The connection between them wasn’t too strong and didn’t affect either of them too much yet since it was still a preliminary bond and not a full bond, but Spock still taught Jim more shielding techniques to help with it and with his other abilities.

Jim had been working on those too. With more guidance from Spock, Jim was working on stricter control. It fell by the wayside a bit when he was finally cleared for duty again, if only light duty, and dove into updates on his silver lady. There wasn’t much for Jim to catch up on, but there were some crew changes (he got to officially approve Chapel joining the crew, which led to him comming Nyota to congratulate her again) and Jim got news from Scotty that they were using the time to do upgrades and refits on the ship. He looked forward to being able to go up and see everything himself, but Jim knew that everyone would panic before letting him do anything they considered strenuous, like a tour of his own ship.

So once he ran through all of his paperwork in what was probably a record pace, Jim was back to having too much free time, which he spent practicing his abilities and meeting with people, sometimes both at once.

Like today. Gaila was coming over while Spock was at work, and Jim was going to see if he could practice focusing his abilities and reading just one person at a time, and seeing if Gaila would notice anything.

She did. Partway though their meeting, when Jim was concentrating, Gaila looked at him with a mix of confusion and concern. “Why are you making such a weird face?”

Well apparently Jim wasn’t subtle. Might as well come out with everything. “So I recently discovered I have empathic abilities, and since I just so happen to have a boyfriend with psychic abilities, Spock’s been training me at controlling and shielding and all of that.”

Gaila became uncharacteristically serious. “How many people know about this?”

“Well apparently Jim wasn’t subtle. Might as well come out with everything. “So I recently discovered I have empathic abilities, and since I just so happen to have a boyfriend with psychic abilities, Spock’s been training me at controlling and shielding and all of that.”

Gaila became uncharacteristically serious. “How many people know about this?”

“Not many.” Jim was thrown off by her reaction. “Spock, me, Bones, and now you. I think that’s it.”

“Good.” Gaila thought a moment then nodded, looking at Jim earnestly. “Try to only tell people you can trust absolutely. While this is all exciting and I know you tend to be pretty open, I think our last mission on the ship taught you that some people in Starfleet don’t exactly hold the same ideals as
you.”

“That’s true.” Jim paused a moment, looking at Gaila. “So does that mean you know about—”

She held up a hand to stop him. “Jim, I’m an Orion who was raised on Syndicate planets and thus speaks the languages and has some idea of how they work. What self-respecting intelligence agency would pass that up?”

That made Jim pause a second. “Ok that’s fair.” He looked at Gaila seriously. “Why’d you join?”

Gaila made a face; Jim got the feeling she was considering how much she could really tell him. After a little bit she looked back at him. “While there certainly are things about the Syndicate I don’t like, wouldn’t mind taking down, or don’t want getting into the Federation, it’s not fully about that.” She was practically projecting earnestness now. “If they make themselves known to you, they basically consider you recruited. I’m mostly part time, but if I ever end up requesting weird leave times, you’ll know why.”

Jim could tell he probably had his feelings on that coming off of him in waves, but he hoped Gaila knew it wasn’t her he was unhappy with. “You won’t be in danger or anything though, right?”

Gaila raised an eyebrow. “Coming from you, that’s an interesting concern.” Jim tipped his head in acknowledgement and Gaila’s expression softened some before she continued. “It’s alright, Jimmy. They mostly just have me decode things or consult when they have questions. And if I ever do get into trouble on a mission, I have ways of getting out. Either they send in backup, I draw on an escape route, or,” she smirked a bit, “I just have to put certain Orion traits to good use.”

“I can see how that would help.” A few longer breaks at the Academy when him and Gaila were stranded with nothing but each other and boredom meant that Jim knew exactly how much Orion pheromones lived up to the hype.

“Ah, good times.” Gaila seemed to be thinking of the same thing as Jim, because she was smiling nostalgically. She looked at him with a smirk. “Too bad I can’t teach Spock about that one. I bet he’d love it as much as you did.”

“Gaila!” Jim reached out to playfully slap her leg. He looked at her with a smile. “Should I be concerned that you and Spock are kinda friends now?”

“Nah.” Gaila took a sip of her tea. “While it has been fun telling him things about you that I think both of you will enjoy down the line, I think both of us are enjoying having a non-human friend too. There’s some things other people just don’t get if they’re from around here, relatively speaking.” She set down her drink and looked at Jim. “No offense, of course.”

“None taken.” Jim smiled at her. “Seriously though, I’m glad you two get along, even if personality wise I wouldn’t have guessed it.”

“Yeah, he was intimidating as hell back when he was kinda my boss with the Kobayashi Maru simulation thing, but turns out we just needed some common ground, minus the obvious non-human thing.” Gaila smirked at Jim again. “Who would have thought that your ass would be the common ground we’d bond over.”

“Hey!” Jim protested, but he smiled since he knew she was teasing. He smirked back at her. “Not gonna lie, I think he might like me for more than just this rocking body.”

Gaila’s answering smile was soft. “I think he just might, Jim.”
They settled into a comfortable silence after that until something that she’d said earlier caught up to Jim. He looked up at her, suddenly serious. “Wait a minute.”

“What?” She seemed thrown off by the sudden shift in his mood.

“You said that if you know about Section 31 they basically consider you recruited, right?” Jim couldn’t help the sudden twist of nervousness in his stomach.

“Yeah?” She didn’t bat an eye at hearing the organization’s name, just prompted him to continue.

“I know about them—you—whatever.” Jim leaned forward. “Doesn’t that mean they’ll recruit me?”

Gaila relaxed. “Nah.” She took another sip of her tea.

Now Jim was confused. “Why not? You said—”

“I know.” Gaila set down her cup and looked at him with an odd mix of seriousness and nonchalance. “Let’s just say the new boss said you’re off limits. Other people might push if they find out you’ve got more going on than the average human, which is why I told you to keep the empath thing under wraps, but I think otherwise you’ll be fine.”

Jim narrowed his eyes. “Do I even want to know who this new boss is or why they’re looking out for me?”

Gaila raised an eyebrow, clearly unimpressed. “I think her intentions are good, and I think if you really wanted you could guess who I’m talking about.”

Jim sat back at that. Gaila had just given him a hint with the pronouns, and it’s not like he knew many people in Section 31, or at least not that he knew of. It was really just Gaila and— “Ma?!”

Gaila looked like she was trying really hard not to laugh at his reaction. “Like I said, pretty sure her intentions are good.”

“I can’t believe this.” Jim ran a hand down his face and looked at Gaila through his fingers. “My mother is in charge of the super sketchy, semi-but-mostly-not-Starfleet-affiliated, top secret spy organization that most of the Federation doesn’t even know about?”

Gaila pursed her lips and tipped her head from side to side in consideration, the red curls that escaped her bun falling to the side. After a moment she looked back at Jim. “I don’t know if she’s the main boss since a major aspect of the organization is that no one knows everyone involved, but there was a power vacuum when Marcus got taken out and I know she’s at least one of the people bringing order to everything again.”

“Damn.” Jim dropped his hand back to his lap. “I don’t think adults are supposed to be this intimidated by their parents.”

“Maybe not.” Gaila smiled, blatantly enjoying his reaction at this point. “But Winona’s an interesting person.” She continued, only seeming more amused at Jim’s response to her apparently being on first name basis with his mother because they were both spies. “She’s definitely intimidating, but she also has a pretty good sense of humor and definitely cares about you and your brother. She’s even authorized me to break out the special tech if it ever seems like you’ve gotten yourself into a situation you couldn’t get out of using normal means.”

“Huh. Good to know I guess.” Jim rested his head on the back of the couch, not even realizing he’d slouched or slid down enough in this conversation that he could do that now, and rolled his head to
look at Gaila after taking a minute to process everything. “Can we just go back to talking about which embarrassing sex stories you’re telling my boyfriend now?”

Gaila laughed before looking back at him, humor shining from her eyes. “Gladly.”

Chapter End Notes

I think we'll be doing more little time jumps like this. Apparently the movie/canon timeline has them spending a year on Earth before restarting the mission and I don't know if I'll do that, but I think we'll get a little more time before they're back on the ship. Everyone seems to be enjoying this domestic interlude, so we'll stick with it a little longer!
Chapter 179

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We interrupt your fluff with a dash of mild angst. Don't worry, it's nothing too bad, and I'm too much of a sucker for happy endings to put you through the ringer too much. (Is it wringer or ringer? I don't know if I've ever seen that expression written down). Anyways, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Today was the day. Jim could barely contain his excitement; all the weeks (months at this point really) of recovery and physical therapy, and he could finally get to go tour his silver lady again. Jim was excited; he'd be going alone since basically everyone else was working, but he was meeting Scotty up there. He said hi to Pike and Spock as he passed through the Academy campus to get to transporters, then he was beaming up to the Enterprise.

Scotty smiled at him as he materialized on the transporter padd. “Welcome aboard, Captain.”

Jim grinned back. “Thanks Scotty. It’s good to be back.” He stepped off the transporter padd, smoothing his uniform. After months of hospital scrubs, pajamas, and casual clothes, it almost felt odd, but it would have felt even weirder not being in uniform for his first time back on the ship. He paused once he got near the doors, looking at Scotty. “You leading the tour?”

“Aye, sir.” Scotty stepped around the transporter console. “Who better?”

Jim felt himself smiling wider. “Probably no one.”

Scotty grinned back at him at that. “Follow me, Captain.”

Jim let Scotty lead them out of the transporter room, but fell in step with him once they were in the corridor. “You know, we’re barely on duty right now. You can call me Jim if you want.”

“I know.” Scotty was quiet a moment as they passed some crewmembers Jim recognized, who also greeted him by his rank. Once they were alone in the corridor again, Scotty looked at Jim again. “But I think it does the crew good to see their captain on the ship alive and well though.”

“That’s understandable.” Jim hadn’t really thought about it like that. He felt himself slipping a little more into how he usually carried himself. The last time the crew saw him on the ship, he’d been comatose in a borrowed cryotube. And the last time he’d been fully conscious on the ship was…. Probably better not to think of that. Jim looked over at Scotty. “So what’s our first stop?”

Jim let himself get a little swept up in Scotty’s excitement. He mostly kept up as Scotty slipped into technical talk, but even if he wasn’t fully understanding it Jim was enjoying himself. It felt good to be back on his ship and see her full of people and looking good.

So he followed Scotty through the ship, not really pausing at anything in particular until they reached the bridge. There, Jim couldn’t but take a moment to sit in the captain’s chair, if only briefly. Jim didn’t realize how much he missed sitting there and staring out the viewscreen until he was doing it again, although he couldn’t help but wish the rest of the bridge crew could be there with him.
Especially a certain science officer…

But they couldn’t linger too long, so they continued the tour after Scotty let Jim have his moment. But Jim couldn’t help but notice that the crewmembers on the bridge seemed to be smiling at the sight of him back in the chair too.

Their final stop was Engineering. Jim listened as Scotty eagerly explained how the new engine upgrades would allow them to go a little bit faster and even be a little more efficient; Jim bet that his excitement would be contagious even for people who weren’t empaths.

Still, his excitement noticeably dropped as they neared the warp core. Scotty seemed nervous as they neared it, even as he kept talking some.

Jim decided to try to break up the tension some. “How’s she running?”

“Running well.” Scotty paused; they were right by a certain glass door Jim remembered very well. “We’re also working on ways to drain the radiation from the chamber even more quickly. There’s certain materials and technologies that…” He trailed off. “Just in case…you know, sir.”

“Yeah.” Jim crossed his arms, both of them staring at the door. “If there’s anyone who can do it, it’s you and your team.”

“Thank you sir.” Scotty still seemed more somber than usual, but neither of them made any move to leave yet.

After a moment, a thought occurred to Jim and he looked over at the man next to him. “Hey Scotty?”

A hum prompted him to continue even though Scotty didn’t look at him. “Why’d you call Spock? When I was…you know.”

Scotty looked over to him, smiling in a way that didn’t quite reach his eyes. “I didn’t see quite as much as other people, but I was there in the alternate universe and I saw how he responded to the other you. And I’d seen how you looked him.” He looked away again. “Just because I may not be much into all of that doesn’t mean I don’t know it when I see it. It seemed like he should be there.”

Jim kept looking at the glass door, but eventually broke away to look at Scotty. “Thank you.”


Jim nodded, and they continued with the tour.

Hours later, Jim was back in his apartment when Spock got there. He’d changed back into more comfortable clothes and was lying on the couch; Spock must have thought he was napping because he was moving quietly so he wouldn’t disturb Jim. Jim turned his head, but enjoying the sight of Spock in his instructor blacks couldn’t take his mind off of what he’d been thinking about all afternoon. Jim looked back up at the ceiling and finally spoke, breaking the silence. “I saw the place where I died today.”

Spock stilled before turning and walking over to kneel on the ground next to Jim’s head. He could tell there were a thousand questions running though Spock’s head, but he didn’t say anything, just waiting for Jim to continue.

Jim turned to face him. “It was weird. But definitely better than being on the other side of the glass.” Spock stiffened at that, and Jim couldn’t help but reach one hand to where Spock’s rested on the couch, starting a Vulcan kiss and focusing on that instead of Spock’s face. “There were a lot of
things I thought of when it was happening, but I was glad you were there. Tough as it was, it would have been worse without being able to say goodbye.” After a moment, Jim finally looked Spock in the eye. He could tell Spock was struggling a bit to control his emotions. “I’m glad it wasn’t goodbye for real though. I’m glad we get to have this.” He sat up, Spock shifting to be at the same height and maintain eye contact. “I love you, Spock.”

It was the first time Jim had said it out loud, but it felt right. He’d been feeling it for longer than he’d probably realized or admit. He leaned in and kissed Spock human style too, gently.

Spock returned the kiss, his other hand coming up to cup Jim’s cheek. After a moment, they broke away, but Spock’s hand stayed on Jim’s cheek and their foreheads rested together and their hands stayed intertwined. When Spock finally spoke, it was quiet, like he was trying to not break the moment between them. “I love you too, Jim.”

Chapter End Notes

Tbh, it felt like Jim needed a moment to process everything at the actual place where it happened. as for the chapter's end, that kinda came on it's own. I hope you enjoyed!
Chapter 180

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I've been busier than expected, but hopefully soon I'll get a better writing and posting schedule worked out. I do have a lot of ideas going forward...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A few more months passed since Jim had first toured his silver lady again and he was still making slow but steady progress on his recovery. Spock’s first semester of teaching back at the Academy was wrapping up and Jim decided to go visit him for lunch, only to run into Pike instead.

“Jim!” Pike looked up at him with a smile, hands resting on the wheels of his wheelchair. “It’s good to see you.”

“You too.” Jim smiled back at him, looking for a place to sit because he wouldn’t mind taking a moment to catch up. Once they shifted over to a nearby bench Jim turned back to Pike. “So what’s new with the admiralty?”

Pike looked a little more tired at that. “Still dealing with a bit of the fallout from Marcus and everything some.” He sighed. “Thank god for Cornwell and her psych background; with the amount of work she’s done to keep everyone calm and communicating instead of shoving blame around she deserves a promotion.” Pike smiled ruefully. “I’m probably not supposed to be telling you all this, but I trust you to not tell everyone. Plus, you were pretty much caught in the middle of the Marcus thing anyways.”

“That’s true.” Jim thought a moment then looked at Pike. “That reminds me; do you need anyone on the crew to come in and talk about what happened more?” Testifying about everything to the Admiralty had become another part of Jim’s routine during his recovery, and he knew a lot of the rest of the crew had been in as well. He’d been mostly honest, but thanks to his mother’s warnings he’d carefully left out any mentions of Section 31 in case another admiral was part of it.

“I think we have enough to settle it by now.” Pike looked a little amused. “Concerned that the investigation is one of the reasons you and your crew haven’t gotten a new assignment yet?”

Jim shrugged. “That wasn’t necessarily why I was asking, but it does seem like it could be a factor, along with Bones still not giving me full medical clearance.”

“I think he just worries about you.” Pike smiled again. “But I think you won’t have to wait too long to get back out there. They might hold you until the end of the Academy school year so they don’t lose so many instructors thanks to all of your crewmembers who have taken positions, but things are looking good for you.”

“Yeah?” Jim perked up at that; everyone had still been calling him captain and he didn’t want to push his luck by asking about it, but it lingered in the back of Jim’s mind that before everything had gone down, he’d been demoted and technically had only gotten his captaincy back temporarily from Marcus. But if Pike had good news…

“It seems like I’ll be the first to tell you.” Pike brightened a bit at that. “I can’t officially confirm it
yet, but I think you’re definitively getting promoted to captain after this.”

“Really?” It was all Jim could do to not jump up from the bench in excitement.

“Yep.” Pike smiled. “No probationary period, no refresher courses, none of it.” His expression sobered a bit, but there was still affection in his eyes. “I guess climbing into that warp core proved to everyone that you had what it takes to put your crew first and got rid of any doubts the other admirals had, although I’d advise you to find less dramatic ways of showing that in the future. And of course honesty in your logs doesn’t hurt.”

“Hey.” Jim reached out and lightly slapped Pike’s knee. “I think I have learned my lesson there, although I can’t promise to be less dramatic.” He smirked. “I mean, have you met me?”

“True enough.” Pike tipped his head in acknowledgement. “But I would prefer if your near-death encounters weren’t quite so close.”

“I believe there are many who would agree.” They both turned to see who had joined them.

“Spock!” Jim grinned at him. “I’m assuming you’re including yourself in there?”

“Indeed, Captain.” Spock stood next to them in his instructor blacks with a padd under one arm. Jim almost instinctively slid a hand with two fingers extended toward him, which Spock met. They didn’t do the full Vulcan kiss, just held their fingers together without moving them.

Until Jim remembered that Pike was right there and pulled his hand away. He looked at Pike, feeling himself sitting up a little straighter. “Sir, I—”

“At ease.” Pike seemed equal parts knowing and amused. “What happened to being one of the first to know, Jim?”

“Well…” Jim mostly remembered promising Pike that, somewhere between the whirlwind day of the press conference, his demotion, and Khan’s attack on Starfleet Command. “You still kind of are. We’ve been keeping it quiet, and it’s still pretty new.”

He could practically feel Spock’s eyebrow go up. “New may be an inaccurate descriptor; the number of months we have been dating is approximately—”

“Not really helping, Spock.” Jim glanced at him then back at Pike. “Really though, you’re still one of the first to know. We’ve only told a handful of people.”

“It’s alright.” Pike smiled. “I never would have seen it coming back when you were literally at each other’s throats, but looking back some things make a whole lot of sense now.”

Jim and Spock shared a look, but neither decided to ask. Instead, Spock just shifted toward Jim. “Captain, would you like to go to lunch now?”

“Yeah.” Jim glanced over at Pike, unsure if he should extend the invitation.

“I’ll let you two get going.” Pike looked between them. “But congratulations, and I’m glad I got to give Jim the good news.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, this time more curious than before. “What news?”

Jim couldn’t help but grin. “I’m officially getting my captaincy back.”

“That is good news.” Jim was pretty sure Spock was letting him feel that little bit of affection and
pride, especially since he wasn’t doing much to overtly show it. “It is not unexpected, however.”

Before Jim could object, Pike cut in. “True. He earned it, plus I think the crew might mutiny if we put anyone else in the captain’s chair.”

“Now, that is not a situation we will have to encounter or consider.” He looked at Jim. “Congratulations, Captain.”

“Thanks Spock.” Jim smiled and stood. “Should we get going?”

“I am amenable to that.” Spock carefully looked around before sliding his fingers against Jim’s once more.

Jim smiled before looking back at Pike. “I’ll see you later.”

Pike smiled back. “See you later, Jim.”

With one last wave, Jim turned and followed Spock off to get something to eat.

Chapter End Notes

Not super related to the chapter, but I did put up a new extra scene last weekend...
Chapter 181

Chapter Notes

Man, the writer's block was STRONG today. They're getting back into space soon; that seems to be where my ideas are. But until then, enjoy another little domestic moment.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Since Jim and Spock were still trying to keep their relationship on the down low, they left the Academy campus to get lunch. Once they were through the usual small talk about Spock’s classes and Jim’s continuing physical therapy, Jim decided to turn to more recent news. “So Pike knows.”

Spock paused a moment, as if unsure if Jim was going to say more. “Indeed.”

“Think he’ll tell anyone? We were trying to keep it secret so we wouldn’t have to deal with all the Starfleet bureaucracy yet.” Jim took a bite and chewed, not bothering to swallow before he continued. “I know neither of us wanted to deal with that.”

Spock raised an eyebrow at him talking with his mouth open, but didn’t comment on it. “You were not meeting with him in a formal capacity, so he may consider this a personal rather than professional notification.” He ate some of his own lunch, chewing and swallowing before speaking again. “Additionally, we are not currently actively serving together, so there is no reason to rush filing the paperwork.”

Jim smiled. “You really do know how to make me happy, Spock.” He placed a hand over Spock’s on the table, trying to push his affection through their touch and bond.

Spock allowed their hands to stay together a moment before pulling his away; Jim didn’t mind because he knew it was just because Spock didn’t do PDA. “You seem to have fewer problems doing paperwork lately.”

“Yeah, cuz that’s the only thing I can do.” Jim sighed and sat back in his chair. “I’m going stir crazy with nothing else to do, and while it’s exciting Pike said we have another mission coming up, we still have months to go before we head back out, and prepping for it won’t take that much of my time.”

“You could find something else to occupy you.” Spock paused in thought. “The Academy would likely welcome you as an instructor.” He paused again, the edge of his mouth quirking up slightly. “In the upcoming semester, they will need someone to administer the Kobayashi Maru.”

Jim sat up and kicked Spock in the shin a little. “Hey!” He settled back down and smiled. “I don’t know if they’d take me, but I could see teaching a command class or two.” He grinned. “It could be fun to pass on my knowledge to the cadets.” He gestured in the air with his hands as if putting up a title. “Lesson One: Seduction for Information, Distraction, or Escape, and Sometimes All Three.” He only grinned wider at Spock’s totally unimpressed expression.

Spock stared at him a moment longer. “Perhaps they would not allow you to teach a class.” He took another bite and chewed.

Jim didn’t stop grinning. “I might have to save that lesson for later, but I bet they’d let me teach a
class. The cadets would be lining up to take it.”

“Perhaps.” Spock’s voice was level, but there was warmth in his eyes.

“I’ll ask Pike about it.” Jim smiled at Spock, but it dropped a little after. “That is, assuming Bones finally clears me for full duty.”

Spock’s eyebrow went up. “I thought you said you had progressed to strenuous physical activity in your physical therapy. Was that not the stage you were due to be cleared at?”

“I thought so.” Jim sat back again. “But Bones keeps putting it off. I don’t get it; even he says I’m getting back to the shape I was in before…everything, but he keeps putting off fully clearing me anyways.”

“It has been less than half a year since your death and return.” Spock could probably give an exact figure, maybe even down to the second, but Jim was willing to bet that he was vaguer than normal because he didn’t want Jim to become concerned he was dwelling on it, even though Jim knew he still thought about Jim’s death a lot. “It was a…highly stressful experience, and Dr. McCoy does have a notable tendency to worry about you.”

“I guess.” Jim sighed and took a sip of his drink. “Still, I’d appreciate it if I were finally cleared for certain unsupervised strenuous activities.” He leaned forward and smirked at Spock. “Well, I’d be lying if I said I’m completely against some ‘supervision,’ but…”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “You are aware our preferences there differ.”

“I know.” Jim felt his expression soften into a smile. “But still, days like this when we have an afternoon, evening, and night all to ourselves, it gets very difficult to follow the good doctor’s orders…” He trailed off, letting his hand slide toward Spock’s with two fingers extended.

“I agree.” Spock allowed his fingers to meet Jim’s, if only briefly since they were still in public. “However, if there is a valid medical reason for his hesitance, I would not want to endanger your health, and even if there is not, he is likely to respond to your actions, or our actions rather, with irritation that neither of us will want to deal with.”

Jim made a face and tipped his head in consideration. “It could be worth it.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Dr. McCoy tends to express his irritation through near-constant complaints and increased hypospray administration.”

“Maybe not then.” Jim groaned and sat back again. He looked at Spock. “I’m not used to waiting this long to do the deed though. I mean, if it was one of us being hesitant, obviously I wouldn’t push, but we both want this, so…” He gestured in frustration.

“Perhaps you should speak to McCoy directly.” Spock seemed outwardly calm, but Jim felt him send assurance though the bond.

“I might have to.” Jim sat up, smirking at Spock again. “But once I’m cleared, we’re blocking off a weekend. Maybe I’ll even take you out to Riverside so we won’t have to worry about neighbors and can just do whatever we want.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, smirking just a little in that way that made Jim really wish he’d already been cleared fully. “I anticipate what you will plan.”

Jim grinned. “I better talk to Bones.”
Chapter End Notes

If any of you write, I hope you don't have to deal with writer's block. For this chapter I had a vague idea and three jokes when I sat down to write, and one of the jokes didn't even work with this chapter. Still, I hope you enjoyed!
Chapter 182

Chapter Notes

Happy Pride Month everyone! Today I had inspiration but no time, so let's hope it balances soon so I can keep putting up chapters for you awesome people!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After spending the day with Spock doing decidedly pg activities still, Jim was ready for his physical with Bones the next day. He got through the usual tests and scans, waiting for a moment to bring it up. Finally, they were nearing the end.

Bones looked over his padd, reviewing and entering all the new information. “Anything else you want to talk about today, Jim?”

Now or never. “Well…”

Bones looked up, instantly concerned. “What is it? Is there something wrong?” He brought up the tricorder and started scanning again, frowning.

“No!” Jim slapped at Bones’ hand. “C’mon, you just did all those scans.”

Bones grumbled a bit but put down the tricorder. “What is it then?”

“Well.” Jim took a deep breath. “As you know, Spock and I have been together for months. And with what you know about us, I think you can expect that we’re at the point where we want to have s—”

“If that sentence doesn’t end ‘sparring sessions’ I will find a reason to hypo you.” Bones was glaring a little. “There are certain things you and the hobgoblin do that I don’t need to know about.”

Jim was taken aback a minute, then he smirked. “That’s funny, I thought you were supposed to tell your doctor when you were having ‘sparring sessions.’”

Bones glared at Jim some more. “Doesn’t mean I have to know details.” He crossed his arms. “Look, there’s so many reasons why you could be pushing me to give you full medical clearance, and you chose that?”

Jim shrugged. “Are you surprised?”

Bones sighed, dropping into the chair next to the biobed Jim was sitting on. “Not really, I guess.”

Jim was tempted to tease Bones, but decided it would be best to stay on his good side. “I’m not exactly opposed to going back to full duty and all the other stuff clearance would bring. But you know I’ve always loved sparring.” He smirked. Maybe a little teasing Bones was ok.

Another glare. “I can still find an excuse to hypo you, you know.”

No teasing then. “Is there any actual medical reason that I haven’t been cleared?”
Bones snorted. “Besides that you died of acute radiation poisoning only months ago and had to have a combination of Vulcan voodoo, a cryotube stay, a coma, and a long hospital stay to get back to functional?”

“But I am back to functional?” Jim held up his hands placatingly when Bones’ head snapped up at him. “Sorry, I get I’m being pushy. But everything with physical therapy is going well, and you even said that there doesn’t seem to be any residual effects of the radiation at this point.”

“That’s true.” Bones was looking at the padd instead of Jim now.

“And c’mon, we both know that Spock’s probably as much of a mother hen as you. If I showed even the slightest hint of a problem, he’d be dragging me right back here even if I insisted I was fine.” Jim smiled at Bones, who started to look up.

He was smiling a bit too. “You’d say you were fine if you were seriously injured. Especially if something with Spock was on the line.”

“Maybe.” Jim smiled a little wider at Bones relaxing. “But he wouldn’t let me get away with that.”

“He wouldn’t.” Bones sat up a little straighter. He looked at Jim seriously. “Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

“Absolutely.” Jim hoped he didn’t sound too eager.

“Alright.” Bones sighed and pulled things up on his padd. “Typically for interspecies relationships within Starfleet, there has to be some checking for potential issues between the species, but we’ve already had precedent for Vulcans and Humans, so you’re good there.” He flipped through a few more things. “I know you aren’t exactly asking about paperwork right now, but when the time comes I’m ready to mark off what I need to.”

Jim had to resist jumping off of the biobed. “So are you saying…?”

Bones sighed. “Yes Jim, I’m clearing you.”

Jim grinned. “You’re the best.”

“Yeah, yeah.” Bones stood up and pointed his padd at Jim. “But if you come to me with sex-related injuries, you better make up a damn good excuse or I will find some way to get back at you and the hobgoblin.”

Jim hopped off the biobed, still grinning. “Of course.”

Bones shook his head, pulling up the padd again. “I can’t believe you. I’m just glad we aren’t roommates anymore.”

Jim laughed. “C’mon, we worked out a system pretty quickly.”

“Not quickly enough.” Bones glared at him. “I still can’t erase what I saw you and Gaila doing. Or what she was doing to you I guess.”

Jim smiled. “Good times.”

“For you.” Bones crossed his arms again. “Now get out of here before I find a reason to hypo you.”

Not needing another warning, Jim backed towards the door. “Bye Bones!” He got some grumbling in response, but just laughed as he headed toward the door and back to his apartment.
Since it was a Saturday, Spock was in the apartment when he got back. Not really wanting to wait any longer, Jim walked over to where Spock was reclined on the couch reading and pushed his hands and padd aside so he could straddle Spock’s lap. He leaned in and started kissing along Spock’s neck, working up to a pointed ear. “Guess what I just got cleared for?”

The padd was discarded on the table and Spock’s hands came up to Jim’s hips. “I believe I can infer.” He waited until Jim’s face was right above his. “Did Dr. McCoy clear you?”

“Yep.” Jim grinned, leaning in for a kiss.

Spock returned it; once their lips broke apart he spoke again. “I believe the bed would be a better location.”

“Don’t feel like moving.” Jim was now working on the other side of Spock’s neck.

“Very well.” Jim yelped as Spock picked him up and carried him to the bedroom.

Jim really liked Vulcan strength sometimes. He grinned as Spock dropped him on the bed and then followed him as he backed up towards the headboard and started taking off layers.

Chapter End Notes

To preempt any questions, the rating will not be going up next chapter. I’m not going to be adding smut here; too many people I know irl know about this account. Not that I think any of them check it...

Anyways, bonus points to whoever knows the couple who was precedent for a Human/Vulcan relationship within Starfleet.
A few months had passed, and Jim and Spock’s “sparring sessions” became a regular thing. They also started doing actual sparring as well; since Jim was cleared for duty and they’d be going back out into space once the Academy schoolyear ended, Jim wanted to be back in shape. Jim could tell that Spock was going easy on him, even more so than he used to, but decided not to press yet. He’d get Spock to go full force one way or another, especially once they were back on the ship. But they might have to find private rooms to spar rather than the main Enterprise gym, because it seemed like more often than not Jim ended up wanting to have “sparring sessions” after their sparring sessions; Jim just couldn’t help his reaction when Spock pinned him. Or the times when he ended up on top in all honestly…

But now was not the time to be daydreaming about that. Jim and Spock were driving up to Sulu’s wedding. Technically, the car was driving for them, despite Jim insisting that he could have done it, and Jim and Spock were just in the driver and passenger seats, respectively. That meant that they probably could fool around, but Jim knew that Spock probably wouldn’t agree right now. Oh well. May as well just enjoy the ride. Jim adjusted his dress uniform and looked over at Spock, admiring the way he looked in his own but deciding to hold back anyways. “How have your classes been?”

“Satisfactory.” Spock shifted some to better look at Jim. “I did overhear three students in my xenolingustics class discuss transferring to Nyota’s class instead.”

“Yeah?” Jim rested his hands on the steering wheel despite knowing it wouldn’t do anything and looked over at Spock. “I’m not sure her class would be any easier.”

“Indeed, but cadets are encouraged to seek instructors whose teaching methods most benefit their preferred learning styles.” Spock paused as Jim nodded in acknowledgement. “And as it is still relatively early in the semester, the academic repercussions of transferring will likely be minimal.” He paused again, looking at Jim. “And how are your classes?”

Jim snorted. He did end up taking on some command courses. He enjoyed it some, but talking about everything just made him want to get back out there even more. “Well enough. Pike’s still reviewing my lesson plans before I do them, which means that I have to have lesson plans and not just wing it.”

“Lesson plans are a normal part of teaching at any level.” Jim felt a small surge of amusement from Spock. “Additionally, you did suggest that if left unchecked, you would have lessons on unconventional topics such as seduction.”
Jim had to hold back his laugh and smirked at Spock instead. “What, like me batting these baby blues and getting friendly has never gotten us out of a tight spot?” Spock’s only response was an eyebrow raise, so Jim looked back to the road. “I do like some of the cadets, though. I’m temped to try to steal some for when we go back out. A couple have real potential as future captains; I like this one girl, Tilly. She’s got a lot of heart, but I just hope that space doesn’t crush that optimism out of her.”

Spock laid a hand over Jim’s, not doing a Vulcan kiss but just providing reassurance in response to Jim’s worry for his students. “If she finds a place among a supportive crew, she will survive and possibly thrive.”

“I hope so.” Jim smiled at Spock and turned his hand around to hold Spock’s more fully before looking at it and sighing. “Are we sure we don’t want to just tell the crew now? It’s gonna be hard to keep my hands off of you all night.”

Spock raised his eyebrow again. “You initially suggested the secrecy. Additionally, we agreed that we did not want to take attention away from the wedding tonight.”

“Fair enough.” Jim glanced at the navigational display; they were almost there. “One last kiss then.” Jim leaned in and shifted their hands to the proper position as well; he smiled when Spock met him with no resistance.

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A few hours later, Jim sat off to the side at the reception, eating Spock’s cake for him. The night was starting to wind down, but there were still people enjoying themselves on the dance floor. Jim smiled at the fact that their crew made up a good portion of the dancers. He planned on trying to drag Spock out once he finished his cake. The ceremony had been short but beautiful and a little more traditional than Jim would expect; despite his offers, Sulu and Ben hadn’t had Jim officiate, but he had to admit that the person they’d picked had done a good job. Sulu had worn his dress uniform and Ben had on a tux; they looked cute together. The only real snag had been Chekov spilling the beans on them looking into ways to have a kid during his best man speech, but even that just led to more congratulations. Jim looked up as Spock sat back down next to him at the table that had been reserved for Enterprise officers. “Did you manage to find the bathroom?”

“Indeed.” Unless Jim was mistaken, there was a slight flush to his cheeks. “However, it was… occupied.”

Jim laughed. “Chekov finally get lucky with the groomsman he's been talking to since after his speech?”

“No; I believe it was a different individual. Perhaps one of the groomsmaids from Ben’s side; I believe I recognized what I saw of the dress.” Spock looked like he was ready to change the topic. “Perhaps it is for the best that Ben and Hikaru have left.”

“Maybe, but I doubt they’d mind.” Jim smiled and looked around. “Would you ever want to do this?”

“Jim, we have already performed a preliminary bond.” Spock was raising his eyebrow. “When the Time comes it will solidify into a marital bond, marking us as married within Vulcan society and thus within the Federation.”

“Fair enough, and one of these days I will figure out why you say ‘time’ so ominously.” Jim looked at Spock, trying and probably failing to look serious. He was too happy to question Vulcan things at
“You will indeed.” Spock was no less ominous, but Jim was again willing to let Vulcan things slide now.

“Anyways.” Jim looked away and gestured around them. “I meant all of this. The ceremony and stuff, done in whatever human style we’d pick.”

Spock paused to think it over. “I am largely indifferent, although would not be opposed if you wished for it. There are Vulcan ceremonial elements I would wish to incorporate if we did have a ceremony.”

“That could be cool.” Jim smiled at him. “Still, I think I’m ok keeping this quiet for a little while longer.”

Spock’s eyes had that warmth they only ever really got when he looked at Jim. “As am I.”

Jim smiled a little wider and looked around before pressing two fingers to Spock’s. “C’mon, let’s go dance.”

Spock’s eyebrow rose. “Dancing together is hardly conducive to keeping our relationship a secret.”

“Well then we’ll dance in a group with the rest of the crew.” Jim grinned. “Besides, I think Chekov’s generating enough gossip to keep everyone busy.”

Spock reluctantly got up; Jim knew he’d probably end up standing by and watching or going back to the table while Jim danced with the crew, but the gesture was still enough to make Jim want to kiss him right there.
I realized after I posted last chapter that I forgot to an end note, which isn't necessarily something I have to do but more something I'm in the habit of. Not sure if any of you noticed (although I know some of you read them because you said so in the comments) but I guess I didn't so who knows. Anyways, today I had writer's block until about an hour ago so that's why the chapter's a little late. But hey, I finally worked a line/situation I thought of months ago and wanted to work in, so enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Today was finally the day. They were gonna get to go out on the Enterprise and take her for a spin. They’d be leaving for the real next mission the following week after the Academy schoolyear finished, but for now they were just doing a test run to ensure that the repairs and refit had all gone smoothly and worked well. So it would just be a quick day run, going out just long enough to run the warp engines a little bit then head back.

Still, Jim was excited enough that he’d barely slept the night before. As much fun as he’d had at the Academy (especially once he realized he could slip things past Pike now and then and tell his cadets the good stories; it’s not like they had a whole lot to do in command classes after the Kobayashi Maru anyways), he really missed being out there. So he’d been too excited to fall asleep, despite Spock’s occasional comments from the other side of the bed that he’d nerve pinch Jim if he didn’t stop moving.

Jim knew that Bones would be on his case about him not getting enough sleep, especially since according to Bones Jim was still recovering (despite it being almost a year since the incident and months since he’d fully cleared Jim). But the easy solution to that was to just not tell Bones. If necessary, there were plenty of secluded places on the ship where Jim could sneak off for a quick nap and claim he was just doing an inspection if anyone caught him. It could work. Besides, Jim’s excitement about seeing his ship again and getting to go out with his crew, even for such a short time, had him feeling more energetic than he’d expect.

Which was why he was practically dragging Spock to the transporter pad on the Academy campus. He was holding onto his forearm where the sleeve of his uniform was so Spock wouldn’t make any comments about needing restraint when they were in public; Jim had already gotten that lecture after grabbing Spock’s hand in public before when he got distracted. Still, Jim was too excited to not look back at Spock and grin a little and give him a tug. “C’mon, let’s go.”

Spock’s eyebrow went up, but he did pick up his pace a bit to match Jim. “I do not understand the rush, Captain. We will still arrive early at our current pace.”

“I know.” Jim calmed a little at Spock’s use of his rank and dropped his arm at the reminder that they were technically on duty now. “I’m just excited.”

“I am aware.” Jim smiled a little at the hint of amusement in Spock’s voice.

They were at the transporter room, so Jim decided to hold off on responding. Instead, he turned to the transporter technician. “Two to beam up to the Enterprise.” He got a nod in response as him and
Spock climbed on to the transporter pad. “Energize.”

The next thing Jim saw was a grinning Scotty in the familiar transporter room on the ship. He stepped around the console as soon as they finished materializing. “Captain. Commander. Welcome aboard.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled as he stepped off of the transporter padd. “Is she ready to fly, Mr. Scott?”

“Yessir.” Scotty seemed as excited as Jim, if not more so. “Just waiting on her captain to get to the bridge.”

Jim grinned and looked at Spock. “Then we’d better get going, huh?” Spock just nodded and Jim restrained himself from pulling Spock along again. Still, he did sneak a Vulcan kiss when they were in the turbolift, which Spock met.

They pulled apart just in time for the turbolift doors to open; Spock tucked his hands behind his back and Jim stepped out first.

“Keptin on the bridge!” Jim grinned again as Chekov announced him and he made his way to his chair; he looked around the bridge and saw all of his usual crew there. The most notable things were that Spock’s station was now to the side of him rather than behind him (which meant he’d have to try harder not to just stare at Spock all shift, even if he could be subtler about it) and that Sulu was apparently back from his honeymoon; Jim would have to catch up with him about that later.

Jim settled in before turning and looking at Nyota. “Lieutenant, do we have clearance to leave spacedock?”

She pressed her earpiece to her ear for a moment before looking back at them. “Yes, Captain.”

“Awesome. Mr. Sulu, disengage the external inertial dampener and take us out.” He could feel Sulu’s little bit of irritation at that (a benefit of not shielding) and only smiled more.

Still, they were moving now. They’d already planned out the course they’d take and the maneuvers they’d be doing ahead of time, so Jim didn’t need to give too many orders. They’d be staying well within Federation space too, so it wasn’t like Jim needed to be on alert much.

Which could explain why partway through the test run, Jim’s head was resting on his hand and he was maybe yawning a bit. Definitely not nodding off though. But how did Spock get next to his chair in the time it took Jim to open his eyes when he blinked…

“Captain.” Spock was standing at attention; Jim had already been leaning towards that side so it was easy to just turn his head toward him. “Perhaps it would be best for us to curtail this voyage; I believe we have gathered the necessary information on the ship’s functioning.”

“You may be right.” Still, relaxed and maybe half asleep still, Jim didn’t think about what came out of his mouth next. “Thanks for looking out for me, babe.”

Well that woke him up. Jim sat up straighter, noticing Spock straightening up next to him. They’d been trying to keep their relationship quiet, and now…

“Captain, permission to speak freely?” Jim looked back at Nyota and nodded; he didn’t want to risk speaking now. She looked at him and shook her head, amused. “We pretty much all knew; everyone on the bridge at least. You two aren’t as subtle as you thought. You can relax; we’re happy for you.”

Jim couldn’t help but smile. “Alright then.” He looked at Nyota, then around the bridge. “Thank
you.” He smiled up at Spock. “Looks like we’ll have to do the paperwork once we get back after all.”

Spock’s face was stoic, but he seemed amused nonetheless. “Indeed.”

Jim grinned and looked back to the front of the bridge. “Well if that’s what’s waiting for us, I say we’re in no rush to get back. Mr. Chekov, Mr. Sulu, let’s find some more places and ways to test our new engines.”

There was a wave of amusement from the bridge and an “Aye, Captain” as Jim resisted the urge to sneak a Vulcan kiss to Spock. He’d missed this, and with Spock by his side in more ways than one he was gonna enjoy this even more.

Chapter End Notes

Anybody guess the line/situation? Anyways, we're back in space! Which means I need to actually remember how to spell lieutenant again. I'd had it down, then the domesticity struck and now I'm reliant on spell check again. I even misspelled it there before spell check. But anyways, back to space!
Chapter 185

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I actually had this chapter done early, but today was a busy yet rewarding day continuing the shift from college to real adulthood. It's stressful, but it feels like it'll be worth it. Anyways, the domestic fluff stuck around one more chapter. But get ready for space!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They were getting into final preparations for their next mission (a five-year mission! Jim was so excited he’d started shielding because he could tell that the excitement was probably radiating off of him and battering Spock’s shields and he didn’t want his boyfriend getting annoyed with him) and they would be spending the night before they left on the ship, so Jim and Spock were spending what could be one of their last evenings on Earth in a while packing their limited personal items at Jim’s apartment. The Enterprise had passed every test on her post-refit test voyage with flying colors, not that Jim had doubted her or her engineers, so now there was only one thing left on his mind…

Jim was in the living area boxing up his movie and holovid collection for transport the next day, and Spock was in the bedroom packing his clothes. Jim leaned over on the couch to glance through the open doorway. “Hey Spock?”

He saw Spock continue what he was doing but look at him. “Yes, Jim?”

“Do you still have your apartment?” Jim hoped that didn’t come out weirdly. “I mean, are you still renting it?”

This time Spock paused. “I am. I intend to return there later tonight to collect some personal items I wish to take to the ship.”

“Okay. I’ll go with you if you want.” Spock nodded and returned to his task. Jim paused, not sure why he was nervous about this. They’d basically reached this stage of their relationship already…

“At that point, probably able to tell that Jim was aiming for a bigger conversation, Spock came into the main room. “Is there significance to that question?”

“Kinda.” Jim stood up and walked over to Spock. “I know we haven’t combined quarters on the ship and I’m ok not having that conversation now, but I was thinking that while we’re on Earth, since we spend such little time here anyways, it might make more sense to just share an apartment. You know, not have to deal with maintaining two places, free up one apartment so it’s back on the market, and make it easier for us since we’ll probably spend leave together anyways.”

Spock nodded. “You present a logical argument.” They were close enough now that Spock’s hands came to rest on Jim’s hips, the kind of casual contact that only happened when they were in private and that Jim loved. “I am open to sharing an apartment.”

“Awesome.” Jim smiled and leaned in to give Spock a quick kiss on the lips, letting his hands settle on Spock’s shoulders.
Spock still seemed to be thinking ahead more than Jim. “Is there a particular apartment you would like to share? We both have our own, but there are likely others available.”

Jim shrugged. “I honestly didn’t think this far in advance. I was too busy thinking about asking.”

Spock’s eyebrow went up. “It is unlike you to not develop a strategy.”

“Well what can I say,” Jim shrugged again, “I’ve never moved in with someone I was with before. I was a bit nervous.”

The eyebrow stayed up. “Jim, we have been effectively cohabitating for—”

“However long it’s been since I got put of the hospital, I know.” Jim waved a hand dismissively. “But that started as you being the one watching my recovery, not us actually moving in together as a couple.”

Spock tipped his head in consideration. “A technicality.”

Jim smirked. “I thought Vulcans liked those.” When all he got was another raised eyebrow in response, Jim laughed, shifting out of Spock’s hold and grabbing one of his hands. “C’mon. Let’s grab dinner at that Italian place then go check out your apartment. We’ve got a little time to decide where to live, and if we end up in space before we settle we can always hire people to move our stuff.”

“That sounds agreeable.” Spock nodded and allowed himself to be led to the door.

“Glad you agree.” Jim paused and kissed Spock again by the door, letting their hands slide together too. When they pulled apart, he smirked. “Well, it looks like you’re getting one of my firsts after all. First significant other I’ve moved in with.” He grinned playfully. “And here I didn’t think I had any firsts left to give.”

“I will accept the honor nonetheless.” Spock didn’t look that impressed, but Jim could tell that he was pleased on some level. “I believe I am also the first partner you have become prepared to marry.”

“Oh yeah.” Jim poked the bond in the back of his head, watching Spock for any reaction before smiling playfully again. “Actually, you may not be the first there. There was this one time in kindergarten where another kid and I said we’d get married as adults.” He looked back at Spock and smiled again. “We broke it off in first grade though, so you probably win for first serious engagement.”

“Indeed.” Spock’s face was level. “However, you are not my first.” Without another word, he turned from Jim and began picking up his shoes and jacket to get ready to go, but Jim could feel a slight trickle of amusement if he focused on the bond.

He grinned. “Well I guess I know what we’re talking about at dinner now.” Jim leaned in, intentionally bumping his shoulder against Spock’s as he bent over to get his shoes. “I want the full scoop on your secret past engagement.”

Spock was shifting to his usual more stoic expression that he usually had when they were out in public compared to alone together, but Jim could still see the warmth in his eyes. “I would not withhold information from you, t’hy’la.”

“I know.” Jim smiled again, more softly than before, and touched his fingers to Spock’s before leaning in to kiss him on the cheek. “Now let’s go eat. I’ll see if we can get the corner booth again so
I can interrogate you in private.”

“A restaurant booth is hardly private, but I will allow it.” Spock followed him, his fingers brushing against Jim’s one more time as they left the apartment.

“Good.” Jim linked arms with Spock. “Off to one last date night in the city then.”

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: the kindergarten engagement story is shamelessly stolen from my best friend's actual life. I hope you enjoyed this, cuz now it's space! I have some ideas lined up, drawing on other tropes, TOS and other trek, and fic probably. Get ready!
Chapter 186

Chapter Notes

We're in space! Also, I noticed another little bump in bookmarks, so again shoutout to everyone showing their love for this fic, in whatever form that takes. You're the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim sat on the observation deck, holding a padd with mission details on his lap but not really looking at it. Instead, he sat and watched the stars go by. They were finally back in space; Jim was excited and there were so many things he wanted to do. He could walk around the ship, getting to know all the new crew and getting reacquainted with his silver lady post-refit. He could go down to the gym to work out or find someone to spar with, or maybe even talk Sulu into trying to teach him fencing again.

There were probably also things Jim needed to do. The first shift was done, but that didn’t mean the paperwork was, or that there weren’t random things to do still to get everything and everyone on the ship settled. Hell, Jim probably still had some unpacking to do in his own quarters. He’d need to talk to Spock about that too; they’d moved in together back in San Francisco, but here their quarters were still separate. They shared a bathroom and would probably be using that for easy, covert visits a lot over the next few years (not that their relationship was really secret anymore; Jim had already gotten the official paperwork back from Pike all approved saying that Starfleet formally acknowledged their relationship, with a note attached from Pike offering his congratulations), but they technically each had their own quarters. He hadn’t brought it up, but Jim felt like he’d miss sharing a bed with Spock. And not just for the obvious reasons of easy access to each other for late night activities, although Jim definitely appreciated that. He’d probably never say it out loud, but just having Spock there in bed with him was comforting and grounding in a way that Jim maybe needed more than he’d admit usually. Plus, maybe he liked cuddling sometimes, not that their beds in their quarters were really big enough for two grown men to spread out anyways.

But he’d deal with that later. For now, Jim was watching the stars and enjoying a bit of peace and solitude.

It was interrupted a moment later when the door behind Jim opened, allowing in some noise before it closed again. Jim didn’t have to look to know who’d come in; whether it was their bond, his own abilities, or just Jim’s knowledge of his first officer and boyfriend (would that still be the term with their preliminary bond? Jim had never bothered to ask, but Spock had never objected when Jim said it), Jim knew it was Spock behind him. He shifted over on the bench so Spock could sit down too, smiling a bit when Spock let their fingers brush together in the space between them. “I missed this.”

Maybe Spock got him as well as Jim got Spock, because he didn’t ask for clarification. “The experience of space travel has few other activities that truly compare.”

Jim looked over at him with a small smile before looking back at the stars, which seemed to move slowly despite their speed. “Can’t get a view like this when you’re planetside, that’s for sure.” He shifted a little closer to Spock, letting their shoulders bump together and smiling at him again. “Company ain’t bad either.”

Spock quirked an eyebrow at that, but Jim could tell he was amused. “I am glad you find my
company agreeable.”

Jim smirked, leaning into Spock a little more. “Maybe more than agreeable.” He leaned in and kissed Spock on the cheek.

Spock tipped his head to meet Jim, letting the kiss last a moment before pulling away and nodding at the padd in Jim’s other hand that he’d nearly forgotten. “What were you reviewing?”

“Not much.” Jim pulled it up and showed Spock. “Just the missions Starfleet command has lined up for us.” He scrolled through. “Nothing too exciting; a few colony check ins, investigating some anomalies, a bit of time patrolling the Neutral Zone, maybe a bit of mapping if we’re lucky.” Jim looked back at Spock. “It seems like they’ll keep sending us things to do, but I hope we’ll get to set our own plans at some point.”

“As a five-year mission has never been accomplished, we may be allowed more freedom as time progresses and Starfleet begins assigning tasks elsewhere.” Spock looked over the padd, pausing at some of the things he saw.

Jim couldn’t tell what he was picking up on from Spock. “What’s up?”

Spock’s eyebrows had pulled together some. “The name of the colony we are visiting first, Omicron Ceti III, is familiar, but I cannot place why.”

“Huh.” Jim took the padd back and clicked on it. “Seems like an important mission; a scientific team recently discovered the sun put out dangerous levels of radiation, but they lost contact with the colony. We’re supposed to check in.”

“How soon will we arrive?” Spock read the briefing over Jim’s shoulder.

“Couple days depending on our speed; we’re already going near top speed since it seems urgent.” Jim glanced at Spock, who still seemed lost in thought. “But we’ll go over it all with the crew tomorrow. For now, let’s get to bed.”

Spock nodded and followed Jim; he was surprised when Spock followed him to the captain’s quarters instead of going to his own door. When Jim paused, Spock just raised an eyebrow.

“Proceed, Captain.”

“Oh…” Jim entered his code and walked in, then stopped short and turned around to smile at Spock. “Did you do this?”

Spock seemed a little smug. “Perhaps.” He and Jim looked at the bed, which was larger than when Jim had dropped his bags that morning and looked big enough for two now. “I was not unaided.”

“I’ll thank Scotty or whoever later, but you’re getting special thanks.” Jim leaned in for a kiss. “What about your room though?”

“It still contains my workspace and meditation area.” Spock’s arms had wrapped around him. “However, we both rested well when sharing a bed, and it is logical for the captain and first officer to be optimally rested.”

“Of course.” Jim grinned and took Spock by the hand, leading him to the bed side of the room. “But I think I have something besides rest in mind now.”

Spock seemed to pick up on exactly what Jim meant, and he eagerly followed him over.
Chapter End Notes

The fluff wanted one last hurrah I guess, but I do have missions planned out now. I have 4-5 of varying length ready, so I hope you're excited!
Hello everyone! Look at me, finally getting a chapter up earlier than usual. Here's hoping that with more of a direction for where they're going I can get back to scheduling my writing better. You're awesome readers, so you deserve good chapters on time. Also, since Pride is this weekend (near me at least) happy Pride everyone!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim and Spock did end up sleeping pretty well that night (and maybe did more than sleep again in the morning), so they were ready for the briefing when the time came. They’d even gone over everything again during breakfast together; Jim was probably more prepared for this briefing than he had been for most so far.

So it all went smoothly. All Jim had to do now was wrap things up. He looked around the room at the senior officers. “Alright, so basically our goal is to check on the colony and report back to Starfleet with whatever we find, good or bad. If the colonists are still there, we’re supposed to evacuate them and provide whatever necessary medical assistance.” He turned to Bones. “I know there’s no known prevention or cure for damage from the level of Berthold rays this planet gets from their sun, but we’ll be fine for short trips, right?”

Bones cautiously nodded. “I’ll do more research, but I think we’ll be fine as long as time on the surface is minimal. Up here the ship’s plating should be enough that even though we’re in the system it won’t harm us.”

“Good; I’ll check back in with you about recommended landing party lengths once we’re closer.” Jim looked back around the room. “Scotty, want to double check the hull plating? I don’t want anyone getting radiation poisoning of any sort.”

“We should be good, but I’ll get a team on it, Captain.” Scotty’s nod was more confident than Bones’ had been.

“Awesome.” Jim smiled a bit. “Getting irradiated sucks, so I’d rather not have anyone else on the ship go through that.”

An awkward silence settled over the briefing room, with no one really meeting Jim’s eyes.

He groaned. “Aww come on, it’s been like a year now.” Jim looked around, but everyone still avoided eye contact. “Seriously, humor’s probably my healthiest coping mechanism, so we might have to work on this.”

“Captain,” Jim looked over at Spock, who finally made eye contact, “May I suggest continuing with the briefing?”

“Okay.” Jim looked around the room again before turning to Scotty again. “Scotty, can you see if we can pull a little more speed out of the engines? If the situation is how we think, the colonists will need us sooner rather later.”
“I’m not sure how much we can do.” Scotty sighed at Jim’s expression. “But I’ll see what we can do.”

Jim smiled and reached out to slap Scotty’s shoulder. “You’re a miracle worker.” He turned to Nyota. “Uhura, keep trying to establish communication. They had the standard equipment, so we should be able to reach them.”

“Yes sir.” Nyota picked up her padd and began scrolling through the briefing to get to the information she needed.

“Alright.” Jim looked around the table again. “I’ll assign landing parties once we’re in orbit and have a better understanding of the situation, but for now just review the information in the briefing. I’ve also attached a list of the known colonists at the site so that once we’re there we can make sure we’ve got everyone.” He looked around the room one more time. “Any questions?” When no one spoke up or seemed like they were going to, Jim clapped his hands together. “Okay then, you’re dismissed. Feel free to come to me or Spock if you have any questions.”

Most of the crew shuffled out of the room and back to their usual stations then, but Jim noticed Spock staying behind. He got up from his chair and leaned against the table next to where Spock was sitting, casually crossing his arms and chucking some when it seemed like Spock was intently reviewing the briefing. “Brushing up cuz I told the crew they could come to you if they had questions? You seemed to understand it all well enough this morning.”

“My knowledge of the mission is sufficient, Captain.” Jim didn’t bother to correct him about the title because he knew that even though they were alone, they were still on duty and Spock was particular like that. Spock looked up at him. “I was merely reading the colonist list.”

Jim and Spock hadn’t gone through that earlier, so it made sense that Spock would do that now. Jim appreciated his thoroughness. “Yeah? Anything interesting?”

“Indeed.” Spock set the padd down, turning more fully to Jim but not getting up yet. “I have discovered why the name of the colony sounded familiar when I initially viewed it.”

That got Jim’s attention; it was rare for Spock to forget things, so he knew it had probably been bugging him some that he couldn’t remember why the name stood out to him, not that his stubborn Vulcan would admit that. “Why?”

“One of the colonists is a woman I briefly dated during my time at the Academy. She had contacted me when she joined the colonist group and mentioned the planet as a possible site they were considering.” Spock paused, his expression remaining as calm as before. “However, that was prior to your death. The intervening events likely affected my recall.”

While part of Jim wanted to comfort Spock and he did drop a hand over Spock’s on the table, the rest of Jim was focused on something else. “Another ex?” He raised an eyebrow. “One you still have contact with?”

Spock raised an eyebrow right back. “She was the one who contacted me. I did not respond.”

“Huh.” Jim let his hand start moving over Spock’s, not even really needing to consciously control the movement anymore. He looked at Spock and moved his hand to pick up the padd, scrolling through. “What was her name?”

Spock raised an eyebrow at him again, but still responded. “Leila Kalomi.”

Jim found the name on the list, but they hadn’t been provided with anything more than names. He’d
have to see if he could find out more later. “Looks like you might be seeing her after all.” Jim looked back at Spock, suddenly remembering the details of the mission briefing. “Unless the radiation…” He trailed off, not wanting to go there. “If that’s the case, I’m sorry.”

Spock paused and looked away. “While her death would be a loss, I would not be overly personally burdened by it.” After a moment he looked back to Jim. “In our brief relationship, she was more invested in me than I in her. I believe it was a partial cause of the relationship’s termination. Additionally, our relationship has been over for 11 years; any attachment has faded.”

“Huh.” Jim looked back at Spock. “Well either way, I hope we find people there to evacuate when we get to the colony.” He didn’t really want to consider the alternative, even if their odds weren’t great given the radiation other teams had discovered and how long they’d been there. But Jim didn’t want to dwell on that, so instead he smiled down at Spock. “And maybe later you can tell me some stories from your days at the Academy. It sounds like you were a real heartbreaker.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, but seemed amused. “I have only mentioned one person from my Academy days.”

Jim smiled wider, glad Spock was picking up on his humor. “But that makes two exes I hadn’t known about, so I’m down to hear more either way.” He shrugged and smiled. “And I want to hear about the other stuff too, of course.”

Spock just nodded. “We may discuss it at dinner, Jim. For now, I suggest we return to the bridge.”

“Sounds good.” Jim grinned. “Wouldn’t want people to think we were fooling around in the briefing room.”

“I do not believe that would be their initial assumption.” Spock's expression was flat like it always was on duty, but still, there was a hint of amusement there again.

That only made Jim smirk. “It might be if we actually did it one day.”

“We are on duty, Captain.” Spock got up and started to head to the door.

“You’re right. Let’s go.” Jim followed Spock out, but he couldn’t help but think to himself that that wasn’t a no… But he’d bother Spock about that later. Right after he found out about this mysterious ex-girlfriend….

Chapter End Notes

A couple of you already seem to recognize the TOS episode I'm drawing on, but I'm hoping you'll enjoy it whether you've watched TOS or not. I think it's become common enough in fic too, but I still have some twists planned to make this stand out...
Hello everyone! It's been a little while since we got some time with Jim and Bones as bros (despite how much I enjoy their dynamic), so this felt appropriate. I hope you enjoy!

The night before they were supposed to arrive at the planet Jim got dinner with Bones. As they settled in with their trays, Bones raised an eyebrow at him. “It’s almost weird to see you without the hobgoblin glued to your side anymore.”

Jim snorted. “Hello to you too Bones. And it’s not like we’re always together.”

“No.” Bones took a bite and chewed some before talking with his mouth still a little full. “You just work together, live together, spend your free time together…” He trailed off and looked at Jim expectantly.

Jim raised an eyebrow back. “Everyone on this ship works together and spends free time together. That’s how starships work.”

“You know what I mean.” Bones waved his hand dismissively.

“I spend time with other people.” Jim waved his hand between them. “I’m eating with you, aren’t I?”

“True.” Bones was quiet for a second while they ate before looking back at Jim. “Spock’s busy in the science labs again, huh?”

Damn, he was good. Jim looked at his tray. “Maybe.” He looked back up. “But hey, I still wanted to connect with you. It’s not like you’re any less occupied with your relationship; I heard that Carol spends a lot of her time in Sickbay these days.”

“Yeah?” Bones set down his food. “Where’d you hear that?”

“Sources.” Jim didn’t want to get into his chain of information, which in this case involved Chapel talking to Nyota and Jim hearing occasional gossip from her and Gaila.

Bones didn’t seem all that impressed. “Did your sources mention that part of the reason she’s there is because she’s considering switching her specialty from weapons and that she’s interested in biology, so she’s checking out different areas within the field, including medicine?”

“No, but that would be more information than you’d expect to make the ship’s gossip grapevine.” Jim smirked back at Bones. “So I’m sure it’s all that and nothing to do with her dating a certain doctor.”

“Damn right.” Silence settled over them for a moment before Bones looked back at him. “So now that we’ve established that I’m being a good boyfriend and supporting my partner’s professional development, how are you and Spock doing?”
Jim rolled his eyes at Bones and took a bite before responding. “Good. I’ve been finding out about Spock’s exes.”

“What?” Jim didn’t even need to try to pick up on Bones’ confusion. “You already knew about Uhura.”

“Yeah, but she wasn’t his first relationship.” Jim was probably enjoying Bones’ surprise and interest a bit too much; he’d always known Bones had a nosy side.

“Well?” Bones paused, prompting Jim to continue. So nosy.

“Do you really want to hear about Spock’s love life?” Jim wouldn’t mind having someone to talk it over with; he’d been tempted to ask Uhura if she’d known about any of it, but he still wasn’t sure if it’d be weird to ask her about his relationship with Spock.

Bones shrugged. “Anything to keep my mind off the fact that you dragged me onto this flying tin can for five years.”

“Well I’d do anything to avoid another dangers of space lecture, so I guess we’re settled.” Jim took another bite then looked at Bones. “It’s not that exciting really. There’s only two people, and one of them was never serious, even though they were kinda married.”

“Spock was married to someone?!” Jim was really glad they’d decided on the officer’s mess if Bones was gonna get that loud.

Thankfully, it was almost abandoned as usual, but Jim still gave Bones a look. “Relax. Apparently Vulcans just do arranged marriages that get set up as children but aren’t fully official til they seal the deal as adults, so it was that kind of thing. But according to Spock neither of them really thought it would last, which was why they both saw other people.”

“Damn.” Bones sat back, looking thoughtful. “Who would have thought that of all the people on the ship to have the ‘failed marriage’ thing in common with, it’d be Spock.” Before Jim could respond, Bones looked back to him. “Did he officially break it off with her now that you two seem serious?”

“He didn’t have to.” This was the part where it got awkward, even if it seemed like she and Spock were never too close; they’d still gotten along well enough even if they hadn’t been interested in each other. “She died on Vulcan.”

“Oh.” That brought the mood down and for a moment they each just picked at their food. After a moment though Bones looked back up. “Wait, you said there were two.”

“Yeah.” Jim paused and took a drink. “His ex-girlfriend from his time at the Academy is on the colony list. They ended things years ago, but he said she’d always seemed more into him than he was into her, and she’d even tried contacting him like a year ago.”

“Wow.” Bones paused a moment, taking a long sip of his own drink. “Well dead or alive, this should be interesting. I wouldn’t want to be the one to tell him that she kicked it though, given how he tends to respond to that sort of thing.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “I think you’ve only seen extreme cases of him responding to death; we both know Spock tends to be pretty level headed.” He took another bite. “Besides, he did say that he was never that into her.”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “So he has a pattern of not getting emotionally invested in relationships?”
“No.” Jim kicked Bones under the table. “I know you like getting antagonistic with Spock, but don’t get all judgy. We both know that Vulcans feel things even if they suppress it, and besides, not getting emotionally invested in relationships isn’t the end of the world. I’ve had some of those.”

“I know, but those were ones where neither person got invested in anything but the physical side and you made me glad for our sock on the door policy.” Bones made a face before getting serious. “But I know you’re really invested in him, and I don’t want you getting your heart broken. Does he ever show he cares?”

Jim kept his expression flat. “Around a year ago he brought me back from the dead by giving me a piece of his literal soul.”

“You were only mostly dead; a cryotube and a radiation recovery chamber may have fixed it.” Bones waved his hand dismissively then looked back to Jim. “I mean since then. What does he do?”

Jim paused to think. “He does mostly subtle things. He did get us shared quarters though.”

Bones didn’t seem impressed. “A shared bed can just mean interest in the things I don’t want to think about you two doing.”

“Shut up.” Jim paused again, trying to think. But of course trying to think of multiple examples just makes trying to think of any examples impossible. He looked back at Bones. “He follows the Vulcan way, and that means not showing emotion. You’d think you’d know that by now, Bones.”

He held his hands up in surrender and shrugged. “Hey, I just don’t want to see you get hurt. I’ve seen you get attached to a guy who didn’t return it before, and it wasn’t pretty. I’m just looking out for you.”

“I can look out for myself. And this isn’t Gary all over again; we both know we’re serious about each other.” Jim looked down at his plate, but he was basically done. Still, he knew Spock would probably be busy with his experiment til late enough that Jim would be going to bed alone, and suddenly being alone didn’t sound to tempting. He looked back at Bones. “Want to grab a movie or something? The condition is you dropping all of this and not bugging me anymore.”

“Fine.” Bones was finished too, and he looked like he was going to speak again before a look from Jim silenced him.

“Good.” Jim stood up and led the way out of the room, dropping their trays in the recycler on the way out. Tomorrow the mission would be distraction enough, but for tonight Jim needed something to keep himself from overthinking.

Chapter End Notes

I swear the angst just made itself happen. But don't worry, I promised limited drama between Jim and Spock and I meant it. So there will be drama, but their relationship is solid. But we're done with fluff for now...
Chapter 189

Chapter Notes

Happy last update of June everyone! We're getting into the mission now, and I'll be drawing heavily from the TOS episode "This Side of Paradise" (not to be confused with the Hayley Kiyoko song of the same name, which arguably has similar themes depending on which character's POV you focus on), but I will be making some changes still. If you've never seen it, you won't need to in order to understand this story arc, but if you're interested I'm always one to suggest watching star trek. Basically any show tbh, but if anyone wants suggestions feel free to hit me up.

Jim didn’t have much time to catch up with Spock after his movie night with Bones because he’d gone to sleep afterwards and then by the time he and Spock woke up, the ship had already entered orbit around Omicron Ceti III. Jim wasn’t even sure if he needed to talk to Spock or not; before Bones’ prying Jim had felt perfectly fine about their relationship. He didn’t really think Spock was emotionally distant just because he didn’t show emotions. That was just how Vulcans were and Jim knew that, just like he knew that Spock cared about him from all the other little things. A part of him did wonder what it would be like if Spock showed more emotion, but he wasn’t going to force his boyfriend (fiancé? He really needed to check about that bond thing and how it affected their relationship status) to give up his culture to settle some of Jim’s insecurities.

But now was not the time for this. After the initial scare of not seeing anyone when they’d beamed down and worrying they’d been too late, a surprisingly healthy looking colony leader had rounded the corner with other surprisingly healthy looking people and welcomed them to Omicron Ceti III. So Jim had sent some crew members off to investigate the colony and talk to any other colonists they found while him, Bones, and Spock got the official rundown from Elias Sandoval, the local leader.

They’d heard all about how the initial colonizing group had split into three separate settlements (more work for them to check up on) and how this was apparently a perfect agricultural planet. Sandoval was starting to get on about how people here wanted to embrace a simple life with limited technology when Jim held up a hand.

“I’m sorry Mr. Sandoval, but this isn’t exactly a regular colony check-in. A scientific team discovered dangerous levels of Berthold radiation here, and I have orders to evacuate you and your people to safety.” Jim looked at him, hoping to convey how serious this was. “While you say everything seems fine, the Berthold rays have serious negative effects on animal tissue, including human tissue. You can’t stay here.”

There was only a slight slip in Sandoval’s contentedness, and only momentary. “But we must stay here. As you can see, no one is suffering from radiation problems. Maybe your scientists were wrong.”

Jim had to resist the urge to sigh and show his annoyance. He turned to Spock. “Mr. Spock, did you bring the data on the Berthold rays in this system?”

Spock nodded. “Yes, Captain.”
“Good.” He turned back to Sandoval, trying to stay professional. Just because he’d had a horrific experience with a colony leader who endangered and harmed his people didn’t mean that was the case here. “You can review the data if you’d like. And I know you say no one has reported any health problems, but radiation poisoning isn’t always dramatic in its effects right away. I’d like to have my doctor look you and your people over.” Jim looked to Bones. “Will you need anything form the ship?”

“I should be fine.” Bones held up his medkit and went through it before looking back to Jim. “Between this and the tricorder, I should be able to do basic health exams.”

“Alright.” Jim turned back to Sandoval. “Will you agree to the exams and tell your people to do the same?”

He seemed hesitant for a moment, then nodded. “If it’ll get you off our backs and let us stay here, I don’t see why not.”

“Again, I have orders to evacuate any living colonists, and I don’t think good results on a physical will change that.” Jim realized that that might sound unprofessional, so he decided to try to bring it back around. “Starfleet policy is to get people out of potentially dangerous situations until they’re proven safe, so if the planet somehow gets cleared there’s a chance you could return eventually, but even our ship’s sensors in orbit detected the Berthold rays on the surface here. We’d rather not have anyone harmed or killed if we can help it.” There, he mostly stuck the landing.

Sandoval looked like he was about to respond, but before he could someone new came in, distracting him. “Miss Kalomi!” He turned to them. “Gentlemen, this is Leila Kalomi, one of our chief botanists. Miss Kalomi, this is Captain Kirk, Commander Spock, and Dr. McCoy.”

“Oh, I know Mr. Spock. I have for years.” She smiled softly at him, radiating the same contentness as the other people Jim’d talked to. It was a little weird, but Jim had other things on his mind. This was Spock’s ex. She was blonde and blue eyed; if Jim didn’t know about Nyota he’d say that Spock had a type.

Jim smiled at her. “Great. We were looking for someone to show us around while Dr. McCoy here starts his exams, so you and Sandoval can figure out who’ll play tour guide and who’ll be the first patient.”

She looked at Sandoval. “I’d like to show Mr. Spock around, if you don’t mind. Maybe show him the native plants I’ve found.”

Sandoval nodded. “That sounds good.” He turned to Jim. “Captain, I’m sure you need to report to your ship, or Starfleet command.”

Every moment here was starting to set off alarm bells for Jim. He didn’t necessarily want to leave any crew member alone with whatever was going on here, but if something was going on it could be good to get a log entry sent to Starfleet documenting it. Bones was just doing exams, and Jim trusted Spock to be able to handle himself in any situation, weird ex or no. “I might do that. I should check in with the other teams.” He looked at Spock, who had his usual more controlled expression for missions. “You up for the tour then, Spock?”

He seemed to pick up on some of Jim’s apprehension, but he nodded. “Yes, Captain.”

“Alright then.” Jim nodded. “Let’s all get to business so we can get away before the radiation gets us.”
I feel like this is an good place to share my First Officer's Ex Rule that I developed from watching trek: if your first officer's ex shows up, something bad is about to happen. The exception to this is if the first officer's ex serves on the ship, like with Uhura in AOS and Troi in next gen. But otherwise, this holds true for all the crews at one point or another; feel free to ask me about this because I've probably put more thought into this than I should. It hasn't happened for Discovery yet, but we've only had one season...
Happy July everyone! Not quite the 4th yet for any Americans who feel like celebrating (I'll eat barbecue but I'm not feeling the US right now tbh), but I think Canada Day just happened, so I hope any Canadians had a good time. For everyone else, enjoy your national holidays whenever they are. And for now, enjoy an update day!

“Captain’s log, supplemental.” Jim had made his first entry before they beamed down, so he didn’t feel the need to rattle off the stardate again. “We’ve beamed down to the colony and found out that the colonists are still alive. Surprisingly, they don’t seem to be suffering from any adverse effects of the radiation and actually seem to be in good health despite the Berthold rays the past scientific team found and our ship picked up on, but I’m having Dr. McCoy do basic exams of the colonists to be sure.” Jim paused, holding his communicator away from his face to sigh before resuming the recording. “The radiation levels suggest that we should follow our orders to evacuate the colonists, but they seem reluctant to leave, and if they aren’t harmed by the radiation somehow it would be difficult to make an argument as to why they should leave a colony that seems to be prospering.” He ran a hand down his face and looked around to make sure he was alone before saying what he’d been thinking. “Still, I have a bad feeling about this place. Something seems…off. I can’t quite place what, but I’ll check in with the landing party and update my log when I can. Kirk out.”

Jim flipped the communicator shut and paused a moment. This place did seem nice. If it weren’t for the radiation he might have supported letting the colonists stay. The crops they’d seen on the way in seemed healthy, so they probably weren’t having any food problems, and scans had shown good groundwater supplies the colony was tapping into. Sandoval seemed nice enough, but Jim knew that it was better to check in with the colonists themselves than to just go off of how the leader acted. He’d have to do more investigating.

He sighed and flipped his communicator open. “Kirk to Enterprise.”

The response was quick. “Uhura here.”

“I’ve recorded a supplement for my log based on our initial findings down here; can you add it to the previous recording if I transmit it to you now?” He knew Nyota had the skills to do it, but with most of the bridge crew Jim found he preferred to ask them to do things rather than order it. They’d been through enough together that the formality felt wrong.

“At any rate, it’s time to update.” She had the professional tone she always had when working, but Jim was tempted to ask her if she knew about Spock’s other ex anyways. Spock was alone with her. Jim trusted Spock; he and Nyota spent time together alone often enough, but Nyota was also happily dating her soulmate. Leila didn’t look like she was aging, but she had looked at Spock like she was interested still…

But bringing that up now would be unprofessional, even for Jim. “Transmitting it now. Thanks, Uhura. Kirk out.” He started transmitting the log once he’d shut down the audio channel and flipped his communicator closed once it finished. He had things he needed to do.
Like checking in with the away team. He rounded the corner of the barn he’d been behind for privacy when recording his log to see Sulu and another officer sitting on a fence. Sulu nodded when he saw him. “Hey Captain.”

“Hi.” Jim crossed his arms. “How’s the survey of the colony going?”

“Alright.” Sulu shrugged. “Everyone we’ve talked to seems happy, but honestly it might have been better if we’d switched jobs, sir. Growing up in San Francisco didn’t exactly prep me for evaluating farms.”

“Fair enough.” Jim tipped his head in acknowledgement. “Now that I’ve finished the official meeting, I’ll use my farm town expertise to look around. You use those city skills to find more people and talk to them.” Jim smiled to let Sulu know he was teasing him back. He decided not to mention that everyone had seemed almost eerily content to him; he didn’t want to bias them or freak them out. “You can report back to me later.”

Sulu and the other officer looked at each other and hopped off the fence. Sulu looked back at Kirk and nodded. “Aye, Captain.”

Jim watched them walk off before deciding to look around like he’d said. If something was off here, Jim would figure out what it was. This mystery would certainly help keep his mind off Spock, if nothing else.

Spock followed Leila Kalomi away from the colony center. He was uncertain what she wished to show him; as a botanist on a previously unexplored planet, she had likely discovered many plants formerly unknown to the Federation, although this planet was remarkably Earthlike. Much of the foliage resembled Earth plants, which had likely influenced the decision to establish themselves here. It was also possible that some of this foliage was Earth plants they had brought and transplanted, but that would require careful cultivation that did not seem warranted for non-food plants. He would need to ask Miss Kalomi about it once she finished speaking.

Technically, she was Dr. Kalomi, but when they had known each other previously she had not completed her doctorate, and perhaps out of human nostalgia she had reintroduced herself as Miss Kalomi instead. Currently, she was explaining various aspects of their settlement to Spock, and he was listening as part of their mission was to assess the current colony to ease their possible transplantation to a different site with less radiation danger.

Still, Spock’s focus was divided. Jim had seemed distracted and possibly uneasy since they awoke that morning, and Spock could not figure out why. It could have been related to their mission, but Spock had noticed it before they arrived at the colony as well. He wondered if his recent disclosure of his past relationship to Miss Kalomi played a role, but Jim had not objected to Spock touring the colony alone with her. Spock would need to speak with Jim later.

Miss Kalomi had paused in front of a plant that was unlike any Spock had seen before; she smiled serenely at him. “This plant will answer all of your questions, Mr. Spock.”

“I find that unlikely.” Still, he stepped closer, starting to lift his tricorder.

Before he could begin scanning, the plant released some sort of pollen with startling force and in his surprise, Spock inhaled some.

There was an unusual feeling overtaking him. Spock struggled to maintain his control as he felt the odd need to relax his controls and embrace the contented feeling that threatened to overtake him. He
was distantly aware of clutching his head and groaning or perhaps speaking as Leila sounded concerned beside him, telling him it shouldn’t hurt and that it hadn’t hurt them.

Then the struggle was over. Spock stood and a smile crossed his face. He felt…happy? Yes, happy. He laughed at how pleasant it was.

Leila was looking at him and smiling, her earlier concern gone. “Are you with us?”

“Yes; I am.” He somehow did not fully understand her meaning but understood it perfectly. But more than anything, Spock felt a need to be with the one he loved.

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh, the spores got Spock...
Hello everyone! One July celebration I forgot to mention before: yesterday was apparently Steve Roger's aka Captain America's 100th birthday! So that's pretty cool. Anyways, who's ready for this?

Spock straightened up, but not quite to his usual rigid posture. He didn’t need to be like that; he could be relaxed and happy. It was pleasant on this planet; they should stay.

He was distracted by a hand on his wrist; Spock looked over and saw Leila smiling at him. “I’m so glad you understand us now, Spock. Would you like to go back to the colony with me so you can formally join us as well? You won’t be needing that uniform; we should have something that fits you.” She began to slide her hand down and interlace their fingers.

Going to the colony was good. Jim was there. Spock pulled his hand away from hers. “I would like to go to the colony, but you do not need to accompany me.”

He did not bother looking at her expression as he turned and left; it was more important to get to Jim. He needed to share this with Jim. This feeling was amazing. Jim deserved to, needed to feel this. The whole crew did.

On his way back into the colony, Spock passed some crewmembers, including Sulu. He smiled at them and ignored their odd responses. “Hello!”

The others looked to Sulu and he spoke, seeming wary. “Hello, Commander.”

Wariness would not do. There was no need to be wary on this planet. “I have just been shown the most amazing species of plant life. Seek out the plants with flowers that produce the spores; Miss Kalomi may still be near them.”

The other crewmembers seemed wary still, but the mention of the plant life seemed to have piqued Sulu’s interest. Spock wished to smile again at Sulu’s passion for botany, but there was no need as he was still smiling already. They would understand soon. Sulu glanced at the others then back at Spock. “I guess we can check it out. It must really be something to have you so excited.”

“You will not be disappointed.” Spock did not have to look back as he walked away. He knew what the outcome of their encounter would be. They would join the members of the colony and Spock, and news would spread though the crew. Everyone would soon share this sensation.

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Jim was still feeling uneasy, and the more he looked around the more the feeling grew. All of the colonists had the same blank happy thing going on, and Jim was honestly getting a little creeped out. Plus, this farm seemed off. It had said they’d brought animals when settling the colony, but Jim couldn’t find any. There was no way they’d already killed all the animals for food; they had plenty of crops which would make such drastic measures unnecessary, and some of the animals would have
been more useful for things besides meat, like eggs, milk, or wool. It wouldn’t make sense to kill them all.

The other possibility was that the Berthold rays got the animals. But then why were the humans unaffected? And even if there was some weird fluke that hurt animals but not humans, where was their response to the animals’ deaths? Even if they were intended for meat (which could have been provided with replicators anyway, but Sandoval did say something about going back to the old ways of doing things) and the people had decided to not get attached because of that, wouldn’t they at least ask for replacements? And if they weren’t going to eat the animals, there was bound to be at least one person who got attached and would be sad that the animals had died, but no one seemed anything except happy.

There had to be something going on. Jim flipped open his communicator. “Kirk to McCoy.”

The response was quick; he must have been in between exams. “McCoy here.”

“How are the physicals going? Find anything interesting?” A medical scan would probably pick up on a lot of potential problems, right?

“I’ll say.” Bones made an exasperated noise through the communicator. “Somehow, everyone is in perfect health, despite the radiation. But it gets weirder.”

Finally, a reason to get the hell out of here. “Yeah? How so?”

“People’s past problems are just gone. Medical records will say something got removed or scarred, but the tricorder says they’re fine. I don’t know what to make of it.” Jim could imagine the frustration rolling off of Bones. He didn’t like puzzles he couldn’t solve.

Still, best to eliminate the obvious. “And it’s not just your tricorder getting messed up or something?”

“Nope. That was the first thing I checked.” Of course it was. “It reads me just fine.”

“Huh. There’s gotta be some explanation for this.” And it probably connected to what Jim was trying to figure out, but how? “Keep me posted Bones; I’m sure you’ll be able to get to the bottom of this.”

There was a frustrated sigh. “I’ll do my damnedest, Jim.”

“I know you will. Kirk out.” Jim flipped the tricorder shut. He was about to go try to find something new to look into, but was distracted by arms circling around him from behind and a mouth starting to kiss his neck. Thankfully, he was very familiar with those particular arms and mouth. “Hey Spock.”

“Hello Jim.” Spock’s response only lasted long enough to switch his mouth to the other side of Jim’s neck.

“Did I miss an ion storm or something? You’re not usually into PDA, especially not when we’re on duty.” Jim honestly didn’t mind, but this was unusual.

But not as unusual as what came next. Spock laughed. Out loud. In public. And not just the quiet chuckle Jim sometimes got from him when they were relaxed in private; it was a full on laugh. He was so thrown off he almost missed Spock talking. “I assure you I am myself and quite well, Jim.”

Yeah, there was something weird here. Spock was giving off the same weird happy vibes as the colonists now. Jim tried poking at their bond to see if he could pick up on anything there, but it was just as frustrating as everything else here. It didn’t really feel like Spock was shielding, but something felt…off. Jim turned around to face Spock, who was smiling. Jim liked Spock’s smile, he really did,
but it didn’t feel right now. “Well then now that that’s as settled as it’s gonna get, we need to get back to work.” Spock’s hands had stayed on Jim’s waist as he turned around, so Jim put his hands on Spock’s shoulders to get some distance between them. It wouldn’t do to get distracted now. “We need to figure out what’s going on here and get the colonists sorted out and out of here.”

Spock took one of Jim’s hands in both of his, still smiling. “There is no need for evacuation.” He lifted Jim’s hand to his mouth and kissed it the human way before starting to pull Jim away from the barn he’d been looking at by their joined hands. “Come with me. The natural flora of this planet has unique properties I wish to share; there is one flower in particular I wish to show you.”

Spock certainly had a strength advantage over Jim, but Jim still knew that if he dug in his heels Spock would stop. So he did. “Babe, hold up.” Spock paused, looking back at Jim. Jim smiled at him. “Spock, I can’t even handle pollen from my own planet. As romantic as taking a walk with you and smelling the flowers or whatever sounds, Bones would kill me if I went into anaphylactic shock just cuz we felt like smelling the roses, so to speak.”

Spock frowned slightly, but Jim still got the same vague contentedness from him. “These plants will not harm you.”

Jim smiled humorlessly and snorted. “You’d think you’d know my luck by now, Spock.” He pulled away. “Once we finish up, you and I can have a picnic in the arboretum on the ship, how about that?” Spock looked like he was about to object, so Jim held up a hand. “I’m going to go check in with Bones.” He’d just finished doing that, but Spock didn’t know that and he couldn’t exactly tell his boyfriend he was trying to get away from him. “I’ll see you later, ok?”

Spock seemed a little disappointed, but nodded. “If you wish, Jim.”

“Good.” Jim kissed his cheek. “We’ll meet back up soon, Spock.” He turned and went back towards the main office where Bones was doing physicals. They had to figure out what was going on here.

Chapter End Notes

Well, Jim seems to think that something’s up, but there’s also more crewmembers going off to see the spores, and no telling what Spock will do. Who knows what’ll happen next? (Besides me for once; I’ve had this arc planned out in at least vague details for a while now, and look forward to seeing all of your reactions to this).
Hello everyone! As of yesterday, we’re 1 year and 10 months into this fic. So I’m gonna do a shoutout to everyone following this, new or old. You’re amazing!

Once he reached the main office, Jim knocked on the door and waited for Bones to give him the all clear to come in; he didn’t want to interrupt someone’s physical. Once he heard the “Come in” Jim pushed the door open and plopped down in a chair near Bones, who looked him over. “You just checked in with me no more than a half hour ago. What’s up?”

Jim glanced at him. “Something weird is going on.”

Bones snorted. “No need to tell me, kid. We come to a planet thinking everyone should be dead or dying, but we get here and everyone’s in better health than they were before? What, do Berthold rays have the opposite effect here?” He dropped into the chair next to Jim. “It’s damn strange.”

“Yeah.” He turned to face Bones. “And everyone has this weird happy thing going on too. It’s kinda unnerving.”

“Yeah.” He could hear Bones shifting in his chair to lean in next to him.

Jim shifted his hand to peek through his fingers. “They got Spock.”

“What?” Bones shifted back in surprise. “What do you mean they got Spock?”

Jim sighed again. “His ex was the one who offered to give him a tour earlier. They left while I checked out the colony myself, and after a little while he came back all happy. And our bond felt weird too.”

“Huh.” Bones eyed him carefully. “Normally if I heard someone ran off with their ex and came back acting weirdly content and kinda distant from their current partner, I’d just assume—”

“Spock wouldn’t do that.” It came out a little sharper than Jim intended, but he was tired of Bones bringing his own issues into Jim and Spock’s relationship.

Bones held his hands up placatingly. “I know. I’m just saying, that’s the usual explanation.”

“That doesn’t make it one that fits here.” Jim leaned back in his chair. “Besides, he was all over me
when he got back. You know as well as I do that he doesn’t do PDA, but we were out in the open and I think if I hadn’t pulled away I’d be sporting some new hickies.”

Bones groaned. “I am so glad you two have a medkit in your quarters. If you two had to come to me with that sort of stuff I’d have quit by now.”

“I know.” Jim rolled his shoulders. “I should get going. You have more patients to see, even if it seems like they don’t need you.” Bones looked like he was about to object to that, but Jim kept talking before he could. “And I need to figure out what the hell is going on here. Check in with me if you figure anything out.”

“Of course, Jim.” Bones nodded. “Good luck to both of us.”

“Thanks.” Jim shoved himself off of the chair and left the room.

He didn’t make it far before his comm started going off.

Hoping for some good news, Jim flipped it open. “Kirk here.”

After a moment, Scotty’s voice came through. “Captain, have you authorized more transports?”

Well that was vague. “What do you mean? Up or down?”

There was a slight pause. “We’ll start with up.”

“Yeah.” Jim got the feeling there was more going on here, but best to start with the obvious. “Our whole mission here was to evacuate the colony.”

Another pause, longer this time. “Does that include plants?”

Now Jim was the one pausing. “I don’t think so; I thought we’d decided that the colonists should minimize what they take out of fear of Berthold ray contamination.”

“Okay then.” Scotty sounded a little nervous and Jim was dreading what would come next.

“Any particular reason you’re checking?” Jim honestly didn’t know where this would go, but he felt like it was important.

“There’s been some native plants beamed up, Captain.” Scotty seemed to be thinking of the best way to describe it. “It’s a flower, unlike just about everything I’ve seen.”

As if this mission needed more weirdness. “Alright Scotty. I’ll head to the beam up point to come check it out.” He started walking, then remembered the other half of what Scotty said. “What about the transports down?”

“Various crewmembers, sir.” Scotty sounded nervous. “I tried telling them to stay, but they wouldn’t listen.”

Great. Hell of a thing to happen the first time they left Scotty in charge on the ship, but Jim got the feeling it wasn’t his fault. “That’s alright; I’ll be there soon.”

“Thanks, Captain.” Scotty sounded like he was about to sign off, but one more thing occurred to Jim.

“Wait, Scotty.” Thankfully, the comm line was still open. “Can you access whoever authorized the transports?” Normally they wouldn’t have all these procedures in place, but with the radiation danger everything was a bit more restricted.
“Of course. Give me a moment.” Jim waited, for once glad for Starfleet bureaucracy. Soon enough Scotty was back. “I have the name, sir, but you’re not gonna like it.”

Ominous. “You can just tell me, Scotty.”

He hesitated again. “It was Commander Spock, sir.”

Well that was just great. “I guess I have a bit more to address down here. I’ll let you know when I’m ready to beam up.” Jim waited for acknowledgement, but he wasn’t really paying full attention and responded with his usual “Kirk out” as soon as he heard something and closed the line as soon as possible.

What the hell was going on?

Chapter End Notes

I’m debating how long to make this arc. I already know how it’ll end, so the only question is how long to stretch it out...
Chapter 193

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I think we're now past the midpoint of this arc, but these things often get away from me so no promises. Anyways, enjoy a long chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim made his way over to the beam up site, not really sure what he’d find there. Even then, he was still surprised when he saw Spock and Sulu there, carefully inspecting the wrapped up roots of a weird looking plant. That must have been what Scotty was talking about. Jim cleared his throat. “Gentlemen.”

They turned around, both smiling and giving off those dopey happy vibes everyone else was. Which meant they’d gotten Sulu. Great. Spock stepped toward him, hands extended. “Jim!” He did seem to smile a little wider at the sight of Jim, and a little part of him had to admit that seeing Spock happy was kinda nice.

“Hey Spock.” Jim smiled despite himself and took Spock’s hand. “What’re you two up to here?”

“We’re making sure these plants are ok for transport.” He grinned. “They really are amazing, Jim.”

Yeah, they definitely got Sulu too. Him getting excited about plants was pretty normal, but him being that informal while on duty wasn’t. Jim had to sort this out. He looked at Sulu. “Mr. Sulu, can you give me and Spock a moment alone please?”

He made a face like he was making the wrong sort of assumptions about why they wanted to be alone, but he nodded. “Alright then.” He smirked at them before looking at Spock. “I’ll go find some more plants to beam up.”

“That’d be good, Hikaru.” Spock smiled at him and—was he swinging him and Jim’s hands? For real? God this day was weird. Spock turned to Jim. “What do you want?” He smiled wider at him and shifted closer, keeping their hands together.

Ok, Spock was being weird but maybe if Jim tried logic he could get through to him. So keep calm and be logical. “Spock, why are you beaming those up? You know there’s regulations about checking unfamiliar plants before sending them to the ship. Plus, there's the radiation danger.”

Spock laughed. It was a nice sound, and Jim would have loved to hear it under different circumstances. “Jim, you’re hardly one to stick to regulations. Besides, the plants we’ve sent up have had no adverse effects.” He dropped Jim’s hand to grab his shoulders, looking him in the eyes with something that probably would be sincerity, but Jim didn’t trust it with the weird things going on. Spock gave his shoulders a little squeeze. “The plants will not harm us.”

Jim shrugged off Spock’s hands but let Spock take one of his again. “Easy to say for someone who’s not allergic to pollen.”

That got another chuckle out of Spock, but this time he stepped forward and wrapped his arms around Jim’s waist, nuzzling his head into Jim’s neck. “You do not need to fear the flowers. If you
would join us, you would know.”

Again, Jim carefully extracted himself from Spock, even though he kinda liked all the affection Spock was showing. “That sounds nice,” or ominous really, but Jim couldn’t say that, “but I need to go check on the ship. I got a weird report I need to look into.”

“That is unnecessary.” Spock again stepped closer, taking Jim’s hand. “How about instead we find a nice shaded place to lay in the grass and watch the clouds instead? We could lay there with your head in my lap while I run my fingers through your beautiful hair.” He ran his free hand through Jim’s hair as if to demonstrate, which did feel pretty nice. Spock cupped the back of Jim’s head and leaned in for a kiss. “Leonard is always saying you need to relax, and if we wished to engage in… other activities after a while the people here would not judge.” He started kissing down Jim’s neck again, as if the other activities he was suggesting weren’t clear enough already.

Damn, Spock really did know how to tempt Jim. “Maybe later. I have to check on the ship; it’s my job.”

Spock sighed against Jim’s neck before pulling his head away to look Jim in the eye. “Do you promise to meet back up with me later?”

Regardless of what was going on, Jim could agree to that. “Of course, babe.” He leaned in and gave Spock a quick kiss before pulling away. “I’ll comm you when I’m ready to head down.”

“Alright.” Spock reluctantly stepped back from Jim, but not before getting one last Vulcan kiss from Jim. “I’ll see you later.”

“See you then.” Jim stepped a little further away and flipped open his communicator. “One to beam up, Scotty.”

He materialized on the transporter padd and was surprised to see Scotty working the console alone. This was weird. “Where’s the usual transporter tech?”

Scotty shrugged. “In the other transporter room, sending people down.”

“What?” Jim stepped off the transporter padd. “I thought there was supposed to be a hold on transports. We went over this.”

“We did.” Scotty nodded, looking nervous. “But when I told xer that, xe just shook xir head and said that if I was camping out in this transporter room everyone else could just use the other one. I tried, sir.”

“Great.” Jim looked back to Scotty, a little apologetic. “It’s not on you. The colony down there is acting downright weird, and now it seems to have spread to the ship and caused a mutiny.” Jim ran a hand down his face. “I’m gonna figure this out. You can stay here to make sure we don’t get everyone beaming down at once, even if they still have the other transporter to use.”

“Aye, sir.” Scotty nodded, and Jim left. There was only one phenomenon he knew about that could cause this, or at least something similar.

Which is how he found himself outside of Gaila’s room, hitting the buzzer. After a moment he heard a familiar “Come in!” and the door opened.

He walked in and plopped onto Gaila’s bed facedown before turning to look at her at her desk. “Gaila, more weird shit is going on.”
“Yeah?” She spun her chair around to look at him.

“Yep.” He sat up. “I know this sounds random, but do you know of any Orions in the area?”

“I don’t exactly keep up with Syndicate movements, but we’re pretty far from their usual territory.” Gaila glanced back to the computer. “Plus, I feel like I would have heard if there were Orions in the area.” She turned back to Jim. “My side job usually has me handle that kind of stuff.”

“Makes sense, I guess.” Jim rolled his shoulders. “Still, you sure?”

“Pretty sure.” Jim could tell she was getting curious. “Why do you ask?”

“Cuz everyone on the planet is acting weird, and there’s only one thing I know of that makes people that kind of dopey.” It wasn’t an exact fit, but it was the closest Jim could think of. “Everyone seems pheromone drunk.”

“Everyone?” Yeah, he’d definitely caught Gaila’s interest. “Is it the same regardless of gender?”

Jim thought over the people he’d seen. “Seemed like it.”

“That’s weird. Typically men are the most affected and women are the least strongly affected, but it can vary.” Gaila thought for a second before asking her next question. “What about Spock? Was he affected?”

“Definitely.” Jim still felt conflicted about how Spock was acting. “He’s been all happy and affectionate towards me, but he puts off the same kinda fake happy vibes as everyone else.”

“Huh.” Gaila looked at Jim, seeming resolved. “You’re definitely not dealing with an Orion then. Our pheromones don’t affect Vulcans, and from what I know of Spock even though he’s half human he wouldn’t be strongly affected if he was affected at all. Plus, if it was an Orion and he was somehow affected, he wouldn’t be getting cuddly with you.” She smiled apologetically. “No offence.”

“None taken.” Jim probably should have known that, but he was a bit distracted at the moment. Jim was about to try to brainstorm more ideas, but then his comm went off. “Kirk here.”

“It’s Scotty, sir. They somehow beamed more plants aboard; I’m finding them all over.” Couldn’t Jim get any good news today? He didn’t want weird plants from an irradiated planet on his ship.

“Thanks for letting me know, Scotty.” Jim held the communicator away from his face. “Gaila, do you have any allergy meds? The plants are weird flowers and this is not the time for me to have a reaction to pollen.”

Gaila made a face, clearly remembering the pollen incident at the academy, and shook her head. “Sorry Jimmy.”

“It’s fine.” Jim probably had some in his quarters anyway. He brought the communicator close up again. “I’ll join you soon, Scotty.”

“Thanks, Captain. I’ll be rounding up the plants. I’ve already got some.” Suddenly, there was a weird noise from the other end.

“Scotty?” Jim got nervous when he didn’t hear an answer right away.

“I’m here.” He sounded…different. “The plants won’t be a problem.”
“Did you take care of them? Beam them into space or something?” Jim wanted to be hopeful, but he got the feeling today wasn’t that kind of day.

“Nope.” Yeah, not that kind of day. “The plants won’t harm us, Jim.”

Great. Not Scotty too. Jim didn’t want to have this conversation again. “Are you feeling like beaming down?”

“Maybe, Jim.” Yeah, Scotty sounded weird happy. “We can bring supplies to help them!”

“No Scotty we’re supposed to be evacuating—” The comm line cut out before Jim could finish.

“Well then.” Gaila looked at Jim. “I guess we know at least part of what’s going on, or at least a possible cause.”

“Yeah. Those weird plants definitely have something to do with it.” Jim rolled his shoulders and let himself fall back onto the bed. After a moment he looked at Gaila again. “Is it stuffy in here or is it just me?”

“It might be stuffy.” Gaila shrugged. “It’s my day off and I didn’t feel like taking pheromone suppressants, so I blocked off the vents to minimize the risk of affecting people.”

“Huh.” Jim sat back up. “How am I not drooling at your feet right now?”

“Could be because I’m not actively putting anything out, so the ambient levels are probably pretty low.” She looked at him closely, scrutinizing him. “The other possibility is that I need to congratulate you and Spock, cuz supposedly humans bonded to Vulcans aren’t affected.”

“Interesting.” Jim thought about poking that familiar spot in the back of his mind but decided against it because of how weird Spock was right now. Jim stood up. “I should probably go figure out how to solve this.”

“Have fun.” Gaila got up and headed towards her bathroom. “I’m here if you need me, but otherwise my plan for my day off was to re-dye my hair. My roots are starting to show.”

Jim rolled his shoulders. “Have fun. I’ll let you know if I need help.” With that, he left the room.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, half the fun of fic is trying to work in all your random headcanons and related things. Plus the occasional chance for foreshadowing and other literary things (or maybe that's just my degree in English talking [still weird being a college grad and having a degree instead of a major, but that's enough tangents for now]).
Hello everyone! Somewhat intentionally and somewhat just through how fics take themselves, this has ended up darker than the TOS episode I based it off of. But still, I hope you enjoy!

Jim wasn’t sure how much time had passed since he’d left Gaila’s room. All he knew is that he’d been wandering the ship and he’d been finding less of the crew and more of those damn plants. He wasn’t exactly sure how they were affecting people or how they connected to everything, but they were definitely important somehow.

And they were all over the damn ship. They were in areas crew members should be in but plants from weird planets that should be irradiated but somehow weren’t shouldn’t be in, like the mess halls or rec rooms.

But possibly more concerning was that Jim was finding clusters near basically every intake vent for the air circulation system that he’d passed. He wasn’t entirely sure why, but Jim had a bad feeling about this. He couldn’t remember if the main systems were set up to include things like filtering out pollen, and Jim really didn’t want to have an allergic reaction right now. There was too much going on.

In a corridor that was deserted but shouldn’t have been, Jim pulled out his communicator. “Captain’s log, supplemental. I’m going to attempt to send my logs to Starfleet now so they have a record of whatever’s happening here. We were supposed to be evacuating the colony, but when we got there everything was weird, like I mentioned before. All of the colonists seemed oddly content and set on staying, and somehow it’s spread to the ship. Everyone is leaving despite my orders to stay, but it’s not like they’re mutinying. An odd plant from the surface has been transported to the ship, and I think it’s somehow affecting everyone. But still, at this rate there won’t enough people to run the ship soon, and whoever’s left up here may be forced to join the colony just because we can’t survive on the ship alone. Let this be a warning about approaching this planet unless I can figure out what’s going on and somehow fix it. I’m sending my mission log as a record, and I’ll add to it later if the situation changes. But if this is the last message from me, you can assume what’s happened.” Jim shut the communicator and ran a hand through his hair. “Way to be dramatic, Jim.” He pushed off of the wall he’d been leaning against. Could it really be considered dramatic if the situation was really that weird?

Still, best to send this off. Starfleet deserved at least some explanation. So Jim went to the bridge for the first time since getting back to the ship. He’d been avoiding it with the assumption that things were ok there, and he really hoped he wasn’t wrong.

He was wrong. The bridge was half deserted when Jim got there, and unless his eyes were deceiving him one of those plants was near the center console.

But thankfully, Nyota was still at her station. Jim was so glad he had the best communications officer in the fleet on his ship; the woman deserved a commendation for her reliability and professionalism alone. “Uhura, I’m glad you’re still here. I need you to add the latest supplement to my log and send
it off to Starfleet command.”

When she turned around her smile felt like it was mocking, but she was radiating the same contentness Jim had felt too much today. “No can do, farm boy.”

“And why is that?” Jim was trying to maintain his cool, but he felt ready to lose it.

Nyota shrugged. “Because we don’t have that kind of communication capability anymore. I took out everything but ship to surface, which we’ll need a little longer.”

“You’re dismissed.” Jim pinched the bridge of his nose and didn’t look at Nyota as she walked away. No one knew that console like she did, but Jim knew he wouldn’t be able to talk her into fixing it now. Better to get her out of the way so Jim could try to fix it uninterrupted.

So he tried fixing it for a little bit before getting frustrated. The ship was probably damn near vacant by now. If he had to, Jim could always put his logs in a subspace buoy and launch it later. He had to get this situation sorted out, and it looked like he was basically on his own.

But Jim didn’t want to do this alone. He wanted Spock by his side for it. Maybe if he got Spock to Sickbay he could figure out what was going on and how to reverse it. But how would he get him?

May as well start with a call. Jim pulled put his communicator. “Kirk to Spock.”

The response was quick. “Jim! Are you ready to join us?”

Anything to lure him up. “Almost. But first we gotta make sure the ship’ll be ok with no one on her.”

Spock laughed. “You are always so preoccupied with the ship.”

Jim held back his comment about it being his job because that certainly hadn’t worked before. “Well we don’t want her falling out of the sky and onto everyone’s heads, do we?”

“That is a fair point, Jim.” Still, Spock didn’t sound as serious as Jim would expect. “Should I go the beam-up spot?”

“Sounds good.” That was how Jim ended in the transporter room, agreeing to beam the last group in line down if only because it meant he could beam Spock up.

But finally, Spock materialized, still weirdly content. “Jim!” That smile was nice though…

Jim couldn’t help but smile back. “Hey, Spock. Before anything else, how about we grab some supplies from Sickbay? I bet some of it will be useful.”

Spock paused. “The spores ensure health. That is unnecessary.”

Not going as planned. Jim stepped forward to take Spock’s hand. “Even for little injuries? Surely we’ll need some things.”

Spock was damn hard to move when he didn’t want to. “You would understand if you joined us.”

“I already said I will.” Jim tried to smile patiently. “Just gotta get stuff first. I mean c’mon, can Bones really be happy down there if he doesn’t have a hypo to stab someone with?”

“I assure you, the doctor has already joined us and is quite content.” Spock had already started wrapping himself around Jim again, but he pulled his head away from Jim’s neck and seemed deep in thought. “I believe he was attempting to make something called a mint julep.”
That did sound like Bones. “Ok, but maybe just to be sure…”

“Jim.” Spock held his hands and looked Jim in the eye. “You do not need to fear this. You will be happy, just as I am.”

Jim could feel his resolve crumbling. If it made Spock happy, it couldn’t be too bad, right? And like that old expression said, if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em. He sighed and finally met Spock’s eyes again. “Alright. What do I have to do?”

Spock’s smile lit up his whole face. “Where is the nearest flower?” Jim pointed him towards it since there was still one in the room, and then Spock positioned Jim in front of it with. “This will not hurt, Jim.” With that last reassurance and a kiss to the back of Jim’s neck, he stepped away.

Jim looked at the flower. “So what’s supposed to—”

There was a weird noise and then Jim felt a faceful of something hit him. There was a familiar uncomfortable sensation, then Jim felt himself collapse.

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh...
Chapter 195

Chapter Notes

hello everyone! There's been a little bump in kudos and bookmarks lately, so shoutout to all of the awesome people showing their love for this fic! You all make me smile. Let's hope you enjoy this arc as it starts wrapping up so we can move on to the next one...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock felt panic fill him as Jim fell. Spock had experienced difficulties with the spores due to his controls, but Jim should not be having an adverse reaction. Spock allowed himself to fall to his knees beside Jim and carefully roll him over, attempting to assess the problem.

Jim’s face was swollen and his breathing was strained; his heart rate was not what it should have been. Unfortunately or possibly fortunately, Spock recognized the signs of a severe allergic reaction. He wrapped one arm under Jim’s knees and the other behind his back and ran with him to Sickbay.

Spock carefully laid Jim on a biobed before running to the medical replicator. Time was of the essence. “Computer, one hypospray epinephrine for severe allergic reactions.” Although momentary, the time it took to appear felt far too long for Spock. He was grateful this was one of the few hyposprays that did not require medical clearance to replicate.

As soon as it finished appearing, Spock grabbed it and rushed back to Jim’s side, quickly applying it to the outside of Jim’s thigh. While this would allow him some time, Spock knew Jim would need more assistance than he could provide.

Spock took the communicator from Jim’s belt, holding it carefully so as to not break it as he still felt panicked. “Spock to Dr. McCoy.”

The response felt like it took too long. “What can I do for you, Spock?”

“There is a medical emergency on the ship.” Spock could tell there was an edge to his voice but he could not bring himself to care. “Jim has entered anaphylactic shock due to an allergic reaction to the spores. He requires immediate medical treatment.”

There was silence, then swearing. “I’ll be there as soon as possible. I’ll get to the beam up point as soon as I can.”

“I await your signal. Spock out.” He was reluctant to leave Jim’s side, but Spock knew Jim needed Dr. McCoy. So he hurried to the transporter room.

Once there, Spock found himself irrationally angry at the sight of the flower that had caused this problem. He snapped its stem before rounding the transporter console, wishing he could somehow isolate Leonard from the other human biosignatures to retrieve him more quickly.

Once the communicator went off and Leonard said he was ready, Spock did not bother to respond before transporting him to the ship. Once he materialized, Spock had to resist the urge to throw him over his shoulder and carry him to Jim, mentally assuring himself that it would be equally fast if they both moved of their own volition.
They did arrive quickly, and Spock allowed himself to move almost automatically, doing whatever Dr. McCoy told him as they both rushed to treat Jim before it was too late.

The relief Spock felt when the swelling began to reduce and Jim’s vitals and breathing began to return to normal was overwhelming. When he finally opened those beautiful blue eyes once more and began to attempt to sit up Spock felt like he could kiss him and felt an irrational urge to take Jim away somewhere where he could protect him from all harm.

Jim looked between them, confusion evident. “What happened?”

Dr. McCoy was scowling. “You managed to have a severe allergic reaction to the one plant that’s been healing everyone else and almost die. You damn near gave the hobgoblin and me heart attacks.”

“Oh.” Jim blinked, seeming to come back to himself more. Suddenly, he brightened. “You both feel normal!” He paused. “I mean, pissed off, worried, and all of that, but not creepy happy anymore.”

“I believe extreme emotions neutralize the plant’s effect.” It was only a hypothesis, but it would explain why he and Leonard were no longer affected. Spock looked between them. “Jim, when you collapsed I only felt panic, no longer the contentedness the plant brought.”

“Same for me when I heard the news.” Leonard looked between them. “It looks like we have a theory to test.”

“Ok, but how?” Jim sat up fully and Spock shifted closer in case he needed support. Jim smiled at him before looking serious again. “How do you do that with a ship full of people and the colonists?” He thought a moment. “I think Gaila’s still on the ship. We could always ask her pheromone bomb everyone to lure them back to the ship and then sort it out later.”

Leonard tipped his head in consideration but Spock shook his head. “The effect of Orion pheromones on different people is too variable. Additionally, if Gaila were affected by the spores while planetside, it would be difficult to fight the effects of both the spores and her pheromones.”

“Fair enough.” Leonard looked at Jim. “Can you mess with people using your thing?” He gestured to his head to demonstrate.

“I don’t think so.” Jim shook his head. “I don’t think I’m that strong, and I’ve been told to keep everything on the down low.”

“Additionally, you are not going near those spores again.” Jim and Leonard turned to him in surprise, but Spock merely raised an eyebrow. “I will not allow it.”

“Ok then.” Jim looked like he might want to push further but didn’t have the energy to do that and focus on the mission now. “How about we make some kind of subsonic transceiver that can send a signal though the communicators? We’d have to fix up the communication station since Nyota sabotaged it before she left, but we could probably irritate everyone enough that they’d work up to snapping out of it.” Jim started to get up. “Let’s get to work.”

Spock quickly shifted to support Jim. “I will assist you.”

Leonard looked between them. “What should I do?”

Jim hesitated. “Maybe prep Sickbay. If we’re getting people angry, there could be fights. I don’t think anything will last too long, but better to be ready than not.”
“Alright then.” Leonard nodded. “I’ll see if we have anything here that can filter out the spores too. We’ll need that to clean up the ship without further incidents.”

“Sounds good.” Jim nodded to Spock. “Let’s get to the bridge.”

Chapter End Notes

Another close call for Jim. I feel like at this point you all know I’m too soft to seriously harm the main characters, but it’s always fun to see if I can get you worried anyways...
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! This arc is coming to a close. It was a pretty fun one to write, and I'm hoping you all enjoyed it too. I already have a timeline of what's coming next...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock had insisted that Jim allow him to clear the bridge of any plants prior to their entering it to begin work. Jim seemed to think that Spock was overreacting, but Spock saw it as only logical he protect his captain and t’hy’la.

Once Spock had destroyed the plant on the bridge, careful to not inhale any spores, he turned back to where Jim was waiting in the turbolift with the doors held open. “It is safe for you now.”

“Thanks.” Jim made an odd expression at him, part amusement but with a small amount of annoyance. “I still say you clearing any room before I go in it is overkill.”

“I simply do not want you to be harmed again.” Perhaps Spock needed meditation; remembering Jim’s response to the spores still caused a tangible flare of fear within him.

Jim may have sensed that, because his expression softened. “Don’t worry, it’ll take more than weird space plants for you to get rid of me.” He stepped closer and held out his first two fingers, which Spock quickly met. Jim smiled at him. “C’mon. Let’s get to work.” He pulled away and moved toward the communications station, and Spock followed him. They laid down to access the underside of the console and removed the protective paneling before beginning their work.

They worked on repairing the communications station and preparing the subspace transceiver to free the crew of the spores’ influence in relative silence. They spoke as was necessary for their work, but no more.

As this was unusual for Jim, Spock carefully felt his end of the bond to determine if he could understand Jim’s current state. He was careful as he did not wish to intrude in Jim’s mind without consent, but he was concerned, especially as the emotions he read were conflicted and somewhat negative.

Jim put the finishing touches on the transceiver, seemingly focused on it, but when he spoke it was not related to the task at hand. “What’s up, Spock? You seem a little out of it.”

“I could say that of you as well, Jim.” Spock shifted closer to view his work. “Is there much more that needs to be done?”

“Nope.” Jim made a small adjustment. “I think we’re good.” He pushed back and waited for Spock to do the same before replacing the paneling. “Now we wait to hear back if it worked.” He sat up, his back to the console.

Spock moved to sit up as well, shifting so their sides aligned and they touched. He looked at Jim. “Is there anything troubling you?”
Jim raised an eyebrow. “I asked first.”

“True.” Spock tipped his head in concession before meeting Jim’s eyes again. “I am concerned because you are quieter than normal and seem emotionally conflicted.”

“Alright then.” Jim smiled humorlessly and looked away. “I’ve just had a lot on my mind lately. Talking with you, talking with Bones, everything with the spores, it has me thinking.”

Spock remained quiet, allowing Jim to continue.

“Before this mission, Bones and I were talking. He got in my head a little with concerns about if you really felt for me how I felt for you, which is weird cuz I can literally feel how you feel about me.” Jim laughed and tapped his head but didn’t look at Spock. “So I was kinda dismissive of it cuz I love you how you are, however emotional you chose to be, which in this case means seemingly emotionless.” Jim paused and took a deep breath. “But then on the planet, with the spores… you seemed happy. You showed it; hell, I felt it more than I ever usually do. And now…” Jim trailed off, still looking forward instead of at Spock, “You lost all of that because of me.”

This would not do. Spock took Jim’s hand in one of his and used the other to gently cradle Jim’s face, coaxing him to turn towards Spock as Spock had turned toward him. “T’hy’la, the elation I felt under the spore’s influence was nothing compared to the feeling I experienced when you opened your eyes and I received confirmation I had not lost you once more.” He pulled Jim in for a human-style kiss, letting their lips connect briefly before pulling back to look Jim in the eyes. “You should know by now that there is a difference between the display of emotions and the experience of them. The spores unnaturally heightened certain sensations and affected my controls, but I would always choose you over them.”

“Aww, thanks babe.” Jim’s smile seemed more genuine, and he pulled Spock in for a kiss, a little longer this time. He moved their hands together as well and allowed them to continue moving as he pulled away to talk. “But really, on some level you did feel happy like I’ve never felt from you before—”

“Jim.” Spock did not like to cut off his captain, but at times it was necessary. “Even when we are bonded fully, it is unlikely you will feel the full strength of my emotions while I am controlling them. The spores destroyed my control, which is how you felt emotion from me.” Spock met Jim’s eyes to convey sincerity. “While I do not often allow myself to fully experience or express it, you bring me greater happiness than the spores possibly could.”

“Ok then.” Jim smiled and leaned more into Spock’s side. He seemed like he was about to say more, but they were interrupted by the sound of an incoming comm from the surface.

They both looked at each other in surprise, hoping that the plan had succeeded. They stood up, their joined hands falling apart reluctantly.

Jim smiled again, this time more playful. “Let’s hope I know how to work Uhura’s station.”

Without too much incident or delay, a voice came through. “Uhura to Enterprise. Come in, Enterprise. Do you copy?”

“We’re here.” Jim seemed a bit relieved. “How are things down there, Lieutenant? Everyone still feeling like deserting?”

Nyota seemed to pick up on the humor in Jim’s voice and returned it with her own. “No more than usual, which is to say not at all.” She paused. “I think we’re free of the spores’ influence.”
“Good.” Jim’s relief was palpable. “Are people ready to beam up then? What about the colonists?”

“We are, and from what I’ve seen they’re free from the spores’ influence too. Sandoval will probably want to talk to you himself, but I think they’re ready to get dropped at a Starbase until they can try again.” There was a slight pause. “Anything else, Captain?”

“Yeah.” Jim glanced at Spock before continuing. “While I recognize that this wasn’t a real mutiny because of spore-based mind control, tell the crew that they’re still getting punished in that I don’t want any trace of those plants on my ship by this time tomorrow and everyone down there has to help with that, got it?”

“I’ll spread the word.” Nyota sounded amused and Spock knew Jim was somewhat joking, but Spock was willing to personally supervise the cleanup if it meant Jim would be safe.

“Good.” Jim smiled. “Find any other ranking officers down there to help organize crew beam up and the colonists’ evacuation. Remember that what people can bring from the surface is limited due to the radiation, and for the love of god make sure everyone stays away from those plants this time.”

“Will do.” Spock heard the smile in Nyota’s voice. “Anything else?”

“Nope. Kirk out.” Jim shut down the comm channel and turned to Spock. “Well, looks like we’re headed to a transporter room. Walk with me so I can figure out how I’m putting this in my logs for Pike.”

Spock nodded. “Gladly, Jim.”

Chapter End Notes

If you haven't watched the TOS episode yet, I'd still suggest it. I wasn't able to work in some of my favorite McCoy lines from when he's affected by the spores or coming out of it because of the transceiver, like when Sandoval tells him they won't need a doctor and he says, "No? You want to see how fast I can put you in a hospital?"
Chapter 197

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I was looking at my stats and realized this has about 10x the response as my next most popular fic, which means that either I should have been writing multi-year epic-length fics all along, or maybe that trekkies are just nicer to fic writers. Either way, all of you are awesome and I appreciate the hell out of you. I hope you all enjoy this next arc!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim shifted in the captain’s chair, arching his back some to stretch. That last mission had taken a lot out of him. The physical toll was obvious, but thankfully at this point Bones could probably treat Jim’s allergic reactions in his sleep. It didn’t mean the process was fun for Jim to go through, but he knew he was in good hands.

Dealing with all the rest of everything had probably been just as painful, if in other ways. Watching basically the whole crew leave against his direct orders had been tough, even though Jim knew it wasn’t really them choosing it and it was really because of the spores. But everyone had been pretty apologetic afterwards, and they were good about clearing the plants off the ships and making sure all evidence of the spores was gone, especially once word got out that Jim was apparently seriously allergic to them.

So long term the only annoyance was that they’d had to loop back into Federation space in order to drop the colonists at a Starbase. It wasn’t like the Enterprise had a strict schedule she needed to keep at this point, but Jim would still rather be out doing exploring than just ferrying people around. Still, Jim’s early concerns about Dr. Kalomi continuing to be weird toward Spock seemed to be unfounded; she must have taken the hint when Spock went straight to Jim even after she’d exposed him to the spores on the planet.

But now they’d dropped Sandoval’s group off and they were back to exploring. They were off to check put some interesting phenomenon that Jim had already been briefed on, but he still felt like getting up so he wandered over to Spock’s station and leaned against the railing. “Mr. Spock, tell me about what we’re looking into.”

“And of course, Captain.” Spock set up some of his equipment to continue recording and processing data before turning to face Jim. “We have been sent to investigate an energy ribbon that has passed through this area periodically according to the locals. From here, we can determine that it has a unique temporal signature that suggests it exists outside of time and possibly space as we know it. It also is surrounded by a strong gravimetric field, so I suggest that we maintain a safe distance.”

Jim nodded. “I think the black hole with Nero was enough gravity struggles for any ship’s career. Send the data to the navigation console.”

Spock turned to his console and hit a few buttons before turning back to Jim. “I have sent the information, Captain.”

“Thanks.” Jim stepped away and faced the middle of the bridge. “Mr. Chekov, Mr. Sulu, you should have just received information on a gravimetric field around the object we’re studying. I’m not sure if
your own sensors have already detected it, but as the scientific sensors are more sensitive you’ll be using data from both sets of sensors to make sure we don’t end up caught. Understand?”

“Aye, Keptin.”

“Yes, sir.” They responded almost simultaneously, and Jim watched Chekov pull up the information from Spock and tie it in to their own information before sharing it with Sulu through the shared screen section in the middle.

“Good.” Jim nodded in satisfaction. “I don’t want us to have to blow up the warp core to get out of something like that again.” He smiled at the slight wave of amusement that went through the bridge before walking back to Spock. It had seemed like Spock had more on his mind about this thing. Jim leaned against the railing again. “Anything else noteworthy, Mr. Spock?”

“Indeed.” Spock shifted closer. “I believe I detected something, so I confirmed with others on the ship. The energy ribbon is putting off faint psychic energy.”

“What?” Jim stepped over until he was leaning against Spock’s station. He kept his voice low. “I’m not picking up on anything.”

“You likely would not.” Spock’s voice was equally quiet, both respecting the need for secrecy about Jim’s abilities. “The psychic energy is very weak.”

“Okay then.” Jim relaxed a little, shifting back to business and speaking at a normal volume. “So the psychic energy. Do you think it’s alive or do you think there’s people alive in it?”

“Uncertain.” Spock crossed his arms. “As I stated, it is weak. It would be difficult to determine.”

Jim was about to respond, but then something began lighting up on Spock’s station. Jim jumped up and turned to look at it. “What’s that?”

Spock’s brow furrowed together in confusion and he turned to the monitor before looking at Jim with shock clear in his eyes. “There is a human lifesign emerging from the energy ribbon.”

“What?” Jim straightened further. While it could be dangerous to take in someone from whatever this was, if this was a person there’d be no way they could survive in open space. “Send the coordinates to transporter room 1. Tell them to beam the person aboard; I’m on my way there.” He glanced toward the middle of the bridge. “Mr. Sulu, feel free to inch us up to the edge of the gravimetric field so we can get this person. But do not enter it.”

Jim vaguely heard them confirm his orders as he got into the turbolift and headed to the transporter room. This mission just got a lot more interesting.

Jim got to the transporter room just as the person started to materialize on the pad. He grabbed the emergency phaser just in case, pointing it towards the torso that looked like it was wearing a Starfleet uniform Jim recognized but had never worn. As the person finished materializing, Jim deactivated and lowered the phaser. He knew he wouldn’t need it; Jim recognized the man on the transporter pad, even if he never expected to meet him face to face.

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses on who it is?
I do love a good comment guessing game. Thanks to everyone who played along with comment baiting author’s note; at least one of you is right... (And whether or not you told me your guess, I hope you enjoy who it is!)

Their new visitor was staring around the room with an odd mix of confusion and recognition. Jim figured that this may be a situation best handled alone, so he looked over at the transporter technician. “Give us the room.”

They seemed a little wary but relaxed some when they saw Jim still had the phaser. “Aye, Captain.”

Their visitor’s head snapped up a little at that, but Jim kept his focus on the transporter technician. “Thank you. I’ll call you back if I need to.” Once the room was empty except for the two of them, Jim put the phaser away and stepped around the transporter console. “You may not believe this, but I’m Captain James T. Kirk of the Federation starship Enterprise.”

The man on the transporter padd smiled. “Funny, that’s usually my line.”

So it was who Jim thought it was. He grinned. “Well, you’re on my ship so this time I get to say it.” Although this was kindof exciting, Jim made himself slip into Captain mode a bit. “Now you may find this difficult to believe, but you’re in what would be considered an alternate universe.”

The other Kirk made a face like he was reliving something unpleasant. “I’ve done that before, so I can believe it.” He paused, still seeming a little wary but mostly relaxed. “But you haven’t tried to kill me and you said it was the Federation, so this can’t be that one again.”

“Wait, did some of your crew end up in an evil universe too?” Jim tried to remember if Selek had said so when he’d called him during all of that, but he couldn’t remember for sure.

The other Kirk snorted. “Kid, I ended up in that universe. Along with some crew.”

Jim was about to respond, but before he could Spock’s familiar voice came over the comm. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Jim didn’t miss how the other him took a half step towards the comm before stopping himself; Jim smiled as he went to it instead. “Kirk here.”

“Captain, are you alright? Were you successfully able to beam aboard the person emerging from the energy ribbon?” Jim could pick up the slightest hint of worry under Spock’s professional tone, but he knew it wasn’t too bad since he started poking around the bond yet.

“I’m fine Spock, and yes we did.” Jim glanced back at the other Kirk. “He seems alright, but I might take him to Sickbay just in case.” He had to hold back a laugh at the flash of disappointment and maybe dread that crossed his double’s face at that. They were definitely the same person. “Actually, how about you hand the conn off to Sulu and meet me there. I think you’re gonna want to meet our visitor.”
Spock hesitated, and when he spoke he sounded a little wary. “Very well, Captain.”

“Great.” Jim grinned, looking forward to seeing Spock’s expression at this little surprise. “I’ll see you soon. Kirk out.” He shut down the comm channel and turned around. “Ready to go?”

“Yes. Actually…” Jim could feel the mixed emotions coming off of the other Kirk, and the reason why was soon clear. “I’d love a tour of the ship, but do I really need to go to Sickbay?”

Jim couldn’t hold back his laugh this time. “Damn, we really are the same person.” He made himself get serious again. “Unfortunately, yes. First of all, you just came out of something that we have no real understanding of—”

“I could tell you all about it!” The other Kirk was almost amusing now.

But Jim continued on. “We’ll probably take you up on that offer, but first, Sickbay.” When the other Kirk still seemed a little disappointed, Jim softened some. “C’mon. If you were in my shoes, would you really let the mysterious person from an unknown space thing walk around your ship without getting checked out? Bones and Spock would be all over me if I did that.”

“Alright. I’ll go.” The other Kirk tipped his head in acknowledgement and started to move. “But you have to promise that you won’t hold me there and that you’ll answer my questions about this place.”

“I can do that.” Jim fell in step with him and started guiding them towards Sickbay. “Ask away.”

“Okay.” The other Kirk thought for a moment before looking at Jim. “First thing that comes to mind, do you really also call your McCoy Bones?”

“Yep.” Jim glanced around to make sure they were going the right way before looking back at him. “Normally I just say it’s a long story if anyone asks why, but something tells me you already know.”

The other Kirk smiled. “That, or I have my own long story that’s not really that long.” They both laughed a little at that before the other Kirk looked at him closely again. “So I know you’ve met Spock and that means you’re aging, but you still look pretty young. How old are you chronologically?”

“27.” Jim picked up a bit of surprise from his double and couldn’t help but feel a little smug. “And what if I hadn’t figured out about Spock or it wasn’t true here? You were pretty open about that.”

The other Kirk’s smile got brighter. “I’m pretty sure Spocks and Kirks are a constant across universes. And if you hadn’t figured it out yet, I’m sure I would have been helping you.”

“Maybe so.” Jim couldn’t help his answering smile. “Any other questions?”

“Of course.” The other Kirk smiled in a way that Jim recognized as his smile when trying to charm people. It was weird to see it on someone else, but it was gone quickly as he started talking again. “How old were you when you made captain?”


“Damn.” The other Kirk stopped in his tracks for a moment before following Jim again. “I set the record when I became captain in my universe, but you have me beat by close to a decade.”

“Really?” Jim looked at him and grinned when he nodded. Before he could decide if it was worth bragging about, though, they got interrupted.
“Captain, I assume this is—” Jim looked up the sound of Spock’s voice.

It was unusual for Spock to stop himself midsentence like that, but Jim noticed him staring at the other Kirk with a slightly stunned expression that the other Kirk mirrored, if a bit more expressively. After a moment the other Kirk spoke softly, his voice filled with wonder. “Spock.”

Spock looked between them for a moment and then stepped closer to Jim. “He is…you?”

Jim smiled, softer than his proud grin from a moment ago. “Yeah. More or less at least.” He shifted closer, resting his hand on Spock’s shoulder and leaning in. “I think he’s from the same place as you-know-who.”

Spock’s eyes widened slightly and he looked at Jim with raised eyebrows. “Indeed?”

“Yeah.” Jim grinned at him before turning back to the other Kirk, who was now looking between them curiously. “C’mon. We should get you to Sickbay.” He turned and kept walking, the other Kirk falling in step on one side and Spock on the other.

After a moment, the other Kirk spoke up. “It’s weird.” Jim and Spock turned to look at him, but they all kept walking together. He looked at Spock. “I know you’re not my Spock, but when I looked at you…it felt almost the same. Like my aging restarted again.”

“Fascinating.” Spock looked between them and Jim wondered if he knew that Selek was aging since he’d met Jim.

But he kind of wanted to keep that a secret a little longer, so Jim interrupted. “We’re almost at Sickbay, so one last thing. It would probably draw too much attention to have a second Jim Kirk show up, so you might need to skip giving a name til we can come up with one for you.”

“Okay.” The other Kirk nodded. “We can do that.”

“Good.” Jim nodded, then glanced to the door. They’d arrived at Sickbay. “Well, we’re here. Time to let Bones do his thing.”

The other Kirk nodded. “Like I said, just don’t keep me here.”

Jim smiled. “Of course.” They walked into Sickbay and Jim looked around until he found just who he was looking for. “Bones!” He grabbed his shoulder then gestured to the other Kirk. “We just rescued this guy who came out of the energy ribbon we’re studying. Want to give him a check up?”

“With an introduction like that, I probably need to.” Bones looked over to where the other Kirk was still standing near Spock. “Sir, please come with me.” He waited for the other Kirk to start to move toward him before heading to a biobed.

Jim watched the other Kirk look around Sickbay with a mix of curiosity, awe, and nostalgia as he walked after Bones. Jim felt a shoulder brush his and didn’t have to look to know it was Spock. “You have not told him about Selek yet.”

Jim crossed his arms over his chest. “I thought it could be fun to surprise them.” He looked at Spock. “The real question is if we should let Bones in on this.”

Spock raised an eyebrow in consideration. “It may be best to let our counterparts decide.”

“Fair enough.” Jim couldn’t help his grin as he thought of something. “But his reaction to two Jims and two Spocks would be pretty funny.”
“Indeed.” That warm spark of humor Jim loved lit up Spock’s eyes. “Perhaps our counterparts would be convinced by such a line of reasoning.”

“Maybe.” Jim laughed and they both looked over to where the other Kirk was laying on a biobed with Bones hovering over him. “Wait, one other thing.” Jim waited until he had Spock’s attention. “I’m gonna need to get a course change into our schedule.”

“Would you like me to relay it to the bridge?” Spock seemed curious now.

“That’d be great.” Jim smiled at him before looking back toward his double. “Tell the helm to lay in a course to New Vulcan. If anyone asks, tell them we have the bondmate of a surviving Vulcan on board.”

Chapter End Notes

This is gonna be a short arc, but I think it’ll be a good one...
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I had this chapter ready to go and meant to post it earlier, but today is my mom's birthday so I got delayed. But it is much longer than usual, so I hope you still enjoy! Tbh, I was a little worried some of you would think this is getting too self-indulgent, but I'm glad you all seem to be enjoying it too. Because let's be real, some of the best fic is shamelessly self-indulgent. Anyways, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

To be entirely honest, Jim wasn’t sure why he’d stayed in Sickbay while the other Kirk got his physical instead of going back to the bridge. He’d already sent Spock up with their course change orders, and while he could make up some excuse about wanting to know about their new visitor as soon as possible, that could still be accomplished by going to the bridge and waiting for Bones to comm him once the physical was finished. But even though Jim was probably about 99% sure he was right about the other Kirk being who he thought he was and thus didn’t really need to hear it from Bones, he lingered.

Which meant that he was right there when Bones walked away from the biobed with the other Kirk and grabbed Jim by the arm to take him to his office. Once there, Jim decided to play along a little while longer. He raised his eyebrows to imitate surprise. “What’s up, Bones? This is a little more secrecy than the standard briefing. What’d you learn about our visitor?”

He looked conflicted for a moment, but finally pulled himself together, looking over his padd. “He’s a male human in good physical shape, although not perfect. He wouldn’t tell me his name, which I initially thought could be a bad sign, but brain scans showed no major damage so I think he may just be hiding it rather than having memory problems. His self-reported chronological age is a good decade and a half over his physical age, so although he appears to be about 46 he’s actually around 60.” Bones paused and looked up. “He also showed signs of aging, so there may be someone out there looking for him.”

There definitely would be, if only he knew this Kirk was here. Jim let himself slip into professional mode. “We’ll have to ask him about that. Anything else noteworthy?”

“Well…” Jim almost felt bad for the wave of nervousness that he felt come off of Bones, but it quickly got under control as he started pulling up something on his padd. “Hell if I can explain it, but his genetic code is nearly identical to yours, Jim.” He held out the padd.

“Really?” Jim took the padd and watched the side-by-side comparisons of the DNA. He looked back up. “How’d you come across this?”

“It was when I couldn’t get a name but hadn’t checked for head trauma yet. I figured I’d run his DNA though the database to see if there would be a match.” Bones laughed hollowly. “Little did I know then closest would be you.” He stepped closer, gesturing at the padd screen. “There are differences, but they seem like they could largely be attributed to epigenetics or other small genetic changes or mutations that can occur over a person’s lifetime rather than similarity due to relatedness.” He looked back at Jim, a little worried. “Now I don’t know what the hell is going on, but if this is somehow someone getting a copy of your DNA and tampering with it I think we should be
Okay, Jim didn’t want Bones to freak out like this. Might as well end this. If only Spock were here to see it too… Jim stood up from where he was leaning against Bones’ desk. “Only one way to sort this out. Let’s ask him.” With Bones trailing incredulously after him, Jim left the office and went to the other Kirk’s biobed.

He was sitting there, looking a little bored but trying to hide it, but he perked up when they walked over. “Gentlemen! Anything I can help you with?”

“Yeah, actually.” Jim gestured at Bones. “My doctor here says your genetic code is almost startlingly similar to mine. Any explanation?”

The other Kirk glanced between them before grinning in what Jim recognized as a “why not?” expression. “Because I’m him from another universe.”

“What?” The skepticism was rolling off of Bones now. “No way.”

“C’mon, Bones.” Jim glanced at him, not sure how quickly he should drop the act. “We do know alternate universes exist.”

Bones mumbled something about how he better not be from the evil universe before looking critically at the other Kirk, arms crossed over his chest. “Prove it. Prove you’re Jim.”

“Alright.” The other Kirk rolled his shoulders and thought for a moment before looking at them. “My name is James Tiberius Kirk, and I was born on March 22, 2233 in Riverside, Iowa, to George Kirk and Winona Kirk.”

“That’s all public record.” Bones waved a hand dismissively. “Besides, you didn’t get the birth information right.”

The other Kirk looked confused, so Jim decided to step in. “Alternate universe, Bones. We did decide that Nero was probably what caused the timeline to change, and you know from my medical records that I was born a few months early. Maybe without Nero’s interference my parents would have made it back to Iowa and had me there.”

“Fair enough.” Bones still didn’t look convinced; he kept his critical stare on the other Kirk. “But you’ll need more than that to convince me you’re him.” He gestured at Jim with one hand, still keeping his arms mostly crossed.

“Alright then.” The other Kirk stared intently at Bones before speaking. “Your name is Leonard Horatio McCoy, although I call you Bones. The most important person in your life is probably your daughter, Joanna McCoy, who you barely see because she still lives with your ex-wife Jocelyn, who you had a bad divorce with. Of course, this is all assuming this universe is mostly like mine.” He paused, taking in Bones’ somewhat softened but still skeptical expression before continuing. “And if this universe is like mine, then one of the things that pains you most is that when your father was sick you—”

“That’s enough.” Bones had tensed again, but Jim knew that it was for a different reason this time. “Damn near no one knows that, so you must be who you claim to be if you do.” He hugged his arms a bit tighter around his chest. “You’re cleared to go. God knows if you’re like him you won’t want to stay anyways.” With that, he turned and left.

Jim watched him go before looking back to his double. “Not pulling any punches, huh?”
The other Kirk did look a little guilty. “I figured personal stuff is always the best proof, and what’s more personal than that?”

“True.” Jim relaxed his posture a bit, not realizing he’d tensed up too.

Silence settled between them before a comm whistle broke it. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Jim stepped over at the familiar sound of Nyota’s voice. “Kirk here. What’s up?”

“There’s a private call for you from New Vulcan, sir.” There was a slight pause, probably her checking his location. “The caller said it’s important; want me to transfer it to the closest briefing room?”

“That’d be great.” Jim did a quick mental rundown of the ship to figure out what would be best, but he was a bit distracted. What kind of important private call would he be getting from New Vulcan? “Transfer it and I’ll answer it as soon as I’m there.”

“Alright, I’m transferring it now.” There was a moment where the only sound through the comm line was the muffled sound of Nyota working. “You’re good to go, Captain.”

“Thanks Uhura. Kirk out.” Jim shut down the comm line and left Sickbay in favor of the comm room. He was still trying to figure out who it could be; the only people he really knew on New Vulcan were Spock’s family, who’d probably be more likely to call Spock if something was up, and Selek, who usually allowed Jim to call him since he said Jim had the busier schedule. But no matter what, he’d find out soon. Jim sat at one of the chairs and pulled up the call on the screen.

Selek’s face greeted him, but he seemed a little off in a way Jim couldn’t quite place. Still, he held up the Vulcan salute and nodded in greeting. “Hello, Jim.”

“Hey Selek.” Jim shifted in his chair somewhat, trying to see what it was about Selek that was throwing him off. “What’s up?”

Selek hesitated, conflict clear on his face before it became resolved. “I must be honest with you, Jim. I believe my Time is upon me, and I have not experienced it with this intensity since...” he trailed off, but Jim saw the flash of pain on his face before he controlled himself once more. “In the past since I became alone, I have been able to survive though meditation and such solitary methods, but I do not believe this will be the case this time. I wished to speak with you one last time before I lose myself.”

“What?” Jim felt a spike of icy panic flow though his veins. “What’s going on? There has to be something someone could do; some way to help.”

“No.” Selek’s face was solemn. “I am afraid this will be my end.”

Before Jim could respond, he heard a faint “Spock” from behind him and suddenly the other Kirk was there, nearly shoving Jim aside in his haste with a mix of wonder, disbelief, and fear on his face. “Don’t you think you better check with me first?”

“Jim!” The unguarded wave of emotion on Selek’s face nearly knocked Jim out of his chair; he mirrored the emotions on his Kirk’s face, but the fear was replaced with a sense of love that seemed to light him up from the inside out.

The other Kirk smiled, but it didn’t quite reach his eyes yet. “Should we do the whole thing? Never and always touching and touched...” He paused then laughed, although the sound was a little wet and his eyes were beginning to water. “I’m too stunned to remember the rest right now, sorry.”
“Parted from me, and never parted.” Selek seemed to be finishing the phrase, and he smiled when he looked at the other Kirk, seeming to forget Jim was in the room. “But how? I had believed you died.”

“I think I did, a little.” Another rough laugh. “But I guess I was close enough that the Nexus pulled me back in; I never can seem to die right no matter how much life tries.” He smiled, then his face went a little serious. “I don’t know how long I was in there again, but then I felt something… Something was pulling on me. Next thing I knew I was on a transporter padd with this pretty young thing introducing himself with my name.” He gestured at Jim, but his focus stayed on Selek. “You must have been what pulled me out; something with the bond, or maybe having this other version of everything we knew so close…” He smiled again, shaking his head in disbelief. “Whatever it was, I’m glad for it. How’d you get here?”

“It is a long story.” Selek’s eyes were fixed on the other Kirk like he’d disappear if he blinked or looked away. “I will gladly tell you all of it in person, but you must come quickly. I am not yet burning, but I need you.”

“I’ll be there as soon as I can. I promise.” The other Kirk stared at the screen in disbelief before looking at Jim expectantly.

“I’ve actually already ordered us to route to New Vulcan.” Jim looked between the other Kirk and Selek on the screen. “Should I tell them to increase our speed?”

“That’d be good.” The other Kirk nodded. “Time is of the essence, and not just because I want to be reunited.” He looked at Selek. “How long do you have, honey?”

Selek paused a moment. “From this stage, typically about 8 standard days.”

Jim nodded. “I’ll tell the helm to double down, even if Scotty starts complaining.”

“Thanks.” The other Kirk put his hand on Jim’s shoulder and squeezed. “From both of us.” He looked at Selek on the screen and he nodded too.

“No problem.” Jim smiled. “I’d want the same for me and my Spock.” He looked between them one last time, seeing that their focus was already shifting back towards each other. “I’ll give you two the room; when you’re done just come to the captain’s quarters and I’ll give you temporary quarters til we reach New Vulcan.”

The other Kirk spared him a quick look and a thanks, but Jim barely noticed as he walked out the door. He knew what they needed or wanted most right now was each other, and he wasn’t going to get in the way of that.

Chapter End Notes

This will probably be one of my quickest arcs, but I felt like I should do something special for chapter 200 because that seems milestone worthy. A little angst snuck it’s way in there with Bones (because I apparently can’t lay off sneaking in the most esoteric of trek references; as always I’m down to explain if people don’t get it), but I promise the next chapter will be as nice as I can make it.
Hello everyone! Happy 200th chapter! As you may have noticed, the rating has not gone up. Despite mentioning that Pon Farr is incoming, this will be staying at an American PG 13. I hope you can all still enjoy it! Who's ready for a Prime reunion? We're also getting a new POV this chapter; hopefully you can guess who it is pretty easily...

Being on this Enterprise was…odd. She wasn’t his, and even the quickest look around could tell Jim that, but she still felt familiar in an odd sort of way. He kept his wanderings through the corridors to a minimum to keep the risk of people figuring out who he was low, but with the access to the computers he’d been given he was able to catch up on what was going on and see some not-quite familiar faces who’d all ended up together despite all the differences. Maybe Spock had been right when he’d talked about destiny and ending up on a starship bridge, and not just for Jim.

And there was the thing Jim liked best about this ship. It was taking him back to his Spock. Everyone on this bridge just made Jim feel like his chronological and physical years had been added together; they were all so young, and still looked it too, even though some of them had apparently met their soulmates already.

And some of those were a real surprise. Bones and Carol? Looks like David wouldn’t be his here.

But what he’d been doing most so far was calling Spock. That younger him had set it up so that Jim could call him easily, and they’d been taking advantage of it. All the time that had passed still seemed like an elephant in the room they couldn’t quite tackle yet, but they could still play chess and chat just fine.

But there wouldn’t be any need for that anymore. Jim took one last look around the transporter room, then at the young him working the controls. He looked at Jim one last time. “Sure you’re all good to go and that going down alone is best?”

“Yes.” Jim smiled softly. “I told you all about this, remember? I don’t think either of our Spocks would like it very much if you beamed down with me right now.”

“Right.” If Jim wasn’t mistaken there was a quick blush on the other him’s face before he controlled it and grinned. “Thanks for answering all of my questions, by the way.”

“Of course.” Jim felt an answering grin spread across his face. “Vulcan biology is one of my favorite topics. Plus, you’re going to experience it someday. May as well know what you’re getting into.”

“Thanks.” His smile softened some. “I should get you down there.”

“That’d be good.” Jim smiled and held a hand in the Vulcan salute. “Wish me luck.”

The other him laughed. “Something tells me you won’t need it, but good luck.”

Jim dematerialized and came back together in what must have been Spock’s home as per his
instructions. It seemed empty, but there was a lingering smell of incense that had subtly signaled ‘home’ to Jim for decades now.

But even better than that was the man who walked through a doorway into the common area Jim had appeared in, dropping the tea he’d been carrying and running to him.

“Jim!” Spock froze a mere foot from him, staring in disbelief. “I—I had almost believed that I imagined it all. That the fever had taken my mind and fooled me into believing that you had returned; but you are—” He trailed off, one shaking hand cautiously extended towards Jim.

“I’m real.” Jim took the hand in one of his and brought it to his lips, kissing it gently. He looked Spock in the eyes, his heart aching with a mix of sorrow and joy. “I’ve missed you so much. The Nexus made a version of you, but he never felt quite right.” He squeezed Spock’s hand. “This feels more real than anything I’ve felt in so long.”

There was sorrow in Spock’s eyes too, almost painfully clear as the pon farr stripped away his controls. “It has been so long, ashayam. I’ve grown old. I was so lonely for so long—” His voice cut off and he dropped Jim’s hand in favor of pulling him in for a crushing embrace.

“Shhh. It’s ok.” Jim rubbed his hands up and down Spock’s back, eventually settling one hand in his hair. “I’m here now.”

Spock pulled back just enough that he could look Jim in the eye. “I’ve spent so long without you.”

Jim took one of Spock’s hands in his again, running his thumb over Spock’s fingers in a soothing gesture. “I look forward to you telling me everything I’ve missed.” Spock’s head fell to Jim’s shoulder, and he wasn’t sure if the shuddering he felt from Spock was from emotion or the fever. He rubbed Spock’s back again, keeping his other hand entwined with Spock’s. “Hey. Spock.”

He waited until Spock finally looked up again, still as if he’d finally regained some measure of control. “Yes, Jim?”

Jim lifted Spock’s hand to his face, gently trying to put it into position. “Reconnect us.”

Jim was sure he saw a flare of emotion in Spock’s eyes this time, but it was only momentary before they were drawn into the familiar space of their shared minds, and Jim felt the very essence of Spock flowing into him as he was sure Spock felt the same from him. He could almost feel his shoulders drop, as if some tension he hadn’t been fully aware of had been released.

They came back to the world together, and fell towards each other from their combined relief as the bond hummed into place. Jim lifted his head and settled his hands on Spock’s upper arms to draw him in for a kiss before pulling back until their faces were barely apart, still close enough that they felt each other’s breath on each other’s faces. Jim rested his forehead on Spock’s. “Why are you still holding back?”

“Very well.” Spock knew exactly what Jim was referring to, and he closed his eyes and fully opened the bond.

Jim shivered as he felt the familiar sensation begin to overtake him through the bond, and soon all was lost as the burning overcame them both and clothing fell to the floor, the two of them soon following with their bodies entwined.
Tbh I almost put a little aos!Spirk endcap on this chapter, but I felt like I shouldn't split
the focus too much. Maybe that'll just be the start of the next chapter; this chapter seems
better with just this Jim and Spock.
Chapter 201

Chapter Notes

Man, I don't know what it is about transitional chapters but I get the worst writer's block when it comes time to write them. But anyways, we're one month away from two years of this fic! I hope you all enjoy this arc...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim stared down at New Vulcan from the Observation Deck, wondering about how the reunion was going but also not trying to think about it too hard since he’d just gotten the full details about what was happening from a man who was as old as his father could have been.

He’d seen snippets of the two of them together in that meld with Selek way back on Delta Vega, and while he tried not to linger on all of that too much there were still days that he felt a pang of longing at the thought of everything that Jim and Spock had had.

But these days it was better than it had been, and the reason for that was wrapping his arms around Jim right now. “I believe the expression is, ‘you are thinking very loudly’.”

“Maybe.” Jim turned around and kissed Spock briefly before pulling away. “Just thinking about that other us. Everything they’ve had and lost and been through together; it’s a lot but some people would give their lives for that sort of thing, or at least parts of it.”

“Then it is fortunate that neither of us will need to make such a sacrifice.” Spock had begun kissing Jim’s neck; he’d certainly learned his lesson well that physical affection was good for getting Jim out of a funk.

“Yeah.” Jim let his hands rest on Spock’s shoulders. “And it seems like it might just get better with age.” Jim smiled. “Even if I start to lose this godlike physique and start to get chubby instead.”

Spock pulled back and looked at him. “Many Earth deities and religious figures are quite corpulent, and I believe your appearance will be just as pleasing regardless of your size.”

“Sweet talker.” Jim grinned and pulled Spock in for a kiss, and forced himself to pull away when it started to linger. “C’mon, let’s take this back to our quarters.”

Spock nodded. “That is agreeable.”

They left the Observation Deck walking side by side close enough that their hands consistently brushed, and Jim had to fight the temptation to pull Spock in for another kiss each time they passed through a deserted corridor. They’d have plenty of time back in their quarters.

Or not. They got about halfway to their quarters from the Observation Deck before the comm went off. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Jim groaned, pulling himself away from Spock. “Kirk here.” He really hoped this was something simple; they were due to leave New Vulcan’s orbit soon, and while they’d be hearing from the surface when they were cleared to go that wouldn’t really require Jim’s approval since he’d already set it up during Alpha shift. So really, there shouldn’t be anything that needed him. Best to keep his
tone calm to not freak out an overeager ensign or something. “What’s up?”

“We’re receiving a call from New Vulcan, sir.” The communications officer sounded nervous.

Could be a new person overchecking then. “We were expecting that; we’re supposed to be cleared to leave orbit soon.” Jim paused; this could just be that, but things never went quite as expected for the Enterprise. “I’m guessing that’s not what this is about though.”

“No sir.” There was a moment on the other end like they were reviewing information. “There is apparently a situation on the surface that they’re requesting intervention for.”

Jim felt Spock tense up next to him and placed a hand on his shoulder almost reflexively. “How urgent is the situation?”

Some hesitation. “I don’t think there’s genuine danger; seems like more of a disturbance.”

“Okay then.” Jim looked at Spock, who seemed to have relaxed a little. “And they requested Starfleet intervention.”

“Yes sir.”

Jim leaned away from the comm panel and sighed, looking at Spock. “Hard to find a ship closer than us to pass this on to since we’re in orbit still.” He stepped close to the panel again. “Commander Spock and I will be beaming down shortly.”

“I’ll tell the surface, sir.”

“Thanks. Kirk out.” Jim shut down the channel and looked at Spock. “Looks like our personal time is getting delayed.”

Spock nodded. “Unfortunately so.”

Jim gave Spock a quick peck on the lips (because even though they were in uniform and about to respond to whatever was going on, they weren’t technically on duty right now) before pulling away. “Let’s get to the transporter room then.” Jim turned, not having to look to know that Spock would fall into step next to him.

It wasn’t long before they were in the heat of New Vulcan in the middle of the town square and saw a crowd gathering. The air here wasn’t quite as thin as it had been on Vulcan from what Jim had heard, but it was still thin enough that Jim felt like he’d need a tri-ox compound if they were down here too long.

Despite apparently being told they were coming, no one came up to Jim and Spock to tell them what was going on, so Spock began talking to members of the crowd in Vulcan. Jim followed him, wishing he’d pushed Uhura for lessons more so he’d at least know what was being said.

They managed to start pushing through to get to the front of the crowd (or to the middle of the circle as it was) with Jim sticking to Spock and trying to avoid touching anyone around them unnecessarily. He was so focused on that that he ran into Spock’s back when he stopped suddenly. “Spock?” Jim tried to step back to get a little distance between them so he could see around him, but the crowd was too thick. “Spock, what is it?”

Spock paused, half turning his head to address Jim without taking his eyes off of whatever was in front of them. “I know this person.”
“What?” Jim tried to push past him to get a good view, but Spock wouldn’t budge. “What’s going on?”

“Something I would not believe they would seek outside help for.” Spock turned only slightly more towards Jim, but it was enough for him to see the surprise on Spock’s face.

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses on what’s going on or who Spock recognized?
Chapter 202

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the delayed posting everyone, but I was having some technical difficulties with my computer this chapter. Hopefully my computer will be more cooperative from here on out, and I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What?” This was becoming one of the rare times Jim got annoyed with Spock being stronger than him rather than enjoying it. “Do I need to make it an order, Spock?”

Spock didn’t budge. “Captain, the person here has considerable telepathic abilities. I recommend full shielding.”

“Okay.” Jim closed his eyes and focused enough to raise his shields. He opened them again when he felt the familiar albeit somewhat uncomfortable closed off feeling. He looked at Spock. “Will you tell me now?”

“Yes.” Spock glanced at Jim, still keeping part of his focus on whatever was going on in front of him. “This person was banished from Vulcan prior to its destruction.”

“Okay.” Jim nodded. “Is this person dangerous?”

“Unclear.” Spock looked forward then back to Jim. “Captain, I must let you know that this person is also my--”

“Baby bro!” The crowd began to part enough for Jim to almost see whoever had spoken up in Standard rather than Vulcan, and loud enough to distract from what Spock had been saying too. “What are you doing here?” Finally, enough people had moved aside that Jim saw the person--Vulcan that had been speaking. Jim was surprised by what he saw; Instead of the usual neat bowl cut and clean shaven (or maybe naturally hairless) face, this person had shaggy hair that almost hid his pointed ears and slanted eyebrows, as well as the beginnings of a beard.

The pieces finally began to click together. It felt like forever ago that Spock had told him about his brother that got banished, but Jim was pretty sure he remembered his name. “Sybok?”

“The one and only!” He grinned, and Jim was honestly a bit taken aback at seeing a Vulcan make that kind of expression. “I’m guessing you must be the famous Captain Kirk? I saw the Enterprise in orbit when I was coming in on my own ship.”

“I am.” Jim looked at him cautiously. Spock still stood between them, close in front of Jim in a way that almost seemed defensive. Touching his shoulder only where it was clothed in respect to the Vulcans all around him, Jim squeezed Spock’s shoulder. “Commander? This conversation might be easier without you standing in the middle here.”

Spock briefly glanced at Jim before turning his attention back to Sybok. “He has rejected Surakian principles. While most Vulcans have committed themselves to a life of nonviolence, we cannot be certain if that principle holds here.”
“Oh come on.” Sybok crossed his arms, his smile gone. “Do you really think I’m going to harm your captain?” He paused, arms dropping back to his sides. “Or more than just captain?” He looked between them, scrutinizing. “It seems like some congratulations are in order.” He grinned again. “Let me know when you two finalize that bond you have going.”

Jim felt Spock stiffen under his hand and self consciously dropped it from Spock’s shoulder. He looked back at Sybok. “Well he wasn’t lying about that powerful telepath thing.”

"Nah, Spock here doesn't lie. Never really has, even when I knew him as a kid." He smiled at Spock before looking at Jim. "I'm sure he'd say it is another Vulcan thing."

"Alright." Jim looked between them before turning his focus back to Sybok. "The local authorities here requested Starfleet intervention here, so I guess that means we're supposed to escort you away from the colony now."

Sybok’s face dropped, suddenly more serious. "I'm not going. Not til I've said my piece."

"Alright." Jim looked around, very aware of the crowd that was still mostly gathered. "Do you want to do whatever it is here, or...?"

"No." Sybok looked at Spock. "Where do our parents live now? I think it's time I pay them a visit."

"I know their address." Spock didn’t make any move to show him where to go.

Jim sighed. "Spock, we were called here to resolve whatever was going on and settle the disturbance." He looked at Spock earnestly. "If this is how we have to do it, this is how we have to do it."

"Very well." Spock nodded and straightened out. "I will show you the way in order to end this matter, but as we were asked to investigate and end this disturbance, the Captain and I must stay with you the entire time." Jim raised an eyebrow at Spock at that, but he seemed serious enough so Jim just decided to roll with it.

"Alright then." Sybok grinned. "Let's get this family reunion going."

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter should be fun...
Chapter 203

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! My computer was mostly cooperative this chapter, so I hope you enjoy!
The family time is just beginning...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim and Spock walked a little ways behind Sybok, who had one of their communicators loaded with directions so he could find Sarek and Amanda’s house. Jim leaned in enough that his shoulder bumped with Spock’s. He looked at Spock from the corner of his eye. “You sure this is a good idea?”

Spock looked back to him before turning his focus back to Sybok. “I am not. But it may be the only way to resolve the situation.”

“Fair enough.” Jim shrugged, looking ahead as well. “Hell of a first way for me to meet them in their new home, though. ‘Hi, I’m kinda engaged to your son, and also I’m here officially because I technically have your other son in semi-official custody. So good to see you since the last time, which was when I interrupted your family reunion and apologized for using an assumed death to compromise your son.’” Jim looked back to Spock with a snort. “I’m sure they already have such a good impression of me that this will only help.”

Spock allowed his fingers to deliberately brush Jim’s reassuringly and looked at him again. “My mother is already quite fond of you from the stories I tell of you, and my father understands your importance in my life. They were disappointed you did not accompany me when I visited them during your recovery, although they understood that you were not well enough for travel.” He looked forward again. “The Narada incident and our treatment of each other during it is long forgiven for them.”

“Here’s hoping.” Jim looked ahead. “Kinda wish we could ask the old men for advice on this. Old you wouldn’t budge probably, but I bet we could get something of old me.”

“Possibly.” Spock then turned slightly green in a rare blush. “However, they will be quite occupied for the next few days.”

“Oh I know.” Jim grinned. “I hope they’re having a good time.”

Spock turned to him with an expression that flashed between puzzled and shocked; he seemed like he was about to ask Jim something, but before he could Sybok stopped and waved. “I’m back! Did you miss me?”

They walked in the door just in time to see Sybok with his arms spread, grinning at three people who all appeared shocked, with various levels of emotional display.

Sarek rose from his chair, his eyebrows slightly drawn together in what Jim could read as a strong display of shock and anger for a Vulcan. “You were exiled.”
Sybok sighed, arms dropping back to his sides. “I was exiled from Vulcan. But as everyone here already knows, we aren’t on Vulcan cuz it got destroyed along with most of its population.” He paused, wincing a bit at his own words. “That came out wrong. I didn’t mean to start like that; I’m just here to help.”

One of Sarek’s eyebrows went up slightly. “How can you help Vulcan when you have rejected Vulcan?”

“It was really more a case of Vulcan rejecting me; all I did was propose a different, possibly slightly less rigid interpretation of Surak’s teachings—” Sybok began, only to be cut off by his father.

“It was a rejection of Surak’s teachings, by a member of his own house.” Sarek’s tone was level where Jim would have expected shouting in any family he was familiar with, but somehow this was almost worse.

The argument was continuing, but Jim didn’t want to get stuck in the middle of that so he edged over to where the one person in the room who looked unfamiliar was sitting. He stuck out his hand after noticing rounded ears instead of pointed ones and kept his voice down to not draw attention from the main event across the room. “Hey, I don’t think we’ve met. Jim Kirk.”

“Michael Burnham.” Stories from Starfleet and Spock clicked in Jim’s mind as she shook his hand. His hand tightened over hers. “Oh my god. I’d love to hear any and all stories you have, either from growing up with Spock or serving with Georgiou in Starfleet. Or both.” He paused, dropping her hand, and grinned. “Definitely both if we have time actually.

Michael smiled back. “Only if I get a few stories of yours in return.”

“Gladly.” Jim grinned wider and was going to say more when Spock pressed against his side. He looked over at him. “Didn’t want to weigh in on the logic versus not thing?”

“No.” Across the room, Sybok’s voice was getting a little more heated while Sarek’s grew colder. “It is illogical to attempt to sway either of them.”

Before another word could be said, a loud voice cut off the arguing Vulcans. “Alright!” All eyes turned to Amanda, who looked ready to grab Sarek and Sybok by the ears while somehow still looking calm. “We were just about to have lunch. Can’t we just ignore the issues for a little bit and catch up with each other instead?”

“Sounds like family to me.” Jim spoke without thinking and immediately regretted it when everyone turned to him.

Sybok broke the tension with a laugh. “Perfect! We all know Dad loves human things if he can make them seem Vulcan enough. We just have to make it sound logical somehow.”

Sarek looked like he was about to respond, but Amanda leveled both of them with a glare. “I said don’t start it.”

Sarek deflated a little and Sybok did too, a little more visibly. He looked at Amanda apologetically. “Sorry Amanda.”

“Just don’t keep doing it.” Satisfied when he nodded in agreement, Amanda looked around the room. “Alright then. We should still be able to accommodate everyone, so let’s eat.” She zeroed in on Jim, who was starting to feel a bit out of place. “Jim, I know this turned out to be more of a family matter than a Starfleet matter, but I hope you’ll stick around anyways.”
Jim nodded. “Of course, ma’am.”

“He’s practically family anyways, what with that bond he and Spock have.” Sybok seemed more focused on actually taking in the room than what he said, but he couldn’t have missed the stunned reaction from everyone else and Jim didn’t miss his little smirk.

Michael was the first to speak. “You two bonded?”

Spock looked a little nervous, so Jim brushed his hand against his in support and Spock straightened up a little, casting a grateful look to Jim before looking at his family. “It is a preliminary bond, formed after melds due to the natural affinity of our minds.”

Amanda recovered more quickly than Sarek. “Well Spock did tell me you two were getting serious, but somehow he left that detail out.” She leveled Spock with a look and Jim almost laughed at how he avoided eye contact, but he contained it in time for her to look to him. “Well in that case Jim is definitely joining us. I won’t bother asking why Sybok was the first to know.”

Jim thought about answering, but decided it would be best to wait and figure out how to explain it with Spock instead. So he just smiled at Amanda instead. “Lunch sounds good.”

Chapter End Notes

I love how dramatic and sassy this family is. Amanda might be the most chill and that's saying something since she still literally moved to a completely new planet and culture for a man. I love them all, and this should be fun...
Chapter 204

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I'm glad you all seem to be enjoying this dramatic little family as much as me hahaha And if anyone's wondering, I'm ignoring the main events of Discovery for plot convenience and because AU; who knows how much all of that would vary in the Kelvin timeline? Not me honestly, so I'm avoiding it

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once they were all seated around the table and eating something vegetarian that Jim probably couldn’t pronounce the name of but was still enjoying a surprising amount, the silence began to feel a little forced. Jim admittedly couldn’t remember what Vulcan norms about talking while eating were, but he and Spock always talked while they ate together. So he swallowed his current bite and looked around to decide who the easiest to start conversation with would be. After deciding not to just talk to Spock even though he knew they could get a good conversation going, he looked across the table and decided on the next person down on his list. “So Michael, what are you doing here? Are you still stationed with Captain Georgiou on the Shenzhou?”

Michael looked a little surprised at being addressed but covered it well. “I’m actually currently part of a Starfleet group here to help establish the new colony. Once my time here is done I might go back to the Shenzhou, but Georgiou also mentioned recommending me for a command of my own so I may pursue that.”

“Cool.” Jim grinned. “Command isn’t easy, but if you’ve been serving with Captain Georgiou you’ve already been learning from one of the best.” He glanced over at Spock, feeling his smile soften a bit. “Get yourself a good first officer. It helps a lot.” He looked away but couldn’t resist letting his hand brush Spock’s under the table. “No stealing Spock though. He’s mine.”

“Clearly.” Michael’s tone was a bit teasing, but her expression was soft.

Spock’s hand squeezed Jim’s softly under the table. “Additionally, I would not leave you, Captain.”

“I know.” Jim looked at Spock with a grin and couldn’t resist sliding his fingers over Spock’s in a Vulcan kiss under the table. “Still, you almost did back before our first mission post-Nero.”

Spock pulled his hand away from Jim’s at a look from Sarek that Jim missed because he’d been getting more absorbed in watching Spock. Spock looked around the table. “I ultimately received more arguments in favor of staying than leaving.” He looked at Amanda. “It seemed better for myself and Vulcan to stay in Starfleet than to leave.”

Amanda smiled. “It seems to have worked out well for you.”

“I’ll say.” Everyone turned to Sybok, who was smirking. “You two are adorable, but I’d tone down the PDA while you’re here if I were you.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “As were are not in public, the term ‘PDA’ does not apply.”

Sybok rolled his eyes. “You know what I mean. And I’m just looking out for you.” His expression
got a little more serious. “You wouldn’t want to get kicked off the planet because people didn’t like what you were doing.”

That was enough to get Sarek to break his apparent silent treatment; his brows furrowed slightly. “They would not be banished for so slight an offence.”

“Really?” Sybok raised an eyebrow. “I would think I was the expert on getting banished from Vulcan here.”

Sarek’s eyes narrowed slightly. “It is not easy to be banished. There are many factors that get considered, like—”

“Whether or not you’re from an important family? Not that much of a protective factor since I had that on both sides and still got booted out.” Sybok smirked bitterly. “It’s just about how much you challenge their conformist ideas, and let’s be real for some of these people Spock was already on thin ice because—”

“Boys!” Jim was surprised by the hint of anger in Amanda’s voice since she seemed good at keeping her cool when he’d seen her before. Still, she definitely didn’t look happy as she looked between Sarek and Sybok. “We all agreed to try to sit through one meal without getting into all this again. Do you two need to leave so the rest of us can have a meal in peace?”

Sybok looked a little cowed. “Sorry.”

“It’ll be alright if you don’t keep doing it.” Amanda smiled at him slightly to soften her words before looking to the other end of the table. “Sarek?”

He looked like he wanted to protest a moment before letting his shoulders drop infinitesimally. “I will drop the subject, aduna.”

“Good.” Amanda took a breath before looking to Jim. “So, Spock said you were still recovering last time he came here and that’s why you couldn’t come. Are you doing better now?”

“Much.” Jim smiled, glad the conversation was moving forward. He looked at Spock and smiled a bit. “I owe a lot of that to Spock here.” His smile grew wider at the warmth in Spock’s eyes.

“What happened?” Michael looked at him curiously. “I heard there was an incident involving the Enterprise, then there was a big shakeup at Starfleet command and I heard you were hospitalized.” She paused taking a sip of her drink. “There was lots of speculation in other parts of Starfleet, but not many definite answers.”

“Well…” Jim looked at Spock, not sure how much they could say, before looking back to Michael. “We can’t say too much since a lot of it is so classified now that I wouldn’t even have the clearance to know about it if I hadn’t been involved.” All the post-mission briefings had made that perfectly clear. Jim looked at Michael. “Basically, we got caught up in some really sketchy stuff Admiral Marcus had been doing that got him killed.”

“Wow.” Michael looked like she still wanted to press but knew better than to do it. “And how does that connect to you spending months in Starfleet Medical?”

Jim shrugged. “I ended up on the wrong side of a warp core.”

Michael looked confused again. “And which side is that?”

“The inside.” Jim felt like maybe he should be concerned about how casually he said that given
everyone’s reactions, but he’d already spent so much time dealing with all that that he didn’t want to get into it now. So he continued on. “But thanks to Spock, my very-near-death experience didn’t end up fatal.” Jim let himself take Spock’s hand under the table again briefly.

“Huh. That explains so much.” Sybok looked between them. “I’d though I got Spock vibes from you just because of the bond, but…” His focus settled on Spock. “You gave him a chunk of your katra, didn’t you?”

There was surprise around the table and Jim was sure Spock’s cheeks got a little green. “It was necessary to save his life.”

Everyone at the table looked a little surprised still, but Amanda spoke up first. “Wow. Does that make me the only person at this table without at least some of a Vulcan soul inside them?”

Immediately after she spoke her face softened and she looked at Sarek as he looked at her in a way that made Jim think they must have been communicating telepathically though their bond, but Sybok broke the moment when he spoke up. “Don’t worry Amanda, I’ve got you.”

Everyone turned to him in surprise, but Spock finally spoke up. “What?”

Sybok rolled his eyes. “It’s not like I’d force a chunk of my soul on her or anything.” He turned to Amanda. “I’m just saying that if you were ever in mortal danger or seriously injured, call me up and I’d be willing to help out.”

“Why?” Everyone turned to Sarek before looking back to Sybok, who shrugged.

“I dunno. Everyone else has special connections to Amanda, maybe I just wanted to be included.” He gestured to Sarek. “The connection for you two is obvious, same with her and Spock. Amanda and Michael are both human women—”

“As are billions of other individuals in this quadrant alone—”

Sybok continued as if Michael hadn’t interrupted. “—so I was the odd one out a bit.” He shrugged. “Again, just offering.”

Amanda still looked a little thrown off but nodded anyways. “Thank you for the offer, Sybok. I’m sorry to hear that you didn’t feel like you belonged.”

Sybok waved a hand dismissively. “You were never the problem there.” He pointedly looked to Sarek for a moment before dropping it.

Sarek twitched slightly in what Jim guessed would have been a long sigh without Vulcan controls. He looked around the table. “Everyone has finished eating, so we must address the topic we have been avoiding and do so civilly.” He looked directly at his elder son. “Why are you here, Sybok?”

Chapter End Notes

If anyone's wondering, Sarek and Amanda were communicating telepathically; he was basically telling her that she may not have any Vulcan soul, but she does have that Vulcan's heart (cuz let's be real he's a total sap, but only in private or low-key ways).

Anyways, any guesses why Sybok is there?
Chapter Notes

The weirdest writer's block is when you know what you want to say but still can't write, and that was the situation today. Also, I'm playing fast and loose with the timeline of Spock's childhood, but it's not like we have much definite information anyways.

Also, one of you mostly got why Sybok is there...I hope you all enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Sybok looked around the room and then sighed. “Alright, may as well get right to it, even though this is already promising to be the most awkward family gathering since the time I told Spock and Michael about pon farr.”

Jim almost laughed at the sudden air of awkwardness that fell over the room, glad that this time he at least knew what they were referring to thanks to older him. Spock and Michael were decidedly not looking at either of their parents, and Sarek and Amanda both looked surprised too.

Sarek finally broke the awkward silence. “What? When did this happen?”

Sybok shrugged. “Not long after I moved in with you guys I think. It must have been your first one post-Spock.”

Jim almost wanted to stop shielding to get a feel for the room, but he didn’t trust Sybok to not tell the whole room about his abilities if he did. He looked back at Sarek, who finally seemed to have gathered himself enough to speak. “Why?”

“It made sense.” Sybok was nonchalant in a way that still seemed so different from typical Vulcan calm. “I mean, what was I supposed to do? I had to explain why you and Amanda went away and couldn’t be contacted at all, and besides, Spock was 6 and Michael was 10; they’d probably be hearing about it soon anyways.”

“As Vulcans do not typically speak of it, it is not a guarantee they would have.” Sarek seemed like if he weren’t Vulcan, he’d be crossing his arms.

Sybok raised an eyebrow. “And yet here the only two full Vulcans here—“ He looked at Spock apologetically, “Sorry bro.” He looked back at Sarek. “We’re Vulcans. We’re discussing it. It comes up.” He looked around the room, exasperation clear on his face in a way that still felt odd to Jim, “It’s not like everyone in this room doesn’t either already know what it is or is going to find out.”

“He has a point.” Jim spoke without thinking and regretted it when everyone looked at him.

Had he forgotten to tell Spock he knew? Given that Spock looked as surprised as he could look, maybe so. He asked the question that everyone was probably wondering. “Jim, how do you already know what we’re talking about?”

Good thing Jim was good at coming up with excuses on the fly. He looked at Spock. “Remember the person we picked up and brought here? He told me about it.” Best to keep the other them’s secrecy a while longer probably. Still, he could probably give some details. He looked back to
everyone else. “We met a human who had a Vulcan bondmate and brought him back here.”

That caught Amanda’s attention. “Really?” She looked at Sarek. “I hadn’t heard of any other humans with Vulcan bondmates living here.”

“They were living off planet for years before Vulcan got destroyed.” Easy enough to lie when it got close to the truth like this. “They got separated for a bit and after the destruction of Vulcan the Vulcan bondmate came here to help.”

“That was good of him.” Everyone turned to Michael. “It could be interesting to talk to them; where in the colony are they?”

Spock paused. “We have their coordinates.”

“But they’re a bit occupied right now.” Jim glanced over at Spock and made a mental note to send a message to their older selves letting them know the situation. Jim looked back to everyone else. “That’s how I know; the Vulcan partner was starting his time and when the human partner found out I was with Spock, he figured he’d just tell me what the urgency was. So I know.”

Sarek looked like he wanted to say something, but Sybok spoke up first. “As awkward as these conversations have been, it’s an alright transition for what I wanted to say.”

“And what is that?” Sarek was still serious and if Jim had to guess, almost annoyed.

Sybok sighed. “Look, Dad, it’s an all hands on deck situation right now.” He made a face. “Well maybe not hands, but…” He refocused and looked back at everyone. “They’re probably going to want contributions from each family for rebuilding purposes, right?”

Sarek cautiously nodded. “That would be logical.”

“And that’s why I’m here.” Sybok looked uncharacteristically serious. “Even with funky human aging on her side, I’m guessing you wouldn’t put Amanda though all that, and the last time you had a kid you didn’t raise, I was the result, and the last time you had a kid you didn’t want, I was the result, and we probably don’t want that again.” There seemed be subtle agreement from around the room. “And honestly, who knows if they’d accept a contribution from Spock because we all know how they are.” He paused. “So while I doubt anyone really wants me sticking around, they’ll probably accept my genes where they wouldn’t accept my beliefs, and it would be logical to accept contributions from other exiled Vulcans who want to help since it’s in their best interest to maintain maximum genetic diversity.”

There was a slight pause, then Sarek nodded. “A surprisingly logical argument.”

Sybok smiled self-deprecatingly. “Gee, it’s almost like I was raised in a totally logical culture and taught logic all my life and haven’t completely abandoned it just because I feel things now and then.”

Sarek raised an eyebrow. “Was the sarcasm necessary?”

Sybok raised an eyebrow back. “Have you met this family?” He didn’t wait for a response before continuing. “Anyways, will you bring my idea before the High Council, or whoever’s in charge now?”

After a moment, Sarek nodded. “I shall.”

Chapter End Notes
Bonus points for picking out my weird headcanons I shoved in here.
Jim sat with Amanda and Michael at the house waiting for Sarek, Spock, and Sybok to get back. Sybok was presenting his case to the Vulcan High Command with Sarek there to help plead his case and Spock there because technically Sybok was supposed to be in Starfleet custody still. Jim had wanted to go with them, but they didn’t think a human would be allowed in the council chambers, plus they’d probably already be causing enough of a scene having Sybok there so they figured it was best to play it safe and not bring Jim along too. Or at least that was basically what they’d said, in more Vulcán, logical terms anyways.

But Jim didn’t mind too much anyways. He and Michael had started swapping Starfleet stories, and then the real fun began when Amanda brought out the stories about Spock as a kid.

It had been worth it for all the blackmail material Jim now had, even if Spock would probably be confused about the random bursts of emotion from Jim’s end of the bond that were likely distracting him during the council meeting.

Still, Jim couldn’t help but respond to some of this stuff. Like right now, when the current story left him with a mix of disbelief, fear, and amusement. “So it’s really a Vulcan thing to just send kids out in the desert with no supplies? And Spock just went and did it on his own?”

“Yep.” Amanda settled back in her chair, looking a little more relaxed than Jim would expect given the story’s content. “All his classmates were doing it, so he wanted to prove he was just as Vulcan as the rest of them despite their bullying. So he set off totally unprepared, and if it hadn’t been for I-Chaya that le matya probably would have killed him.”

Michael made a face. “I’m somewhat glad I missed certain Vulcan traditions.”

“I’ll say.” Jim looked at her with a grin for a moment before looking back to Amanda. “So what was I-Chaya like? Spock doesn’t talk about his childhood much.”

Amanda’s eyes lit up. “Spock loved I-Chaya. I’d been a little worried at first because of the fangs and because sehlets can be quite ferocious when threatened, but he was like a big teddy bear with little Spock.” She grinned. “Remind me to find some holopics for you; it was adorable.”

Jim grinned back. “I need to see this.”

“You could see a real sehlet too if you wanted.” Jim turned toward Michael as she spoke. “They’re attempting to reintroduce them from populations that were off world during Vulcan’s destruction. There’s some at the science center.”

“Really?” Jim had to resist the urge to ask to go immediately. “I’ll have to tell Spock we’re making a pit stop on our way out.”
Both Amanda and Michael laughed, but Amanda spoke up first. “If Spock’s anything like Sarek, which he sometimes is as much as neither of them want to admit it sometimes, he’ll act like he’s only doing it to humor you but secretly love it.”

Jim smiled. “Sounds like Spock.”

Before any of them could say anything more, the door opened and Sarek, Spock, and Sybok walked in. Everyone else stood up and walked over to them, Jim coming to stand by Spock and trying to get a read on everyone. “How’d it go?”

Sybok looked at him with a grin. “They accepted my proposal! They don’t want me sticking around, but they agreed it would be best to accept genetic material and possibly other help from other exiled Vulcans.”

“The acceptance of aid is contingent on their being minimally disruptive to general society.” Sarek looked at Sybok levelly.

“Which means I probably won’t be sticking around too much longer now that I’ve said my bit.” Sybok rolled his eyes. “Now could have been a time for dialogue, learning, and acceptance, but I guess infinite diversity in infinite combinations isn’t quite infinite for everything.”

It looked like Sarek wanted to say something again and Sybok loomed ready to respond, but Spock cut in first. “Sybok has also been awarded the honorary title of ambassador to the exiled populations.”

“Yep.” Sybok slung his arm around Spock’s shoulders, ignoring how he tensed slightly at the unexpected touch. “Look out little bro, it seems to run in the family. They’ll be making you one next.” He looked up at Michael’s raised eyebrow. “You too, sis.” He laughed when she backed away when he raised his other arm towards her.

“No thank you.” She kept her focus on him as if she knew he’d try again. “I’m content with my current assignment.”

Jim grinned as Spock awkwardly ducked out from under Sybok’s arm. “And like hell are they taking Spock from me and the Enterprise.” He reached out to extend two fingers toward Spock, grinning wider when Spock accepted.

Sybok shrugged. “Guess it’s just you and me then, Dad.” He stepped toward Sarek but just held up his hands placatingly at Sarek’s warning glare and shifted his focus, smiling again. “Well, us and Amanda, who probably does the diplomacy thing as well as you do if not better at this point.”

Amanda looked like she wanted to laugh, and a glance at Sarek’s slightly sour face only made her look more torn between laughing and containing it. After a moment, she regained her composure. “Thank you Sybok. I think it may be time for you to get off to your diplomatic mission through.”

He looked at Sarek then nodded. “I think so.” He looked around the room, finally settling on Jim and Spock. “Well, it’s been great, but since I’m no longer a persona non grata here I think I’ll just leave on my own, without the Starfleet escort.”

Jim shrugged. “Works for me since that frees us up so Michael can come show me and Spock the sehlat.” He turned to Spock, grinning at his surprised expression. “If they’re cute we’re taking one on the ship. It’d hardly be the first time an Enterprise had a pet onboard.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I assume you are referring to now-Admiral Archer and his beagle, who may I remind you was a small dog rather than a large bear-like creature and still managed to cause at
least one major diplomatic incident.”

“Still worth it.” Jim grinned, resisting the urge to kiss Spock human-style. “C’mon, let’s go.”

Spock kept his expression mostly neutral, but Jim felt the flare of warm affection from him in the back of his mind. “Very well.”

Chapter End Notes

Bonus points if you catch the reference to two trek episodes here, or if you get curious and ask about them. I love talking trek.
Happy last update of August everyone! I can't believe we're almost 2 years into this fic. I remember when I used to guess how long this fic would last, and now it's just part of my life, although I do doubt we'll hit a third year here; I only have 3 planned storylines left... But for now, enjoy a fluffy little transition chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim flopped down on his back on the bed in his quarters that were really more their quarters at this point, especially since Spock didn’t even have a real bed in his quarters anymore, just a couch and meditation mat. Jim watched Spock methodically beginning his nighttime process, not bothering to strip out of his own uniform yet. “I still say we should have taken one of those if we could have. They were so fluffy, and I somehow wasn’t even allergic.”

Spock graced him with that slight smile he only did when they were alone. “That truly is something the doctor would probably deem miraculous.”

“Yeah.” Jim propped himself up on his elbows. “I’ve gotten the whole spiel before. If you really want Bones to rant at you, ask him how surprising it apparently is that I survived around farms with all those plants and animals with these allergies.”

“You continue to confound us with your ability to remain alive despite the situations you near-constantly get into.” Spock paused folding his discarded clothing to look at Jim, a genuine look on his face and warmth coming through the now fully unshielded bond. “We are all very grateful for it, however.”

“I know.” Jim smiled and sat up so he could get Spock to lean in for a kiss. Once they separated, Jim smiled mischievously. “Convince me again why we shouldn’t just have Scotty beam up a sehlat before we break orbit?”

Spock raised an eyebrow, but Jim could hear the playful tone in his voice when he responded. “There are many reasons, ashayam.”

Jim made a face as he finally began to pull off his boots and start to undress for the night. “List them for me.”

“Very well.” Spock paused his own routine with his meditation robe mostly on and started counting off reasons on his finger. “First, at this stage it is important that all possible sehlat remain on New Vulcan for the breeding program to be successful.”

Jim tipped his head in consideration. “That’s valid I guess.”

Spock raised another finger and continued. “Second, we do not have the proper facilities to care for a sehlat. They require room to exercise, and additionally our duties do not allow the proper amount of time to care for it.”

Jim grinned. “What, no walks in the arboretum or taking it on the bridge with us? Imagine how the
Klingons would react if next time they hailed us they saw me in the captain’s chair petting the giant bear-dog next to me.”

“No.” Spock had that look in his eyes that made Jim feel like he’d be laughing if he’d let himself. “Finally, as we mostly saw young sehlat’s today, I do not believe you understand how large the adults are. As you will see in the pictures of myself as a child with I-chaya that my mother will doubtlessly send you if she has not already showed you, adult sehlat’s are quite large. Our quarters would not be easily able to accommodate both of us and an adult sehlat.”

“What?” Jim grinned again, pausing his search for off duty clothes (and his consideration if he should just skip straight to pajamas) to look at Spock. “Concerned you’ll come in from meditation one night to find it taking up your side of the bed?”

“That did happen to my father on occasion with I-chaya.” Jim almost wanted to laugh at that mental image. “According to my mother, he would actually growl at my father if he attempted to move I-chaya away from her when she was pregnant. She said I-chaya would get quite cuddly with her, which likely influenced her to use the teddy bear descriptor she often uses in connection to I-chaya.”

Jim couldn’t hold back his laugh this time. “God, that’s adorable.” He smiled at Spock. “If we ever end up groundbound, we’ll have to see if one is available for adoption.”

“Should that happen, we can check.” Spock straightened and adjusted his meditation robes. “I am going to meditate prior to retiring for the night. Do you intend to be awake much longer?”

“Probably.” Jim stretched. “I have to figure out how the hell to describe what we just went through to Pike.” He held his hand to his chin fake thoughtfully. “Should I start with how we escorted an alternate me to his alternate you in time for a Vulcan sex thing they don’t share with others to not kill him, or jump to your secret exiled brother showing up unannounced?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I do not envy your current task.”

“Yeah.” Jim laughed. “I’ll probably write it up but wait to send it off til tomorrow so you can make sure I’m not spilling any too serious Vulcan secrets.”

“I will review it.” Spock nodded. “As we have learned, it is most important that we do not have conflicting information in our logs.”

“That, and I don’t want the Vulcan High Command coming after me because they don’t like how much I shared with Starfleet.” Jim smiled. “They’d probably have secret pre-Reform ways to take me out.”

“They would not violate Surakian principles for a light offence.” Spock seemed more focused on his robes.

“You didn’t specify if me blabbing about Pon Farr would be a light offence or not.” Despite his words, Jim didn’t feel too worried.

“I would ensure that no offense was committed before that could occur.” And that was why Jim wasn’t concerned; Spock would always have his back.

“Thanks babe.” Jim leaned in and got another kiss, human and Vulcan style. “Now go meditate so I can do this and we can go to bed together afterwards.” At the slight but oh so recognizable specific type of curiosity through the bond Jim smirked. “Well I hadn’t been thinking about it like that, but I’d be open to it.” He bit his lip to keep from laughing at his own unintentional innuendo.
“You are incorrigible.” Spock rolled his eyes, but Jim could feel his amusement.

“And you love it.” Jim smiled as he leaned in for another kiss that Spock met him for. “Now go meditate while I do this report and check our upcoming schedule. We’ll have plenty of time for sleep or other activities once we’re done.”

“I anticipate it eagerly.” Spock had that certain spark in his eyes that made Jim almost want to suggest skipping paperwork and meditation, but he knew they’d both be annoyed if they had to make it up tomorrow.

So Jim reluctantly pulled away, stealing one last peck on the lips first. “Same. Now go before we get too distracted.”

Spock nodded and pulled away; heading to his meditation area through their bathroom. Jim spared one last appreciative look for Spock in his robes before settling in at his desk.

Chapter End Notes

Does anyone have anything (tos episodes, etc) that they'd like to see me take on here? I won't necessarily do it, but I like the idea of showing a little thanks for all the awesome people still following this...
Chapter 208

Chapter Notes

Hello and happy September everyone! I had a fun time rewatching some TOS to do this, and I think I might do two before we get into the next major thing I had planned. This was one of the requested episodes, so enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim rolled his shoulders and walked into the briefing room. That last mission, if it could be called that when it was pretty far from organized orders from Starfleet, had been a pain to explain to Pike, even with Spock helping him out and backing him up. Hopefully whatever came next would go more smoothly. It was time to prep for their next mission; they’d already had an initial briefing, so most of this was just review. He looked around the room; everyone was already there. “Alright everyone, let’s get as ready as we can be. We’re supposed to evaluate this planet. Spock, any regulations we need to keep in mind?”

Spock looked at his padd. “The situation is unusual as they are pre-warp but outside contact has already been made by the ship the Horizon in the year 2168. The exact date of contact is uncertain as the Horizon was lost shortly after visiting this planet. Still, this makes Sigma Iota II a rare exception to the Prime Directive as they are a pre-warp society where contact is allowed, even if interference must still be minimal.”

“Got it. Wouldn’t want another prime directive problem on our record.” Jim smiled as the bridge crew reacted to his joke, with responses varying from quiet laughter to groans to Spock raising an eyebrow. The incident on Nibiru, while it had nearly cost him his captaincy at the time, had mostly been forgotten in the midst of everything that followed. It helped that a survey team that observed the planet while Jim was recovering found no signs of major cultural change; the volcanic smoke must have been enough to keep them concealed after all. Once the room was focused again, Jim directed them on to the next part of the briefing. “Alright. What do we know about the native people?”

“From what we could gather of the logs from the Horizon, the Iotians are humanoid and were in early industrialization.” Spock glanced at his padd then back at Jim. “The Horizon logs also made note that they were intelligent, yet imitative, so I believe the potential for contamination from the Horizon is high.”

“Good to know.” Jim grimaced. The Horizon had been there before Starfleet formally had a non interference policy, so there was no telling what kind of mess they’d made. Depending on how bad it was, it would be a mess the Enterprise would have to fix. “Whoever’s not on the landing party, have the sociological computers and any interested crew on board ready to process the information on their society that we send up. We might need to find solutions to any problems the Horizon could have caused.” There was some nodding, so Jim decided it would be alright to move on. “Sulu, Chekov, how long til we make orbit?”

“Very soon, keptin.” Chekov glanced at Sulu, who nodded. “I would have to consult navigation for an exact figure, but within the hour.”

Jim nodded. “Uhura, any luck making contact with the planetary government?”
“Some.” She frowned. “Our usual methods didn’t work, but I remembered that the Horizon had been using radio communication and attempted that. I successfully made contact with someone on the planet named Bela Okmyx who said he was the “Boss” of that area of the planet, but there didn’t seem to be any sort of unified government.”

“Good to know.” Jim wondered if that was due to the Horizon or something more natural to the planet’s development; they’d have to figure that out. “Is he who you arranged a meeting with?”

Nyota nodded. “Yes captain.”

“Alright.” Jim looked around the room. “Scotty, you have the beam down coordinates?”

“Yes.” He still looked a little nervous. “As we don’t know much about the surface, I’d like them confirmed though.”

“We can do that.” Jim looked at Nyota. “Uhura?”

She nodded. “I’ll contact Okmyx and confirm.”

“Awesome.” Jim nodded. “Spock, Bones, you’ll be coming down with me. Standard equipment should be fine; treat it like we’re going to a first contact. Regular uniforms should be fine though; no need to bother the quartermaster about trying to replicate their style of clothing if they already know we’re not from around there.” Done with everything they needed to discuss and not picking up on any questions or lingering concerns around the room, Jim decided to wrap it up. “Ok then, everyone back to your stations. Spock, Bones, meet me in the transporter room once coordinates are confirmed and we make orbit.”

The dismissal clear, everyone dispersed. Jim stretched and started heading toward the transporter room, figuring if they were almost in orbit it wouldn’t really be worth it to go to the bridge. He noticed Spock falling into step next to him. “Any thoughts on the upcoming mission, Mr. Spock?”

“I am uncertain, Captain.” Despite being alone, Spock stuck to formality like he tended to while on duty. “This planet presents a fascinating opportunity for study as it is not often we see planets with pre-warp contact, although the Prime Directive does exist for a reason. If the contact with the Horizon has somehow been damaging to the lotians, it is concerning that the Federation will be responsible for the damage and that we will need to repair it.”

“True.” Jim poked at the bond, feeling everything Spock had stated. “Hopefully it won’t be too bad.”

“Bridge to Keptin Kirk.” Jim paused as Chekov’s voice came through the wall unit.

He stepped over and hit the button. “Kirk here.”

“Keptin, we are in orbit. Mr. Scott is ready for you in the transporter room.”

“Thanks for letting us know. Mr. Spock and I are on our way; tell Dr. McCoy to meet us there.” He waited a moment for acknowledgement.

“Aye; I will contact him.”

“Good. Kirk out.” Jim released the button and turned to Spock. “Well, better or worse, we’re about to find out what the contamination is.”

Spock nodded. “Indeed, Captain.”
Jim grinned despite himself. “Here goes nothing.”

Chapter End Notes

You can probably tell which one it is already, but I kinda wanted to keep it vague because I love playing guessing games in the comments. Feel free to comment if you recognize it or if you don’t!
Chapter 209

Chapter Notes

Shoutout to two years! (minus two days I guess) It's been fun doing this fic, especially with all of you awesome people following along and encouraging me. As I'm posting this this fic stands at an even 2000 kudos, which is absolutely fricking mindblowing. You're all the greatest, whether you're new, old, here from the start or reading this after it's done. You're the best!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim lead Spock to the transporter room; Bones was already there and Jim grinned at him, already knowing the answer before he asked the question. “Excited for the mission, Bones?”

“No.” Bones crossed his arms. “But I know I have to beat you down here otherwise you reckless idiot,” he pointed at Jim, “will beam down without me and no one will be there when one of you inevitability gets hurt and needs patching up.”

Spock beat Jim to the response. “Doctor, as always your confidence in our abilities is appreciated.”

Bones looked like he was going to respond, but Jim decided to preemptively cut them off, even if it could get entertaining. “Alright then. Boss Okmyx is waiting for us; we should get down there.” They both seemed to begrudgingly agree, so Jim turned to Scotty. “You have the coordinates?”

“Aye sir, best I can.” He looked down at his console and back up at them uncertainly. “I confirmed with Lieutenant Uhura; apparently we’re putting you down in the middle of an intersection.”

Jim frowned momentarily. It was a little unusual, but probably not the oddest place to set down. Maybe they didn’t get that with how transporters worked they could just pop up anywhere instead of needing a landing spot. “Alright then. Beam us down.”

The familiar transporter room disappeared, and they ended up right in the middle of a street. Jim jumped to pull Spock and Bones away as a very old looking car nearly hit them as it drove by, honking its horn.

Jim looked at Bones with a grin. “What was that about me getting us hurt, Bones?”

Bones shifted his arm out of Jim’s grip, not looking impressed. “One exception doesn’t disprove the rule, Jim.”

Jim was about to respond, but Spock spoke up before he could. “Captain, Dr. McCoy.” He waited until they were both looking at him. “Do you notice anything about our surroundings?”

Only then did Jim look around; his first thought was that they definitely had a mess to clean up.

Bones’ train of thought seemed a little different. “Kinda looks like home. Or those old pictures of the US at least.”

“I don’t think even the old US had this many people with firearms.” It was making Jim a bit uneasy really; it seemed like everyone who walked by had either a pistol, a revolver, or something bigger. “I
“Alright, hands up.” The three of them turned at the voice from behind them; two planetary natives (if their suits were any indication) were approaching them, guns in hand. Big guns. “Are you the Feds?”

“We’re from the Federation, if that’s what you mean.” Jim kept his hands by his belt, trying to figure out if he could get put his phaser and stop them before they could shoot him, Spock, and Bones. “Is this what Okmyx calls a welcoming committee?”

“Don’t get sassy with me, blue eyes.” The one in front approached them, still pointing his gun but holding out his hand. “We’ll take you to the Boss. But hand over whatever you got on your belt first.”

For a moment, Jim thought about resisting, but he could tell goon one and two meant business, and he could practically feel Spock and Bones willing him not to on either side of him. “Alright.” He pulled off his communicator and handed it over, then the hand phaser he’d strapped to his belt just in case. He tensed a little when goon one started turning it over in his hand. “Careful.”

Goon one grinned. “What, is this a heater?”

“While it can be used to provide heat, that is not its intended purpose.” Jim could imagine Spock’s raised eyebrow, but he didn’t dare turn around in case these two were trigger happy. He did have to stifle a laugh though.

That earned him a glare from goon one, who moved on to Spock and gestured for the other one to get Bones’ stuff. He shifted his glare from Spock as he took his phaser and communicator. “It means gun, dummy. Is it?”

“We’re here to talk with the Boss, not just anyone.” It was a bit of a gamble, but Jim figured that kind of move might just work here. “You gonna take us or not?”

He successfully got goon one’s attention away from Spock, even if he didn’t ease up on the glare. “We’ll take ya.”

Whatever he was going to say next, they couldn’t hear it over screeching tires as another car came around the corner. Jim dove for cover at the first sound of gunshots, glad to see Spock and Bones both joining him behind the newspaper stand while Okmyx’s goons returned fire, one of them hitting the ground as the car drove off.

Once the coast was clear, Jim got up, Bones and Spock behind him. “What the hell was that?”

“A hit.” Goon one riffled through the other one’s pockets, taking out McCoy’s things and putting them in his own pockets. “Probably Krako. But if you’re here to see the Boss he’ll tell you all a that.” He pointed the gun at them again. “Now move.”

They probably could have taken on one goon without being too hurt, but if this was the only way to Okmyx this would be how they did it. Jim nodded and the three of them were lead away.

Goon one lead them into and through a big building til they came into a big office with a pool table in it. Inside were a few more goons with guns, a pretty young thing in a dress sitting on a desk, and behind it an older person who had to be Okmyx; he matched the signs Jim had seen around the neighborhood and stood up to greet them when they walked in. “Gentlemen!” He looked them over but paused when he saw the goon escorting them. “Weren’t there two of you?”
“Krako sent a hit as we were picking these ones up.” He nodded at Jim, Bones, and Spock.

“Well hit ‘em back.” Okmyx watched as goon one and one of the other goons in his office turned to leave before turning back to the landing party. “Now which one of you is the captain?”

Jim didn’t trust this situation. “Why do you wanna know?”

Okmyx smirked. “Guess that means it’s you, babyface.”

“I’m older than I look.” Jim didn’t feel like it was the time or place to explain everything about human aging and soulmates, but he still felt it needed to be said.

“Whatever.” Okmyx went and sat at his desk. “I’m looking to make a deal. I’m the biggest boss around here, but that means I’ve got a target on my back. You’ve already seen that; now let’s fix it together.”

“What do you suggest?” Jim got the feeling he wasn’t going to like this, but felt like it would be best to try anyways.

Okmyx smiled. “You supply me with heaters, I take out the other bosses. Then the only boss you deal with is me instead of having to deal with a dozen or so.”

Jim frowned. “We can’t do that.”

“No?” Okmyx crossed his arms. “Maybe that ship of yours will when they find out it’s that or their captain’s swimming with the fishes.” He nodded to the remaining goons. “Put ‘em on ice.”

Chapter End Notes

Well this doesn't look good for the boys...

Also sometimes I forget that with this AU's aging rules, all of them look like college students age wise. I think I need to make more jokes about that, because I'm currently older than Jim or Spock physically. That's the reason for the babyface joke if you missed it; idk if you share my humor but I hope so. Anyways, be on the lookout for something this weekend, probably over at the extra scenes...
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and happy two days after two years of this fic! And also happy Rosh Hashanah to any Jewish readers out there. Are you ready for a chapter that shamelessly steals a TOS scene because I found it funny but couldn't do it justice through imitation? You're about to get it...

Jim leaned against a stack of crates, watching the group of Okmyx’s men that were guarding them. All things considered, it wasn’t the worst time he’d been held captive. No torture, no restraints, and they hadn’t even separated him from Spock and Bones. If it weren’t for the fact that the three goons sitting at the makeshift table playing cards was armed to the teeth, it might just seem like the landing party was only there to observe and could go whenever they wanted.

But they couldn’t; not until Jim figured out a way out of here. And a way to fix the mess the Horizon had somehow made of this entire civilization. Jim glanced at Bones and Spock, who were standing on either side of him. “Any theories on how the planet got like this? I’m guessing the Horizon crew wasn’t walking around in old-style suits and carrying guns, so it’s not like they’re copying them.”

Spock crossed his arms, not taking his eyes off of the men playing cards. “I did notice a book in Okmyx’s office while we were there about Chicago gangs of the 1920s.”

“That would certainly fit with how they’re behaving.” Bones leaned back next to Jim. “Would that really change their whole society though?”

“Possibly.” Spock tipped his head consideringly. “It did seem to be set up like a reverent display as if it was very important to them. As they were noted to be an imitative society, I think it is likely that is the cause of the contamination.”

“Well we worked out the problem, but now we have to work out how to fix it.” Jim shifted. “Everybody in sociology and xenoanthropology will have a field day with this I’m sure, but for now any ideas on how to get out of this mess? Or how to fix this situation?”

“I would not want to speculate without consulting the proper resources.” Spock glanced at Jim. “I am also uncertain how to best escape from our current situation.”

“That’s alright. Once we’re out of here, you two go back to the ship and work out a solution. I’ll try talking to Okmyx again, if only to get our stuff back before he works out how to use thephasers. We just have to get out of here.” Jim watched the henchmen still playing cards and suddenly had an idea, but he wasn’t sure if it would work. “I think I can get us out of here.”

“And how are we doing that?” Bones raised an eyebrow. “I know for a fact that none of us are bulletproof, and that they won’t hesitate to open fire.”

“Thanks for the medical advice, Bones. I didn’t know to avoid bullets.” Jim rolled his eyes. “It looks like they’re playing poker. I could probably win a hand of poker.”
“No.” Bones turned and pointed at Jim sternly. “You are not gambling for our lives.”

“Fine.” Jim shrugged it off and looked at Spock, who seemed deep in thought. He poked him through the bond. “What’s up?”

“I was considering the problem of the planet, Captain.” Spock turned to look at him. “Okmyx’s methods are not commendable, but his central idea was correct; it would be for the best if the planet were unified. Without that unity, the violence and struggle for power may doom the planet and its inhabitants. We must discover how to change how the planet is run without causing too many problems.”

“So we have to change the game, but still work with what we’ve got here.” Jim watched them play cards while he thought. Then he grinned as an idea came to him. “No idea how to do that, but I know how we’re getting out. Follow my lead, and be ready for a fight.” He ignored Bones’ shout of his name as he sauntered over to the table, holding up his hands when all the guns were suddenly pointed at him. “Easy gentlemen. What are you playing, poker?”

Goon one from earlier was still there and spoke up since he seemed to be in charge. “What’s it to you?”

Here’s hoping this would work. Jim smiled in a way that usually worked to get people to relax. “Nothing, except that it’s a kid’s game.”

“Says who?” Goon one kept his gun pointed at Jim as he got closer.

Jim shrugged, taking the open seat at the makeshift table. “Anybody outside this atmosphere. But look,” Jim leaned in like he was sharing a secret, “I may not be able to tell you about our tech, but I can tell you what the big shots play on Beta Antares Four.” He paused, looked at goon one closely then around the table and sat back. “Actually, maybe not. It could be beyond you.”

Goon one set down his gun and leaned forward. “Listen Kirk, if you can get it so can I. Pick up the cards and tell us how it’s done.”

“Alright.” Jim picked up the cards and shuffled. “The cards on Beta Antares Four are a bit different, but these’ll work. The name of the game is…fizzbin.”

“Fizzbin.” Goon one nodded seriously; thank god for the Iotian’s imitative nature.

“Yep.” Jim began dealing. “Each player gets six cards, except for the player on the dealer’s right, who gets seven.”

“On the right.” Goon one was playing close attention, and the others were as well.

“Yes.” Time to make this complicated to keep their focus. “The second card is turned up, except on Tuesday.”

“On Tuesday.” He nodded in understanding; thankfully it seemed like they had the same day system here.

Jim glanced at the card. “Oh, look at that! You have two jacks; that’s a half fizzbin already.”

Goon one looked seriously at the cards and back at Jim. “I need another Jack.”

“No, no.” Jim shook his head. “If you had another Jack, it would be a sralk.”
“A sralk?” He looked invested but confused; good.

“Yes; you’d get disqualified.” Jim kept shuffling the cards in his hand. “You need a king and a two, unless it’s night, when you need a queen and a four.”

Goon one nodded, watching Jim intensely. “Unless at night.”

“Exactly.” Jim nodded and dealt another card. “Well look at that! An ace. How lucky! How wonderful for you.” Jim couldn’t help but smile at how excited goon one looked. “If you didn’t get an ace, if you’d gotten a king, you’d have gotten another card. Unless it was dark, in which case you’d have to give it back.”

“If it was dark on Tuesdays.” A mild conflation of the rules, but Jim could let it slide.

“Yes.” He glanced back to the cards, then back at goon one. “So what you’re after is a royal fizzbin, but the odds of that are astronomical.” He looked up, glad to see Spock and Bones had come closer. “Spock, what’re the odds?”

Spock’s raised eyebrow meant he knew Jim was making all of this up, but he still played along. “I have never calculated them, Captain.”

Jim grinned and waved a hand dismissively. “Trust me, they’re astronomical.” He shuffled some more. “Now, last card, we’ll call it a kronk. Got it?”

It finally seemed like too much for poor goon one. “What?”

Time to act. Jim dropped a card on the floor, making it look accidental. “Whoops.”

Goon one looked at him, not seeming to suspect anything. “I got it.”

As soon as he bent down, Jim flipped the table, knocking down the person across from him. He saw Spock nerve pinch goon one as he settled into hand to hand with the closest goon, finally managing to stop him after a short fight. When he turned around, the coast was clear. “Good job. Now let’s get out of here. You two find a radio transmitter to contact the ship; I’m gonna get Okmyx.”

“Very well.” Spock nodded and he and Bones left.

Jim scooped up a gun before heading out in the alleyway; no way was someone going to get the jump on him again. Nope, he’d just get Okmyx and take him hostage this time instead of getting captured himself, and then—

Jim stopped where the alley met the street, feeling something that was probably a gun barrel pressing into his back. Not again.

Chapter End Notes

The fizzbin scene is too iconic not to steal tbh. I wonder if anyone has actually made rules for fizzbin in the 50 years or so since this episode aired; it could be fun to learn, and it probably wouldn't be any more difficult to learn than the weird card games my card-game-obsessed middle school friend used to bring back from boy scout camp and teach us at lunch... Or maybe it probably would be.
Also, I know some of you saw the extra scene I posted this weekend, but if not feel free to go check it out!
Chapter 211

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! If anyone's curious, I did see several sites claiming to have fizzbin rules when I looked it up, but none were trek sites so I don't think there's official ones. Still, Jim can't fizzbin his way out of every situation...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Drop the heater, babyface.” Jim didn’t recognize the voice behind him, meaning goon one and his friends weren’t behind this. “C’mon; we’re taking a ride.”

Great. Jim dropped the gun. “I’d really rather walk.”

The gun poked into his back again. “The option can be taxi, ambulance, or hearse, but you’re coming with me. Understand?”

“I think so.” Bones would kill him if he got shot while alone, so Jim decided to cooperate.

“Good.” As if somehow signaled, a black car pulled up in front of them and new goon poked him in the back to urge him forward. Jim sighed and climbed in.

That’s how he ended up in front of an entirely different building going into a different office. Jim could already guess who he was meeting as another smiling suit greeted him. “Well hello there! You the Fed?”

“Maybe.” Jim crossed his arms. “Who’s asking?”

“Jojo Krako, Southside Boss.” He held out his hand and Jim reluctantly shook it, earning another grin. “Great to meet you.”

“You too.” Jim stepped back and crossed his arms. “Mind telling me how you knew who I was?”

Krako shrugged. “I got Bela bugged. He can’t even make a date with a broad without me knowing.” He leaned in toward Jim. “Now you’re probably wondering why I brought you here.”

He could guess. “You want to make a deal?”

“Now how’d you know?” Krako gestured for Jim to sit; once he did, Krako snapped his fingers and Jim felt someone start massaging his shoulders. “It’d be good for you, Kirk. A better deal than Bela; I’d skim your cut right off the top.”

“I’m sure you would.” Jim wondered if he could politely shrug off the massage, even if it felt ok. “So I’m guessing you want enough guns to make you the big boss?”

Krako grinned again. “Real sharp this one, ain’t he?” He looked the goon who’d brought Jim in, who nodded. Krako looked back to Jim. “That’d be the deal, if you want to play.”

Jim rolled his shoulders, successfully dislodging the would-be masseuse. “No can do.” He looked up at Krako. “What I would do is get you, Okmyx, and the other bosses together to sort this out. Do it
with talking, not hits.”

“No.” Krako looked offended by the very idea, and pointed to a book on a pedestal just like Spock had described seeing in Okmyx’s office. “We do this by the book. The book don’t say that; what do you think I am, stupid?”

“Of course not.” They definitely knew what cause the cultural contamination now. “Just that there’s some arrested development here.”

Definitely the wrong thing to say. Krako’s grin dropped. “I don’t know what developments you’re talking bout, but I’ve never been arrested in my life, and that ain’t gonna change now!” He looked up to the one who’d brought Jim in. “He ain’t cooperating. Put him on ice, and bring in one of our boys with a skill for making people cooperate.

He got a quick nod in response. “Yes Boss.”

So once again Jim found himself led at gunpoint, this time to a small office. At least this place really did have some of the laxest prisoner standards Jim had dealt with in his time in the ‘fleet; once again they didn’t lock him up or restrain him, just shoved him into a nicely furnished room.

Jim heard the door lock behind him and he was sure there’d be armed guards outside, but he just needed to work out a way out. He took inventory of the room.

The desk was well stocked and had a typewriter and a letter opener, both of which could be pretty handy in a fight. But Jim wasn’t sure he really wanted to do any lethal levels of damage here; he just needed to incapacitate his guards.

The bed had a blanket that Jim could get loose easily enough, but he wasn’t sure what he could do with it. It looked like it might be thick enough to block put someone’s vision if he threw it over their heads though…

He almost got excited when he saw the radio in the corner; this would be a hell of a lot easier if he could just contact the ship and get beamed out. Uhura and her communications teams were supposed to be monitoring the radio transmissions from the planet…

But a closer inspection showed that that wouldn’t do much good. This kind of radio was only good for receiving transmissions, not sending them. Even if Jim did manage to make something useful from the components, it’d be hard to get in contact and ask for a beam out with nothing resembling a mic he could use.

But he did see some other components he could use; with the wire and the desk and the radio table, he just might be able to rig up a trip wire so anyone who came in would end up falling over instead of shooting him, which would be for the best.

A plan in place, Jim set up the trap and then grabbed a trash can from the corner, throwing it against the bedframe and shouting to make enough noise to get his captors to check on him.

It went surprisingly smoothly; one goon came running in only to trip on the wire and faceplant hard on the floor, his gun coming loose and sliding under the bed. The next one had his buddy to break the fall, but before he could finish getting up Jim threw the blanket over his head and took advantage of his disorientation to get a few hits in til he went down too.

Once both were down, Jim grabbed the gun that went under the bed just in case and left the room, retracing his steps to get out of the building, dodging and hiding whenever he saw anyone. Once he
was clear, he breathed a sigh of relief before heading towards Okmyx’s. It was time to have a talk.

Chapter End Notes

Jim certainly seems to be getting ahead of everything, but will it last?

Also, if anyone's interested in another long (but hella good and also completed) Spirk fic, I've been so caught up reading The Promise by Coffee666 on here that I've almost forgotten to write my own fic (almost).
Chapter 212

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Spirk day was this weekend, so happy belated Spirk day! I did post something over at the extra scenes, so feel free to check that out! But for now, back to the action...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim somehow managed to get to Okmyx’s without getting caught. He was lucky, but he knew that if he was going to stick around down here he’d need to blend in more. Sticking out like a sore thumb in clothes that were nothing like what the natives wore was probably contributing to him getting captured.

Still, Jim made it through the building without getting caught. He paused outside of Okmyx’s office; it sounded like he was yelling at someone.

Perfect time for a dramatic entrance. Jim opened the door, gun at the ready just in case. “Alright, everyone put your guns down. I mean it.” Seeing Bones and Spock again was a bit of a surprise, but Jim didn’t let it faze him.

“Didn’t Krako put the bag on you?” Okmyx actually looked a little impressed as he handed the phasers he’d probably just taken back to Spock and Bones. “It’s not easy to get away from him.”

“I got away from you too.” Jim raised an eyebrow. “Hate to break it to you, but I’ve seen much worse than what either of you’ve got.” He gestured to the side of the room. “Get over there.” They all did so with only mild complaint, so Jim turned to Spock and Bones. “I thought I told you two to go back to the ship.”

“We did.” Spock fell in next to him, keeping his phaser pointed at Okmyx and co. “We returned after agreeing to meet with Mr. Okmyx, but he did not make the deal in good faith.”

“Looks like it.” Jim glanced at him, still deciding what to do with everyone. “Did you get any insights on how to fix this while you were up there?”

“Negative. Several crew members expressed interest in studying this planet, their civilization, and the effects of the contamination, but neither them nor the ship’s computer could create a solution.” Spock looked over at him, Jim picking up the slightest amount of frustration in his voice. “There does not appear to be a logical solution to this.”

Bones snorted. “You admit that?”

“Of course.” Spock raised an eyebrow. “To deny the facts of the situation would be illogical.”

Bones looked like he was ready to respond, but as much as Jim loved watching them bicker it probably wasn’t the time or place. “Alright, no logical solution.” He smiled at them. “Mind if I try something I’m thinking of?” He had about half a plan, but if there was one thing Jim was good at it was coming up with plans on the fly.

Bones looked like he was about to object, probably because he knew Jim well enough to know just
by looking at him that he didn’t have a full plan, but before he could say anything Spock nodded.
“Go ahead, Captain.”

“Great.” Jim grinned. “First things first, you two,” he gestured at Okmyx’s men after sizing them up,
“strip. Nobody’s putting the bag on me and my boys anymore, which means it’s time to blend in.”
He watched while they did it before pointing at Spock. “Put on the brown suit. I’ve got the blue one.
Bones, you hold down the fort here while we go get ourselves another Boss.”

“Jim!” Bones did not look happy about this plan, but after a pointed look from Jim he sighed. “Fine.”

“Great.” Jim grinned. “Stun if necessary, but I want Okmyx on his feet for what’s up next, got it?”

Bones glared but nodded. “Got it.”

Jim grinned before grabbing Spock and their borrowed clothes. After a quick break to suit up (and
the temptation to do a little more after seeing Spock in those clothes; they might be a few centuries
put of style but Spock still pulled off the look in a way that made Jim want to pull off his clothes),
they headed out the street. Jim pulled a set of car keys out of the pocket of his stolen suit and noticed
the logo on them matched the logo on a car across the street. He grinned. “Let’s hit the road, Spock.”

Spock slowed when they neared the car. “Captain, do you know how to operate this vehicle?”

“Sure.” Jim took a look at the car while they settled in. “It’s a stick, same as my old man’s corvette
back in Iowa. I drove that thing as a kid; it’ll probably be even easier to do now that I can see over
the wheel and reach the pedals easily.”

Jim felt a mild surge of alarm over the bond. “Did you not crash that car?”

“Maybe.” Jim looked at Spock in a way that was supposed to be reassuring, but he couldn’t help his
grin. “But there’s no quarries to drive into here, and we’ve gotta move fast.” He turned the key in the
ignition and tested the pedals. “Buckle up.” Jim couldn’t help his laugh as he hit the gas and clutch
and started shifting gears, even as he saw Spock’s eyes widen and hand fly to his hat put of the
corner of his eye.

They probably managed to get their faster than Jim had gotten there when he’d been kidnapped. Jim
grinned as he pulled it to a stop. “Man, I missed driving. I kinda want to get one of these.”

Spock looked a little alarmed at that, and he paused as if he wanted to be careful with his words. He
slowly loosened his white knuckle grip on his hat and the gun on his lap before turning to Jim.
“Captain, you are an excellent starship commander, but as a taxi driver you leave much to be
desired.”

“That bad?” Jim couldn’t help a slight smile.

Spock looked at him levelly. “Although there are not many formal laws in this place, reasonable
speeds should still be followed in the absence of posted limits.”

Jim made a face at that. “Fine. But we can talk about my driving later. Let’s figure out how to get
those guards first.” He looked around, realizing he was missing something. “Have you seen my hat?”

Spock picked something up out of the footwell of the car, then held out Jim’s hat. “I removed it from
your head before it could fly off due to the speeds we were traveling and the open top of the car.”

“Whatever.” Jim took back the hat. “C’mon, let’s put the bag on Krako.”
Listen, I know everyone loves Jim Kirk, a gay who can't drive, and I do agree that that works for TOS Jim, but based on what we've seen I think AOS Jim is more Jim Kirk, a bisexual speed demon (semi-confirmed pan but I'm rolling with trope names). Who's with me?
Hello everyone! I’m glad you all seemed to approve of Jim Kirk, bisexual speed demon. Now he and Spock just have to get into Krako’s...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim and Spock crouched by the front of their car, eyeing the entrance to Krako’s building. Jim was pretty sure he remembered the inside layout well enough since they never bothered to knock him out or blindfold him while he was there, but getting in would still be a problem. Jim slouched back against the front of the car. “Only two guards out front, but I know there’s more inside. It’s probably not a good idea to stun them where everyone can see us, but I think we could hold our own against two people without weapons.”

“Our history in combat situations suggests so.” Spock peeked over the top of the car. “The only difficulty will be approaching without being shot.”

“You’ve got a point.” Jim leaned back against the car, trying to figure out a strategy. “Bones’ll kill us if we get shot.”

“Indeed.” Spock crouched beside him, also deep in thought.

They were interrupted when a kid ran up to them excitedly. “Is this a hit? Can I watch?”

Better stay in character. Jim looked at the kid under the brim of his hat. “What’s it to you?”

The kid shrugged. “I just wanna watch. If you’re trying to get Krako, it’s gotta be good.”

The kid shrugged. “I just wanna watch. If you’re trying to get Krako, it’s gotta be good.”

“It would be best if you were not involved.” The kid finally turned to Spock when he spoke up. “We do not want to draw excess attention to ourselves.”

The kid made a face. “Those ears’ll draw excess attention to you.” Ignoring Spock self-consciously pulling down his hat, the kid continued. “Sides, even if you get the guards outta the way, you’ll get gunned down from half the windows on the street.”

“Well we don’t want that.” Jim looked at Spock, smiling despite himself, before looking back to their potential new partner. “You got a way to get in, kid?”

The kid pulled out a little knife. “Who you calling kid? You ain’t much older than me.”

Jim wondered how the Iotians would take news of how humans aged, but decided now wasn’t the time. “Still older than you, but age isn’t everything. What’s your idea to get in?”

The kid raised an eyebrow. “I’m not sharing for free.”

Spock looked like he was about to object, but Jim held up a hand, sending amusement back when he felt annoyance through the bond. “What do you want?”

The kid looked between them appraisingly. “If you’re going after Krako, it’s gotta be something
good. We can talk percentages later, but I want a piece of the action.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded. “That’s only if this works though, got it?”

“Got it.” The kid held out his hand and Jim shook it. Once they’d settled the deal, the kid nodded. “Wait for my cue; you’ll know it when you see it.”

Once the kid was out of earshot, loudly playfighting in the street, Spock leaned closer to Jim. “I do not understand why we are trusting this child, or how we are supposed to understand our cue.”

“I think it can work out, Spock.” Jim glanced at the kid, who was getting closer to the door of Krakó’s place. He looked back to Spock. “Besides, you said yourself logic doesn’t have a solution here. We have to go with instinct.”

“I do not enjoy relying on instinct, Captain.” Spock cautiously looked over the hood of the car at the kid.

“I know.” Jim rested his hand on Spock’s arm and tried to send reassurance through the bond. “But when have my instincts steered us wrong?”

Spock’s eyebrow disappeared into the brim of his hat. “Do you genuinely want me to answer, because—”

“Dad! Dad! Dad help me!” Jim didn’t think he’d ever be glad for a kid interrupting his time with Spock, but it seemed there was an exception to every rule.

“That’s our cue.” Jim stood up, dropping his gun in the car after checking he had his phaser and waiting a moment as Spock did the same. “Which one of us is supposed to be the dad?”

“I do not believe it matters, but I will allow you to take the lead.” Spock slowed slightly, letting Jim climb the stairs to the door first.

“I do not believe it matters, but I will allow you to take the lead.” Spock slowed slightly, letting Jim climb the stairs to the door first.

“All right.” Jim paused by the kid, looking for injuries but knowing there were probably none, before standing up and getting in the face of one of the guards. “What did you do to my kid?”

“I didn’t do nothing, I swear!” The guard held up his hands, taking them off the gun strapped over his shoulder.

Just the opportunity Jim was looking for. “I’ll show you!” He knocked the guard back through the door, trying to take him out quickly while he saw Spock nerve pinch the other guard. Once both guards were out, Jim nodded at the kid through the open door. “You earned your percentage; congrats kid. We’ll get back to you when the mission is done.”

The kid looked wary, but nodded. “You better take out Krakó and not get taken out. I wouldn’t want to lose my piece of the action.”

Jim smiled to prevent himself from laughing. “You’re good kid, trust me.” He turned toward the inside of the building. “C’mon Spock, let’s go.”

They moved further inside, Spock sticking close to Jim. “We cannot pay that child, Jim.”

“I know.” Jim shrugged. “I’ll work something out; maybe set things up so someone takes care of the kid when we’re gone.” He paused, the next two guards in sight. “Phasers on stun.” He and Spock carefully aimed and fired, hitting their targets.
Once they were down, Jim cautiously led Spock further into the building based on what he remembered of the path to Krako’s office. They both froze at the sound of a voice. “Captain! How nice of you and your friend to join us; I was just gonna try to put the bag on you again, and now you saved me the trouble. How kind of you.”

Jim pointed his phaser up at Krako, who he could see up on the stairs making his way down. “You sure about who’s getting the bag this time?”

Krako smiled. “Sure am, babyface.” He leaned over the railing and whistled. “Boys!”

Spock stilled. “Captain, I believe I just heard guns being prepared to fire.”

Jim turned at the sound of doors opening behind him and saw two of Krako’s men with guns at the ready. “I bet you did Spock. I bet you did.”

Chapter End Notes

The best part of this episode is the comedically dangerous situations they get themselves into.
Fun fact of the day: My word doc with this fic just passed 300k words, so that’s kinda exciting. I may end up writing more than a third of a million words for this by the time we’re done, so props to all of you sticking it it. You’re the real MVPs.

Krako grinned and took their phasers from them. “If it’s this easy to get heaters from you, we won’t need troops.” He looked at it closely. “Just gotta work out how to fire.” Krako started flipping it around and Jim was glad they’d brought hand phasers instead of the phase pistols that would have been easier to figure out for someone familiar with guns.

Jim leaned in to Krako. “If you’re real nice we could show you, but you ain’t being nice.” He could practically feel Spock objecting at the offer, but he ignored it and glanced over his shoulder. “Plus, do you trust your men? When everyone’s got one it won’t make a difference, but when there’s only two of those down here whoever has them could make himself a big boss.”

Krako narrowed his eyes. “They wouldn’t be here if I didn’t trust ‘em.” Still, Jim could feel the little bit of doubt that sprang up for him and almost grinned because that was too easy. Krako looked at his men then back to Jim and Spock. “We’ll talk in my office.”

And just like that, they had Krako alone. It really was too easy. Once the office Jim strolled over and took the phasers back from Krako, tossing one to Spock. “Now let’s get one thing clear here JoJo, you ain’t the boss here.”

“What?” Krako seemed stunned but quickly got angry. “Unless I’m mistaken, we’re in my office. This is my operation!”

“Who says?” Jim shrugged, walking over and sitting behind the desk with his feet up. “You may run this chunk of town, but it ain’t your planet. The Federation’s taking over.” He glanced at Spock, gesturing for him to come sit by him. “Ain’t that right, Spock?”

Spock still looked confused; looks like Jim still had something to teach him about playing a part. “Captain, I—”

“Riiiiight?” Jim looked a little more sharply at Spock, trying to mentally tell him to go with it.

Spock looked a little wary still but nodded. “Riiiiight.”

“Good.” Jim smiled despite himself.

“So how do I fit in to all of this?” Krako crossed his arms, looking between them suspiciously.

“Easy.” Jim shrugged. “If you’re good and you cooperate, we’ll cut you in for a piece of the action.”

“A very small piece.” Looks like Spock still wasn’t fully on board. “Miniscule.”

Krako seemed interested but confused. “And how much is that? What’s my percentage?”
“Your percentage is what your percentage is.” Jim shrugged. “We’ll tell you when we need you to know.” Jim looked at him seriously. “And that all depends on you cooperating, capisce?”

“I got you.” Krako didn’t seem fully on board, but he didn’t really need to be for what Jim had planned.

“Good.” Jim nodded at Krako. “We’re taking over, but we want to be subtle about it. So we’ll help someone down here take over, but we’ll have taken over him. That’s how this’ll work out.”

“And that person’ll be me?” Krako walked closer to the desk. “Am I really just supposed to not know what my cut is compared to yours? Is that how we’re doing this?”

Jim shrugged. “Well if you ain’t interested I guess we can go back to Bela and see if he’d play ball…”

“No!” Krako frowned. “Let’s keep Bela out of this, you hear?”

Jim grinned. “Loud and clear.” He had no intention of that, but better keep up appearances. He flipped open his communicator, glad to have finally gotten it back from Okmyx. “Kirk to Enterprise.”

“Scott here, Captain.” Perfect.

“Hey Scotty, I’ve got something for you to do, so listen closely.” Jim hoped this would work. Scotty sounded wary. “What is it?”

“We’ve made a friend down here, Mr. Krako. Now he’s gonna help us take this place over.” Jim paused at the sounds of disbelief on the other end, waiting a moment before finally deciding to just talk over Scotty. “Now hold on, hold on. You gotta listen closely to what I say and what I don’t say so you know what I want you to do, got it?”

A pause. “I think so, sir.”

“Good.” Jim really hoped Scotty did understand it. “Now I’d love to show Mr. Krako the ship, see what our kind of boys with guns look like, but I just don’t think that’s possible. He’s right here, the only one in the room with Spock and I, and he’s expecting more of us to come down. I just wish we coulda shown him the ship, huh?”

“Yes.” Scotty seemed hesitant; Jim hoped he was understanding him.

“Good.” Maybe make it more obvious. “Let me know when you’re ready for the big ship-planet shift.”

Jim might have imagined the sounds of Scotty working the console but he thought he heard something before Scotty came through again. “We’re ready when you are, Captain.”


Thankfully, Scotty must have understood because Krako disappeared, not looking all that happy about it as he went.

Spock looked where Krako was and then back to Jim. “Novel thinking, Captain, yet good.”

Jim smiled, feeling a little more genuine. “Thanks Spock. Now let’s get back to Okmyx’s to wrap this whole thing up.”
“Very well.” Spock nodded and followed Jim out the door of Krako’s office.

Krako’s boys perked up when they came out, holding their guns a little tighter when they saw Krako wasn’t with them. Jim tried to keep up the act so this wouldn’t go bad quickly. “Easy boys. We made your boss an offer and he’s thinking it over. He told us to pass along that you are not to disturb him til he comes out, got it?”

The two nearest them looked at each other suspiciously but nodded after a moment. “Got it.”

“Good. C’mon, Spock.” Jim lead Spock out the door, letting his shoulders drop a little in relief when they made it out without problems. Jim moved toward the car, but stopped when he saw Spock wasn’t with him. “What’s up, you afraid of cars suddenly?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Only if you are driving, Captain.”

“Really?” Jim looked at him incredulously.

But Spock didn’t budge. “It would be more efficient to use the transporter.”

Jim grinned. “Well if speed is the issue, I could always—”

“No!” That was the most emotion Jim had seen from Spock in a while.

Jim couldn’t help but laugh a little. “Do you really want to beam up to the ship in stolen clothes, leave a car with guns unattended down here, deal with Krako who’s probably still in the transporter room, and have to explain everything to everyone on the ship just to avoid a little drive? That doesn’t sound all that logical.” Jim grinned at Spock’s defeated look. “Plus Spock, we’re supposed to be blending in. When in Rome and all that.”

Spock sighed, a gesture small enough that Jim would probably miss it if he didn’t know Spock so well. “Very well.”

Jim grinned as they climbed into the car and settled in, Jim taking off his hat this time. “Let’s do this.” He started the car and shifted gears to get them moving, smiling a little more at Spock’s grimace.

Chapter End Notes

I just love how much fun Jim seems to have messing around on the gangster planet. If holodecks were a thing yet (and boy is canon inconsistent on that), Jim would totally make Spock do a gangster one with him hahaha
They made it to Okmyx’s without incident somehow, and Jim pulled the car up to the curb and put it in park before grabbing his hat and gun. “Let’s go see if Bones managed to keep things under control.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Do you think the doctor would fail?”

“No necessarily.” Jim shrugged then grinned. “I just wanna see if he ended up stunning anyone out of irritation.”

They burst into Okmyx’s office, once again to the sound of Okmyx loudly saying they were probably dead. Jim couldn’t help his grin again. “Really Okmyx, you’d think you’d learn to have a little more faith in me by now. I’ve never met a no-win situation I couldn’t work my way out of.”

Bones scoffed. “Including the time you ended up dead?”

“It didn’t stick.” Jim shrugged with a smile then turned to Spock, his expression softening. “I’ve got this one to thanks for that.” He sent a pulse of affection through the bond and smiled wider when he felt one back. He was just about to go over and see if Spock would be down for a kiss, either style, when he heard someone clearing their throat.

It was Bones, of course. “Me and a whole lot of people at Starfleet Medical had a bit to do with that too.”

Jim raised an eyebrow, smirking. “What Bones, you want a kiss too?”

“No!” Bones made a face at the same time Jim felt a note of objection through the bond with Spock. “Save that for shore leave, Jim. And save it for your green blooded boyfriend over there.” He rolled his eyes. “Don’t we have a job to do?”

“Of course. Nothing wrong with having some fun on the job.” Jim grinned, finally turning back to Okmyx. “Ain’t that right, boss?”

Okmyx was a little busy looking stunned; Jim figured they’d probably given him a lot to process there. “You died? When? How’d you get out of that?”

“Long story.” Jim smirked and shrugged it off. “But we ain’t here to talk about me, we’re here to talk about you and your planet.”

“Yeah?” Okmyx’s curiosity was quickly replaced with wariness. “And what about it?”
“We’re taking over.” Jim relaxed his posture, hoping he looked a little more like an Iotian boss than a Starfleet captain. He ignored the raised eyebrows from around the room, continuing on to give him the same spiel he’d given Krako, more or less. “The Feds don’t like how this place is run, so we’re taking over. We’re gonna be real subtle about it though, so we need some partners. Sound good?”

Krako narrowed his eyes. “And what’s my cut?”

Jim made a dramatic offended face. “What’s got everyone here so concerned about percentages? You’ll get what you get when we’re done sorting it out.”

“Then whadda you want now?” Krako crossed his arms, not budging from his desk.

“Easy. Wait a moment and I’ll tell you.” Jim pulled out his communicator. “Kirk to Enterprise.”

“Scott here.” Perfect.

“How’s our special guest doing?” Jim hoped there hadn’t been any problems.

“You mean Mr. Krako?” Jim’s smile widened as Okmyx’s eyes did the same. He quickly tuned back in to what Scotty was saying. “He’s mad enough to chew neutronium, but not going anywhere.”

“Let’s change that.” Jim looked around the room. “Send him down to this room.”

A moment of hesitation. “You sure about that Captain?”

“Yep.” Jim nodded, knowing Scotty wouldn’t see it. “We’re gonna set up a meeting with the bosses. We’ll need him here for that, and I’ll need one other favor from you.”

“What’s that?”

“How good is Uhura and her team getting with local communications?” Jim hoped this would work.

“Very good, Captain.” He could hear Scotty’s confusion. “Why?”

“Because I’m gonna have my buddy Mr. Okmyx here,” Jim turned to him to make sure he was paying attention, “make some phone calls. When he does that, grab the person on the other end of the line and beam ‘em here. Can you do it?”

“We’ll do it, Captain.” He still sounded a little doubtful, but Jim had to love his crew for trying if nothing else.

“Awesome.” Jim nodded at Spock. “Get Okmyx dialing and make sure he doesn’t pull any funny business. Bones,” he looked over at his friend, “Take their heaters once they’re here, got it?”

Bones looked about ready to roll his eyes out of his head, but nodded. “Sure thing, boss.”

Jim grinned. “Let’s do this.”

Krako beamed in first, as angry as Scotty described. Once Jim had confirmation that their plan would work Okmyx got dialing, and the room slowly but steadily filled with people. Once it seemed like they had everyone (according to the bosses’ own counts, which probably couldn’t be trusted, but it wasn’t like Jim had a better system), Jim climbed on the pool table in the middle of the room, ignoring Krako’s objections. He was gesturing with a pistol in each hand courtesy of Bones, who’d had enough guns to start a revolution by the time he’d finished beaming the bosses and had started handing the guns off to Jim and Spock.
Jim would rather die again than admit how much he was enjoying this to the admiralty, but for now he had a job to do. “Like I said, the Feds are taking over. There’s nothin you can do about it, but if you’re good you’ll get a good cut, you hear? We just gotta stop the hits and make everyone here part of one organization, capisce?”

“Who says we should follow you?” Krako still looked grumpy. “You only got the three a you, and I didn’t see many guys up there.”

“There’s over 400 people up there.” Jim tried to keep control of his room even as he felt it slipping. “We just couldn’t let you get loose, got it?”

“You say you got that many!” Okmyx was chiming in now. Great. “What’s to stop us from putting the bag on you right now?”

“In case you ain’t noticed,” Jim shook his hands with the pistols in them. “We got your heaters.”

It seemed like that was about to do the trick, but then there was the sound of gunfire outside. One of the smaller bosses let out a shout. “You ain’t got all the heaters though!”

“I bet it’s my boys doing a hit! They musta realized you grabbed me!” Krako ran to the window that overlooked the street.

“My boys’ll beat ‘em!” Okmyx followed him, everyone else following close after, including Bones. Which ended up being a mistake. Jim was barely down from the pool table after gratefully accepting a hand from Spock when he heard Bones. “Hey! Give that back!”

“Not a chance!” Krako had taken one of the guns from Bones and was now pointing it at him. “Alright Captain Babyface, it’s high time you got cooperating. If you don’t, your buddy here will pay the price.”

Okmyx grinned. “Great thinkin, Jojo.” There was a murmur of agreement among the other bosses before they looked back to Jim and Spock, who still had guns on them.

Krako grinned. “What’ll it be?”

Damn it.

Chapter End Notes

Part of me feels I overdid the gangster slang this chapter, the rest of me is having too much fun to care. Have I said I love goofy!trek before? Cuz it's my favorite. I like the serious stuff too, but the goofy stuff has a special place in my heart.
Happy October everyone! We're in the month when tumblr's halloween obsession gets into full swing, but there's no real halloween episodes of trek so I don't know if that'll be reflected here. TOS had one episode with witches, but I think after TNG's ghost episode no one wanted to try again (understandably honestly). Anyways, back to Bones' life on the line...

Time to think fast. Jim held up his hands and tried his best disarming smile, seeing Spock follow his cue and lower his gun next to him. “Gentlemen. I know I wanted you all getting along together better than before, but I didn’t quite mean it like this.”

Krako grinned. “What? Don’t like being the one held hostage? Now you know how the rest of us felt for the last hour or so.”

“A fair point.” Jim looked around the room; he and Spock could be pretty fast, but there was no way they could take out everyone before Bones got at least one bullet hole through him, hopefully somewhere nonessential. But still not the risk he wanted to take. Plus, opening fire now could lead to total chaos, undoing all of Jim’s progress so far.

More gunfire outside grabbed everyone’s attention. Okmyx leaned toward the window and laughed. “My boys are kicking your boys’ ass, Jojo!”

“No way!” Krako leaned closer, but kept his gun pointed at Bones. “They’ll get ‘em back.” He turned from the window back to Jim. “Besides, we got bigger fish to fry.”

“Who says you’re the one doing the frying?” Jim now had an idea; he really hoped it worked because if Bones got shot he’d never hear the end of it. “You ain’t seen the kinda firepower I have yet.”

“I saw you two take out some of the guards at my place with your fancy heaters.” Krako shrugged. “I ain’t impressed.”

“Well that’s just what we can do with small, hand held weapons.” Jim carefully watched the room, pausing long enough to make sure he had everyone’s attention. “The ship up there can do a whole lot worse than that.”

“I’ve seen your ship.” Krako shook his head, still grinning. “It didn’t look like much.”

“You saw one room.” Jim put on his best patronizing expression. “Surely you ain’t dull enough to think that’s all we got up there?”

Krako sputtered as the other bosses began muttering among themselves.

Bones scowled. “Dammit Jim, don’t mock the man that’s got me at gunpoint!”

“Cool it, Bones. You ain’t getting shot.” Jim really hoped not. “Not once they see what we can do.”
“And what’s that?” Okmyx crossed his arms. “You been doing a lot of talking, babyface, but you ain’t done nothing yet.”

“I put the bag on all of you, didn’t I?” That didn’t seem to help anyone’s mood, so Jim held up his hands placatingly again. “Alright. You wanna see the kind of hit we can do? I’ll show you the kid of hit we can do.” He pulled out his communicator and pulled it open. “Kirk to Enterprise.”

“Enterprise, Uhura here.”

“I want you to pass an order along to the helm to me. Can you do that?” Jim dropped the gangster persona a little bit, even if he felt like Nyota would be willing to play along.

“Of course, Captain.” Good.

“Thanks. Tell them to focus the ship’s phasers on this area, wide scatter of about a block or so.” Jim paused, trying to make sure he didn’t do anything that would land him a court martial. “Do a very low setting, just enough to stun anyone caught outside, got it?”

“Got it.” There was a pause and the silence grew tense in the room, all of the bosses staring at Jim with enough suspicion rolling off of them that Jim would bet even non-empaths could feel it. Finally Uhura came through again. “Ready and waiting for your word, Captain.”

“Good.” Jim took a deep breath then stared down the bosses. “Fire.”

There was a green glow outside and the bosses rushed to the window again. Once the bosses finished their sounds of shock, they turned back to Jim and Spock.

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Are you ready to negotiate now?”

There were silent nods from the bosses, and Jim tried not to smile as he pointed toward the window. “Despite what it looks like, they ain’t dead, but only because I didn’t want ’em to be.” He looked at Krako. “Let go of McCoy and then we’ll talk.”

“Okay.” There was the slightest waver to his voice as he let Bones go.

Bones walked back toward Jim and Spock, still scowling. “Took you long enough.”

“Shut it.” Jim grinned, knowing he’d probably pay for it later. “Now I want all of you to listen to me. We’re taking over, and we’re making this place a syndicate. Krako and Okmyx will be in charge down here, but all of you will be reporting to the feds, directly or indirectly. Got it?”

There was murmuring and discussion among the bosses before Okmyx spoke up. “Alright. What about our percentages?”

“We’ll be taking ohhh….” Jim looked between Bones and Spock then back to the bosses. “Forty percent. The rest will get divided among all of you and one other person.”

“And who’s that?” One of the minor bosses whose name Jim hadn’t caught stepped up.

Jim grinned. “The first one to take our side and ask for a piece of the action.” He turned to Krako. “There’s a kid who lives near you and helped me and Spock here take down your door guards. Ask them for identification cuz I want this kid taken care of, you hear?”

He seemed a bit confused, but nodded. “Alright. Will do.”

“Good.” Jim looked around with a grin. “Now let’s get down to brass tacks and work out some
A few hours later, they were back on the ship and finally leaving Sigma Iota II behind. Jim rolled his shoulders where he sat in the captain’s chair. He felt a little conflicted being back in his uniform; he knew they couldn’t just steal clothes from people on planets they’d probably never return to, but he and Spock had looked good in those suits. Jim glanced over at Spock, who was lingering by his chair. He felt a bit of conflicted feelings from Spock, but he guessed it was for different reasons. He leaned toward Spock. “What’s up, Mr. Spock?”

“I am considering your solution to the planet’s problems, Captain.” Spock turned to him. “It was inventive, if illogical, but I fail to see what we are to do with our percentage of the money the bosses collect.”

“I’ve thought of a few possibilities.” Jim knew it would probably ultimately be decided by people higher up than him, but he had ideas. “For starters, there’s all sorts of sociologists, xenoanthropologists, and other people in related fields who’ll want to study the planet and try to find ways to help out. Maybe some of them will be posted there and want the full immersion experience of living off of Iotian money and being in Iotian society, and this way they have a salary.” Spock tipped his head in consideration but didn’t seem convinced, so Jim carried on. “There’s also the Federation Treasury, not that most people need to draw on anything there. I’m sure someone could find a good use for the money, even use it in a way that will benefit the Iotians and help their arrested development. How’s that sound?”

“Possible.” Spock raised an eyebrow. “However, still not the most logical solution to the problem.”

Jim shrugged. “You said yourself there wasn’t a logical solution.” Not wanting to get into it on the bridge, Jim turned to Bones, who was lingering on the bridge still. “And what’s got you looking so concerned, Bones?”

“Well…” He hesitated, seeming more nervous than angry. Jim was glad he didn’t seem like he was still mad about the held at gunpoint thing.

“Well?” Jim prompted.

“I double checked, but I don’t have it.” Bones looked away. “It must still be in Okmyx’s office.”

“What is?” Jim had a bad feeling about this.

“Nothing serious; we definitely got all the phasers.” Still, Jim could feel Bones’ uncertainty.

“Good.” Jim looked at him, feeling Spock draw closer in curiosity next to him. “What did you leave?”

Bones sighed. “My communicator.” He looked at both their faces, growing a bit hostile. “Look, in all the confusion of getting captured then holding people hostage then being held hostage and all of it I must have lost track of it or forgotten to take it back when it was taken.”

“That is unfortunate.” Jim turned to Spock, who seemed deep in thought. “The communicator contains technology far beyond the Iotains’ current level of development. The technology contained within is also the basis of much of our other technology.”

“Well, too late to go back now.” Jim sighed, but couldn’t help a little amusement. “With the Iotain’s
intelligence and imitativeness, they’ve probably already taken it apart and figured it out.”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded. “This is troubling.”

“I’ll say.” Jim looked between him and Bones, then grinned as a thought occurred to him. “It does settle a problem for us, though.”

“How the hell does it do that?” Bones’ nerves had given way to irritation easily enough.

“Easy.” Jim felt his grin grow wider. “We know what to do with the Iotian’s money now; we just gotta hold onto it until they get advanced enough to ask for a piece of our action, which could be soon.” He looked at Spock, who looked unamused. “Get ready to calculate some new percentages.”

Chapter End Notes

I love the tone of TOS at times where they're definitely in danger and there will be consequences but it's still fun and amusing. It's not the easiest to match, but I still have fun trying.

Any ideas where they'll go next?
Chapter 217

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I'm really excited for this arc; I plan on doing one or two more arcs drawing on stuff with the original crew, but only if I can make it my own some. I hope you'll enjoy this....

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim stretched in his chair, trying not to look bored even though he was a little. Or maybe more than a little. But he couldn’t really let it show; the crew took cues from him and he couldn’t just leave it up to Spock to demonstrate professional behavior. Spock was professional regardless, even when everyone was bored beyond belief. Jim was still working on that; at least he managed to stay awake through the dull shifts, which was probably an accomplishment all things considered.

The last exciting mission they’d had was the trip to the gangster planet, which felt like forever ago. Jim could probably ask Spock for the days or weeks or—had it been months? Jim wasn’t sure if he could say without checking his logs or the stardates; nothing could have prepared him for how the days would blend together when the only missions they got were starcharting broken up with the occasional supply run.

If nothing exciting happened soon, Jim would have to look into doing something to up crew morale; it wasn’t that he was picking up unhappiness from anyone per se, just boredom. And he could relate.

What could he do? They were probably still too early on in their mission to officially request shore leave, but there had to be options on the ship. The rec rooms had games; maybe some sort of tournament? He should talk to Gaila; she always seemed to have a good idea of what was going on on the ship and how people were feeling or what they were thinking. And since she wasn’t technically part of the command crew, people were probably more relaxed and open with her than they would be if it was him asking around…

“Keptin!” Jim got pulled out of his daydreams by Chekov shouting. He leapt up and stood over the central console, leaning in to see Chekov’s computer readouts and listening as he continued. “We are detecting unusual temporal energy from a nearby planet.”

This could be interesting. Jim turned to the science station. “Spock, do your sensors confirm?”

“Yes, Captain.” He looked into his scanner for a moment before looking back up at Jim. “The coordinates and data Ensign Chekov sent me match what my own station detected.”

Alright then.” Jim straightened up, feeling a little excited and smiling a little when he felt that he wasn’t the only one enjoying a break from the monotony. “I say we go check it out. This seems like just the sort of anomaly we should be looking into.” When there were only murmurs of agreement and no protests, Jim nodded. “It’s settled then. Mr. Chekov, lay in a course.” Jim settled back in his chair, feeling energized again as the crew’s excitement leaked into him.

It wasn’t long before they reached the planet. Sulu glanced back over his shoulder at Jim. “We’ve established a stable geosynchronous orbit, Captain.”
“Good.” Jim stood up, ready to check this out. “Any more information now that we’re closer?”

“Yes; it appears to be mostly concentrated or strongest at a particular place on the planet’s surface rather than existing planetwide.” Spock looked up from his scanner. “Further data would need to be collected on the planet, but scans indicate that the planetary conditions in the area of the temporal signature are tolerable without the need for protective equipment or life support equipment.”

“Excellent.” Jim grinned. “We’re beaming down. Spock, meet me in the transporter room, and bring someone from science who specializes in this.” Spock nodded, so Jim turned to the helm. “Send the coordinates for the temporal signature to the transporter room.”

“Aye, Captain.” Sulu tapped away on the center console.

Jim left before the coordinates were confirmed because he trusted his crew and probably mostly because he was eager to get down there. He hoped whoever Spock got would be someone who hadn’t spent too much time on landing parties before; he and Spock had agreed what while it was important to bring whoever was best suited for the job, it was also important to rotate crewmembers some so everyone got at least a little experience both on ship and off. If someone genuinely didn’t want to leave the ship they wouldn’t force it, but Jim and Spock had agreed that the opportunity should be there.

Jim liked to think that that helped crew morale as well; he wanted to make sure everyone felt like a valued member of the crew. Sure, he had his core team for landing parties, but he wanted to incorporate others as well. Plus if nothing else it gave everyone on the lower decks something to talk about besides gossip.

Jim’s mind wandering helped time pass well, and before he knew it he was in the transporter room with his standard equipment and just waiting for Spock and the specialist, who came in a moment later. Jim smiled. “Glad to see you’re all ready to go.”

“Indeed we are, Captain.” Spock gestured to the person beside him. “This is Ensign Khanna.”

The name was enough to jog the basic info from her personnel file for Jim. He smiled at her. “Glad to have you with us, Ensign. Good to put a face with the name, or at least more than I can with just the picture in your file.”

“Thank you, Captain.” She smiled but still seemed a bit nervous as she tucked a lock of dark hair behind her ear. “I’m looking forward to investigating this anomaly.”

“Then let’s get going.” Jim nodded to the transporter technician. “You have the coordinates?” When he got an affirmative reply, Jim turned back to his away team. “Let’s go then.” They climbed onto the transporter padd and a moment later the transporter room disappeared.

Once they were on the surface Spock took off, following his tricorder. “The signal is this way, Captain.”

“Alright.” Jim and Ensign Khanna followed him, her with her tricorder also scanning and Jim just glad to feel some real gravity.

Spock paused before a large stone archway. “This object appears to be the source of the signal.”

“My tricorder registers that too.” Ensign Khanna stepped closer, curiosity radiating off of her. “I wonder what it is; it seems to be constructed of similar material as the other rock formations in this area, but the temporal signature is unique to it.”
“I am no ordinary rock formation or object.” All of them jumped back when the arch began to light up and speak. “I am the Guardian of Forever.”

“Fascinating.” Spock took a cautious step closer. “Why do our readings detect temporal energy emanating from you, Guardian?”

“It is simple. I present a view of times gone by, and create a portal to the past.” The light in the middle of the arch began to shift and change, displaying images. “I know the histories of your planets, of Earth,” the images began to look familiar to Jim, “and of Vulcan,” from Jim’s limited knowledge it looked like recent Vulcan history, “and of many other planets.” The images began to flash by quicker than Jim could fully process; he saw glimpses of cultures he knew and many he’d never even imagined.

“This is amazing!” Ensign Khanna had her tricorder out recording the information as it flew by.

“It is.” Jim turned to her, reluctant to take his eyes off of the archway before them. “Contact the ship; I bet there’s historians and other scientists who’d love to see this. Tell them Spock and I will be beaming back up to analyze what we’ve gathered so far.”

“Of course, Captain.” Ensign Khanna looked reluctant to leave, but stepped away and pulled out her communicator.

Jim stepped back over to Spock. “There’s a whole lot of possibilities here.”

Spock nodded. “Indeed, Captain. I will value the opportunity to study this and process the data.”

“It’ll be a hell of a lot more interesting than starcharting.” Jim watched the images that flashed by absently.

“Uhh, sirs?” Ensign Khanna looked extremely nervous, her hand shaking as she pushed her glasses up her nose. “We have a problem.”

Chapter End Notes

I love a good cliffhanger.

Also if anyone’s concerned, Khanna has nothing to do with Khan and everything to do with the fact that I’ve been playing that new(ish) Harry Potter mobile game and decided to steal a character.
Chapter 218

Chapter Notes

2 years and 1 month exactly into this fic and now over 300k here! I never thought this fic would be this long and I’d still be writing it, but it’s worth it for all of you awesome people! Speaking of, some of you seem to recognize the Guardian; if you don’t, don’t worry. I’m always happy to answer questions about trek, and I plan to take this in a different direction than people may expect...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim looked at Spock then back to Ensign Khanna. “What do you mean we have a problem?”

“Well…” She glanced from the communicator in her hand back to Jim. “I relayed your orders, and they mostly got accepted by the ship, and there are people who plan on coming down, but…”

“But?” Jim raised an eyebrow expectantly.

“There was some confusion when I mentioned Spock.” Ensign Khanna pushed her glasses up her nose again. “Apparently no one up there knows who he is or remembers him.”

“What?” Jim glanced at Spock, who looked deep in thought. “Any ideas what’s going on? I knew the crew was getting bored, but I wasn’t expecting a prank or whatever this is now that we finally found something interesting.”

“That is unlikely.” Spock looked at his tricorder then back to Jim. “I believe it would be best for us to return to the ship to investigate.”

“Wait a minute.” Jim held up a hand. “What if there’s something weird going on and it would be harmful for you to leave the planet? We still don’t understand the temporal energy here.”

Spock paused then tipped his head in consideration. “A logical consideration. However, what is to say that you will not lose your memories of me as well if you were to return to the ship?”

“A valid point as well.” Jim thought for a moment then held out a hand to Ensign Khanna. “Give me your communicator and I’ll see if I can figure out what’s going on up there. You two keep trying to figure out what this Guardian thing is; see if you can get some answers by talking to it.”

Spock nodded solemnly. “We will do our best.”

“Good luck, sir.” Ensign Khanna handed over her communicator before turning back to the Guardian with Spock.

Jim flipped open the communicator. “This is Kirk; are you still there, Enterprise?”

“Yes Captain; this is Uhura.” Well if there was anyone on the ship who should remember Spock…

“Glad I got you. What’s this I hear about no one knowing Spock?” Jim paused, unsure how to proceed. “If this was someone’s idea of a prank, I know starcharting was making people bored but
mid-mission isn’t the time.”

“I assure you, everyone is serious.” Nyota paused. “I even searched Starfleet’s personnel database after the initial confusion with Ensign Khanna, but no record of a Commander Spock exists, nor any Vulcan named Spock in Starfleet records.”

“That’s impossible.” Jim knew she wouldn’t lie to him about that, but he couldn’t believe it. “Nyota, you dated him for like a year and a half starting when we were at the Academy and he was teaching there.”

“I think I’d remember dating a professor, especially a non-human one.” She paused. “But I don’t, because that didn’t happen. The only non-human I did anything with at the Academy was Gaila, and I don’t know if I’d call that a relationship.”

“Something clearly went wrong here.” Jim crossed his arm not holding the tricorder across his chest. “Spock’s been my first officer the entire time I’ve been Captain. There’s no way no one on our ship remembers him. Not to mention the fact that he’s my goddamn soulmate who I’ve been in a relationship with for like a year now.”

Nyota was quiet for long enough that Jim started to get nervous, and the feeling only got worse when she finally spoke up. “Jim, you’ve never met your soulmate.”

It was less nerves and more an unnameable unpleasant feeling that swept over Jim at that. “We need to figure out what’s wrong. I’m going to check with Spock and Ensign Khanna, and then we’re going to work this out. Kirk out.” He closed the communicator without another word then went back over to Spock and Ensign Khanna. “I hope you’re having better luck than me.”

“Uncertain, Captain.” Spock turned to him and Jim was sure that if he wasn’t so overwhelmed by his own emotions he’d be feeling some nerves from Spock. “I believe we are better understanding the Guardian, but we have no explanation for my disappearance from the crew’s memory.”

“We…” They both turned to Ensign Khanna, who took a deep breath before continuing. “We might have better luck doing an analysis from the ship. But we still don’t know if being near the Guardian is what’s somehow protecting us from being affected like everyone else.”

“It will be best to analyze this from the ship.” Spock looked to Jim. “We need to return.”

“Wait a minute.” Jim crossed his arms. “You don’t seem to exist up there; what if we beam up and you just disappear? That’s not a risk I’m willing to take. I’ll go up alone first and see what happens.”

“That is also an unacceptable risk.” Spock clasped his hands behind his back. “As you have many memories of me and our strong connection, the sudden transition between knowing me and not could be neurologically damaging. I cannot allow that.”

Jim’s arms shifted tighter across his chest. “Well I can’t just let you beam up.”

“Nor can I risk you.” Spock shifted forward. “The damage if you were harmed would be—”

“I’ll do it.” Both of them turned to Ensign Khanna, who seemed to have surprised herself. “I’m not Spock, and I’m new to the ship so I don’t have many memories of him. If there was any damage, it’d be minimal.”

Jim and Spock looked at each other, each considering it individually. Spock’s posture relaxed marginally. “That is a logical option.”
“It’s also brave.” Jim stepped forward and put his hand on her shoulder. “Thank you, Ensign.”

“Of course.” She smiled, but it lacked some confidence. “I’m going to call for a beam up.” She held out her hand and Jim gave back her communicator.

Jim and Spock watched as she walked away and called the ship. As they watched her disappear into golden light, Jim spoke so softly he almost missed his own words. “Brain damage or no, I wouldn’t want to forget you.” Jim stared into the now empty space once the last of the transporter energy was gone. “I’ve lost too much.”

Spock turned toward him. “And what if there is no way to return the Enterprise with me and your memories?”

“Then we’ll stay here.” Jim turned to Spock, feeling his resolve strengthen. “Starfleet will want to study this thing anyways. We could run the outpost.”

There was something conflicted in Spock’s eyes. “You would miss our ship and being among the stars. That is your home.”

“I wouldn’t want it without you.” Jim looked Spock in the eye and grabbed his hands, not feeling enough concentration for a true Vulcan kiss. “I already said I’ve lost too much, Spock, and I meant it. Even without my memories I’d know something was missing; an emptiness I’d never fill. I know there’s no one but you for me, Spock, I feel it deep within me. And I’ve never wanted to be one of those people who’s perpetually young and alone because they never find their soulmate. I’d rather have you and this one hunk of rock than all the stars without you.”

For a moment Spock didn’t speak, only staring at their joined hands and clenching Jim’s tighter. Finally, he made eye contact again. “That will not happen. We will solve this, and you will have both as you were always meant to.” He leaned in and met Jim’s lips, slowly and carefully at first and then with increasingly more force as if trying to physically reassure Jim that he wasn’t going anywhere.

They broke the kiss when Jim’s communicator chirped. Jim reluctantly pulled away enough to pull out his communicator and open it, still keeping one hand with Spock’s. “Kirk here.”

“This is Ensign Khanna, sir.” She sounded less nervous, which was good. “I’ve gotten scanned by Dr. McCoy and given a clean bill of neurological health, and I still remember Spock. It’s safe to beam up.”

“Alright.” Jim felt his shoulders drop, not even realizing how much he’d tensed up. “Tell them to beam us up. Kirk out.” Jim flipped the communicator shut and rubbed his thumb over Spock’s hand before slowly releasing it. “Let’s do this.”

The golden light of the transporter slowly surrounded them.

Chapter End Notes

Unrelated author's note but if you live in the US PLEASE register to vote and vote in the upcoming elections. Registration is on a state-by-state basis and rules vary for how to do it, so do your research and stay informed. And please remember that even if you don't agree 100% with a candidate, it's probably still better to vote for someone who has
a chance and less-than-perfect views than to let whatever rapist/bigot/greedy asshole the republicans want in win. It sounds dramatic to say people's lives may be at stake, but with how the people currently in charge want to strip away the rights of everyone not like them, it's less of an exaggeration than I'd like.

TLDR Register, get informed, and vote.
It felt like it took longer than usual to materialize on the transporter, but it could have just been Jim’s nerves. Still, he felt a tangible wave of relief flow through him when Spock showed up too.

But it was gone sooner than he’d like. “Who’s that?” They both turned to Scotty, who seemed genuinely confused. “Is this that Vulcan you’re insisting we’re all supposed to know?”

“Yes.” Jim gestured to Spock. “His name is Spock and he’s been the first officer of this ship since Pike was captain.” Not that he was captain long, but Jim wanted to emphasize that this wasn’t a recent development.

Scotty nodded cautiously. “Whatever you say, sir. But all of us only remember Commander Thelin as your first officer.”

Now Jim was confused. “Who?”

“Me, Captain.” Jim turned to a gray-skinned Andorian who had just walked into the room and was eyeing him critically. “It appears that the rumors are true and you do not remember me.”

“I don’t, sorry.” Jim did feel a little bad; he never wanted to be the kind of captain who didn’t remember his crew’s names or basic info, especially for senior staff. “I only remember Spock.”

“Very well.” Thelin turned to Spock. “And I suppose you remember being the first officer of this ship?”

“As I have an eidetic memory, yes.” Spock broke the staring contest with the other first officer and looked at Jim. “It would be best that we investigate quickly in case the timeline begins to change further.”

“Good point.” Jim turned to Thelin. “Gather the senior staff and any info we have so far on the Guardian and Spock’s family. Start by looking up Ambassador Sarek of Vulcan; he’s Spock’s dad.”

That got a bit of a reaction from Thelin; was he impressed? Jim guessed if Thelin was his first officer he’d have finally had to figure out what Andorian antennae movements signaled, but even without definite knowledge he was pretty sure there was some sort of challenge going on here. Still, Thelin nodded at Jim’s order. “I will do so. We will meet in the nearest briefing room as soon as the crew can assemble.”

“Good. Spock and I will head there now.” Jim nodded at his apparent first officer and then walked with Spock towards the briefing room. Along the way the crew stared at Spock, some more openly than others. The reactions seemed more curious than anything else, but it was still enough to bother Jim. Once they were in the briefing room, he slumped into a chair. “Ok I don’t know what kind of
captain I’d be without you there to help me out, but I’d like to think that I wouldn’t let my crew be so rude to someone onboard to just stare like that.”

“The circumstances are unusual; it is likely that this is not typical behavior for them.” Spock settled into his usual seat on Jim’s right. “Additionally, it does not bother me.”

Jim smiled a little. “No time for that emotion?”

“Indeed.” Spock’s amusement through the bond let Jim know that he knew it was just teasing. “However, I was referring to the fact that due to my dual heritage I am not unfamiliar with being perceived as an oddity.”

Jim sat up in his chair, placing one hand over Spock’s. “It shouldn’t have to be like that, babe. You’re amazing, and if people are too blinded by their own prejudice to see it they need to get with the times. I mean c’mon, what century is it?”

“I am aware, t’hy’la.” Spock sent a warm pulse of affection through the bond and shifted his hand, still allowing his and Jim’s to touch but now more like they were holding hands.

Before Jim could respond, the doors opened and the rest of the bridge crew shuffled in, rearranging themselves a bit to accommodate Spock at the table. Bones raised his eyebrows at their joined hands. “Really Jim? I don’t know much about Vulcans, but isn’t that a little much to be doing with someone you just met?”

Spock withdrew his hand and put it in his lap, much to Jim’s chagrin. He rolled his eyes at Bones. “I’m telling you Bones, something must have gone wrong when we were down there. I’ve known Spock for years, as have the rest of you, and while we don’t typically do PDA it’s not like there’s no reason to be affectionate. He’s my soulmate, we’ve been together for over a year, and we’re pretty committed.” Since he’d responded to the nickname normally meaning they must have a pretty similar relationship in this alternate Enterprise, Jim decided to just go full teasing. “You should know this; you were the one who had to do all the paperwork.”

Bones wrinkled his nose. “You’re definitely the same Jim, weird memories or no.”

“Thanks.” Jim grinned before looking around the table at the mostly familiar faces, who all seemed to be processing the information Jim just dropped. He couldn’t help but remember Nyota’s words from earlier about how he hadn’t found Spock here. Time to change that. “So what do we know?”

“The Guardian will likely still remain a mystery, but I am interested in hearing the results of Ensign Khanna’s analysis.” Spock looked around the room. “Did you also divert from starcharting to investigate the temporal anomaly?”

“Yes.” Thelin nodded. “Our Captain transported down with Ensign Khanna as well, but there were no other members of the landing party, so we were confused by the mention of another person.”

“Understandable.” Spock nodded then looked around the room. “Have we gathered any other information?”

There was a tense pause before Nyota spoke up. “Yes, actually.”

“Well?” Jim didn’t like the feeling of nerves coming from her; Nyota had stared down all sorts of situations without blinking, and now she seemed nervous? This couldn’t be good.

“I looked into Ambassador Sarek’s family like Thelin asked.” She paused, seeming even more nervous. “I did find record of a son named Spock that he had with his wife Amanda, formerly of
Spock nodded. “I am half human and half Vulcan.”

“So was this Spock.” Nyota spoke more calmly, but her words still gave Jim pause.

“Was?” Jim didn’t like the sound of that.

Nyota took a deep breath. “He died at age 7, Captain.”

Chapter End Notes

Uh oh...
I forgot how much I missed those dramatic cliffhangers. Some of you are on to where
I'm pulling this storyline from (while I will be putting my own spin on it, it isn't entirely
original), but I feel like regardless this will be fun. Here we go!

No one spoke for what felt like a long time after that. The room felt tense; Jim wasn’t sure how much
was everyone else’s reaction and how much was his own emotions leaking into everyone else. After
a moment he pulled himself together enough to speak. “What?”

Nyota looked a little hesitant but continued anyways. “That’s what the records say, Captain. No
specific cause of death is listed on the public file and nothing else is accessible; I imagine with
Ambassador Sarek’s connection with the Vulcan government he could have had the authority to seal
the files.”

“It is possible.” Everyone turned to Spock, who seemed less bothered than Jim was by the odd looks
they were giving him. “I am—was the first Vulcan-human hybrid to live past infancy. There would
likely be speculation over my death, and it is possible that my father wished to prevent undue
attention on the matter in respect to my family’s privacy.”

“That’s possible.” Jim nodded before turning back to Nyota. “Did you find anything else?”

“Would you like the rest of the family records?” Nyota’s expression almost made Jim say no, but he
nodded. She took a deep breath and continued. “Ambassador Sarek perished with the rest of the
Vulcan High Command during the destruction of Vulcan—”

Jim saw Spock stiffen out of the corner of his eye.

Nyota must not have noticed, because she continued on. “Prior to that, his marital status was listed as
widower because of the death of Lady Amanda in a shuttle accident while she was returning to Earth
following their son’s death. It’s unclear if the couple had intended to separate prior to her death. As
for the rest of the family—”

“That is sufficient.” Spock’s voice was cold, and Jim recognized the shock on his face and extended
a hand under the table for comfort, grateful when Spock accepted it.

But it also meant that things had to be pretty bad, but Jim understood why. He turned to the rest of
the room. “Any idea how this happened? We’ve dealt with alternate universes before, but typically
there’s a good explanation for how we got there. It’s not just beam down in normal conditions, spend
a few minutes on a planet, then beam back up to a totally different place.”

The crew was mostly silent at that, and Jim began to wonder if they’d encountered as many alternate
universes as the crew he knew. But before he could ask, the comm went off. “Ensign Khanna to
Captain Kirk.”

Hopefully this meant some answers. Jim nodded for Uhura to answer the comm. “Kirk here.”
“Sir, I don’t know if this connects, but I had a realization about the Guardian on the planet.” She sounded excited.

“Go ahead.” They had a smart enough team; any knowledge was helpful. “What’d you discover?”

“The Guardian doesn’t just show you the past; I don’t think so at least.” Ensign Khanna paused. “It mentioned being a portal, and with those levels of temporal energy I don’t think that’s fully metaphorical.” The excitement was back. “This may literally be a possible way to time travel. It’s an amazing scientific discovery!”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded. “It will prove interesting to study.”

“Assuming you don’t start disappearing from existence.” Was Jim the only one still focused on that?

“Wait a minute.” Everyone turned to Scotty. “If you can time travel, you can save Mr. Spock.”

“Yes.” Chekov perked up. “Do you have the date of death?”

“I think it’s there.” Uhura pulled up the padd, then sent it to the screen on the table. Everyone paused to look it over. Jim gave Spock’s hand a squeeze. “Remember any way you could have died around then?”

There was a pause as Spock thought. “Yes, actually.” He looked at Jim. “I remember nearly dying but being saved by an older relative who was visiting.”

Something began to click for Jim. “Any chance this relative looked like you do now?”

Jim felt the excitement from the end of the table. Sulu seemed to be working it out the same as Jim. “A time loop of some sort?”

Bones scowled. “I thought we said this was an alternate universe?”

“Time travel may have variable effects.” Chekov looked ready to vibrate out of his chair. “The implications of this will be astounding to study; perhaps different types of time travel will—”

There was excited chattering breaking out across the table, and Jim almost laughed at Bones’ mumbling about getting a headache. It was probably time to reign this in. “Alright everyone. Do we think this will work? Will Spock and I end up somewhere where he exists?”

“It would seem so.” Everyone turned to Thelin, who Jim had nearly forgotten with how quiet he’d been. “But where am I in this alternate universe of yours?”

Jim felt a little guilty all of the sudden. “I don’t know. I genuinely hadn’t met you before today; you must be on a different ship.”

“As your life may also be dramatically changed, I feel I must ask the following question.” Spock turned to the other first officer. “Would you object to this mission?”

There was a long pause and Jim felt his stomach fill with dread. What would they do if he objected?

Finally, Thelin spoke. “It is your family and life at stake, which seems more important than my career. Additionally,” he paused, looking between Jim and Spock. “I sensed nothing but sincerity when you spoke of being soulmates, and I know that there is nothing that will stop James T. Kirk when those he cares about are endangered.”
Jim almost wanted to thank him, but Spock had noticed something else in Thelin’s statement. “Sensed? Are you Aenar?”

“In part.” Thelin nodded. “As such, I empathize with your dual heritage.”

“Fascinating.” Spock looked like he wanted to ask more, but there was a sense of urgency Jim couldn’t quite shake.

“Very.” He looked around. “While I wish we had time to talk, I feel like we should get moving.”

“So what’s the plan?” Sulu asked the question that had to be on everyone’s mind.

“Simple.” Jim grinned. “We go back in time to save Spock.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “We?”

“I’m not risking you going alone and disappearing entirely; I’m going as backup.” He paused. “Ensign Khanna, you still there?”

There was a slight pause before her voice came back through the comm. “I am sir, and I think this is possibly the biggest revelation for temporal science in years—”

“And, with Spock’s permission, you’ll probably get to write the most exciting paper of your career so far on this once we get it all sorted out.” He felt a little bad cutting her off, but he still had that sense of urgency. “Spock and I will get appropriate clothing and then travel through the Guardian if your hypothesis is right; let’s hope it is.” He paused and took a breath. “As the only other one affected—or not affected maybe, I want you to monitor us and the Guardian. Can you do that?”

“Yes, sir.” The excitement was back. “Seeing it in action will be excellent research.”

“Awesome.” Jim nodded at the team in the briefing room. “Let’s do this.”

Chapter End Notes

Trek easter egg of the day: the Aenar are a subspecies of Andorian who pop up in Enterprise and so far no where else in the main canon (I'm sure novels have explored them). They have pale skin instead of blue and have telepathic abilities, which sets them apart from the rest of the Andorians as well. In the episode I'm pulling him from Thelin has gray skin, so I decided to make him Aenar and regular Andorian. I looked this up and it's confirmed somewhere in the extended canon, so that's kinda cool. Anyways, I'm gonna keep cramming in all the obscure trek stuff I can, so feel free to ask for explanations if you want (memory alpha is also good if you want)
Jim shifted in his newly replicated period-accurate Vulcan robes, trying to decide if he was wearing them right. He looked over at Spock, who looked amazing as always. “You sure I have these on right? And remind me again why I can’t just wear regular human clothes?”

Spock stepped over and made slight adjustments to Jim’s clothing and the bag he was carrying. “These robes provide superior heat protection while also not exposing too much of your skin to the sun. Along with the hyposprays and lotions Dr. McCoy has provided, these will help you tolerate Vulcan’s climate.”

“It will be cool to see it for real, not just a quick view while in freefall from Nero’s drill.” Jim paused as he felt a trace of pain from Spock, strong enough to slip past his barriers. “Do you think we’d be able to warn them?”

“Uncertain.” Spock stepped back, clearly trying to regain his control. “If we did, there would be no guarantee that when we returned that Vulcan would be intact. We may simply create an additional alternate timeline like my older counterpart did.”

“True.” Jim winced. “I get why Bones was complaining about a headache from all the time travel stuff earlier.” Jim paused as something occurred to him. “Wait, do you think the other you exists here?”

“As the destruction of Vulcan still occurred, I believe so.” Spock paused, another small wave of pain.

“Right. And sorry about your dad…” Jim felt like an ass for bringing it up again. “I guess without you, no one really knew to go in and get them out of there.”

“Indeed.” Spock seemed to still be struggling with his control a bit. “All the more reason we must restore my existence.”

“Yeah.” Jim stepped a little closer to Spock, but held off on physical contact because they were in the transporter room and weren’t alone. “I always knew you were important to the universe, and to me in particular of course.” That got a little affection from Spock through the bond, but he still seemed a little off. Jim decided that there was probably no better way to distract him than with science. “So how do you think the other Spock still exists if you died as a kid? More timeline stuff?”

Jim could tell Spock was humoring him, but he also seemed grateful for the new topic. “As the alternate timeline created by Nero began with the attack on the Kelvin, my death as a child would be several years past the point of divergence. If my counterpart had faced a similar situation and dealt with it, it would not affect our timeline due to occurring beyond that point.”
“Gotcha.” Jim nodded, feeling like he did mostly understand.

“Sorry for the delay; I’m ready now.” Ensign Khanna finally arrived, carrying armloads of equipment. “I think I have everything I’ll need to test this out.”

“Alright.” Jim couldn’t help but smile at her enthusiasm. “Let’s go.” They climbed onto the transporter padd and at Jim’s signal they energized.

Once on the surface, Ensign Khanna began setting up her equipment while Spock calculated the exact time and place they would need.

Jim gave Ensign Khanna a hand, stepping back when she began to do smaller adjustments. “Ready?”

“Almost.” She made one last adjustment before stepping back. “Ok. Let’s see if this works.”

“Awesome.” Jim stepped to Spock’s side by the stone arc, which had begun glowing faintly again as if it could sense their presence. Maybe it could.

Spock cautiously stepped forward. “Guardian, we wish to travel to the past.”

The glowing intensified, swirling colors appearing in the middle. The wavering voice spoke again. “Name the time and place, and I shall assist you.”

As Spock began to share his careful calculations of date and place, Jim couldn’t help the nerves that overtook him. He’d known time travel was possible, he’d even met time travelers technically if Selek, his older self, and Nero’s crew counted, but it still seemed odd to be doing it himself. Not to mention that the stakes were pretty high here…

He was drawn out of his thoughts as the image on the Guardian began to solidify into something recognizable, something he’d only seen in Spock’s memories and in illustrations and holopics; a spectacular city set into mountains in a way that seemed to defy gravity, surrounded by a red desert. After a moment, the Guardian spoke. “Enter the portal to enter the past.”

Jim took a deep breath and looked at Spock. “More straightforward than I’d expect. You ready?”

“I am, Captain.” Spock stared ahead, and Jim took another moment to appreciate how difficult this must be for Spock.

He reached out and squeezed Spock’s shoulder. “Let’s go.”

There was less feeling than Jim expected actually stepping through the portal. Instead of the disorientation he expected, there was only heat and a slight struggle to breathe; he felt heavy, and he slouched at the unexpected weight.

The next thing he was aware of was Spock softly pressing a hypospray into his neck that made breathing a little easier and the loss of the weight from his bag as Spock gently took it. “While you will hopefully acclimate some to the gravity and oxygen levels, I will support you as needed.”

Jim smiled weakly. “Thanks Spock. Where are we?” Feeling a little more in control, Jim looked around and tried to get his bearings.

“Not far from my family home; follow me.” Spock stood, seemingly unbothered by the gravity and the heat and the low oxygen and Jim’s bag he now carried. He set off without bothering to consider his surroundings as if it was all familiar to him; Jim supposed it probably was.
The journey was uneventful until they were nearly there, or what Jim thought was nearly there. Spock stopped short at the sight of a group of Vulcan children. Three of them appeared to be picking on the other child, but that wasn’t what Jim’s immediate focus was. “What are they wearing?”

Spock paused, also apparently taking in the limited coverage of what looked like briefs and short boots with only a sash on top. “Exercise uniforms. The standard student uniforms are more similar to everyday Vulcan robes.”

“Alright.” Jim followed Spock as they got closer to the Vulcan children. The one being picked on seemed familiar somehow, but Jim couldn’t place how.

Until they got closer and could hear the taunts. Taunts about being part human.

Chapter End Notes

If you haven't seen the weird uniforms the Vulcan kids wear in TAS, look it up for a laugh. I don't know what they were doing in the '70s, but I embrace the delightful weirdness.

Also because I don't know when she comes into the family, I don't plan on including Michael here. I'd love to, but I don't know how the timeline works on that.
Hello everyone! I'm glad you all seem to be pretty excited about this little bit of time travel shenanigans. I mean, it wouldn't really be trek without it. Every show has had some (even Discovery kindof, but I'm still waiting on a proper episode on it), so this should be fun...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock had gone still and was somehow unreadable even to Jim, which he wouldn’t have thought was possible anymore. He made no move to go over and do anything about what was going on.

“You’ll never be a true Vulcan; you are not even capable of so simple a technique as a nerve pinch. Your human blood will always make you inferior.” One of the bullies leaned closer into little Spock’s personal space. “Your father is a traitor, and your mother is a—”

“Excuse me.” He heard Spock make a strained sound behind him as he started walking over, but Jim had never really been one to sit by in these sorts of situations. He paused in front of the children, summoning every ounce of authority he could muster and pulling a padd from his bag. “I’m a xenoanthropologist studying Vulcan culture, and I couldn’t help but overhear what you were saying. Would you say your attitudes towards humans and mixed-species individuals are typical of Vulcans?”

The bully who appeared to have been leading the others stood a little straighter, moving a little away from Spock. “We were speaking to our classmate. This matter does not concern you.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “It was a public interaction, and as students surely you can appreciate my pursuit of knowledge.” He lowered the padd, looking at them seriously. “I’ve heard that children can be much more honest than adults, so this interaction has me curious, if disappointed. Would you say these attitudes are typical?”

The bullies looked between each other before the head one looked at Jim. “We must be leaving now.” Together, they turned and walked away.

Jim glared at their retreating backs. “Yeah you better run.” He’d muttered it under his breath, but he still heard a sharp inhale next to him that meant that little Spock had probably heard. Jim turned to him. “You ok kid?”

“I am fine.” Despite his words, it didn’t take an empath to tell that he was upset.

“I apologize for my son’s display of emotionalism.” Jim looked up at the familiar voice; he hadn’t even noticed Sarek (and his Spock) approaching.

“His behavior isn’t what concerns me.” Jim looked off in the direction the bullies had gone.

“And in family, all is forgotten.” Spock raised a hand in the Vulcan salute. “Greetings, Sarek, son of Skon.”

Only the little bit of familiarity Jim had built up allowed Jim to notice the slight surprise from Sarek.
He returned the gesture. “Greetings. You are a member of the family?”

“Yes.” Spock nodded, letting his hand fall to his side. “I am Selek, descendent of T’Pel and Sasak. I’m journeying to the family shrine.”

“That is a long journey.” Sarek paused. “Would you like to stay in my home to rest for the night?”

Spock nodded. “I am humbled by your generosity.”

“Would there happen to be room for one more in that offer?” Jim tried his best charming smile. “Not a relative, but I’m a xenoanthropologist studying Vulcan culture who’s been traveling with Selek.” He held up his hand in his best Vulcan salute, which still didn’t quite match Spock’s. “Jim Pike.”

Sarek nodded at him and returned the gesture. “We have sufficient space; you are welcome as well.”

“Thanks.” Jim grinned. “Lead the way.”

Sarek nodded and turned to walk in what must have been the direction of his house with little Spock following in step just behind him. Jim and Spock hung back a little bit, just out of hearing range so they could speak without being overheard.

Spock looked at Jim and raised an eyebrow. “Jim Pike?”

Jim shrugged. “I may have exaggerated how much I thought out my cover story before we got here. Jim’s a common enough first name, and it was the first last name that came to mind that wasn’t mine.”

“As long as we are consistent in our use of names and other information, it should not be an issue.” Spock looked back up ahead to where Sarek and little Spock were walking, seemingly in silence.

“You were a cute kid.” Jim smiled at Spock’s raised eyebrow. “What, it’s true. Too bad your dad doesn’t seem to see it.”

“Vulcans do not focus on the appearances of their children as humans do.” Spock paused, not breaking stride. “My mother, however, did comment on my appearance on occasion.”

“I bet.” Jim grinned, but his smile dropped a little after a moment. “That wasn’t exactly what I meant though.”

“I am aware.” Spock glanced at Jim out of the corner of his eye. “However, there are some things I do not believe we can change, and I fear the repercussions of our interfering too much in the timeline.”

Jim shrugged. “Doing nothing lead to you being dead, so clearly inaction isn’t a solution either.” He sighed. “But I see your point. We can’t change everything.” A thought occurred to him. “But what about what we talked about earlier? About warning them—”

“I do wish it were possible to prevent that.” For the first time since arriving on the planet, Jim felt a slip of emotion through Spock’s tightened controls. “However, I am uncertain how we would proceed.” He paused, looking at where Sarek and his younger self had stopped to open the gate to a large home. “We have arrived.”

Jim paused, taking in the home they’d paused in front of. He’d never expected to be able to see where Spock grew up, not after… It occurred to him that this was probably Spock’s first time back in a long time; as he understood it Spock hadn’t exactly gone home much after starting at the Academy.
Jim wanted to reach out and offer some sort of comfort to Spock, but he knew that it wasn’t really the time or place, so instead he sent a pulse of reassurance toward Spock through the bond. “Ready for this?”

Spock sent his own reassurances back to Jim but didn’t take his eyes off of the house. “To use the human expression, I am as ready as I will ever be.” He resumed his steps toward the gate and the house, Jim tagging along behind him.

Chapter End Notes

Sarek’s an interesting character, but he really is a bit of a dick as a parent. Thank god the kids had Amanda (who will show up soon)

Also, consider this your reminder to get ready to get out and vote; if your state has absentee or early voting you may even be able to do it now. If anyone’s interested, I do have a few websites that can provide good info on candidates, ballot measures, etc for whatever area you pick. Would people want those?
Nothing like some technical difficulties when you're trying to get something done, right? Anyways uncooperative laptop related delays aside I hope you enjoy this chapter! There's two introductions (one to the story, one to this arc) that I know some of you are looking forward to that happen this chapter...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They entered the house a little bit behind Spock and Sarek, who they saw head out to the interior courtyard. It looked like Sarek was sternly talking to Spock about something, but that might have just been his face. Jim squinted, trying to see if he could read their lips from here. “I wonder what they’re— you’re?—talking about.”

Spock watched them a moment. “If I remember correctly—”

Jim smiled. “And with your memory, you probably do.”

“—my father is telling me that I must chose a path to follow for the rest of my life.” Spock paused again, turning to Jim. “It is a critical decision, to chose between logic and emotion.”

“It seems like a lot to put on a seven year old, especially framed as something that can’t change later in life.” Jim crossed his arms.

“Seven’s actually an important age for Vulcans; Spock’s due to undergo his first big rite of passage next month.” Jim hadn’t heard Amanda approaching behind them, but he whirled around at the sound of her voice.

“Hello.” Jim smiled to cover his nerves. “How long have you been there?”

Amanda’s answering smile was reserved but still reassuring. “Not long; I came in when you were talking.” She looked between them. “I take it you’re the guests Sarek told me about?”

“Yes.” Spock stepped forward, extending a Vulcan salute. “I am Selek, a distant cousin of Sarek traveling through the area.” He gestured to Jim. “My traveling companion is Jim Pike, a xenoanthropologist studying Vulcan culture.” Jim again tried to copy the gesture, probably still ending up a little sloppier than Spock’s.

“Welcome.” Amanda nodded at them both and held up her own hand in the Vulcan salute.

Spack lowered his hand and Jim and Amanda followed suit; he turned toward Amanda curiously. “If I may ask, what ritual is Spock to undergo next month?”

“The kahs-wan.” Amanda paused. “I know it’s more of a test than a ritual, but I prefer to think of it that way to avoid passing some harsher judgments of my husband’s culture, even if I don’t agree with all of it.” She took a deep breath, collecting herself some. “Still, if it helps him develop some control and avoid some problems, I guess I can’t be too against it.” She looked between them. “I heard there was another incident with his classmates today?”
“If that’s what you call them bullying him.” Jim crossed his arms again. “He may have seemed a little upset, but it was understandable.”

Spock, of course, knew how to handle the situation with a little more tact. “All children are still learning, and your son has a more difficult journey than most.” He paused, and Jim could practically feel him weighing his words. “Still, I believe he will be able to achieve balance eventually.”

Her expression turned a little rueful. “You might have a better outlook on him than Sarek does sometimes.” There was a hint of regret as soon as she said it, but Jim could tell Amanda did mean it when she said it.

“Parents are rarely truly objective concerning their children.” Spock looked to Amanda and Jim could tell he was trying to process something. “Did you say the kahs-wan was next month?”

“Yes.” Amanda nodded.

Jim registered a little surprise from Spock at that, but he didn’t show it on his face. “May you show us to our quarters? It has been a long journey.”

“Yes.” Amanda nodded.

Jim registered a little surprise from Spock at that, but he didn’t show it on his face. “May you show us to our quarters? It has been a long journey.”

“Of course.” Amanda turned and led them to a stairway. “Follow me.”

She led them to the guest quarters in a separate area of the house from the main family living area before taking her leave, and once she was gone Jim walked into Spock’s room and plopped onto the bed. “Ok babe, what’s up? Something seemed to be throwing you off when we were talking to Amanda, and I’m guessing it wasn’t just that she’s barely aged by when I meet her for real.”

“Yes.” Spock sat down next to Jim, his perfect posture a contrast to Jim’s relaxed semi-reclined position. “I believed my younger self to die during the kahs-wan, but the date does not match.”

“Weird.” Jim looked up from where he was resisting the temptation to sink into the surprisingly comfortable mattress; the heat and thin air had gotten to him more than expected, and the high gravity wasn’t helping either. “You sure about that?”

“You know my memory, Jim.” Spock appeared deep in thought.

“True.” Jim made himself sit up enough to look out the window. “I’m sure we’ll figure it out.” He jumped when he saw what looked like a furry boulder move in the courtyard. “What the hell is that?”

Spock had tensed at Jim’s tone but relaxed when he saw what he was looking at. “That is I-Chaya, our sehlat.”

Jim sat up fully. “I want to meet it.”

There was a trickle of amusement through the bond. “Very well.” Spock helped Jim up from the bed and led him back through the house, which Jim was grateful for because it was just big enough that he wasn’t sure if he’d find the right courtyard door on his own. Once outside, Spock paused. “While his size may be intimidating, I-Chaya is very old and gentle, so do not be…”

Spock trailed off as Jim threw himself into I-Chaya’s side, not quite managing to get his arms around his fuzzy bulk but trying anyways. “This is better than any animal I’ve met, and I grew up on a farm.” Jim circled around to where I-Chaya’s head was resting on the ground by his front paws. “Look at you!” Jim took his fluffy face in his hands before looking at Spock. “What happened to his fangs? One looks broken off.”

Spock carefully rested a hand on I-Chaya’s back and stroked slowly. “He has been with the family
since Sarek’s youth and provided companionship through good and bad.” There was a subtle but undeniable hint of fondness to Spock’s voice.

“Aww.” Jim smiled, still petting I-Chaya’s head absently. “Was he your best friend as a kid, Spock?”

“We were quite close.” Spock crouched down and stroked I-Chaya’s head. “He was my childhood confidant.”

“That’s so sweet.” Jim patted I-Chaya’s head affectionately. “Good boy, way to be there for Spock.” He got a slight groan in response, which only made him smile wider. He turned to Spock. “Sure we can’t get one?”

There was a twinkle of amusement in Spock’s eyes. “We have discussed this.” His expression turned more serious. “Additionally, we should focus on the matter at hand.”

“Right.” Not even the giant saber-tooth teddy bear in front of them could save Jim’s mood with that reminder. “We need to figure out how you die.”

Chapter End Notes

Anyone else really want a sehlat?
Hello everyone! Casual reminder to my US people to get out and get ready to vote if you haven’t already. And please don’t get caught up on who’s perfect or not; literal lives may be/already are at stake and indifference and inaction only helps those looking to harm people they see as lesser. So vote to prevent a catastrophe, or honestly more catastrophes. Don’t let the horrible people out there feel bold enough to keep committing acts of violence like we’ve seen this week.

Soapbox moment aside, we're getting into the action. Back to a POV I haven't written in a while...

While meditating that night, Spock heard a faint noise and the realization came to him. “It was not the kahs-wan; not the official rite of passage.” He turned to where Jim was deeply asleep beside him; although they’d been given separate quarters, Jim had insisted that he slept better with Spock in bed with him. As Spock had found no logical basis for objection, he had allowed it. Now, it proved fortuitous. Spock lightly shook the captain to rouse him. “Jim.”

Jim rolled over with a slight groan. “What is it?”

“I now have remembered when I nearly perished.” Spock could tell that Jim was not fully awake, but time was of the essence. “I did not nearly die in the actual kahs-wan; I attempted to prove myself early and nearly died.”

Jim rubbed his eyes. “When probably you saved you?”

“Yes.” Spock nodded. “I believe I have just heard my younger self leave the premise.”

Jim sat up, seeming more alert if still not fully awake. “You gotta go then.”

“Indeed.” Spock stood, taking the traveling robes he’d worn earlier that day and pulling them on once more. “I must ensure my own survival.”

Spock believed he heard Jim mumble, “Go save cute baby you,” prior to his returning to his sleep as Spock exited, but there was not the time to address that.

Instead, he moved through the house as silently as possible, using his own knowledge of the familiar space to avoid waking his parents. He had never anticipated being able to return to this house after the destruction of his planet; there were emotions rising within him that Spock would need to meditate on later for he feared that even attempting to address them now would delay his quest with possible fatal results.

The door of the home had been left open, which was unusual for even Spock’s juvenile self, but he did not have time to dwell on the matter.

Instead, he went out into the cold of the Vulcan night, his eyes adjusting quickly to the darkness of the moonless night as he traveled towards the Forge, following the path that was returning to him...
despite the many years that had passed since his childhood journey.

The thin air of the planet he was raised on felt natural to Spock’s lungs; his time acclimating to the Earth-normed thicker atmosphere of the Enterprise did not hamper Spock as he expected it to. He was able to make swift time across the sandy terrain, hoping he would not be too late.

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Jim rolled over once more, this time to quiet voices in the hallway and a palpable sense of panic. He tried to concentrate like Spock had taught him; two panicking people maybe? One felt more muffled maybe, but what would be going on that would have people that freaked out? He turned to ask Spock only to discover the other side of the bed empty.

Right. Jim sat up with a start, fumbling for one of the tri-ox hypos when it became hard to breathe. This was it. If Spock didn’t get there in time, he would die and be gone forever. He attempted to take a deep breath, glad Bones had drilled into him how to self-apply hypos.

There. He could breathe. Now he just needed to calm down, and—

The door burst open. Sarek came in seeming somehow cold but still kinda furious, and Amanda seemed the same but a little more open. Jim was reminded again that his almost-in-laws were kinda terrifying before Sarek paused at the foot of the bed. “Your traveling companion is missing, as is my son. Where has he taken Spock?”

“Woah!” Jim held up his hands, wishing he was wearing more than boxers to sleep in but glad he at least had that. “He didn’t take Spock.”

“Really?” Amanda stepped around Sarek. “Why are they both missing then? The other room doesn’t even look slept in.”

Sarek narrowed his eyes at Jim. “Is Selek truly a member of my clan, or was that a false premise to gain entry to my home?”

“I swear on my life we have no ill intentions towards Spock.” God, if only they knew how much Jim and Spock had a vested interest in keeping him safe. “And of course he’s related to you; didn’t you notice the family resemblance?”

Sarek’s posture relaxed minimally, although he was clearly still on guard. “That is true, although it does not guarantee his intentions.”

“Okay.” Jim kept his hands up. “Here’s what Selek told me: he heard Spock sneaking out. He worried the kid could end up somewhere dangerous. He went to bring him back.”

Amanda looked at him critically. “And why should we believe you?”

Jim froze. He had an option he could go with, but he wasn’t really sure if it was the right one; it might gain their trust…

“Is there a reason?” Sarek raised an eyebrow, and Jim had never really considered the gesture genuinely menacing before but now that existed.

Jim could just tell them he and Spock (or Selek, had to keep the names down) were together and that from that Sarek and Amanda could assume they had no bad feelings towards anyone of this family, unlike a concerning number of Vulcans of this time apparently. But he also didn’t want to make too much of an impact on the timeline, and Sarek and Amanda would definitely remember meeting
another human-Vulcan couple, not that this incident would be forgettable anyways.

Still, the little voice in the back of his head that sounded an awful lot like Spock (which probably wasn’t really him; Jim could feel through the bond that Spock was justifiably focused elsewhere now) told Jim that the best option here was subtlety. “Can’t you just trust me now? If by the end of the night Spock and Selek aren’t back unharmed we can get into all the threatening things you can do when you have diplomatic immunity or whatever.”

Sarek and Amanda shared a significant look that made Jim wonder if they were communicating telepathically; he kinda wondered if they could or if it was just years of being together that made silent conversations possible. Either way, his fate was probably hanging in the balance here.

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Spock climbed over the crest of a hill and went still at the sound of a le-matya’s hiss. The scene before him felt all too familiar, if from a different perspective. In the small valley below was his younger self, and a highly venomous le-matya. This was when he could die.

Chapter End Notes

Ahh, I missed cliffhangers. They're so fun, for me at least.
Chapter 225

Chapter Notes

Hello and happy November everyone! I hope anyone who celebrates it had a good Halloween, and now we're on to Dia de los Muertos, Thanksgiving, or just December holidays if nothing else. But we're not here for holidays, are we? Not with baby Spock in danger...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim looked between his future almost in-laws and mentally reaffirmed his decision to never piss them off. Time to talk his way out of this. “Look I understand that you have no good reason to trust me. But I swear on my life that Selek and I have not in any way harmed Spock.” It would be so easy if Jim could just tell them they were there to do the exact opposite, but this didn’t seem like the right time to to try to explain time travel, especially since Jim didn’t even fully understand how it worked. He took a deep breath and looked between them again. “Look, you’re right about the other room not looking slept in. Selek was meditating when he heard someone leave the house and went to go investigate.”

Amanda made a face. “Your story’s consistent enough, but that doesn’t make me feel any better about the fact that my son just happened to disappear at the same time as this apparent relative we’ve never met before.”

“Is there anything I can do to make you trust me?” Jim shifted a little and pulled the covers around himself more, feeling self-conscious. “I swear neither me or Selek have anything against mixed-species relationships or individuals. I even want to make my focus within xenoanthropology the importance of interspecies acceptance.”

Sarek paused. “You did intervene in the conflict between Spock and his classmates.” He looked at Jim critically. “Would you consent to a mind meld?”

Jim froze. He knew it would look bad, but there was no way he could agree to that. It’d be way to heard to keep the truth secret. “That’s one thing I can’t do.” He took a deep breath. “I’ve experienced some things that I don’t want anyone seeing, and even though I’m sure you’d be very focused I don’t really like the idea of someone going through my head.” It was true enough; he even still steered Spock away from some of the worst of Tarsus and Frank when they melded.

Sarek didn’t look all that convinced (not that he was showing much), but Amanda put her hand on his arm and he relaxed a little. Jim probably wouldn’t have seen it if he wasn’t as familiar with the family as was, but it felt like a good sign. As did Amanda smiling gently at him a moment later. “We can respect that. But I hope you can respect why we feel uneasy.”

“Til sunrise? I’ll accept any consequences you set up.”

That seemed to appease Sarek and Amanda; he stood with a little more of the dignity Jim would expect from him, and she seemed reassured if still worried. Sarek stared Jim down solemnly. “We will hold you to this agreement.”
“Alright. I wouldn’t expect anything otherwise.” Now Jim just had to hope Spock was having better luck than he was…

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Spock began his descent down the hill towards where his younger self was becoming aware of the le-matya that had doubtlessly already noticed him. He wished to move more quickly, but was hindered by the uneven terrain and sandy texture of the soil. He nearly fell when something passed him at great speed.

“I-Chaya!” His younger self shouted in surprise as he recognized the sehlat that quickly placed itself between him and the le-matya. “I told you to go home.”

Spock quickened his pace as he saw I-Chaya’s protective stance. While even domesticated sehltats could prove quite ferocious when provoked, the le-matya’s ability to poison their opponents made them possibly the most dangerous animals in this region of Vulcan.

As Spock continued down the hill, he saw I-Chaya engage the le-matya as it pounced toward the child Spock. The struggle was intense, and Spock knew he would need to take down the le-matya while its focus was elsewhere. Once he was near enough, he leapt from the hillside and landed on the le-matya’s back, applying pressure to both sides of the neck in an attempt to sedate the creature.

After a brief struggle, it collapsed. Spock carefully dismounted and evaded its falling mass to avoid injuring himself. He turned to his younger self. “Are you harmed?”

The young Spock was visibly distressed, if possibly still less than a human child would be, but shook his head. “The le-matya did not make contact with me.” He looked at Spock with something akin to admiration. “Can you show me the nerve pinch technique?”

“Yes.” This was the age Spock had learned. “But first we should return to safety; the le-matya is merely stunned and will awaken; it would be unwise to be in its presence once it does so.”

“A logical point.” Young Spock nodded and patted I-Chaya’s side. “Come, I-Chaya.”

The sehlat began to move, but slowly. They got no further than the top of the hill before I-Chaya groaned and collapsed.

“I-Chaya, we must continue.” Young Spock grabbed the fur by his head. “You are old and fat, but surely if you have made the journey here you can make the return journey. You may rest when we are home.”

Another groan was the response, and Spock felt a small amount of concern. The emotion grew to levels requiring suppression when he noticed a dark spot on I-Chaya’s fur that did not exist before. He knelt down and touched the fur; his fingers came away damp with blood. Spock straightened, not allowing his emotions to control him. “He is injured. If the le-matya was the cause, he is likely already suffering the effects of the venom.”

His younger self’s distress increased. “How can we help him?”

“If he is to have any chance of survival, he will need a healer.” Spock stared at the vast desert and mountains surrounding them; he was uncertain the exact distance to the city, but it was not close.

“He cannot travel to a healer; he seems unable to move.” Young Spock’s hand was fist in I-Chaya’s fur.
This was not as Spock remembered it.

Chapter End Notes

More cliffhangers! At least I didn't make you agonize over baby Spock this weekend...

And again a reminder that if you're in the US and can, vote! Seriously it's so important. If you live elsewhere, I may not know as much but be politically involved if possible to prevent the worst case scenarios.
Not gonna lie, this chapter was fighting me. It kept feeling like I’d write a lot and then have the word count say it was next to nothing. But anyways, time to see poor I-Chaya’s fate...

Spock took a deep breath and let it out slowly, reminding himself that it was imperative he maintain control. He looked at his younger self, who was struggling with his own controls. “Spock. Use the basic meditation techniques you have learned to calm yourself.” Once his younger self seemed to be regulating his breathing to regulate himself, Spock looked him in the eye. “If we cannot bring I-Chaya to a healer, what is the logical alternative that may allow him to live?”

It was a moment before his younger self met Spock’s eyes, now with a slight degree of confidence. “We must bring a healer to I-Chaya.”

“Correct.” Spock nodded in approval. “I will stay with I-Chaya in case the le-matya returns and attempts to attack again. Return to the city and find a healer.”

There was an unsteady acknowledgement, then the young Spock turned and ran back the way they’d came. He did not have an easy journey ahead of him; the desert between where they were and the city was filled with flora and fauna that posed dangers to any humanoid life form. Perhaps Spock should have accompanied his younger self; they were still within the date of his supposed death.

But Spock found he could not leave I-Chaya; while he expected a challenge to his emotional controls by returning to his home planet, which he had not seen since its destruction, the potential loss of I-Chaya was unanticipated.

Spock carefully stroked I-Chaya’s fur, taking care to avoid the area where the wound tainted with the le-matya’s toxin was still slowly bleeding. “You were not meant to be lost so soon.” There was only a soft groan in response; notably quieter than I-Chaya’s typical vocalizations. It did not seem a promising indicator of his future health.

Needing a distraction from his current predicament, Spock reached out towards the bond with Jim, uncertain how his other familial bonds would respond to his current temporal displacement. A gentle “poke” (to borrow Jim’s term) led to feelings of nervousness, although it did not seem wholly directed toward Spock. He found himself unable to send calm or reassurance as he often would. Instead, Spock felt Jim attempting to send reassurance to him despite his own turbulent emotions.

Spock would need extensive meditation upon their return to process the events of this day.

After an interval of time, the amount of which Spock could not confidently state, there was the faint sound of a hovercar growing increasingly closer. He looked up from I-Chaya in time to see the hovercar slow until it ceased its movement only meters from him and I-Chaya. He saw his younger self emerge, followed by an older bearded Vulcan Spock recognized as the animal-focused healer he had known during his childhood.
The older Vulcan quickly strode toward I-Chaya, visually assessing his condition before setting down his bag and pulling out tools to begin his work.

Spock stood back with his younger self; there was no need to intervene in this process when neither of them had the level of expertise required to assist.

Spock noticed a slight shaking of his younger self’s shoulders and turned toward him, causing him to wipe at his face and forcibly calm himself. “I apologize for my emotional display.”

“You are young, and the situation is trying emotionally.” Spock allowed himself a measure of lowered controls and rested his hand on his younger self’s shoulder. “You will learn control, although it may take time.”

The pain was clear in his younger self’s eyes when he looked over. “Even if I am part human?”

“Yes.” Spock looked down at his younger self, hoping to convey sincerity. “Human blood is neither a deficiency nor a disadvantage; it is nothing to be ashamed of and not harmful.” Wary of over-disclosing but still feeling some disclosure was necessary, Spock continued. “I myself have partial human ancestry; it will not prohibit you from choosing the Vulcan way if you so desire.”

His younger self took a moment to process before turning to him. “May I learn the Vulcan neck pinch technique from you?”

The question was somewhat unexpected, but not unwelcome. Spock nodded. “I shall teach you before I leave.”

Before they could continue their conversation, the healer approached. “Who is the owner of this sehlat?”

Young Spock stepped forward. “I am. He is the family sehlat.”

The healer did not waste words. “His odds of recovery are negligible. I cannot treat the wound to save his life, but I can humanely end his life. What would you have me do?”

Spock hesitated, feeling this was a decision his younger self must make alone. Although he did not have to face it; Spock felt as if he knew that this would be a pivotal decision for his life.

After another moment of deliberation, young Spock spoke. “I-Chaya has had a long life. There is no reason to allow him to suffer unnecessarily.” He looked directly at the healer. “End his suffering.”

The healer solemnly acknowledged the young Spock’s words before turning around and returning to I-Chaya’s side. Spock’s younger counterpart turned away, Spock found he did not want to view the procedure either.

Both staring over the desert, Spock tipped his head toward his younger counterpart. “We will need to arrange for his body to be returned, and we will need to navigate our own return.”

“Yes.” The young Spock turned toward Spock. “First, may I attempt to attain emotional control?”

Spock nodded. “I will allow it.”

Chapter End Notes
And one final time: If you are at all able to, go vote! Let's see if we can stop this before the US goes full fascist (stopping it from getting worse isn't the best goal, but you gotta do what you gotta do).
Jim didn’t sleep much that night. Not that he expected to with his future almost in-laws maybe plotting his death and his boyfriend/fiancé (was that what the bond made them?) out trying to prevent himself from dying and ceasing to exist. It was a bit of a stressful situation.

Still, that sleeplessness meant he was still up when the Spocks returned. He’d been pacing around the house, which meant he was the first one there when the door opened.

It was hard to resist hugging or kissing Spock out of relief, but Jim remembered their current setting just in time. He didn’t hold back his relieved grin though. “Thank god you’re back!”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Was there ever truly a doubt as to our survival?”

“Maybe not,” Jim shrugged, “but if you two hadn’t made it back in one piece there would have been a major doubt about mine. You should have seen how Sarek and Amanda were acting.”

Little Spock raised an eyebrow. “While my mother is prone to displays of emotion, my father is not.”

Jim had to resist the urge to laugh at how cute baby Spock was. “It may not have been overt, but I think on some level he was just as shaken up as your mom.”

He looked like he was about to respond, but before he could there was a loud gasp from the doorway. “Spock!” Amanda came running in and hugged her son (the one she knew was her son at least), and he seemed to mostly tolerate it. She pulled back enough to see his face but kept her hands on his shoulders. “We were so worried.”

Sarek had come in at a more stately pace, and he paused next to his wife, although he remained standing. “Your safe return is appreciated.” Something in his expression shifted ever so slightly; a little sterner maybe. “However, we must ask why you were not in the house when you were expected to be.”

Jim felt a flash of guilt from little Spock, but he tamped it down more quickly than Jim would expect. He looked up at Sarek. “I wished to attempt to prove myself in the Forge as my peers will do next month.”

That earned a terse nod from Sarek, who then shifted his focus to Jim’s Spock. “And how were you involved in this ordeal?”

“I was not initially.” He kept his cool better than Jim would expect. “However, when I heard Spock leave the house and realized the official kahs-wan was not until next Vulcan month, I inferred that he may not be adequately prepared. To protect the safety of my kinsman, I followed him.”
“See? Just like I told you.” Jim felt a little bit like he was intruding on a family moment, but it seemed like this would be one of the times he spoke without thinking.

The Vulcans in the room (or Vulcan and half-Vulcans really) went silent, but Amanda smiled and stood, keeping one hand on young Spock’s shoulder. “I suppose so. Sorry for being so harsh with you.”

Jim smiled in return. “It’s ok. While I’m not a parent, I can get that your kid disappearing in the middle of the night would leave anyone a little panicked.”

Sarek looked like he was about to object to the emotional descriptor being applied to him, but Amanda stopped him with a hand on his arm. “Thank you.”

“There is something else I must tell you.” Everyone turned to little Spock. “I-Chaya followed me as well, and stopped a le-matya from attacking me.” There was a tense pause as everyone processed the information. “He…” Little Spock looked to Spock.

“Before I could intervene and subdue the creature, I-Chaya was wounded in the battle, and the toxin was likely to end his life with much suffering and pain.” Spock shifted slightly, clasping his hands behind his back. “I sent Spock to get a healer, but the damage had already taken hold. Spock made the logical decision to end his suffering instead of allowing it to continue.”

The tiniest of sniffles came from little Spock. “The healer has arranged for his body to be brought to us.”

“Wow.” Jim felt strong sadness from Amanda, but her expression didn’t show nearly what she was feeling. She turned to little Spock. “It’s been a long night. Let’s get to bed.” He nodded weakly and allowed himself to be led out of the room.

Jim could tell Sarek and Spock needed a moment, so he fake yawned about as loudly as he could without being rude. “I think I’m gonna hit the sack as well.” The expression earned him more raised eyebrows and Jim had to resist the urge to roll his eyes. “Go to bed. If there was house on Vulcan that you’d expect to understand human expressions, it’d be here.” Jim shrugged at their nearly blank expressions. “Can’t say I didn’t try. Goodnight.” He started to leave the room and head to where the guest quarters were, but paused and lingered in the doorway to eavesdrop.

After a moment, Sarek spoke. “I cannot articulate the depth of my gratitude for saving Spock. How can I repay you?”

“Your continued hospitality for my companion and I will be sufficient. However…” Jim could imagine Spock collecting himself. “I also ask that you attempt to understand your son. Much about him is unique, but that does not mean his problems are beyond comprehension.”

There was more tension in Sarek’s voice when he spoke next. “I will consider it.”

“Perhaps that will be enough.” Jim wished he could see Spock’s body language. “I must retire for the night.”

There was an acknowledgement from Sarek, but Jim ignored it as he rushed to catch up with Spock. “That went well.”

“Surprisingly so.” Spock stared ahead. “It would seem this section of our mission is complete.”

“Yep.” Jim let his shoulders bump with Spock’s, taking comfort in the touch after the long night they’d had. “Ready to go back to the future now?”
Spock did that little almost smile he always did when he was putting up with Jim’s goofiness in private. “Indeed.”

Chapter End Notes

If only Sarek actually took Spock's advice...
Chapter 228

Chapter Notes

So some of you were getting into a great discussion about time travel and how it could work in the comments last chapter, but to be fully honest I might not explore that too much. Trek has never been all that consistent on how it works, so I may be a little loose with the rules.

The next morning Jim woke up feeling surprisingly well rested given how much of the night before had been making sure little Spock didn’t die. Jim rolled over and looked at Spock. “Time to move on?”

Spock opened his eyes, still sitting in a meditation pose on the bed. “I believe so.”

“Alight.” Jim sat up and stretched. “You know, I’m feeling much better than I expected to given the temperature and gravity and air and everything. Maybe I’m acclimating.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, but a trickle of amusement came through the bond. “I would doubt that, Jim, given that we have not been here long. Additionally, we are protected from the heat by the home’s temperature controls, and your lack of difficulty breathing may be due to my already dosing you with a tri-ox compound this morning.” Jim must have looked surprised, because Spock explained after a short pause. “You appeared to have difficulty breathing while asleep, so naturally I alleviated the problem.”

“Naturally.” Jim sat up with a slight smile, a little too soft to be a proper smirk. “Thanks babe.” He kissed Spock’s cheek, tempted to do more but mindful that they were still in Sarek and Amanda’s home and might not have the privacy to do much. He pulled back and looked at Spock. “You ok? You meditated before bed too, both times. Did you even sleep?”

“Vulcans require less sleep than humans to be fully rested.” Spock continued quickly as if he could sense Jim’s usual objection to that, which maybe he could. “However, at the moment meditation has seemed more essential for my general well being. This experience has been…”

“Difficult?” Jim wasn’t sure where Spock’s mind had gone when he trailed off like that, but he figured that was a good place to start.

“Yes.” Spock looked up at him earnestly. “The unexpected loss of I-Chaya has compounded the already strong emotions I felt upon seeing my home planet whole for the first time since its destruction. I will likely require prolonged meditation for the foreseeable future to regain equilibrium.”

“Alright.” Jim sat up a little straighter. “You did bring up the elephant in the room though. Should we tell them?”

It was a long moment before Spock answered. “I am uncertain we can.” He held up his hand, anticipating Jim’s objections. “I wish it were possible to save my planet. I would be willing to expose ourselves as time travelers to grant our argument more merit, as the needs of the planet far surpass
our own, but I am uncertain we would be believed.”

That was unexpected. “Really?”

“Yes.” Spock was projecting nothing but sincerity. “At this point, there are still some Vulcans who doubt the existence of time travel. If we present ourselves as time travelers, we may only subject ourselves to unpleasant consequences without any true future gain.”

“What?” Jim rubbed his head, trying to bring back records he’d read in the Academy. “But like a hundred years before when we are now, there was a Vulcan who time traveled. It’s all recorded; I’ve seen the mission files myself.”

“Yes, in Starfleet mission files.” There was the slightest edge of pain to Spock’s expression. “As you have seen, the Vulcans of this time are less than accepting of outsiders. Many in the scientific community reject information discovered by other cultures, even if there was Vulcan involvement like in the mission you describe.”

“Damn.” Jim rubbed a hand on his face before turning to Spock. “You really think they won’t believe us?”

“Yes. Even if they accepted our words, Vulcan cannot develop the defensive capabilities to fend off Nero in the intervening time, so the planet would still be destroyed.” Spock slowly untangled himself from his meditation pose. “I have given this much thought, Jim.”

“I’m sure.” Jim smiled, but it felt empty even to him. “It’s just kinda… disappointing we can’t do anything.”

“We may attempt it.” Spock paused. “We can attempt to spread a message and save lives, but the number who would believe us to be credible would be minor compared to the losses Vulcan would still experience.”

“Some is better than nothing.” That had always been Jim’s philosophy when it came to saving lives. “I think trying anything at all would be better than doing nothing.”

“Very well.” Spock nodded. “It will be difficult as official venues are closed to us; the simplest option would be an anonymous post on the planetary information network warning of the danger. It would still be likely to be dismissed.”

“Maybe so.” Jim nodded. “But maybe enough people will make the connection when the time comes and we’ll be able to save lives.”

Spock nodded solemnly. “Perhaps that will be enough.”

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It was afternoon before they had made and posted their message. They’d shared a quiet meal with Sarek and Amanda, who’d explained young Spock’s absence as due to the ordeal the previous night. Jim got the feeling it was more the emotional toll of losing I-Chaya than anything physical that caused his retreat, but decided it was best not to say so.

Before too long they were back in the desert gear, heading away from the city. Jim paused and took a deep breath, glad Spock had talked him into taking that other triox shot. “So how do we know when the Guardian will be ready to take us back again? Our mission’s all done.”

“I am aware. I have been monitoring you.” The now familiar wavering voice of the Guardian rang
out in the desert, and before their very eyes the portal opened up, showing them the Guardian’s planet and more distantly Ensign Khanna.

Spock raised an eyebrow. “That is remarkably efficient.”

“Yeah.” Jim looked through the portal then back at Spock. “You ready?”

There was a pause. “You may go on ahead. I will require…a moment.”

“Alright.” Jim walked ahead but paused just before the opening, looking back at Spock.

He had his back turned toward Jim and the portal, looking out across the vast expanse of desert and the distant mountains that hid the city from their view. Jim saw Spock’s shoulders rise and fall like he was taking a deep breath, and somehow Jim knew that on a certain level he was saying goodbye to his planet.

When Spock turned around, there was a certain determination in his eyes. “Let us go.” He walked through the portal without looking back, and Jim followed him with only a quick backward glance at the planet he’d likely never see again.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter came surprisingly easily, so apparently philosophical debates in charmingly domestic settings is my wheelhouse. Anyways, have an exchange too goofy to put in the chapter but too short to put anywhere else:

(after the elephant in the room comment)
Spock: Jim, the only mammal of Terran origin present at the moment is you.

Jim, rolling his eyes a little but still smiling: I can't believe some people think you don't have a sense of humor. (Looks at Spock, serious but amused) I know you get idioms, Spock.
Hello everyone! I think I need to start a new word doc to continue this fic in to avoid some of the technical difficulties that have been delaying updates lately; I'm at nearly 650 pages and it no longer displays a word count, so I guess I can get why word is overwhelmed. Anyways, this arc is coming to a close. Just gotta see if it worked...

Ensign Khanna lit up when they came through the portal. “Sirs, you’re back! I was monitoring you through the Guardian, but it seemed to be doing an abbreviated version of events. Did it work?”

“We did successfully prevent my younger self’s death.” Spock looked between her and Jim. “However, we have yet to assess if the timeline has been restored to how we know it.”

“One way to check.” Jim shrugged and pulled out his communicator. “Kirk to Enterprise.”

“Enterprise, Uhura here.” Perfect.

“Lieutenant, I’m going to have to ask you a question that’s going to sound weird but I promise I’ll explain.” Here goes nothing. “Do you know who Spock is?”

There was a long pause on the other end. “Is that a serious inquiry, Captain?”

“Yes.” Jim ran a hand down his face. “I did tell you it would sound weird. So do you?”

“Of course.” Nyota paused. “I’ve known him longer than you have. Did you hit your head down there and forget everything since the Academy? Should I send down Dr. McCoy?”

“No, everything’s alright.” It really was now that he didn’t have to worry about Spock spontaneously ceasing to exist or something like that. “No need to call up Bones.”

“Okay then.” There was a beat of silence, likely her trying to figure out if he was lying to avoid medical care, which was probably a valid concern. “Can I get that explanation now?”

“Right.” Jim nodded even though he knew she couldn’t see him. “It’s a long story, but basically we encountered a temporal anomaly, Spock as we know him ceased to exist for a bit, and we had to make sure what we’d done to set everything right actually worked. If it hadn’t, you wouldn’t have known who Spock was.”

More processing time, but for some reason Jim felt like this probably wasn’t even the weirdest conversation he’d had with Nyota. Maybe top ten though; he ought to give her a commendation for her ability to remain professional in these kinds of situations alone. “Captain, are you certain you don’t require medical attention?”

“Captain Kirk is unharmed, Lieutenant.” Spock finally stepped over to be within speaking range of the communicator after listening in. “While I recognize the oddity of his story, Ensign Khanna and I can corroborate his account, and Ensign Khanna may have tricorder data to support it as well.” She nodded, and Jim had to wonder if that would be some of the weirdest tricorder data ever recorded.
“I suppose I’ll have to accept your word and await further explanation, Commander.” Maybe Starfleet had medals for professionalism in unusual situations. If not, Jim knew who they could name it for.

“It’ll be a debrief that’ll fuel the lower decks rumor mill for weeks I bet.” Jim couldn’t help but smile. “For now, I think we’re ready to beam back up. This planet will make for some interesting studying, but I’m going to have to warn the crew to exercise caution when down here.”

“I’ll make a note of it, Captain.” She paused, probably entering in the information. “Connecting to the transporter room now; they should be transporting you back shortly.”

“Alright. Kirk out.” He flipped the communicator shut and turned to the one other thing that could confirm things were back as they were. “Guardian, has the timeline been restored to how it was when we first came down here?”

“There have been minor changes, but it is largely returned to what you remember.” The Guardian’s voice coming from the stone arc still seemed a little odd, but at least its words were reassuring.

“Awesome.” Jim nodded, then turned back to the landing party. “I wonder what’s taking the transporter room so long?”

The sentence was barely out of his mouth before the familiar golden light of the transporter surrounded them, and soon they were back on the Enterprise. With someone Jim didn’t expect (but probably should have expected) waiting for them.

“Bones!” Jim tried his best to not seem disappointed. So much for that commendation for Nyota. “What’re you doing here?”

“Uhura said you were being weird and needed to have your head checked.” Bones pulled out the scanner from his tricorder and began waving it over Jim. “She said that you encountered something freaky down there, so all of you are coming with me to Sickbay.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I doubt Lieutenant Uhura used such language.”

Bones shrugged. “Maybe not her exact words, but you’re all still coming with me. So let’s go.”

“You know Bones, sometimes I think you take this CMO authority thing too far.” Jim shook his head at him, exaggerating his disappointment for dramatic effect.

“Maybe, maybe not. You’re still going to Sickbay now.” Bones nodded at them then turned around. “Follow me.”

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After what felt like an excessively long physical later, Jim stretched and looked at Bones. “Satisfied? This wasn’t because of my comment earlier, was it?”

“No, it was because you got Nyota worried. But your story checks out with the others and your vitals check out with me, so you’re good to go.” Bones picked up a padd and began looking through. “Plus, with you it’s always best to get in a physical when I can.”

“Better leave now while I still can then.” Jim smiled at Bones’s grumbling as he slid off the biobed and started to leave Sickbay. “See you later Bones!” There might have been a bye from Bones, but Jim wasn’t sticking around to hear it. Ensign Khanna had already left to review and share all the data she’d gathered, and Spock was also long gone. Jim knew where to find him though.
Sure enough, Spock was in what had been his quarters and were now just his meditation and work area. Jim walked over to where he was looking at something on the computer and leaned over his chair, wrapping his arms around Spock and resting his chin on Spock’s head. “What’ve you been up to while Bones was holding me?”

“I was doing research related to our recent mission.” Spock pulled up a personnel file. “I have located Commander Thelin.”

Jim leaned down a little more so he could read over Spock’s shoulder. “Still a first officer; good for him.” A part of Jim had been worried that their universe’s? timeline’s? that their version of him had died in the Battle of Vulcan, but it looked like he’d been with the other half of the fleet at the time. But that reminded Jim of the other think he knew Spock would look into. “What about our message?”

“It is unclear how much of a verifiable effect can be attributed to our message.” Spock paused, bringing up different information on his screen. “However, the survival count is slightly larger than it previously was, according to my memory.”

“I trust your memory, so I’ll count that as a win. Every little bit counts when you’re trying to save people.” He kissed Spock’s cheek, human style. He wasn’t sure which one of them he was trying to reassure with all this physical affection, but after the past few days they probably both needed it. Jim was surprisingly tired. “I’m gonna go and work on figuring out how the hell to make a log of this than maybe call it an early night; are you going to join me or will you need more mediation time?”

“I believe I still require additional mediation time supplemental to my typical routine.” Spock didn’t look at Jim, his eyes still fixed on the information he had pulled up on the destruction of Vulcan.

“Alright.” Jim slowly pulled his arms away from Spock. “You know where to find me if you need me.” Spock nodded, and Jim stepped away and began to leave the room. He paused in the bathroom door long enough to watch Spock get up and begin to set up his mediation station before leaving through the bathroom to his own room, knowing Spock needed his privacy but would come if he needed Jim.

Chapter End Notes

Unrelated note, but guess who turns 23 today? (If you guessed the person who's apparently written approximately 650 word pages for this, you'd be right). Zero relevance to the story, but I thought it'd be fun to mention.

Anyways, time to see the boys off onto their next adventure...
I was wrong, there's a little more to the last arc. In true style of this fic, have a little fluffy domestic Spirk moment. Apparently that's just what I do. Or maybe my end-of-semester tiredness is just getting transferred into Jim's sleepiness here. The world may never know...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim woke up in dark but familiar quarters, but even to his groggy mind something felt...off. The bed was a little colder than usual. Still half asleep, he rolled over and swung his arm over to Spock’s side of the bed, only to not make contact with anything but the sheet-covered mattress.

With a groan, Jim sat up. There were plenty of places Spock could be. In the labs, on the bridge, back down on the planet, getting food in the mess, any of a lot of places really. But Jim had a feeling. Maybe it was the little bond they already had, maybe it was Jim’s own abilities, maybe it was just how well he knew Spock.

He threw off the blankets and began making his way toward the shared bathroom, not bothering to put on anything more that the boxer briefs and undershirt he’d slept in. Their room was already warmer than average in deference to Spock, but Jim knew it would only be hotter once he was on the other side of the bathroom.

Sure enough, Jim didn’t even feel the slightest chill as he walked into the other room, seeing Spock staring intently at the console screen on his desk. He was still wearing his meditation robes. Jim leaned against the divider that would have separated the bed area from the work area but now just gave Spock’s meditation area some more privacy. “Did you sleep at all?”

Spock’s eyes didn’t leave the screen. “I require less sleep than human.”

“That’s the excuse you used last night, when you skipped out on sleep to go chase your younger self through the wilderness, fight dangerous wild animals, and meditate.” Jim walked over and leaned against the desk, crossing his arms. “What time is it?”

Spock’s eyes flicked to a corner of the screen then back to Jim. “0426. You should return to bed; after the strenuous environment on Vulcan you may require more rest, and you do not need to awake for any duties for several more hours.”

“I could say the same to you, minus the Vulcan environment being strenuous or whatever and the return to bed part since you haven’t been.” Maybe Jim did need more sleep; that sounded a bit grumpy even to him. Being grumpy was Bones’ job. “What’re you doing anyways?”

“I have completed multiple tasks.” Spock looked up at Jim. “Ensign Khanna has already begun data processing of the information gathered on the Guardian and will likely ask for more opportunities to study it before we break orbit. I have begun to review the initial data and prepare team rosters to go down to study it further.”

“No offence, but that could have waited until you had some rest.” Jim continued to watch Spock, not
letting his resolve falter. “What else have you been doing?”

Spock paused. “I have meditated.”

“Okay.” Jim expected that one. “Has it helped?”

“Perhaps.” He still seemed a little lost in thought; it was a moment before he met Jim’s eyes. “I will still require additional meditation.”

“Understandable.” Jim glanced at the time on the screen again, trying to remember when he’d actually gone to bed. His internal clock was off thanks to their trip to Vulcan, but it felt like Spock must have had time for more than what he was saying. “Anything else?”

“Yes.” More hesitation; Spock must really be feeling off to show this much uncertainty. “I have been researching the minor changes the Guardian mentioned happening to the timeline.”

“Oh?” That actually was enough to catch Jim’s sleepy brain’s interest. “Anything cool?”

He could practically feel Spock’s dissatisfaction with his word choice, but he chose to ignore it and Spock seemed to get over it as well, even if he looked at the screen instead of Jim. “Many are difficult to track; I am increasingly questioning how my memory will be affected when the timeline changes are different to what I knew prior to our…excursion. How do I know if my memory is unaffected?”

Jim sighed and ran a hand down his face. “Babe, I love you and that would be a fun question to dig into, but I’m too tired now.” He looked back at Spock. “Anything concrete we should be worried about?”

Spock clicked around on the screen. “There is a minor cult following surrounding the post we made; there is speculation on if someone has the abilities to predict the future.”

“Wow.” Jim kindof wanted to sit down to process that, but the only place he saw was Spock’s lap and that didn’t seem appropriate, so he stayed standing. “I would say I wouldn’t expect Vulcans to fall for cult stuff, but I guess you aren’t even the first in your family to minorly start a cult.” At Spock’s raised eyebrow, Jim smiled sheepishly. “I may have dug through some records to find out more about what happened with Sybok. I was curious.”

Spock’s unimpressed eyebrow didn’t drop. “Should I question the methods you used to obtain that information?”

“Probably not, but since we kinda met due to me hacking you should probably have known what you were getting into.” Probably best to shift the topic. “Is that what’s got you staying up all night?”

“It is related.” Spock took a deep breath before making eye contact with Jim once more. “Time travel is not a force to be meddled with lightly. You and I both personally know how serious the consequences can be when it is used improperly.”

Finally to the heart of the matter. Jim sighed and stood up only to squat a little so he and Spock were more at eye level. “Spock, we’re not Nero. Yes, what he did was horrific, and yes, time travel played a role. But we tried to help people, not kill them. It’s not the same at all.”

“Still, I am…” Spock broke eye contact, “uncomfortable that this power could so easily be accessed and misused.”

“Then we’ll make sure it isn’t.” Jim took Spock’s hands, just holding them in a way that would get
Spock’s attention without causing other reactions hopefully. “I mean, you and I both know that not all of Starfleet can be trusted after everything we went through last year, but I think we can still make sure the right people are in charge of this. I’m not above pulling whatever strings I can reach if it’ll bring you some peace of mind.”

Spock looked at Jim before diverting his gaze to their joined hands. “Thank you, Jim. I do not know how much will be necessary, but I appreciate the lengths you will go to for me.”

“Of course.” Jim kissed the top of Spock’s head and waited for him to look up before continuing. “Now as your captain and boyfriend or fiancé or whatever we are, I’m telling you to come with me and get some sleep. Are you gonna fight me on this?”

There was something soft in Spock’s eyes. “No, t’hy’la.”

“Good.” Jim smiled. “Let’s get some rest.” He stood again and led Spock to their room by their joined hands.

Chapter End Notes

Btw, since there seems to be some confusion I want to clarify: Amanda has always been alive here. I did do a fakeout, but go to chapter 86 if you want to see confirmation that Amanda lives, a few other chapters I haven't checked the numbers on for other Amanda moments, and chapter 5 of the extra scenes if you want Old Married Spirk with a side of Amanda. I understand the confusion since there's a lot of fic to keep track of here and I kept her out of the tags for dramatic reasons, but she’s alive and well even with the boys' time travel shenanigans. I'm taking the women out of the fridge.
Turkey day sleepiness very nearly got me before I could finish this chapter, but here is the beginning of our next arc! This will be a short one...

It had been presented as a routine mission. After their time orbiting the planet of the Guardian to study it, staying until Starfleet dispatched a contingent of scientists and historians to study it and leaving behind a team of their own to work with the new arrivals, the Enterprise had returned to the star charting they had been previously working on. As with before, the crew quickly became restless.

It was difficult to pinpoint the exact moment in the weeks since they had departed the Guardian’s planet where the crew became restless, but it was simpler to decide the member of the senior staff most affected: Captain Kirk himself.

Spock felt a measure of blame for the Captain’s situation; his increased meditation time to regain his equilibrium since their visit to Vulcan’s past had caused a certain distance to grow between him and Jim, which likely contributed to Jim’s unease.

Still, their current mission was to be simple. A recently warp-capable civilization who had already made first contact wished to learn more about the Federation, and their self-reported cultural norms suggested that they would only listen to the individual in the highest position of power available and did not like seeing those who lacked status.

In retrospect, perhaps that would be what Jim referred to as a “red flag.” But as the son of an ambassador Spock had been exposed to many cultures with many sets of norms and this did not quite tip his mental gauge from “eccentric” into “dangerous.” He did not believe that this society posed a significant danger to Jim; the team that had made first contact reported no difficulties.

Spock’s eidetic memory allowed him to recall the exact conversation which occurred in the transporter room.

*Dr. McCoy sighed and crossed his arms. “You really think this is a good idea, Jim?”*

“It’s fine.” The Captain grinned. “We’re supposed to practice diplomacy and respect local customs, right?”

“That is correct.” Spock had shifted slightly. “However, it is also a violation of Starfleet policy for a Captain to visit a non-Federation planet unaccompanied.”

Jim’s smiled had shifted a bit and Spock had enjoyed the feeling of warm amusement from him despite himself. “No regulation numbers this time?”

“We are both aware that I know the code, just as we are both aware that your knowing the number would not affect your decision to obey the code, or disobey it.” Spock had shifted his hands slightly, clasping them more tightly behind his back. “I would be willing to accompany you, Captain.”

“Thank you, but no.” Jim shook his head. “It’s better to make a good first impression by following
their rules. And how much trouble could I get into? All I’m going to do is beam down, have a little chat, and get to stretch my legs in some real gravity. Easy.”

“Yeah, until you factor in Jim Kirk luck.” Dr. McCoy scoffed and crossed his arms across his chest more tightly. “You may be able to get out of most situations alive, but that doesn’t mean you don’t get damn close to dying.” He shook a finger sternly. “What will you do when that luck runs out?”

“Come on.” Jim rolled his eyes than turned to Spock. “What’s your take on this? Think I have bad luck?”

Personally, he did not fully support the idea of Jim transporting down alone. However, he did not have sufficient evidence to support that conclusion. “Logically, there is no reason to object to the Captain’s participation in this mission. Additionally, there is no logical basis for the concept of “luck”.”

Jim’s expression had been almost smug as he turned to the doctor. “See? No logical reason for me not to go. I’m beaming down, and I’m going alone.”

Spock had underestimated Jim’s ability to defy logic. He had transported to the planet and Spock had returned to the bridge, settling into the center chair. As the planet’s social norms also limited communicator use while conducting official business, Spock used their bond to monitor Jim as a precaution.

Which was how he became aware of a surge of pain that nearly caused Spock to fall from his chair. He was unable to suppress the fear that flowed through him and possibly showed alarm when he spoke. “The Captain is in danger.”

A sufficient amount of the bridge crew knew of the bond; it was enough that Spock’s knowledge was not questioned. They moved into action, turning to their respective stations.

Uhura spoke first. “I can’t hail him on his comm frequency; it’s like it’s being blocked.”

That did not bode well. Another wave of pain wracked Spock and he fought to remain upright. “What are alternative methods of locating the Captain?”

There was some noise from the front of the bridge, but Spock’s focus was on the pain coming through the bond. He nearly missed it when Chekov spoke. “We could scan from the transport site outwards for human lifesigns; if we find one it must be the keptin.”

“Do it.” Spock nodded, the situation too urgent to take the time to acknowledge the logic of the plan. Spock’s focus was on attempting to absorb the feeling of pain through the bond to ease Jim’s suffering, but he felt his success was limited.

“We’ve got him!” It sounded like Sulu’s voice. “Sending the coordinates to the transporter room now.”

“Tell Dr. McCoy to prepare a medical team and meet the Captain when he appears.” Spock had been unable to determine what sort of pain the Captain was experiencing or the cause, but it was a necessary precaution. “I will meet the Captain as well.” He stood from the chair and proceeded to the turbolift.

There was a “Yes, sir.” of acknowledgment, but Spock could not focus on its source. He needed to see Jim.

He arrived at the transporter room in time to see Jim on a stretcher with a medical team already
circling and assessing as they moved him to Sickbay. Spock only saw him briefly before the stretcher and attached team rounded a corner in the corridor, but he saw bruises, blood, and at least one limb that appeared to be at an abnormal angle.

After a moment of processing, he moved to follow them to Sickbay.

Chapter End Notes

While the real backstory of Thanksgiving is not nearly as nice as the version they tell you in grade school, I'm still going to wish a happy Thanksgiving to any American readers out there and say that I'm grateful for everyone still following along with this behemoth of a fic. You're the best!
Chapter 232

Chapter Notes

Someday there will come a time when I write a non-compromised Spock, but today is just not that day I guess. Still, you all seem to be still following along despite my injuring Jim (maybe because you know I'm too much of sap to really do much). Enjoy the angst!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was difficult for Spock to concentrate as he followed Jim and the medical team to Sickbay from the transporter room. He was still attempting to ease Jim’s pain through their bond, even if it meant he was experiencing the pain and it was impairing his focus. It did not help that the only words he seemed to hear were the medical team describing Jim’s injuries; broken femur, contusions, cuts, stab wounds, probable concussion...

His focus thus diverted, he did not notice anyone attempting to speak with him until he was in Sickbay and Nurse Chapel was standing directly in front of him. “Spock!”

He flinched backwards at the volume of her voice, but he felt that given her tone and attitude it must not have been her first attempt at getting his attention. Still, he should not be distracted from attempting to aid Jim. “What is it, Lieutenant?”

She raised an eyebrow at his tone. “I’ve been trying to get your attention. We need you to leave.”

“I will not.” Spock planted himself more firmly. “As Jim’s intended bondmate, I have a right to be here during his medical procedures.”

“No, you have a right to visit him after.” Chapel crossed her arms. “As is, you’re just distracting us and need to leave.”

“No, I need to be here to help Jim.” Spock refused to budge. They would not separate him from his t’hy’la in his time of need. “I demand to speak to Dr. McCoy.”

“You’re being irrational.” Chapel was remarkably unswayed as well. “Is it logical to not only continue to distract a member of the medical team needed to save Jim, but also demand the head doctor treating him stop doing that to chat with you?” She took a deep breath, calming herself before looking him directly in the eye. “Do we need to declare you compromised and take you off duty?”

She had made a technically logical argument, but Spock bristled at her last comment. He could not help Jim if they sent him to his—their quarters. “No, I—”

“Are you shielding right now?” Spock turned at the new voice and saw Dr. M’Benga, who was cautiously walking closer. “Or is your link to Jim still open?”

“Geoffrey, thank god.” Chapel rolled her shoulders and relaxed some. “You handle this, I have a patient to help.” She turned and quickly paced to the room where they were treating Jim.

Spock moved to follow, but was stopped by Dr. M’Benga calling out to him again. “Commander Spock.”
“Are you shielding, or is your link with Jim open?” His demeanor and voice were calm, but it did nothing to soothe Spock.

“It is open.” Spock turned towards the room where he could just see them hovering around Jim through the transparent aluminum. “I am attempting to help alleviate his pain.”

“I know this is counter intuitive, but you need to stop that and close the link. Shield completely.” M’Benga’s calm voice continued. “It’s for your and Jim’s best interests.”

Spock spun around once more. “How is it in my best interest to not aid my t’hy’la?”

“Because right now that’s the role of the medical team in there.” M’Benga stepped closer but was careful to not actually touch Spock. “If you’re taking some of Jim’s pain, they might hurt him without realizing it, not address an area where he is hurting for the same reason, or give him the wrong dose of pain medication. None of those would be good for Jim. At this moment, he needs to feel his pain so they can properly address it.” M’Benga looked Spock in the eye. “And you need to not feel it so you can address running this ship. Handling this situation would also be a way of helping Jim, right?”

Spock allowed himself to fully process what Dr. M’Benga was saying. “I suppose so.”

“Good. So take a deep breath,” He took one to demonstrate, “shield, and do a quick meditation exercise as you make your way back to the bridge. Sound good?”

Spock began to follow along with Dr. M’Benga’s breathing and felt himself begin to calm slightly. He closed his eyes and slowly released his hold on Jim’s pain before raising a shield to block off their bond. When he opened his eyes, Dr. M’Benga was watching him closely. “I have begun shielding.” Spock would not admit it, but he felt closer to a state of emotional equilibrium without holding onto Jim’s pain.

“Good.” Dr. M’Benga smiled and nodded. “Now get to the bridge, and don’t forget to do a brief meditation exercise on the way. Sorting out this situation is the best thing you can do right now to help Jim.”

Spock nodded shakily. “I will go.” He turned and headed toward the exit then along the corridor toward the turbolift that would take him to the bridge, doing a basic breathing exercise he had learned as a child to center himself. By the time he reached the bridge, he did feel more…collected. He sat in the Captain’s chair and stared forward. “Lieutenant Uhura, please contact the planetary government.”

There was a moment’s pause, and when she spoke he could hear her hesitation. “Yes, sir.”

It was not long before the planet’s leader appeared on the viewscreen. “Where is your Captain?”

Spock bristled at that, but attempted to control himself and not allow an outward display of emotion. “We transported him back to the ship when we became aware of his condition.”

“How were you notified?” The leader—Spock could not be bothered to remember the exact title this planet used—moved some of the orange tentacle-like hair in a gesture Spock believed showed agitation. “A part of our stipulations was no contact.”

“We are not at liberty to share that information.” Spock took another deep breath, holding onto the armrests of the captain’s chair to shift his focus from a desire to wrap his hands around the leader’s
“It does not matter.” A facial spasm that was the equivalent of a human shrug wrinkled the leader’s white skin. “As we have bested your leader, we have proved our worthiness to enter your organization under the rules of our culture.”

“And you have marked yourselves unworthy of Federation membership by the rules of our culture.” Spock’s grip on the armrests tightened. “You attacked a Federation official, our Captain. Members of the Federation must greet each other in peace, not with violence. Serious physical harm like you inflicted would not be tolerated between Federation worlds; it would mark the perpetrator unfit for continued membership until they learned proper diplomacy.”

More hair waving, with greater intensity. “Your officials spoke of many cultures being tolerated within the Federation, yet you reject ours?”

“We reject violence for personal or societal gains, or violence for nearly any reason beyond defense of self and others.” Spock sat up straighter. “The Federation embraces many cultures, but it does have certain behaviors it will not accept. You may attempt contact with the Federation again if you wish, but this incident will be recorded against your planet and we will not be so trusting if there is a next meeting.” He turned to Uhura. “End transmission.”

When Spock looked forward again, the viewscreen only showed the planet as they slowly continued their orbit. It was quiet on the bridge.

Sulu broke the silence. “Any new orders?”

“Yes.” Spock slowly loosened his grip on the armrests, noting the small indentations in the shape of his fingers that would need to be fixed. “Leave orbit and begin our journey to our next scheduled destination. I will remain on the bridge until we have an update on the captain’s condition.”

Chapter End Notes

I'm slammed with end of term stuff for grad school right now but still so tempted to write a little M'Benga scene after this bit of him. He needs more love from the fandom tbh
Chapter Notes

So I just noticed that this hit 300 bookmarks, which is incredible? I can't believe so many people like my little (or not-so-little; It is already above 300k) fic that much!
You're all awesome!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock was uncertain exactly how much time passed while he waited for a message on Jim’s condition, which was troubling because his internal chronometer was usually impeccable.

Still, Spock could admit to certain tension when Dr. McCoy finally contacted the bridge, and he was certain he was not the only one present who felt it. “McCoy to Bridge.”

Spock had to remember to restrain his strength so as to not break the captain’s chair comm as he hit the button to respond. “Spock here.”

“Jim’s stable.” Spock saw numerous bridge officers exhaling or relaxing tensed muscles in gestures of relief. “It took forever and he sure as hell didn’t make it easy on us, but he’s stable and out of immediately critical condition.”

A part of Spock wished to go to Jim, but he knew he needed to maintain a sense of professionalism. “How soon will the Captain be able to regain command?”

A snort from the other end. “Not for a while. Not for a long while.”

Spock quickly suppressed the tremor of fear that rose within him. “Doctor, is the Captain—”

A sound of annoyance. “Just come see him yourself, you green-blooded mother hen. I know you want to. McCoy out.”

The channel closed before Spock could comment that he did not resemble a terran chicken, maternal or otherwise. He looked up at the bridge crew, who were watching him expectantly. “I am going to Sickbay.” No one looked surprised. “Mr. Sulu, you have the conn.” Spock waited long enough to hear his agreement before leaving the bridge.

Once in Sickbay, he paused before Dr. McCoy. “What is Jim’s status?”

“Jesus.” Dr. McCoy turned around, looking more strained than usual. “Dammit man, I was just elbow-deep in my best friend’s blood. Can you at least try to be a little gentler with how you’re pestering me?” He paused and pinched the bridge of his nose with a notably blood-free hand. “Sorry. I realize you’re probably about as on edge as I am, and Jim wouldn’t want us snapping at each other right now.”

Spock clenched his hands together behind his back. “I suppose I could be more accommodating of your stress. However, you have seen Jim, and I have not.”

“Fair enough.” Dr. McCoy took a deep breath and rolled his head from shoulder to shoulder, stretching his neck muscles. He looked at Spock. “Jim’s stable and we fixed all we could, but some
things still take time, like that broken femur of his. He won’t be able to walk for a bit, and he’ll need physical therapy for sure.”

Spock nodded. “We can accommodate those needs on the ship; I fail to see how that impairs his command.”

Dr. McCoy sighed. “I’m telling you Spock, Jim’s in no shape to be taking command of anything right now, and won’t be for a while”

Spock clenched his hands together more tightly behind his back. “You stated that you had stabilized the Captain.”

“I did.” McCoy’s demeanor shifted, possibly realizing Spock had misunderstood. “He’s fine, or he’ll be fine.” He paused, glancing at the door to the private room he typically stuck Jim in. “How about you just see for yourself? He’s awake.”

Spock nodded tersely. “Very well.”

He did not expect what he saw when he walked in. Jim was sitting up and seemed to brighten up when he saw Spock, but there was still something...off, beyond the bandages, cast on his leg, and other medical apparatuses. It became more clear when Jim spoke.

“Spock, baby! I was just thinking about you!” He leaned forward enough that Spock became concerned about Jim falling due to his notably impaired movement, so Spock quickly stepped forward to catch him.

He caught Jim with his hands on his biceps and relaxed somewhat when Jim had the coordination to return the gesture. “I am gratified to hear I was on your mind.”

“'Course.” Jim giggled before toppling forward to plant a sloppy kiss on Spock’s mouth before pulling back. “You’re in my mind, so you’re always on my mind.” He clumsily dropped his hands to Spock’s side. “But anyway, if we get married, would you wanna do the name thing? Cuz I just realized that since Standard and Vulcan do names differently we could keep both our names! I’d be Suchun Tigah Jim Kirk and you could be Suching Tuhgun Spock Kirk.”

Years of Vulcan control allowed Spock to keep his expression neutral at his t’hy’la’s notable mispronunciation of his family name. “That would indeed be possible, although your Vulcan pronunciation would require much practice if you did adopt the name.” Jim pouted at that, but Spock was distracted by the poorly muffled laughter in the doorway, reminding him that Dr. McCoy was still there. He turned around. “Explain.”

McCoy struggled to gain some semblance of professionalism. “As you know, Jim was pretty badly hurt. So he was in a lot of pain. What you’re seeing is a side effect of the strongest painkiller I can give him that doesn’t either totally knock him out or send him into an allergic reaction.” Jim started leaning again, causing Spock to adjust his grip and McCoy to muffle more laughter. “It’s harmless enough; just makes him a little loopy and me want a recording device of some sort. He’ll need to continue to take some dosage of it as necessary while he recovers.”

Jim finally seemed to notice Dr. McCoy, lurching a bit (as much as he could with Spock still holding him) in order to see McCoy. “Bonessss! I love you too, but not like I love Spock so we’re not gonna get married.” He paused, thinking. “You should marry Carol though. She’s good for you; all smart and pretty and not pretty like Spock though.” He paused, looking solemnly at Spock. “You’re the prettiest. And not just to me; the prettiest ever.”
“Thank you.” Spock’s attention was once again drawn to Dr. McCoy laughing in the doorway.

He took a moment to calm himself before looking at Jim and Spock. “I’ll give you two a moment while I handle the paperwork for this. But I think you get why Jim can’t exactly be captain right now.”

“Hey!” Jim pouted. “I’m always Captain. I love this ship. And all the people on her. In her?” Jim giggled. “That sounds wrong.”

McCoy left with more poorly concealed snickering and Spock turned back to Jim. “You are still the Captain, but at this moment I am in command; I will need to leave soon.” He did not necessarily wish to, but since he had ascertained Jim’s safety it was best he returned to his duties.

“Nooo.” One of Jim’s hands flopped to cover Spock’s on his arm. “You didn’t even answer if we’d do the name thing if we got married.”

“As we already have a preliminary bond, our marriage is more of a when than an if.” The way Jim lit up at that, impaired state or not, caused something warm to stir inside Spock. “However, it would be best to discuss this when you are more clearheaded.”

“Ok.” Jim yawned. “I’m feeling sleepy anyways.”

“Most likely an additional side effect of the painkillers.” Spock could feel Jim relaxing in his hold, so he lowered him slowly onto the biobed.

“Yeah.” Jim nodded solemnly. “It’s the good stuff. I can’t even feel where I got stabbed.” He paused. “Did I get stabbed?”

“You did, along with several other injuries.” Spock nearly wished he did not have an eidetic memory as even mentally replaying the scene of Jim's bloody reappearance on the ship caused his heart to squeeze in his side.

“Hey, hey babe. Shhh.” Jim’s hands clumsily found Spock’s face and he allowed Jim to turn his head so they could make eye contact. “I’m gonna be ok.” He yawned. “Just gotta sleep.”

“Very well.” Spock again guided Jim to a comfortable position on the bed. “Sleep well, t’hy’la.”

Jim mumbled something in response, but he was beginning to slip into unconsciousness before Spock even released him fully.

With no one to witness, Spock leaned down enough to gently press his lips to Jim’s forehead, a gesture of affection he had secretly cherished whenever his mother did it to him as a child. Through the contact, a limited unblocking of their bond, and possibly Jim’s own abilities, Spock could feel that Jim was content and at peace, no longer in pain. Spock pulled away reassured enough of Jim’s recovering health that he himself found enough of a sense of peace that he was able to return to the bridge without fear of emotional compromise.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone's wondering how Jim can still flop around when Spock, who is considerably stronger than him, is holding him, it's because Spock defaults to being very gentle with Jim and not using his full strength, especially when Jim's injured. (But of course he's not
above pulling out more strength when Jim asks for it)

Anyways, let's see how well you know me! I thought of one part of this arc long before the rest then had to put together the rest to post. So what do you think came first, the hurt/angst or the comfort/comedy?
Chapter 234

Chapter Notes

Man, I am feeling that end of the semester exhaustion. But hopefully now free time will mean catching up on sleep. Topic change, but for anyone curious, the order for this arc (as I thought of it) was the last name thing, "that sounds like something Jim would say, but not when he was in his fully right mind," "maybe high on painkillers?", and finally "I guess I gotta go injure him somehow now." Props to anyone who got it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

At the end of the shift, Spock was prepared to leave the bridge and return to his quarters to meditate before visiting Jim. However, before he could depart there was a noise from Nyota’s station. He turned expectantly.

She had her earpiece in and turned to Spock, still listening to the request. “It’s Admiral Pike.” She winced slightly. “He wants to talk to Jim; I don’t think he knows what happened.”

Spock took a deep breath, quickly understanding the situation. “As I have not submitted either a mission log or incident report, it is likely he does not know.” He stood from the captain’s chair. “Route the transmission to the Briefing Room One; I will inform him.”

“Yes, sir.” Nyota turned back to her station and began the process.

Knowing she would be able to finish without supervision, Spock left the bridge and proceeded to the briefing room. It was not long before Admiral Pike appeared on screen.

He was looking down at a padd. “So I’m reviewing a report from the last planet you visited. They said that our representative disrespected their culture and told them they were unfit for Federation membership. What the hell happened down there, J—” he paused, finally looking up. “You aren’t Jim.”

“No, I believe we have known each other long enough for you to determine that.” Spock straightened and considered the possible insubordination of his words. “Sir.”

Pike sighed and run a hand down his face. “And I’ve known you long enough to know that you only get this sassy—don’t object, it’s true—when you’re upset. Is Jim in Sickbay?”

“Yes, Admiral.” Spock relaxed his shoulders. “This planet’s idea of diplomacy was attacking the leader of the group they wished to join; they nearly killed Jim.”

“And if he’s still in Sickbay and hasn’t bothered McCoy enough to get released, it really must be bad.” Pike leaned back in his chair. “Okay, I guess I can see why you chewed them out.”

“I did not chew them out; I presented factual information on Federation standards of diplomacy, which they did not meet.” Spock refolded his hands together under the table. “It was logical to do so to prevent another such incident; had I not sensed Jim’s pain and called for his immediate evacuation, he would be dead.” The mere thought caused a wave of emotion so strong in Spock that he clenched his hands together with enough force to feel the bones shift.
“Alright.” Pike nodded. “We both know you probably weren’t at your most rational since Jim was hurt, but I’ll still accept that logic. Now go put in some meditation time; I’m sure you need it.”

“I will ensure that the proper reports are filed and that Dr. McCoy submits his reports as well.” Spock paused. “If you would like, you may see Jim yourself. We could transfer this to a monitor in Sickbay.”

Pike’s brows came together. “Is that a good idea?”

“I believe Jim would appreciate it.” Perhaps Spock’s decision making was flawed at the moment, but he knew Jim did enjoy talking to Pike.

“Alright.” Pike nodded. “I’ll wait while you move me over.”

“Very well.” Spock hit the audio comm. “Commander Spock to Lieutenant Uhura.”

After a moment, the response came through. “Uhura here.”

“Can you route the call with Admiral Pike Sickbay, and hold it until I resume it?” Spock believed Nyota fully capable, but did not wish to make a demand.

“Yes; doing it right now.” Pike’s face disappeared from the screen.

“Thank you, Lieutenant.” Spock shut down the comm line and exited the briefing room to head to Sickbay.

Once there, he paused in Jim’s room and began to activate the monitor. Jim stirred and looked at him sleepily. “Babe! You’re back.”

“Indeed.” Spock paused, resisting the urge to smile at Jim’s relaxed grin. It was rare to see him so carefree, even if his current state was artificial. Still, his near expression in the public environment of Sickbay meant that Pike may have been correct when speaking of Spock’s potential compromise. “There is someone else who also wishes to speak with you.” He hit the final activation sequence, and Pike appeared on the monitor by Jim’s bedside.

Jim lit up once more. “Dadmiral!” He giggled. “Cuz you’re like a dad and like an admiral. Or at least what I think a dad is supposed to be like.”

Jim’s last sentence dropped the mood some, but Pike still seemed mostly amused when he turned to Spock. “Care to explain, Commander?”

“The Captain was severely injured, including a fractured femur. Dr. McCoy has given him medication to ease his pain, but it has…side effects.” Spock looked at Jim, who seemed no more coherent than earlier.

“I see.” Spock looked up and Pike was smiling a bit. “While I’m not happy to see Jim so beat up, this is a little amusing.” He looked at Spock from the monitor. “Any other good moments we should have recorded?”

Spock tipped his head in consideration. “There was a conversation involving notable mispronunciations of my full name.”


Despite Pike on the viewscreen, Spock allowed a brief contact between his fingers and Jim’s, not
quite a kiss but suggestive of one. “You still require practice, Jim.”

“In all fairness,” Pike looked like he was trying, nearly unsuccessfully, to contain his laughter, “Vulcan is notoriously difficult for humans to pronounce. I bet there’s very few humans alive who are capable of pronouncing it.”

“I can think of multiple.” Spock’s mother and Nyota were fully capable of doing so, and Michael was nearly always fully accurate at this point, although her lack of familiarity with speaking Vulcan did hinder her pronunciation somewhat. Spock occasionally questioned his father’s decision to not have Michael learn the language, but she had succeeded on Vulcan despite her incomplete knowledge.

“You also know more human linguists highly familiar with Vulcan than most.” Pike did have a point.

Before Spock could respond, there was a groan from the door. “Dammit man, he’s supposed to be resting.” Dr. McCoy stormed into the room, only pausing slightly when he saw Pike. “I appreciate all of you wanting to visit Jim, but visiting hours are through. It’s time for him to rest, even if it means sedating him cuz he’d rather chat with all of you.” He directed a glare at Jim as of he believed him fully capable of doing so.

“Hey.” Even Jim’s disappointed expression was no match for Dr. McCoy.

“I’ve been on enough ships to know to avoid angry CMOs.” Pike looked between Spock and McCoy. “I’ll expect both of your reports soon; the rest of the Admiralty will want an explanation about the planet.”

“You will have it, Admiral.” Spock nodded solemnly.

Dr. McCoy waved a hand nonchalantly. “I’ll send it in and keep you posted. Now let me deal with my patient.”

“Very well. Pike out.” The monitor by Jim’s bedside went dark.

McCoy’s glare turned to Spock. “That means you too.”

Knowing he was in need of meditation and not wishing to incur McCoy’s wrath, Spock acquiesced. “I will return for an update on Jim’s position prior to my next shift.” He turned and walked away, Dr. McCoy’s grumbling about hobgoblins following him out.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Hanukkah to anyone celebrating it!
Even with his limited mobility, Jim was practically shaking with excitement. Today was the day he was finally getting out of Sickbay, even if he wasn’t quite on full duty yet. Or even fully medically cleared yet.

Jim shifted himself further up into a sitting position, resisting the urge to shove something down his cast to use to scratch that itch that was there. “I am so ready to be out of here. I’ve gotten sick of Sickbay.” He paused at Bones’ unimpressed expression. “No offense.”

“Whatever.” Bones grumbled and looked back at his padd. “Maybe that means you’ll learn your lesson about being so reckless on away missions. And in life in general.”

“Hey.” Jim crossed his arms, but was in too good of a mood to do his usual exaggerated pout. “This one wasn’t even my fault really.”

“The captain is correct.” Spock stood by Jim’s bedside, ready to lend a hand with moving Jim. “However,” he turned to look at Jim seriously, “you are often unnecessarily careless with your wellbeing.”

“Whose side are you on?” Jim ignored Bones’ persistent laughing. “Anyways, I was looking forward to being back in my own bed, but it looks like you might not be in it. Keep this up and you’re sleeping on the couch.”

“I am merely concerned for your health.” Spock offered Jim two fingers in a simple Vulcan kiss. Who was Jim to turn that down, irritated or no? “I know.” He smiled softly and met Spock’s fingers, just holding them still and enjoying the contact.

“I hope you two remember that that’s about as intimate as you can get for a while.” Bones looked between them seriously.

“We are aware, Doctor.” Spock moved his hands behind his back. “I have memorized all the rules regarding Jim’s recovery, from his sleeping, bathing, and eating requirements to—”

“It’s ok, I know you know.” Bones turned his focus back to his padd. “Probably know them better than me and Jim combined with that memory of yours.”

“Really?” Jim looked between them. “Sleeping, eating, and bathing routines? What am I, a baby?”

“You certainly act like one sometimes.” Bones grumbled then looked up from his padd. “Look at it this way: We went through a lot of work and multiple medical procedures to ensure you didn’t die. I don’t want that hard work coming undone because you felt like not following my rules because you can’t control yourself around your green blooded whatever you two are to each other now.”
Spock was about to respond, probably to tell Bones their exact relationship status, but Jim cut him off. “No matter what, he won’t be getting any for a while after that stunt with Pike.”

“What incident, Captain?” Spock raised his eyebrows in that way he did when he was being fake innocent.

“You know.” Jim raised his eyebrows expectantly. “Having me talk to Pike while I was out of it on painkillers.”

Spock kept up the innocent act, but Jim knew him well enough to see the spark of amusement in his eyes. “Admiral Pike merely wished to be updated on your condition.”

“There are other ways of doing that.” Even if he was a bit annoyed, Jim couldn’t hold his serious expression much longer. “Plus, I could see doing it once, but two times?”

“As Pike knows you on both a professional and personal level, it seemed appropriate to allow him to visit you, in a manner of speaking.” Jim felt a note of strong amusement through the bond. “Additionally, he seemed to enjoy your commentary, like how your cast causing you to utilize a mobility aid meant that you two matched.”

“God, you’re so on the couch. And I’ll pay you back somehow.” Jim shook his head, but he still smiled at Spock. “But for now you’re also my easiest way to move, so give me a lift?”

“Of course, Jim.” Spock effortlessly slid his arms under Jim before carefully depositing him in the wheelchair beside the bed.

“Thanks.” Jim shifted, experimentally rolling himself back and forth a little, testing to make sure he could operate it. He looked up at Bones. “This can get me anywhere on the ship?”

“It should.” Bones pulled up the schematics on his padd and showed them to Jim. “It’s set to have a certain level of interaction with the ship’s systems so it can either use its resources or deploy built-in accommodations in the ship that exist for people who need mobility assistance of any kind. If you have a problem, call Scotty.” Bones looked between him and Spock with a smirk. “There’s potential for it to go wrong, but it’s still probably a little easier than just having Spock carry you everywhere, even if you two would look amusing doing that.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Doctor, we are all aware that that would be highly inefficient.”

Jim grinned a little despite himself. “It could be fun though.”

“Well it’s not part of the plan, so we won’t rely on that.” Bones looked at him sternly. “And remember, you’re on light duty only. If I hear about you doing anything more strenuous than watching over the starcharting and filling out paperwork I will find and sedate you.”

“Alright.” Jim nodded, a little intimidated despite himself. “Between you and Spock I’ll have no room for misbehaving.”

Bones narrowed his eyes at the sass but must have ultimately decided it wasn’t worth it. “Just get out of my Sickbay before I change my mind.”

“Gladly.” Jim started to move himself out the door and glanced behind his shoulder (and wow, up a lot more than usual). “Spock, you coming?”

“I am, Jim.” Spock followed him out of Sickbay, not any more eager than Jim to get on Bones’ bad side.
Chapter End Notes

Anyone who'd risk being on Bones' bad side?
Jim stretched, looking down at his leg where it stuck out from under the covers. The cast was due to come off soon, but Bones still had him on medically restricted duty.

Which unfortunately meant he was medically restricted from other things as well. No unsupervised activities that got his heart rate up, and “No Jim, Spock does not count as supervision.” He could hear it in Bones’ exact tone; he’d certainly heard it enough times for that.

Jim frowned at the empty other side of the bed; he knew Spock was working a double and would meet him on the bridge as soon as his shift in the lab ended, but it was so much easier to get ready with Spock there to help. Jim wouldn’t admit it with a phaser to the head, but maybe he kinda liked it when Spock took care of him. There was something comforting about being carried when he couldn’t walk; Jim was always finding new ways to appreciate Spock’s strength.

But for now Jim would make do with the chair. With the ease that came with having to do this the past few weeks, Jim pulled the chair over, configured it to make getting in easier, then moved himself over.

He couldn’t help but laugh at the thought that although his legs were going to need some work because he hadn’t been able to use them lately, this certainly had helped his upper body strength.

The rest of his morning routine went smoothly. Jim really had to appreciate the accessibility accommodations built in to the ship; while he missed his water showers, the retractable lip at the edge of the shower stall worked either way, and the sonics meant he didn’t even have to wrap up his cast.

Even without Spock’s help, it didn’t take Jim long to get ready. Which meant that he was perfectly presentable when he heard the familiar whistle of the comm. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

He rolled over to the desk, easily avoiding his usual desk chair that had been set aside, and hit the button. “Kirk here.”

“You have a call from Admiral Pike; should I forward it to your quarters?” Jim didn’t recognize the voice; Nyota must have just promoted someone.

He’d have to ask her about the new officer so he could pass on his congrats. An overnight bridge shift was still a bridge shift after all. “That sounds great. Patch him through.”

“Doing it now, sir.” Was that a little bit of a purr on the r? Maybe the new officer was Caitian.

“Thanks. Kirk out.” He shut down the comm channel and pulled up the screen for the video call.

After a moment the Starfleet logo gave way to Pike, looking serious. “Captain.”
Jim nodded in acknowledgement. “Admiral.”

Pike’s serious expression cracked. “Don’t you mean Dadmiral?”

Jim groaned and buried his head in his hands. “I’m gonna kill Spock.” He looked up, realizing that probably wasn’t the right thing to say on an official channel, even if he was just talking to Pike. “Not really. But maybe a little.”

“It’s ok, I know you’d never really hurt him.” Pike smiled. “Anyways, I have good news for you.”

“Yeah?” Jim perked up. “A cool mission or something?”

“Better.” Pike smiled a little wider. “You’ve officially been approved for shore leave, to be taken at your discretion.”

“Really?” Jim felt his brow pull together. “I’m not turning it down, but I don’t remember requesting leave.”

“You didn’t have to.” Pike sat back. “Jim, I’ve gotten tired just reading your mission logs, not to mention what happened the last time you beamed down to a planet. You and your crew have earned some R&R.”

“Okay I can see that. But we’ve only been out here for…” How many months had it been? Jim looked at Pike. “It’s still been less than a year, right?”

Pike laughed, but there was a slight edge of concern when he spoke. “If you’ve started losing track of time, it’s definitely time for some leave.”

“Spock would probably know exactly how long we’ve been out here.” Jim said it almost without thinking of it, but it was probably true.

“Well—and don’t misconstrue this—Vulcans don’t need leave as much as the rest of us. They pride themselves on it.” Pike smiled nostalgically. “I don’t think I ever got Spock to actually take leave the whole time he was under my command.” He looked at Jim a little more seriously. “That’s your challenge now; I think he still needs it even if he’ll refuse.”

“Spock I can handle; it’s Scotty I’ll have to pry off the ship.” Jim smiled. “Still, I think some leave will do the crew good. Thank you, sir.”

“Your and your crew have more than earned it. Use it wisely.” Pike nodded at him. “Pike out.”

The screen went dark, but Jim’s mood was pretty bright. Pike was right; his crew had earned this.

He got to the bridge after a quick stop in the mess hall and then spent most of the morning on the bridge looking over potential shore leave destinations that were close to them. He’d make a list of destinations and what they could do there and send it out to the department heads so each of them could get input from their sections of the crew.

With that decision out of his hands for now, Jim headed to the mess hall for lunch. He saw Spock and Bones sitting together and decided to join them since he hadn’t gotten to talk to Spock today since he’d been occupied with shore leave planning once they were both on the bridge.

As he was rolling over to the replicators, Jim got an idea. He knew how to get back at Spock.

When he set his tray on the table, Bones raised his eyebrows. “Really Jim? Do we need to go over
your dietary restrictions while recovering again?”

“Relax Bones, they’re baked, not fried.” Jim picked up a chicken wing, licking the excess barbeque sauce off his fingers. “What’s healthier than baked chicken?”

Bones narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “Alright, but you really should get some fruit or veggies with that instead of just meat.”

“Will do.” Jim set aside the bones and picked up another wing. “Next trip to the replicator.” Before Bones could object, Jim lit up. “Oh that reminds me. We’ve got shore leave coming up; share the list I sent out with your departments so I can pick somewhere the crew will actually want to go.”

“That is good to hear.” Bones got a faraway look. “I wonder if Jo’s school has a break; it’d be good to see her.”

“That would be great.” Jim smiled. “I’m sure she’d be happy to see you.” He picked up another wing, sucking more sauce off his fingers before looking across the table with a smirk. “Any thoughts, Spock?”

Spock’s eyes snapped up from where they’d been glued to Jim’s hands and mouth. “Thoughts on what matter, Captain?”

“Shore leave, Spock.” Jim popped another finger into his mouth and cleaned the sauce off, resisting the urge to smirk when Spock’s eyes got drawn to his lips again. “Weren’t you paying attention?”

Before either of them could say anything more, there was the sharp sound of Bones shoving his chair back. “Oh my god.” He glared at them. “I have no idea what the hell you two are doing, but you better stop it right now. I sure as hell don’t want to be a witness to it.” He leaned in again. “And need I remind you Jim has not been fully medically cleared yet, so neither of you should be thinking about what I can clearly tell you are thinking about.” He shook his head and picked up his tray. “Unbelievable.” With that, he turned and walked away.

Once Bones was gone, Spock turned to Jim, looking a little more …clearheaded. He raised an eyebrow at Jim. “Was that truly necessary?”

Jim had to hold back his laugh. Better to act innocent a little longer. “What? I like wings.”

“You intentionally…distracted me in front of Dr. McCoy.” Leave it to Spock to cut straight to the point.

Jim shrugged nonchalantly, taking another bite of wing and chewing and swallowing before responding to Spock. “You put me on a call to Pike while I was out of it on painkillers. Twice.”

“So this is your payback, so to speak?” Spock raised an eyebrow. “But you have also embarrassed yourself in front of Dr. McCoy.”

Jim snorted. “Bones has been my doctor for years and was my roommate. I have no illusions about him thinking I have dignity with my partner or partners.” Jim laughed, thinking back to a particular incident at the Academy. “He once prescribed me a cold shower, and I don’t even think he was kidding.”

“Still, he is the one who will be responsible for clearing you at your appointment tomorrow.” He couldn't tell if Spock was disappointed or smug.

Jim’s wing dropped from his hand to his plate. “Damn.”
Chapter End Notes

If you think about it, CMOs have a weird level of control over the crew's sex lives. They even have to give approval in certain situations for crew members to get it on with their partner of choice. Also yes I do know too much about star trek probably.

Speaking of, bonus points if you catch the little star trek easter egg in this chapter
By the time Jim arrived at his appointment in Sickbay the next day, he could tell Bones was still annoyed with him. Jim really didn’t have to be an empath to pick that up; it was pretty clear from his grumpy expression. Of course, sometimes it seemed like Bones’ face was just like that.

Still, Jim plastered on a smile when Bones finally walked over to his biobed. “Hey Bones! How’re you?”

“Surprised you’re here on time and I didn’t have to drag you down here.” He finally glanced up from the padd at Jim. “You just want the cast off, right?”

“Yep. I can’t wait to be able to properly scratch my leg again, plus everything else.” He paused, wondering if he should just go for it before deciding to just do it. “Speaking of everything else—”

“Your clearance will change when I say it can change, based on my official medical opinion.” Bones was back to focusing on the padd.

Damn. “How’d you know what I was going to say?”

“You’re predictable.” Bones looked up at him from the padd, thoroughly unamused. “You and the hobgoblin always bother me about getting back on duty, if in your own, different, ways, not to mention your little show yesterday.”

Despite what he’d said to Spock the day before, Jim felt a little embarrassed. “About that… It was really more to embarrass Spock; you just kinda got caught up in it.”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “Do your best to get me not caught next time, if there is a next time.”

“Will do.” Jim decided to switch topics. “You know, I’d really like to be cleared by shore leave so I can more fully participate in leave activities.”

Bones sighed, but it sounded more like a groan. “Please don’t give me mental images neither of us want me to have.” He slipped back into a more professional mode. “Adjust your leg so we can begin taking off the cast.”

Jim shifted and then held still as Bones moved something over his leg on the biobed and he felt it begin to cut off the cast. “Maybe I meant swimming at the beach and stuff like that.”

Bones raised an eyebrow. “We both know damn well the activity you had in mind, even if you can think of others.”

Jim shrugged. “Ok, maybe fair enough. But I would like to be able to fully enjoy shore leave doing other things too.”
“Yeah?” Bones lowered the attachment over Jim’s leg, now free of the cast, and began doing scans. “Yes.” Jim tucked his hands behind his head. “The planet that’s currently leading the crew poll has all sorts of things to do. Beaches, clubs, museums, even a theater that does old Earth plays. Plenty of options.”

“Hmm.” Bones set aside the tricorder. “Time to start moving your leg.” He put his hands in supportive spots on Jim’s thigh and calf. “I’ll be guiding the movement, but try to do it using your own strength as much as possible, ok?”

“Alright.” Jim nodded and followed Bones’ guidance to slowly bending his leg and stretching it, only wincing a little. “The interesting thing is that technically, Pike said leave was at my discretion. I get to pick the date or time we do it. So if I had a reason to do it later rather than sooner…”

Bones paused his motions with Jim’s legs and he could tell Bones wasn’t buying it. “You wouldn’t postpone the crew’s leave just so you and Spock can spend leave doing…that.”

He really did know Jim too well. “Okay maybe not, but I’m feeling fine and the physical therapy has been going well, so—”

“So I’m still the doctor here. Would you want me calling out backseat strategies when we’re fighting the Klingons or whoever’s trying to kill us this week?” He turned back to the padd.

Jim shrugged as much as he could laying down. “I dunno Bones, got any good ideas for battle strategies?”

“Ha ha.” Bones crossed his arms, padd dangling precariously from one hand. “Do you want to get this over with or are you going to continue the jokes?”

“Sorry.” Jim couldn’t help but smile. “Still, a good captain listens to all the crew, just saying.”

“Okay, let’s not get philosophical. Besides, doctors and captains have different rules.” Bones made some notes on his padd after looking over the biobed readouts. He looked at Jim. “Ready to try standing?”

“Let’s go for it.” Jim had practiced this with the cast on in his physical therapy sessions, but the real deal would be more rewarding probably. Plus, he still hadn’t managed it without support yet. But for now he carefully shifted on the biobed, really appreciating the increased mobility in his leg now that the cast was off, and cautiously brought his feet to the floor, keeping most of his weight on his arms on the biobed and leaning, but slowly starting to increase the amount of weight on his feet themselves.

“Good.” Bones was quickly typing out notes on the padd. He watched Jim carefully, stepping closer when he saw Jim wince. “Any problems?”

“No. Just feels a little weird.” Jim kept his tight grip on the biobed.

“Would you want a mobility aid like a cane?” Bones skimmed through something on the padd. “Could be good to ease yourself into walking again.”

“That could be good, but no promises I’ll stick to it very long.” Jim only grinned more at Bones’ eye roll.

“Well medically you’re healed up, so this is a rare area I’ll defer mostly to your judgement on how long you need it.” He hit something on the padd. “I’ll have someone bring it here so you can use it on your way out.”
“Sounds good.” Jim nodded, not sure if he should push about what he really wanted to know.

“And since I can practically hear you wondering, you are now cleared for full duty.” Bones didn’t look up from the padd. “That means clearance for non-duty activities as well, but not around me again.”

“Of course.” Jim couldn’t help his grin. “Maybe I’ll grab some dinner on the way out of here; chicken wings are sounding good again…”

That got Bones to finally look up. “I’m leaving to continue my rounds; don’t be here when I get back and don’t tell me when you’re doing.”

“Okay.” Jim was grinning, already trying to mentally send the good news to Spock. “Thanks Bones!” He ignored the grumbling from Bones as he walked away, leaving Jim impatiently awaiting the cane. So close to being back with Spock, and Jim couldn’t wait…

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses on the next arc? I’ve had it planned...
Hello everyone! I can't believe it's almost Christmas/almost the end of the year! I'll spend my holiday season still writing this probably. Anyways, at least one commenter called where I'm going with this; props to you, although you won't find out who you are quite yet...

Jim shifted a little in his seat, careful not to send his cane falling to the ground from where it was resting against his chair. Thanks to him and Spock celebrating his full medical clearance the night before, Jim was a little sore in the way that put him in a great mood, even if it made him wish the mess hall chairs were a little more padded. Still, he was in a good enough mood to ignore that. Such a good mood he wasn’t even complaining about the salad Bones was making him eat.

His current company probably helped too. Nothing to get those pre-shore leave good vibes going like lunch with his two best friends (outside of his boyfriend/future bondmate/fiancé/whatever the proper term for Spock would be). Jim smiled across the table at Gaila. “So do you have plans for shore leave yet?”

“Yep.” She grinned. “Pasha and I are going clubbing. Sulu might join us; Ben’s coming out and depending on what he wants they might join us too.”

Bones made a face. “Is Chekov even old enough to get into a club?”

“Yep.” Gaila nodded and took another bite of her lunch, some Orion thing Jim had never quite learned to pronounce the name of. “He’s like 20 now.”

“Wow.” Jim shook his head. “He still looks so young.”

Gaila raised an eyebrow. “All of you look young. Have you not noticed how humans age yet? You all look like babies, even if Len here is already a grumpy old man inside.”

“Ha ha.” Bones rolled his eyes. “Still, even if a lot of us look 18 or barely older, the kid has a babyface, even compared to the rest of us.”

“Hmm.” Gaila thought a moment before shrugging. “Fair enough.” She looked at Bones. “Do you have plans yet?”

“Yeah.” Bones’ expression went a little soft. “Jo’s actually able to come on out to the middle of nowhere here despite the short notice. She and Carol haven’t met face to face yet, just on screens and over comms, so…”

“Aww, Bones.” Jim smiled and reached across the table to slap his arm. “That’s huge.”

Gaila gave him a little side hug from her seat next to him. “I’m so excited for you.”

“Yeah, whatever.” He shrugged off their touch, but Bones was practically radiating happiness and Jim got the feeling he wouldn’t have to be an empath to know it. He looked back at Jim. “And what
about you? Doing something worthy of incessantly bothering me about clearance and having that
cast off?"

Jim rolled his eyes. “C’mon, I wasn’t that bad.”

“You were.” Bones looked at Gaila. “He complains when he doesn’t get what he wants, back me up
on this.”

Gaila held up her hands and leaned back, but she was smiling a little. “I’m not getting in the middle
of this.”

Bones grumbled, but Jim just laughed. “That’s probably for the best.” He took a drink of his water
and looked between them. “I don’t know what I’m doing yet actually. Before we got together, Spock
rarely did shore leave, although Uhura says they’d sometimes do museums or things like that. She
never got him off the ship for a full day though, just enough time for a quick trip then he’d go back
up to the ship.”

Gaila grinned. “So you might still be able to go clubbing with us then? Sneak out at night while
Spock sneaks back the labs?”

Jim laughed. “I don’t know; it could be fun.” He let himself run through it in his head a bit, picturing
Spock there with him despite what Gaila said. “Get dressed in something provocative, do some
dancing, get Spock just riled up enough that if I get out of bed at all for the rest of shore leave I won’t
be walking straight.”

Bones seemed somewhere between choking on his drink and spitting it out, but Gaila just smirked.
“Like you’ve ever done anything straight in your life, Jimmy.”

Jim couldn’t hold back his laugh at that. “You got me there.”

Bones rolled his eyes, finally seeming to reach the proper balance of breathing and drinking. “I think
you two are some of the only people in the universe that still reference those old labels.”

“Aww c’mon.” Jim grinned. “I’m honoring a proud history by making jokes about my sexuality. It’s
practically my heritage.”

Gaila was giggling but nodded along. “Yeah Len, don’t disrespect this grand tradition. Have some
respect for this culture.”

“Whatever.” Bones seemed to be holding himself back from rolling his eyes again as he took another
sip of his drink. “I just don’t want any mental images of you and the hobgoblin in bed together if I
can avoid it, Jim. You’re like my brother, and he’s like my weird coworker.”

Jim raised an eyebrow. “You two are friends and you know it.”

Bones glowered at him and Gaila poorly attempted to stifle another laugh. Bones set down his cup
and sighed. “Either way, the fewer mental images I get the better.”

“Alright, whatever you want.” Jim stretched in his chair. “I’ll make no promises though. I mean
really, I’d have thought that between being my roommate and doctor you’d be desensitized to all of
this.”

“I’d really hope so, and yet.” Bones shook his head. “Maybe I’ve managed to block a lot of it out,
only to leave myself vulnerable to getting re-scandalized.”
“Really?” Gaila looked amused. “You never walked in on me and Jim doing anything too bad; Nyota probably saw the same kind of stuff before we worked out our overnight guest policy and she never complains.”

“Bones here just likes being a dramatic southern belle.” Jim grinned, mostly immune to Bones’ glare by now. “Although in his defense, he did walk in on me with other people besides you, so maybe he has something to complain about that Nyota doesn’t.”

“Exactly.” Bones shook his head. “Jim, I love you, but you really could have been a better roommate. Would it have killed you to send a message?”

“Hmm.” Jim rubbed his chin in an exaggerated thinking gesture.

“Dammit Jim.” Bones slapped his hand away. “Medically speaking, no it would not have.”

Jim and Gaila both laughed. Jim stretched before looking at his empty plate. “Well, as fun as reliving my wilder days has been, I now have all sorts of thoughts about how me and Spock can fill the rest of our day off…”

Bones groaned. “What was I just saying, Jim? What was I just saying?”

“What you wanted a heads up.” Jim winked at him. “Consider the sock on the door policy in place for my quarters.”

Gaila laughed and mock saluted. “Aye aye.”

Bones had dropped his face into his arms, and Jim patted him on the head before grabbing his now empty tray with one hand and his cane with the other, shifting some weight onto it before getting up. “Well, I’m off. I’ll see you two during our last shifts before leave.”

“Bye Jim! Have fun!” Gaila waved, and Jim thought he saw Bones do a one-finger salute as he walked out.

Yep, nothing like lunch with friends to get him in the right mood for leave.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, friendship time is just the best. I saw something on tumblr (pre-daylong boycott/the site's possible demise) about how fic is basically so much more character driven than most other types of fiction, and honestly that seems so true. This kind of stuff would probably get cut for not being plotty enough in professional writing, but I've definitely hidden Chekhov's guns in innocuous chapters before...
Chapter Notes

First off, sorry about getting this chapter up late; I completely lost track of time today. Thankfully we're getting into a planned arc now, so I do have some stuff prepared and should get chapters up faster now. I hope you enjoy this arc!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Ultimately, Jim let Spock make their plans for shore leave, for the first half at least. Which meant that Spock would be returning to the ship for a good chunk of leave after all. Jim had tried to argue that Spock should spend more time off, but Spock had had plenty of excuses ready about wanting to work in the labs while it was quieter and he didn’t have obligations on the bridge and how as a Vulcan he needed less rest than the rest of the crew so he should work on the ship. Jim’s attempts to remind him that he was still half human resulted in Spock pointing out that he was still taking some leave, and Jim remembered that it was pretty pointless to argue with Spock most of the time.

Jim himself didn’t have a single duty shift scheduled for the entirety of shore leave. Both Spock and Bones had insisted that since Jim was still recovering (despite both being fully aware that he was cleared now) he needed to take some time to relax and recover. So Jim would have to find some nice, non-strenuous activities to fill up his leave with. He was still using the cane, so that limited his options some, although this planet did have good accommodations that adapted activities for people with different mobility levels. Jim figured he could look into that while Spock was holed up in the labs.

But for now, he was going to enjoy the date night that Spock had planned for them. They’d eaten dinner on the ship, and now they were preparing to head down. Jim smiled at Spock as they both finished getting ready. He had to admit, seeing Spock out of uniform and all dressed up was a damn nice sight; almost enough to distract Jim from the fact that they wouldn’t be spending much of leave together. He walked over and rested his arms on Spock’s shoulders with his hands clasped behind Spock’s neck, trying not to hit him in the back with his cane in the process, and resisted the urge to lean in for a kiss as he let Spock support some of his weight. “I’m feeling a little torn right now. You look so nice that part of me wants to show you off, but part of me is just thinking of all sorts of things we can do without leaving this room…”

Spock raised his eyebrow but made no move to get out of Jim’s embrace. “We have tickets for the theater, Jim.”

“They’re doing other shows.” Jim smirked at Spock. “There’s plenty of times to go see the plays, and plenty ways to spend shore leave.”

“This theater company is relatively new, but they have gotten good reviews.” Spock shifted his shoulders and Jim took the cue to drop his arms back to his side, returning weight to his cane. “Additionally, the plays of Shakespeare have been revered for centuries on Earth.”

“Look at you, being all cultured.” Jim smiled and shook his head. “Alright, we’ll go to the play.”

“We will still have time for…other activities later tonight.” Spock reached out and adjusted the collar of Jim’s shirt. He met Jim’s eyes and the corner of his lips quirked up just slightly in the way he
had to know drove Jim wild. “We will make the most of our time together this shore leave.”

Jim grinned despite the reminder that they wouldn’t be together the whole time. “Have I said that I love you lately? Cuz it’s true.” He leaned in and gave Spock a quick kiss on the lips, bringing his free hand up to meet Spock’s at the same time.

Spock returned both kisses, but parted after what felt like too short a time to Jim. “We must get going. We would not want to miss the show.”

“Whatever you say.” Jim smiled again and gestured for Spock to lead the way, knowing it would give him a chance to enjoy the view.

Before long they were waiting in the fancy lobby of a building decorated to look like old fashioned earth theater. Jim looked around and grinned when he saw a bar along one wall. “Spock, check it out. They have a bar.”

Spock looked where Jim was pointing. “Indeed.”

Jim smiled as an idea came to him. “Maybe I should see if they make chocolate martinis.”

“It is possible.” Spock raised an eyebrow. “Is there a reason you wish for that particular drink?”

“It’s not for me.” Jim grinned a little wider. “I want to see what the effect of having both chocolate and alcohol at once would have on my amazing half Vulcan, half human boyfriend.”

Spock’s expression remained mostly neutral, but Jim could see the amusement in his eyes. “You have already seen me intoxicated before, Jim.”

Jim smiled at the memories of that; their little winter trip to Iowa while Jim was recovering from everything with Khan had had all sorts of great experiences. He looked back at Spock. “Yeah, but that was just chocolate. Don’t you have any scientific curiosity about how introducing a new factor will affect the dependent variable here, which is how drunk you get?”

Jim got the feeling Spock would have been smiling a bit if they were in private. “As I have to return to duty for gamma shift, this may be a better opportunity for a control test where I remain uninebriated for comparison.”

Jim groaned. “God, how do you make science sound so sexy?” He leaned in for a quick peck on Spock’s lips, careful not to lose his balance with the cane. Jim pulled back a little, keeping their faces close. “I might still get a chocolate martini though.”

Spock’s brow furrowed. “Why?”

Jim grinned. “Because I enjoy them, and I’m not working anytime soon.”

“Very well.” There was another flicker of amusement from Spock before a tone over the lobby speakers caught his attention and he turned back to Jim. “That is the signal to take our seats; you may have to retrieve a chocolate martini during intermission instead.”

Jim let out an exaggerated sigh. “Okay, I’ll be patient. Lead the way to our seats.”

Spock nodded, turned, and started walking, carefully leading Jim through the crowd milling into the theater.
While I haven't written drunk!Spock (yet) if you want to see a little bit of their mentioned trip out to Iowa it's in chapter 7 of the extra scenes for this fic, which I have as separate work in this series if you haven't checked it out yet. I don't add to the extra scenes as often as I update this, but I do still enjoy posting there too. It's fun for me, so I hope all of you enjoy it too!

Anyways, anyone see where this is going now?
Hello everyone! More of you seem to know where I’m going with this, and I hope you enjoy it as much as I’m enjoying writing it...

Once they got to the theater and settled into their seats, Jim resisted the urge to let his hands wander when the lights went down. As new as being cleared again still was, he and Spock were adults at a professional theater performance, not teenagers in the back of a movie theater. If Spock wanted to enjoy the show, Jim wouldn’t interfere with that.

However, when the show started, Jim found himself distracted for other reasons. This Macbeth seemed familiar the moment he stepped onto the stage, and when he spoke the feeling only got stronger…

It was deep into the later scenes of the play when it finally hit Jim. It wasn’t that he’d seen this actor in anything else, not really. He’d seen that man before, but in a far different role…

The play and the dialogue began to melt away. Jim wasn’t a late 20-something starship captain in a theater but a preteen boy looking into a room too big packed with too many people and too many soldiers with too strong phaser rifles. Standing above it all was the very man who was on stage now, but he was younger and saying very different words…

“The revolution is successful. But survival depends on drastic measures. Your continued existence represents a threat to the well-being of society. Your lives mean slow death to the more valued members of the colony. Therefore, I have no alternative but to sentence you to death. Your execution is so ordered, signed Kodos, Governor of Tarsus IV.”

Jim had been spared and led out of the room, something about recognizing him and not wanting a scandal, but he snuck back to peek through the door and saw the speech and the chaos that followed, the phaser fire and screaming and panic and the horrifying silence that followed. He’d run away and hid before they came out of the room; he was too terrified of what he would have seen in the aftermath, or what would have happened to him had they found him.

He’d kept running after that; through the streets that no longer felt safe, hadn’t for too long, until he’d reached the house that he’d formerly shared with his cousins, but they weren’t coming back. God, they were never coming back. He’d left Iowa to get out of a house filled with pain and ghosts, and here he was in another one. Was he cursed? Was this all because of him?

A touch on his arm brought Jim back to the present. In the dark, he could just barely see Spock leaning over, concern clear on his face. The quiet whisper came a moment later. “Are you alright? You seem distressed.”

“Yeah.” Jim tried to smile but he wasn’t sure how reassuring it was. “I’m fine; I just need a little breather.”

Spock nodded and Jim carefully scooted out of their row, trying to move as smoothly as possible but
probably still accidentally hitting some knees with his cane as he passed, glad that Spock had gotten them a place in the balcony so he had fewer people to walk past on his way out.

Once he was outside, Jim took a deep breath and tried to pull his thoughts into something coherent. He half collapsed against the exterior balcony railing, his elbows quickly joining his cane on the ledge while he buried his face in his hands. His mind was still racing, but Jim felt sure of at least one thing.

That man, that actor, was Kodos. Kodos the Executioner, the one who had ordered the deaths of half of the people he’d been supposed to be governing. The man who’d let that society fall into chaos, who may have ignored the early problems. Had it been intentional so he could carry out his twisted plans?

Did it matter? That man had killed 4000 people. He may not have been the one pulling the trigger, but the blood was on his hands nonetheless.

He was alive. They’d found something that they thought was Kodos’s body in the charred remains of his mansion, but Jim had always had a feeling... it had been easier to believe that at least one of the monsters haunting his nightmares was dead and couldn’t reach him back then, but still... Jim shook his head. Kodos was alive, and he was just living his life as a damn actor with no repercussions for his actions.

That was going to change.

Jim raised his face to look out into the night, his arms still on the railing and his hands shaking before he closed them into fists. He could make Kodos pay. He wasn’t just another underfed—starving really—kid lost in a mass of other suffering people. Not anymore.

Jim was an adult, and he’d taken down far worse than Kodos before. Other killers like Nero, other dictators like Khan. He wouldn’t even need to pull the crew in for this one; better to do it alone and not involve them.

Besides, he wouldn’t need the ship or the crew for this. All he’d need was one little phaser from the armory...

There was the definite temptation to use a phaser rifle. Make him disappear like all those people had, in a flash of agony. But no, that wouldn’t do. There needed to be something left behind, something people would find so they’d know. Know that Kodos had finally been brought to justice...

“Jim?” He turned as much as he could at the sound of Spock’s voice, the anger inside cooling a bit at the clear concern in Spock’s eyes. “Are you alright? I can sense that you are upset.”

That wouldn’t do. Jim took a deep breath and imagined raising his shields before looking at Spock again with a smile. “I’m fine. Just needed some air, like I said.”

Spock frowned slightly, the expression monumental for him in public. “You were experiencing strong emotions, and now you are shielding against me. Are you certain that you are alright?”

“I’m fine.” Or he would be, once he finally made sure that bastard got what was coming to him.

Spock hesitated. “You are still recovering. My initial plan was for us to stay afterwards and attend an event that allowed us to meet others in attendance as well as the actors because I know you enjoy social functions, but if we need to return to the ship—”

“No.” It probably came out harsher than he intended, so again Jim tried to soften it with a smile.
“I’m all cleared and want to make the most of it. No way am I missing a chance to show you off.”
With his weight against the railing, Jim extended his arms for Spock to come closer.

He did, but Jim could tell that Spock still thought something was off. Still, he accepted Jim’s kiss like it was all the reassurance he’d ever need, and when it was over he only pulled apart enough to rest their foreheads together. “I am aware that you do not like it when I or Dr. McCoy fret over your health, but we do it because we love you, Jim.” He looked directly into Jim’s eyes. “I love you.”

“I know.” Jim leaned forward for another quick kiss before pulling away. “And I love you. Now let’s get back in there.” He pulled away from Spock enough to grab his cane, then linked arms with him to lead them back in. They’d finish the show, then they’d head to the afterparty. It’d be the perfect opportunity for Jim to get close enough to confirm what he was already mostly certain of.

Then he’d strike.

Chapter End Notes

Happy Christmas Eve and Merry Christmas to everyone celebrating!
Chapter 241

This chapter got away from me a bit, but I am excited for all of you to read it. Consider it a late Christmas present that it's on the long side, if you consider tension building an acceptable gift...

Some warnings at the end of the chapter.

Jim didn’t appreciate the rest of the play as much as he probably should have. Yes, the play was a classic, and most things about the production and acting were good. But Jim couldn’t help but wonder if any of the other actors knew, if they were helping cover for Kodos.

And Jim was increasingly sure it was Kodos. Sure, he’d heard all about how memory wasn’t always reliable, how some people even questioned if eyewitness testimony should be trusted in legal proceedings, but this was different. That moment had been burned into his memory in a way that nothing could change or erase.

So Jim really did wish he could enjoy the show with Spock. He really did. But some things were more important than an evening out with his boyfriend.

Jim could tell that Spock thought something was wrong, even with all the psychic stuff blocked off. As they made their way to the afterparty, Spock stuck close to Jim’s side. “Are you certain you’re alright, Jim?”

“Fine.” Jim shot him a smile, not sure if his practiced skills in faking being ok would hold up with Spock. “Just thinking about the play, is all. Lots to digest there.”

“Indeed.” Spock’s eyes lit up in that way Jim normally loved. “The themes of the play are fascinating; Shakespeare wrote the play for King James I of England and Scotland, but it prominently features two of James’ greatest fears: supernatural forces and regicide. This makes it an interesting work for scholars to consider when debating if Shakespeare’s expressed beliefs were more in support of or against the established sociopolitical system…”

Jim loved Spock’s well researched discussions of just about everything, but now he was only half paying attention. It did sound interesting, but there were other things to consider. Like if Kodos would know who Jim was. He’d been one of thousands of colonists, just one of too many starving kids, so in that sense he probably hadn’t been worthy of Kodos’ notice. But his name would certainly draw some attention; it was what had initially gotten Kodos’ attention back then after all. They’d thought it would be in bad taste to kill the kid of a Federation hero, although they’d been perfectly fine putting him on the chopping block before then. Something about his ancestry on his mother’s side…

It wasn’t like they’d really had to worry about bad press anyways, what with how much the incident got covered up. Jim tried not to think about that too much; he didn’t really want to think about the Federation putting its image before the truth, or whether it could happen again. Of course with his knowledge of Section 31, he couldn’t help but wonder if they’d played a role in the cover up. He’d
ask his mom if he wasn’t certain it would get targets on both of their backs.

But the secrecy could do him some good. Without the authority he’d had as a governor, Kodos wouldn’t have the clearance to view the files that had the names of the witnesses. A whole lot of Jim’s life was public record, but that thankfully was not.

But still, it wouldn’t take a genius to connect the James T. Kirk who’d been on Tarsus with the Captain Kirk at this show tonight. Maybe he should hide who he was somehow, assuming people didn’t recognize him from all the Starfleet publicity. But they were on the edge of Federation space, and Jim certainly knew how much the outlying areas could be out of the loop…

“Jim?” They’d stopped, and Jim got the feeling this wasn’t the first time Spock had said his name. “Are you certain you’re alright?”

“Yeah.” Jim smiled again, but he could tell Spock wasn’t fully buying it.

Spock raised an eyebrow. “You did not respond when I asked for your thoughts on the discussion of Shakespeare’s social commentary through his works.”

“Just zoning out a little. Maybe I’m more tired than I thought.” Jim yawned for effect.

Spock hesitated. “We can return to the ship if you are in need of rest.”

“No!” Not when he was this close; he couldn’t let Kodos get away. “I want to go to this party. You know how I like social stuff; it’ll be good to mingle with people who won’t be reporting to me later on.” That gave him an idea. “In fact, can we not throw around my name or title too much today? I want to be able to relax without worrying about all the headlines about ‘heroic captain’ doing this or that.” There was a grain of truth to that, even if Jim was keeping his primary motivation from Spock. It was better not to drag him in to everything with Kodos.

There must have been enough earnestness there, real or fake, to convince Spock, because he nodded. “Very well.”

“Thanks babe.” Jim leaned in for a kiss, keeping it surface level enough that it wouldn’t pull up Spock’s reservations about PDA but still letting in enough feeling to hopefully reassure Spock. After all, he didn’t want to fuck up this relationship just because of Kodos. He wouldn’t let that bastard ruin this. He pulled away enough to look at Spock, carefully using their linked elbows and his cane to support his still not quite back balance. “Let’s go have some fun at this party.”

Spock still looked a little concerned, but nodded and allowed Jim to lead them to the hall off of the theater where the party was being held.

It was fairly crowded, but not enough that Jim’s eyes didn’t zero in on where Kodos was right away. He was lingering by a wall, all alone. Not for long. Jim turned to Spock with a smile. “Hey, want to grab us some snacks? I’d go myself, but you probably know both of our dietary restrictions better than I do, and can probably do a better job guessing which food is safe for me. I don’t want to end up in Sickbay.” Jim’s laugh at that was genuine, which seemed to help relax Spock.

“I can procure us food. Where will you be?” Spock scanned the room.

“I’ll be mingling, but I’m sure you’ll find me. Maybe trying to talk to the actors.” Jim smiled enough that Spock seemed reassured as he left, but as soon as his back was turned the expression melted off of Jim’s face. He made his way across the room, more quickly than someone might expect for the cane and the crowd, and slowed to a casual stop besides Kodos. He took a moment to mentally calm himself; there were too many witnesses to strike now. “Great performance tonight. I can’t imagine
it’s easy, playing a murderous, mad leader like that. Are there any past roles you’re drawing on for inspiration?”

It was satisfying to see Kodos jump, even if he covered it quickly. He looked at Jim calmly, politely. “The title role of the Scottish play has been fascinating actors for nearly a millennium now. There are an abundance of performances to draw inspiration from.”

“I’m sure.” Jim was too direct; it’s not like Kodos would admit guilt to any random partygoer. “Still, I’ve heard many actors channel their own experiences into their craft, but I imagine it would be difficult to do for this. Who can bring their own experience into scenes like ordering the deaths of innocents?”

“Not all actors follow the same methods.” Kodos shifted slightly; Jim was almost tempted to drop his shields to get a better read on him but he couldn’t risk Spock picking up on what he was really feeling. Kodos eyed him carefully. “Are you an actor yourself?”

“No, just interested.” Jim did his best attempt at a polite smile. “I’m in Starfleet actually.”

He didn’t miss the way Kodos’ eyes dropped to his cane and back up. “Starfleet allows officers or crewmembers with your…restrictions?”

Damn, Jim really wanted to punch him in the face right now. “Starfleet avoids discriminatory attitudes and practices that were sadly once common in our society. Anyone can serve, and the ‘fleet will give them the necessary accommodations to help them be their best.”

“Hmm.” Kodos avoided looking at him, scanning the room instead. “That doesn’t seem to be the best use of resources.”

It took everything Jim had not to snap at him right then and there. Resources. That was his excuse before. Resources. He took a deep breath before trying to politely smile at Kodos again, but it felt strained. He definitely had all the proof he needed now though. “It’s amazing what can be done when all people are valued.”

Before Kodos could respond, Spock arrived, balancing a plate of food. “Hello.”

“Hey babe.” Jim kissed Spock’s cheek but didn’t miss the expression that flashed across Kodos’ face. Was it due to xenophobia and not liking a human and (as far as he could probably tell) Vulcan together? Or was he the type to hate same-sex couples too? Bigotry did seem to fall together like that…

Kodos looked between them. “What is the nature of your…association?”

“We are romantically involved.” Spock beat Jim to responding, but it gave Jim more time to watch Kodos’ response.

It was to be expected; distaste. “It’s unusual to see a human and Vulcan together.”

“I am actually half human.” Spock seemed to be getting just a little uncomfortable; he probably had a good radar for this sort of thing at this point.

“Hmm.” Kodos eyed him critically.

Jim was so damn ready to hit him. But he couldn’t, not here. He’d make sure Kodos got what he deserved later. “It’s been very interesting talking to you, but I think we need to go.” Jim turned to Spock. “I’m sure we can find some better conversation partners elsewhere.” With one last glare over
his shoulder at the man who was definitely Kodos, Jim led Spock away.

Chapter End Notes

Warnings: mild Macbeth spoilers, discussions of death, Jim in a really bad headspace, Kodos being bigoted (mostly ableist)

This arc will be heavy, but it'll be fun taking on one of my favorite TOS episodes. I'll have to reign in my discussions of Shakespeare to get to the plot, but if anyone wants to talk Shakespeare hit me up (I have a degree in English and a lot of thoughts)
Happy New Year’s Eve! This year may have held ups, downs, or both for you (I know it did for me) but you survived and that’s pretty badass with how much the world is spinning off kilter these days. Let’s hope 2019 will be good for us.

But now back to the fic, where things aren’t so good for Jim...

They didn’t spend a whole lot more time at the party before they had to head back to the ship so Spock could do his gamma shift in the lab. Spock clearly still thought something was up with Jim, but he wasn’t pressing too much. Maybe he just needed to get to the lab that badly.

Regardless, it left Jim more time to do some research. The playbill had listed the actor for Macbeth as Anton Karidian, the lead actor for the troupe. Jim did all the digging he could do with his clearance as a captain, and then maybe a little more beyond that. As far as he could tell, there was no record of this man existing inside the Federation until very recently. No record at all.

There were possible explanations for that. It was rare, but some humans lived outside the Federation, mostly on ships or small, unclaimed planets. If that were the case, they wouldn’t show up in the records until they interacted with the Federation in some way, like working in it.

But it could also be someone purposely avoiding records so they could resurface with a fake name after staging their death to avoid facing any consequences for the atrocities they’d committed.

It was all too possible. Jim clenched his fists. He would make Kodos regret ever climbing out of whatever hole he’d slithered into and hid in all these years.

Jim was pretty certain, but further evidence just confirmed it. Picture comparisons, the limited vocal analysis he could do, all of it seemed to be pointing the same way. That man was Kodos.

Jim tried not to let the memories consume him, but it was so hard. Looking through the official reports didn’t help; they only had vague details about colony collapse due to famine and half of the colonists dying. But they hadn’t died, not really. They’d been killed, simple as that.

Most of the colony had been fed a lie. They’d been told that the other people were leaving to be transported to a different site on the planet to see if they’d have better luck there. By the time everything was happening, everyone was desperate enough not to question it. When they’d found out that everyone who’d been selected for the “other site” had died, most just assumed that the other site had failed from what Jim could tell. None of them questioned it. None of them knew that is had been phaser beams rather than transporter beams waiting for those who got called away.

Jim had tried to save people, mostly other kids. He’d catch the groups going in to the government headquarters, knowing he couldn’t warn them but desperately wishing he could anyways. Instead he’d just asked to play with the kids, saying they could catch a later transport if necessary. Once he’d separated them, he tried to keep them from seeing what came next, but a few of the kids saw.
He wondered if poor little Kevin was ever going to be ok. It wasn’t like there was a good age to see that kind of horror, but he’d been so young…

There was the nagging question in Jim’s mind if it all had been part of Kodos’ plot. If the initial sequence of events had been orchestrated, or if he’d at least taken advantage of what had happened to further his twisted agenda.

After all, they’d ignored it when Jim and the others near the farmland first started noticing the problems that would develop into the famine. They ignored it until the crops began to rot in their fields and desperation drove people to horrible things. The society began to collapse and the crops were all beyond saving. It was horrible.

Then came the martial law under Kodos’ control, then the “transports” that only the most secret, sealed files acknowledged were executions. Most people had been so grateful there was some sort of order in society that they hadn’t questioned anything Kodos did, and the Federation, or at least whatever powers that be that covered up this fiasco, seemed ok to roll with that story. As far as Jim knew, only conspiracy theorists wondered why the governor’s mansion had burned. Most attributed it to a collapsing society of starving people.

It didn’t matter. The truth would come out soon enough. Jim took another swig of the whiskey he’d gotten at some point and gritted his teeth at the burn as it went down.

He’d make sure Kodos would pay. And he wouldn’t drag anyone else into this mess; Jim had to do this alone.

The sound of the door chiming distracted Jim; he’d locked it using his clearance code so he wouldn’t be disturbed. Still, there would be questions if he didn’t answer. He turned to the computer.

“Computer, seal all activity on this terminal for the past—” he checked the time, “four hours. Authorization Kirk, James Tiberius.” There were perks to no one on the ship having higher clearance than him.

His recent searches and all their implications safe, Jim turned to the door in his recently reinstated desk chair. “Come in.”

Spock walked in, looking wary. “Hello, Captain.”

Ah, the Spock’s on duty formality. Not Jim’s favorite thing, but hardly his problem at the moment. “Hey Spock, what’s up? I thought you’d be in the labs all night.”

“Well I was, but the long goodbye with Jim’s roommate took longer than expected. I thought I’d spend this time with you.”

“I am on my mealtime break, and I wished to spend it with you.” Spock walked in and sat down on the couch by Jim’s desk. “I wished to ascertain why you were upset earlier. Is it due to my not spending the full leave with you?”

Spock was nothing if not direct. Wrong in this case, but direct. “No babe. Trust me when I tell you that this has nothing to do with you.”

Spock’s brow furrowed. “Then why are you blocking me?”

Damn Spock was making this hard. “I don’t need help with this. I just need to be alone.”
There was maybe confusion from Spock now; Jim could still read him better than most but it was harder all shielded. Spock leaned toward him as he spoke. “It is uncharacteristic of you to seek to be so alone. Your sociability and gregariousness are defining traits.”

Jim was getting frustrated. He could feel a regrettable lashout coming, but he couldn’t help it. He needed his anger now, and he knew Spock would chip it all away. “If you claim to know me so well, why don’t you get what I’m doing now? Aren’t you the mind reader here?”

It wouldn’t take an empath to pick up on Spock’s frustration; it was clear in his voice. “I may be a telepath, but my abilities cannot go past the blocks you have put in place, nor would I wish to force it. Captain—“

“Captain?” Looks like today would be the day Spock’s formality pushed Jim over the edge. “We’re in the middle of what you think is some sort of lovers’ quarrel, and you’re still so hung up on rules that you use rank because you’re on duty?” Jim stood before he could remember his injury and ended up settling somewhat shakily against his desk. “Unbelievable.” Spock had jumped up to help him, but Jim held up a hand to make him back off. “No. What I’m dealing with doesn’t concern you, and I’ll handle it myself. Go back to the labs and don’t come looking for me until I come looking for you, ok?”

It was hard to ignore the pain on Spock’s face as Jim walked out the door, but by god he had to do it. This was too important. Jim leaned on his cane as he paced though the corridors of the ship. First stop was the armory, then the transporter room. Then he’d track down Kodos and make him pay.

Chapter End Notes

And now the next update will be next year!

I have a lot of thoughts on how Tarsus went down so hit me up if you want to talk about it
The party was still going on when Jim transported down to the theater; he’d known it was supposed to last until the wee hours of the morning but he just hoped he’d be able to find Kodos still, that that bastard hadn’t sensed something was off and disappeared again.

Jim also hoped that the holster and phase pistol he had hidden under his tux jacket were subtle enough that no one would stop him. The armory hadn’t exactly had a wide selection he could take planetside, but there were still some things intended for stealth missions, and hopefully it would work.

All his practice masking his feelings at social events came through well enough for Jim to wander into the party and ask about Kodos—remembering to refer to him by his role in the play so as to not raise suspicions—without anyone seeming too wary. Who would have thought all those years of Kelvin memorials would actually do him good.

Kodos had left, of course. But according to one of the other actors who was probably too trusting, or maybe a little too drunk, he’d just gone back to his dressing room for something.

Jim was grateful he’d looked up the theater’s blueprints prior to coming down. As quickly as he could with his cane, Jim made his way to the backstage area and to the dressing rooms until he found the right one. He carefully set his cane by the door and unholstered the phaser; he’d need both hands to keep the phaser steady, and Bones had said his leg was good to go…

He slowly opened the door, as quietly as possible. The room was only illuminated by the moonlight filtering in through a window and the vanity lights where Kodos sat in front of the mirror. The rest of the room was dark enough that he didn’t seem to see Jim walking in.

That is, until Jim raised the phaser and powered it on, the whine and illumination causing Kodos to tense. Jim stood surprisingly steady as he held the phaser towards Kodos’ head. “Stand up and turn around. Slowly.”

Kodos complied, raising his hands and even looking a little scared. Fitting that he was a coward. “What is the meaning of this?”

Despite how much his hands felt like they should be shaking, they were steady as Jim pointed his phaser at the man in front of him. Even up close Kodos looked a little different now, maybe just the stage makeup, but that face and that voice were burned into Jim’s memory. There was no way he’d be able to forget this man. He adjusted his grip on the phaser, wondering if he should turn it up to a setting high enough to kill and finish it right now instead of offering any mercy. That would be fitting in a way; those deemed unfit to live were led away and shot down by guards with phasers and not even the slightest hint of mercy. “I know who you are and what you did. Tell me why I shouldn’t set
this to kill and pull the trigger right now.”

There really did seem to be fear in the bastard’s eyes. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” It almost sounded convincing, but he had become an actor so that wasn’t surprising.

“I know you’re Kodos.” Jim advanced slowly, never lowering his phaser, getting an odd sort of satisfaction when Kodos backed away until he stumbled and fell to the ground. “I know what happened on Tarsus; what you made happen. You ordered the deaths of thousands. My name is Jim Kirk; sound familiar?”

Something Jim couldn’t identify crossed his face. He seemed to realize that he couldn’t lie his way out of this. “I was trying to save who I could! If I hadn’t acted, many more could have died.”

Jim sneered. “A ‘could have’ isn’t good enough to justify all the blood on your hands. But since I’m not a goddamn murderer like you, I’ll give you another chance to give me a reason. A reason to show more mercy than you ever did.” He was so tempted to just switch it to kill and end this now, but a part of him held back for reasons he didn’t know.

Kodos looked panicked and conflicted before his face settled. “I have a daughter. Her mother is gone and she’s only 13; she shouldn’t have to lose her father. She shouldn’t have to go through that!”

“Really?” Jim honestly couldn’t believe this. “I was even younger than that when I was on Tarsus. And back then you didn’t seem to care about age of children or breaking up families. And take it from me, a kid can grow up without a dad. It’s probably better to have none than one that’s a total monster like you.”

There was still fear in his eyes, and it seemed genuine. “Please, don’t do this for a mistake from so long ago.”

“Oh my—” Jim laughed, the sound bitter and full of pain. “A mistake? Is that what you’re calling it?” He looked Kodos straight in the eyes, not trying to hide the rage and pain he felt. “You ordered the deaths of thousands of innocent people. They may not have all been perfect, not by your standards, but they were good people. They didn’t deserve to—” Jim closed his eyes and took a deep breath. “They didn’t deserve to die like that.” He reopened his eyes, looking right at the man who filled his nightmares for years of his life. “But you do.” Any last concerns gone, Jim adjusted the setting.

Before he could pull the trigger, there was a soft voice behind him. “Jim.”

Of course Spock found him. Jim didn’t take his eyes off his target. “If you’re calling me Jim, you must recognize that this is a serious situation. It’s also a situation that you don’t need to part of, so go away.”

“I disagree and I am not leaving.” He could feel Spock walking up closer to him. “You will regret this if you go through with it. I do not wish for you to have to live with this guilt.”

“I disagree with you.” Jim glanced to Spock out of the corner of his eye for a moment before looking back at Kodos. “It’s not like I’ve never caused a death before, Spock. We’ve gotten into battles with Klingons or whoever all the time and you never seem to care about us firing our phasers at them. Hell, with some of Nero’s crew we were this close when we shot them. How is this different?”

“Fighting a defensive battle after you have been fired upon or when you are threatened is not the same as killing someone who cannot defend themselves.” Spock’s voice remained infuriatingly cool, but there was something else underneath it.
“Well he’s hardly an innocent. I know you know what happened on Tarsus Spock; don’t try to deny it. All sorts of defenseless people were killed then.” Jim’s thumb wandered to the setting controls. It would be so easy to adjust it all the way up; take it past killing and make him disappear from existence entirely, just like all those people on Tarsus…

“That is true, and what happened then should have never happened. He should be held responsible.” Spock was right beside him now; Jim could feel it even if he wasn’t looking at him now. “However, this is not how that should be done.”

“He’s gotten away before.” Jim’s eyes flicked to Spock. “He’s spent over a decade hiding and living it up as a goddamn actor with no repercussions for what he did. He’s been traveling around while people have been mourning and trying to cope with the damage he did. Why shouldn’t I prevent him from escaping ever again?”

“This will not bring them back. It will not undo the damage that has been done, only create more.” Spock stayed still by his side, facing Jim and ignoring Kodos. “You are justifiably enraged now, but this is not what you truly wish to do. The James T. Kirk I know would not want to do this.”

“Maybe you don’t know me as well as you think.” Jim adjusted his grip on his phaser. “I do want to do this.”

“If you wished to kill him, you would have already pulled the trigger and done it.” Damn Spock and his logic. “You are not the type to live with taking lives; you are even upset when you believe deaths of crewmembers are your fault even though they are not. This is not the way, Jim.”

Jim looked at Spock; his phaser was still up but he could feel his resolve weakening. “He can’t get away with what he did Spock.”

“He will not.” Spock carefully laid his hands over Jim’s and the phaser. “We will bring him to the proper authorities and he will stand trial. He will not go unpunished and you will not forfeit your life by spending the remainder of it imprisoned for his murder.” Spock waited until Jim met his eyes. “You once told me that I should not let those who wanted me dead make me end my life. If you do this, you will be allowing him control over you. You will be giving him the satisfaction of your failure.”

Jim’s shoulders slumped, but his hands and eyes and phaser didn’t leave their target. “He deserves so much worse than what he’ll get in custody Spock. The way things were there… it was horrible. It wasn’t just all the people he killed; he let it fall into chaos. The things people did…”

Spock touched his cheek and Jim realized he was starting to cry. “What you have seen and experienced is far more than anyone should have. But doing this will not undo that.”

Jim looked at Kodos, really looked at him now. He was staring to look less like the terror Jim remembered and staring to look like someone on their way to being a pathetic old man. He looked back at Spock. Spock, who came down to save him from himself despite the big fight they’d just had that had all been Jim’s fault. Did Jim really want to throw that all away because of this nightmare from his past? But was Jim’s relationship worth more than all the lives lost and the pain gained on Tarsus? It would be just in a certain sense to make Kodos pay by facing the same fate he’d sentenced so many to, but was this the right way to make him pay? Spock may have his hands over Jim’s on the phaser, but his finger was still unobscured on the trigger…

Chapter End Notes
If anyone wants to destress with a bit of fluff, I'm gonna shamelessly self promote the Star Trek Secret Santa fics I finally cross posted here from Tumblr. They're for various treks and mostly fluffy, so feel free to check them out! You can find them all together in one work on my account page here. Enjoy!

If you want to just sit with the tension, I'll see you Monday...
Chapter Notes

A lot of you seem pretty strongly opposed to Jim killing Kodos, which tbh surprises me a little bit. We'll see what Jim decides soon, but first let's see how Spock got there...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim’s behavior had been concerning at the theater, and his assertions that he was alright and would handle his problem independently only served to increase Spock’s suspicion, not decrease it. Something had to be wrong for Jim to be behaving so erratically, so agitated.

He settled down at Jim’s desk chair, unwilling to remain standing against the odd weakness that had filled his body when he and Jim fought. It was an uncomfortable sensation.

Spock looked at the computer terminal; perhaps it held a clue to the problem Jim claimed to be working on.

Normally he would respect Jim’s privacy about his computer and his wishes about handling this matter alone, but Jim was not himself. He could be in danger, and Spock would not allow his t’hy’la to be harmed. Dangerous situations were one of the few instances where Jim would routinely refuse help…

Resolved, Spock faced the desk terminal. “Computer, display recent activity.”

“Unable to comply; recent activity has been sealed by order of James T. Kirk.”

Jim was determined to prevent interference, which likely indicated great danger. “Computer, override, by order of S’chn T’gai Spock.”

“Unable to comply.” Jim must have used his captain code rather than personal code. It truly must be a serious matter.

Because of that and Jim’s own history of “hacking,” to use Jim’s term, Spock did not have many qualms around subverting the computer’s locking mechanisms to view Jim’s recent activity.

When he was finally able to see what Jim had sealed, Spock’s eyes widened, and he was unable to suppress the swell of horror he felt.

Spock had more knowledge of the events of Tarsus IV than many in the Federation due to his father’s ambassadorial status. They had wished to consult a Vulcan for a rational perspective on dealing with the aftermath as (apparently) most humans who encountered the situation became overly emotional in response.

Spock had overheard the details described to his father, and, even then in the midst of his attempts to act fully Vulcan at the time, he could not fault the humans for their emotional responses to such an atrocity.

And he could not fault Jim for his response now. If Kodos was truly alive and facing no consequences for his actions, and the evidence was compelling, Jim would be understandably...
agitated. It made sense, even if Spock now had more cause for concern that Jim was about to undertake a reckless action. “Computer, state current location of Captain James T. Kirk.”

“Captain James T. Kirk has left the ship.”

Continuing cause for alarm. “Computer, name Captain Kirk’s last known locations on the ship.”

“Captain Kirk’s last known locations were transporter room 2 and the ship’s armory.”

Spock felt his heart freeze in his side. “Computer, have any weapons been taken from the armory?” With leave on a peaceful planet, there should be no cause to remove weapons for any member of the crew.

However, “Phase Pistol 68 has been removed.”

“Computer, track Phase Pistol 68.” Starfleet policy mandated that all weapons be tagged with tracers whose activation would be undetectable to users. Jim would know of this and how to disable it, but if he was not thinking clearly…

“Phase pistol found. Location is planetary coordinates—”

Spock memorized the coordinates; they were very close to where he and Jim had beamed down to attend the theater. He rose at once and made his way to the transporter room, only stopping to acquire a communicator. He gave the transporter technician the coordinates and watched the Enterprise disappear.

He appeared in what looked like a hallway in the backstage area of the theater. Jim was nowhere in sight.

But his cane was; Spock saw it leaned against a doorway and hurried over; once outside the open door he heard the voice of the actor who had played Macbeth as well as Jim; stepping into the doorway revealed Jim standing over the man who was likely Kodos, pointing a phaser at him.

That was how Spock ended up trying to talk his t’hy’la away from killing a man who likely deserved death in the eyes of many. He had tried to stop Jim, but with shielding and how tightly Jim had locked down his expression, escaping tears excepted, there was no way for Spock to know what thoughts crossed Jim’s mind, what decisions he may be struggling to make. His grip on the phaser remained steady. For a tense moment, Spock was uncertain what Jim would do.

Spock watched as whatever internal struggle his t’hy’la was experiencing seemed to be resolved. Jim sighed and lowered the phaser. He looked at Spock. “Call the ship and tell them to ready the brig. We’ll need to contact the proper authorities as well.”

Spock nodded. “Would you like to do that or should I?”

Jim ran a hand down his face; it seemed as though the energy and epinephrine that had been fueling him was beginning to drain, leaving only exhaustion. “I might do it. I think I need to get away from him before I do something I regret.”

Spock held out his communicator and carefully took the phaser from Jim’s hand. “Very well. You may need to leave this room to have proper signal to contact the ship.”

“Ok.” Jim sighed again. “I’ll go do that.” There was a definite wariness about Jim as he leaned into Spock and spoke softly. “Thank you.”
Spock merely nodded again. He would always do whatever he could to help Jim, and he hoped that Jim knew that by now. “Of course, Jim.” He watched as his t’hy’la nodded once more before leaving the room, communicator in hand instead of phaser.

“Ha.” The man who was quite possibly Kodos, looked at the doorway Jim had just exited with a look on his face Spock could not recognize; it was a calculating expression. “I always knew he was weak. All the news I saw of him, and deep down he’s still the same young boy motivated by fear and desperate to please others.” Kodos shook his head. “He is still weak.”

“You will not speak of him that way.” Spock had been controlling his emotions so as to now alarm or provoke Jim, but now he found himself uncaring if a small amount of the rage he felt showed. There was no doubt in his mind now that this was the man who had harmed Jim and so many others on Tarsus IV. “He is my captain and partner and you are no more than a murderer. He is a stronger and better man than you ever have been or ever will be.”

Kodos merely made a contemplative expression. “We shall see which of us is the better judge of character. I stand by my observations.”

Spock would not tolerate this. He advanced on Kodos, seeing the fear in his expression grow as he approached. However, Spock was in control. He would not harm this man, despite all the harm he had caused. As Spock reached for him he flinched away. Spock narrowed his eyes. “You are no more than a coward.” Before Kodos could respond, Spock applied a nerve pinch to his shoulder and he collapsed.

Chapter End Notes

For anyone curious, Sarek did not suggest covering it up. He wouldn't suggest publicizing it unnecessarily, but he'd say that the record should reflect the truth. Sarek certainly has issues, but I don't think he's that messed up
Chapter 245

Chapter Notes

We're officially two and a third years into this fic. This also marks 100 chapters since their first kiss (wow I never thought this would be that long) so I figured we'd do a chapter that's a bit more of Spirk comfort after all that hurt. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Spock exited the room to see Jim sitting against the wall in the hallway. He paused, clasping his hands behind his back. “Have you contacted the ship?”

“Yep.” Jim gestured to where his legs were sprawled out in front of him. “I know Bones said they’re fine, but I didn’t really feel like standing. Maybe I strained them; it felt like they were about to give out.”

Spock crouched down to be level with Jim. “You have spent the past several hours reliving a majorly traumatic experience. That is often tiring for the human body.”

Jim smiled weakly, and despite the still-closed bond Spock imagined he could nearly feel Jim’s exhaustion. “You’re being awfully imprecise, Spock.”

Spock reached out a hand and placed it on Jim’s shoulder, noticing how he leaned into the touch. “I deemed it appropriate to focus more on comfort than precision in this instance.”

The comment kept the small smile on Jim’s face, so Spock did not regret it. “Thanks.”

“Of course, Jim.” Spock felt more secure as Jim placed a hand over his own on Jim’s shoulder.

Jim seemed to think of something and his smile dropped. “What happened to Kodos?”

Spock squeezed Jim’s shoulder slightly, knowing he found comfort from physical touch. “He is unconscious.”

Jim’s eyes darted to the phaser, which was now powered down in Spock’s loose grasp with his free hand.

Understanding the look, Spock shook his head. “I administered a nerve pinch.”

“Ah.” Jim nodded. “Probably more controlled than what I would have done if I’d laid hands on that bastard.”

“I am grateful I was able to reach you in time.” Spock nearly regretted his words as Jim flinched slightly, but a moment later he relaxed.

He didn’t meet Spock’s eyes. “Thank you. For…that.” He took a deep breath and sat up a little straighter, looking more like the man Spock saw on the bridge nearly daily and less like he was collapsing in on himself. “We need to secure Kodos. I can’t have him getting loose again.”

Spock nodded. “I will contact the ship to have him beamed into the brig.” He stood, noticing how
Jim’s hand over his tightened a moment before letting him go. “I will need the communicator.”

“Right.” Jim shakily handed it over and then folded his hands awkwardly in his lap, staring into the middle distance instead of Spock.

“I will return shortly.” Spock took the communicator and stepped back into the dressing room, looking at the unconscious man still slumped against the furniture in the corner. He flipped the communicator open. “Spock to Enterprise.”

“Enterprise here.”

“Please instruct the transporter room that the Captain and I have apprehended an individual who must be transported directly to the brig. The security team there will be prepared to receive him.” Spock paused, considering Kodos’ location. “He is a human male, unconscious, approximately two meters to the southeast of me.”

There was a pause. “I’ve relayed the information, Commander.”

Spock waited until he saw Kodos dissolve in the light of the transporter beam. “Thank you. Spock out.” He returned to where Jim was. “Would you like to return to the ship?”

“Hmm?” Jim furtively wiped at his face before dropping his hands from his face. “Uh… not yet.”

“Very well.” Spock shifted and settled down next to Jim against the wall, wrapping his arm around Jim’s shoulders when Jim leaned into him.

“I just need a moment, that’s all.” Jim was still looking away from Spock even as he huddled against Spock’s side. There was a moment of quiet before he spoke again. “How’d you know I wouldn’t do it?”

Spock was fairly certain he knew what Jim was referring to, but he felt the need to clarify nonetheless. “Do what?”

Jim let out a frustrated sigh. “Kill Kodos.”

Spock paused a moment in thought. “It is not who you are.”

“Yeah?” Jim shifted against him, still not looking at Spock. “What makes you say that?”

“I have seen your mind, Jim. We are deeply connected, and in our melds I have seen the very core of you.” Spock paused. “But it is more than that. Even without that, I would know it to be true.”

Jim seemed more curious now, finally looking Spock in the eye. “How so?”

Spock met his gaze, grateful to finally see those blue eyes less turbulent than before. “Your actions. I still remember the first time you showed care for me as an individual, not as a crewmember or in the line of work or as an apology for past actions, but for me.”

Jim sat up a little more, but didn’t move out from under Spock’s arm. “When was that?”

“It was on the Observation Deck, following your first day in command after defeating Nero.” Spock could state the stardate and precise time, but he knew these cues would help Jim better.

Understanding dawned across Jim’s face. “That was the day I…” He trailed off, allowing Spock to continue.
“Yes.” His arm tightened slightly around Jim’s shoulders. “You shared past experiences, briefly of Tarsus IV and what followed for you, that would have been painful to share, out of concern for me. You understood that idle words or admonitions would have been insufficient, and you were willing to share those experiences to form a more meaningful connection to help me.” Spock paused, looking into Jim’s eyes seriously. “We did not know each other well then, and you still were willing to do that for me. I am grateful.”

Jim looped an arm around Spock’s back, smiling in a way that was difficult to interpret. “We really were dicks to each other at first.”

Spock did not suppress the slight uptick of the corners of his lips. “Perhaps.”

“Still.” Jim’s face grew more serious. “I remember that day. I did know we were soulmates at the time, or was pretty sure at least, but that wasn’t why I did it.” He looked away. “No one should ever have to live like that without someone reaching out to them. Everyone needs some kind of support.” He looked at Spock. “The universe needs people like you, Spock. I need you.”

Spock understood the words Jim wasn’t quite saying, understood that he may not be in a place to say them at the moment. “And I you, Jim.” He paused, unsure if this was the right time to bring up what he was considering. “And I wish to support you. I realize you are likely dealing with many conflicting emotions at the moment, but if you are willing, let me help. Open the bond, let me guide you through this turmoil, anchor you. It is common among Vulcans and their bondmates, especially t’hy’la.”

Jim looked hesitant, but nodded. “Alright.” He took a deep breath and leaned his forehead against Spock’s, closing his eyes.

Slowly and then all at once, Spock felt Jim’s emotions flood into his brain. Pain, anger, loss, sadness, rage, powerlessness, and a bone-deep exhaustion. All from the ordeal with Kodos. But there was more; sparks of hope and under it all, Spock could still feel the love Jim had for him, seeming to thrum with the beat of their hearts. Spock tried to remain calm and draw on that to strengthen himself before lending Jim that strength, giving him a stable place to hold himself so he did not drown amid his feelings.

When Spock opened his eyes, not realizing he had closed them, Jim’s blue eyes were staring into his own. “Thank you.” Jim leaned in and briefly pressed his lips to Spock’s.

Spock returned the kiss, taking a moment to breathe once they separated. “It is my honor, t’hy’la.”

Jim smiled, a genuine smile unpolluted by tiredness or negative emotions. “I think I’m ready to go back to the ship now. Help me up?”

Spock nodded and stood before pulling Jim up and offering him his cane, which he accepted. Jim also took the phaser from Spock’s hand and reholstered it under his jacket. Spock pulled out his communicator. “Spock to Enterprise. Two for transport.”

Close enough that their sides were still touching, they dissolved in the golden light of the transporter.

Chapter End Notes

If anyone’s curious, the post-Nero conversation referenced here is in Chapter 51. I’m just
gonna do a general warning for that chapter for discussion of suicide and past attempts.

These boys have seen some rough stuff. Maybe it's time for fluff; we'll see...
Chapter 246

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! How's everyone doing with this roller coaster of an arc? We're about to throw in another character we haven't seen for a little bit...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Once back on the ship, Jim took a deep breath and straightened himself up. Time to act like a captain again. Jim looked at the transporter tech. “Did the brig get its new occupant?”

He got a nod in response. “We transported the man Commander Spock indicated, Captain.”

Jim looked at Spock for confirmation and was relived when he got it. “Good. I’m going to pay him a visit.” He stepped off of the transporter room and made his way into the corridor.

Spock followed him out, but stopped him with a hand on his shoulder once they were alone in the corridor. “Jim.”

He was hesitant to stop because he didn’t want to lose his momentum, but Jim turned around. He owned Spock that much after everything he’d pulled today. “What’s up?”

“Perhaps it would be best to wait to confront Kodos.” Spock dropped his grip on Jim’s shoulder and clasped his hands behind his back. “It may be more important to report what we have done to Starfleet; it is unusual to make arrests while on shore leave.”

Jim sighed, letting his shoulders slump a little again. “You’re probably right.” He ran a hand down his face. “This is gonna be one of the weirdest calls I’ve made to Pike, and that’s really saying something.”

Spock’s hands reappeared by his sides, twitching forward as if he were going to reach out to comfort Jim but stopped himself. “If you would like, I could make the call. You are not technically on duty.”

“No.” Jim shook his head. “No, I need to do this.” He paused, extending two fingers to Spock. “I wouldn’t say no to some moral support though.”

“Always, Jim.” Spock’s fingers met his in the Vulcan kiss, and Jim almost melted at the surge of affection he felt through the bond. God, why had he closed it off again?

Okay.” Jim took a deep breath and pulled their hands apart slowly. “Let’s do this.” He looked Spock in the eye. “Let’s go to our quarters.”

Once they made it to their quarters, Jim made a detour to change into his uniform. When Spock raised an eyebrow, Jim just shrugged.

“I need the familiarity.” Jim adjusted the shirt then went to sit in front of the monitor, pulling up the channel to Pike. He could tell Spock was lingering just outside of frame over his shoulder.

It wasn't long before Pike popped up; Jim wondered what time it was in San Francisco. “Captain, aren’t you supposed to be on leave?”
That odd but now almost comforting mix of formal and familiar helped Jim relax. “Yes, but I’ve got bad news. I’ve made an arrest and we’ll be needing to arrange transport to a court that can try the man in our brig for crimes against the Federation.”

Pike’s brow furrowed. “What happened? Did a member of your crew do something?”

Jim frowned. “Sir, everyone on this crew was handpicked by you, me, Spock, or one of my other senior crew. I’d like to think we have better taste than that.”

“Fair enough.” Pike tipped his head in consideration. “If not that, what’re you calling about?”

“Well…” Jim took a deep breath and mentally drew on that strength from Spock in the back of his mind. He sat up and looked Pike in the eye as much as he could over video. “How familiar are you with the events of Tarsus IV? I’ll wait for you to do some research if necessary.”

“I know some, but…” Pike’s expression went grim. “I get the feeling it’s not enough.”

“Being an admiral means you might have better clearance than before. I’ll wait.” Jim sat there and watched while Pike worked at his desk.

Even though Jim would bet that Pike was controlling his expression as much as possible, he could still see Pike’s expression pale the more he read. After a few minutes, he looked back at Jim. “Why’d you have me look this up, Jim?”

“Because Kodos didn’t die on the planet. Kodos the Executioner is in our brig.” It wasn’t the name that haunted the history books—yet—but if Jim had his way that would change.

Understandably, Pike was wary. “Jim, that’s a serious accusation. I know you well enough to know you wouldn’t make that lightly, but—”

“I’m not.” Jim squared his shoulders and looked directly at Pike. “I swear on my father’s grave, wherever the hell his final resting place might be, that that man is Kodos.”

Pike nodded. “What’s your evidence?”

“We’re going to get voice print, face ID, all of that. But I know it will match.” Here goes nothing. “I know eyewitness testimony isn’t always the most reliable, but this isn’t something I’d forget.” Jim felt Spock shift a little closer behind him and drew on his strength to look back up at Pike. “I know who he is and what he did because I’m one of the Tarsus Nine.”

Pike went still a long moment, and when he finally spoke again his face was grim. “You’ve had a much rougher life than you ever deserved, Jim.”

“I know.” He resisted the urge to look over his shoulder at Spock, one of the people who’d done so much to help him realize that. “I’ve had to work on it and have help, but I know.”

“I’m glad.” Pike nodded solemnly. “Get me that evidence, and I’ll do everything in my power to make sure he never gets away again.”

“Well do, sir.” Jim could do that. He owed it to everyone who didn’t make it off Tarsus.


Jim smiled weakly. “I will.”

Pike’s eyes flicked over Jim’s shoulder. “I’m sure Spock will ensure it if I can’t.” He smiled tiredly at
them. “Stay safe. Pike out.”

They stayed still a moment after the screen went dark. Eventually, Spock stepped forward and placed his hand on his shoulder and Jim carefully rested his own hand on top. They stayed like that for a while, just soaking in the comfort from each other, before Jim gave Spock’s hand a squeeze. “Let’s go get this bastard.”

Chapter End Notes

Ready for next chapter?
Chapter 247

Chapter Notes

Ooh this chapter was really something to write. Are you ready?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Outside of the brig, Jim paused to take a deep breath. He was ready for this. He really was. He needed to do this. He should do this…

Spock discretely squeezed his hand. “If you would like, I could speak to him.”

“No.” Jim shook his head but squeezed Spock’s hand back. “I need to do this.” With one last breath to strengthen his resolve, Jim released Spock’s hand and stepped forward into the brig, Spock right behind him.

Kodos was in his cell and ignored them, but the officer on duty stood straighter. “Captain. Commander.”

“At ease.” Jim waved a hand dismissively. “I’m going to need you to set up the recording devices here. We have evidence to gather.”

“Yes sir.” A few nods and button presses, then they got the signal to proceed.

Jim stepped up to the brig door, where Kodos was watching them with interest now. Jim tried not to let it faze him. Kodos had no power here; Jim did. He wasn’t a starving little kid in a collapsing society, not anymore. “State your name for the record.”

There was something calculating behind his eyes. “I believe you already know who I am.”

Jim resisted the urge to sigh; of course he would make this difficult. “You currently go by the name Anton Karidian, correct?”

“He crossed his arms. “And you’re being held on suspicion of being the dictator of Tarsus IV at the time of the colony’s collapse; what do you say to those charges?”

He shifted a little; maybe Jim was getting under his skin. “I believe Kodos’ title was ‘Governor’.”

“And I believe his actions were more in line with a genocidal, eugenics-obsessed dictator, but it seems for now we’ll agree to disagree.” Jim looked at him, not breaking eye contact. “How do you answer to the charges?”

“This is not a court of law, and I do not have to plead.” Kodos sat back, still watching Jim.

“You have that right.” Jim nodded. He wasn’t happy about it, but just because this was an extreme circumstance didn’t mean the Federation couldn’t potentially come after Jim for violating a prisoner’s rights. Ironic, given how many rights violations Kodos had done. Jim was still allowed to gather evidence as long as Kodos would talk though. “What do you know of Tarsus IV?”
“It was an ill-fated colony many years ago.” He must have been a damn good actor to stay this calm. “Many colonists perished.”

“That’s the basics.” Jim wondered if this was just another performance to him; after everything he’d admitted back on the planet, why back down now? “While the official record says that half the colonists were evacuated to an alternate colony site, their bodies and evidence of another site were never found, and we have reason to believe they were killed by Kodos’ government. Thoughts on that?”

“Whatever his actions were, the governor must have had his reasons.” Kodos continued to watch Jim. “Removing some colonists would alleviate the pressure on the rest, creating a better standard of living.”

Jim was so close to losing it. “It’s not right to let people suffer and die just so that other people can have a little bit more.”

“I disagree.” A crack in his act? “Some people may be more valuable to a society than others—”

“No.” Jim’s hand shook where he leaned on his cane. “That doesn’t make them expendable. Just because someone says they contribute less or have less value doesn’t mean that person is right, even if the person saying that is the one in charge.”

“No one seemed to complain then.” God why was he so calm? Where was the remorse?

“Or did Kodos just ignore the complaints? Create a system people thought they could buy into, earn themselves a treasured spot in his favor so they could prosper even if it meant others suffering?” Jim’s voice might have been rising. “A system that needed others to suffer so the select could keep what they wanted and gain more?”

Kodos bristled slightly, just slightly. “Those so-called select earned their places.”

“By doing what? By managing to do well in a system already engineered to help them do well, then sucking up to those in charge and following them without question?” Jim could feel anger bubbling up. “A system where people follow a leader without question is not a society or any sort of functional group; it’s a cult.”

“Perhaps to you.” Kodos eyed Jim assessingly. “But you’re a leader yourself, aren’t you Captain? Don’t you understand the need for control?”

“Captain Kirk understands that good leaders value input from others; while the individual in a leadership position must ultimately be the one to make crucial decisions, a true leadership process is collaborative.” Both of them turned to Spock in surprise; they’d nearly forgotten he was there.

Kodos’ eyes narrowed. “You were not asked, half-breed.”

“Okay.” That was the final goddamn straw. “Commander Spock is my first officer and can speak for me, especially in situations like this where he is correct.” Jim looked at Spock in a way that he hoped conveyed his support, then looked back at Kodos. “Additionally, he is a member of my crew and also fundamentally a being deserving of respect, not the hateful terms you seem inclined to use.”

“Hmm.” Kodos didn’t budge. “Perhaps we must agree to disagree; isn’t that what you would consider civil, Captain?”

“No.” Jim’s fists tightened at his sides. “For a truly civil, peaceful, or tolerant society, people with hateful views like yours shouldn’t exist. You endanger everyone else with your violent bigotry.”
“Well.” Kodos looked shocked, but Jim didn’t pick up anything genuine. “How are you any better than what you accuse me of being with statements like that? Wanting to get rid of certain people to make a society better? Isn’t that what you’ve condemned me—Governor Kodos, that is, for?”

“It’s not the same.” Jim tried to control his rage, but he was sure he was glaring a hole through Kodos’ skull right now. “Recognizing that someone’s views call for violence against or death of certain groups for aspects of themselves they cannot change, and responding to those violent bigots appropriately, is protecting people. Besides, if those people realized the views they chose to endorse were horrible and changed, maybe that would be the end of it. But people can never really change the fundamental aspects of themselves those assholes would kill them for. It’s not the same at all.”

“Hmm.” Kodos seemed unaffected still. “And I thought Starfleet and the Federation preached tolerance and acceptance for all.”

This was going nowhere. Jim turned to the security officer, who looked pretty ready to lose control as well. “Shut off the recording; I think we have all we need. Commander Spock and I will be leaving; leave the prisoner in his cell.”

A terse nod. “Aye, Captain.”

It was out in the corridor before Jim could finally slow down and breathe without feeling the need to go back there and finish what he’d almost started on the planet. He just had to remember that it was important to expose this bastard for what he was.

Spock came up to Jim’s side. “That was…unpleasant. I believe there would be infinitesimally small odds of any Federation jury viewing him sympathetically.”

Jim laughed bitterly, an old expression coming to mind. “Well you know what they say, Spock. There’s some things only God can forgive.”

“Captain—Jim.” Spock seemed confused. “I did not think you believed in any deity.”

“Hmm.” It sounded cruelly mocking to Jim, and he couldn’t bring himself to regret it. “I guess there’s no forgiveness possible for him then.” Jim turned and put more distance between him and the nightmare in the brig.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing like venting your frustrations with society into a star trek fan fiction, right?

Also I know Disco starts tonight but I can't watch yet, so please no spoilers. When I watch I'm so down to obsess over it together though
Chapter 248

Chapter Notes

Me: Ok so I should probably do something plotty this chapter; I know where I'm going to take this I just need to bridge the gap from where I am to there
My brain: Write soft Space Husbands. No, softer. SOFTER. So soft it's almost out of character.
Me: Well who am I to argue with that?

Anyways, enjoy this chapter, light on plot as it is hahaha

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Once they were back in their quarters, Jim slumped down onto the bed, letting his cane fall into its usual spot. He could feel all the righteous fury that'd filled him when he was talking to Kodos draining out, leaving him feeling exhausted once more. It had been a long day; was it even the same day he and Spock had gone down to see the play or had midnight come and gone? It was probably well after midnight now…

The bed dipped a little as Spock gently sat down next to where Jim was sprawled out with his feet hanging off the bed. “Are you alright?”

“Mostly. I think. You’re probably gonna be getting weird emotional stuff from my nightmares through the bond if or when I finally get to sleep.” Jim turned his head so he’d be looking at Spock instead of the ceiling. “He can’t stay here, Spock. I can’t have Kodos on this ship.” He slowly sat up so he’d be level with Spock, leaning on his arms behind him. “I don’t want this place tainted by him. And while I don’t really think I’d do anything stupid, not with you here to talk me down, I still don’t fully trust myself with him onboard. Not so close.” He collapsed back down onto the bed.

Spock shifted a little and began to run his fingers through Jim’s hair, a gesture they’d figured out early on was good for relaxing Jim, and that Spock claimed to enjoy because of the mental sparks from Jim he’d sometimes get from this kind of contact. Well he hadn’t put it like that, but that was Jim’s impression from the more technical way Spock had put it. He was so caught up in the gesture he almost missed when Spock softly spoke. “As I am on duty and you are not, I will contact Starfleet about arranging transport to a place where a proper trial can occur. You require rest.”

“Thanks babe.” Jim had half a thought to move and kiss Spock’s wrist as a little show of gratitude since it was so close, but he couldn’t summon the energy. He sighed and brought one hand up to rub at his face. “I’m gonna have to go testify in the trial I bet. Whatever it takes to get him brought to justice, I’d do it.” He dropped his hand back to his side. “I have no idea how that’d affect the mission. These things can take so long and I’d rather not miss out on the mission, even if I do trust you to be in charge, but the crew couldn’t exactly just take an extended leave while I’m doing this. I wouldn’t want my crew or my silver lady getting docked for that long.” He took another deep breath. “But if it comes to that, I gotta do it Spock. I have to.” He looked up at Spock and saw understanding in those deep brown eyes.

“I know, Jim.” Spock leaned down and gently kissed his forehead human style before pulling back. “But those problems can wait for another day. For now, it is imperative that you rest.”
Jim kindof wanted to fight it and try to work it out, but sleep was already pulling at him. “Maybe you’re right…”

The next thing Jim knew, it was the next morning. Or it probably was; it was so hard to tell since his quarters were dark. A quick time check told Jim that it was a lot later than he expected; at least it was shore leave and he didn’t have anything to do.

Jim had vague memories of Spock changing him into pjs and tucking him in as he was falling asleep; the fact that he was under the covers in his pajamas supported this being real and not just a weird dream.

Wait. Dreams. Jim sat up, shocked. He hadn’t had any Kodos or Tarsus related nightmares last night, despite it totally making sense for him to have them. He rubbed his head. Was it possible for Spock to somehow calm his brain through their bond, uncompleted as it was?

Jim threw aside the covers and got out of bed, pulling the blankets back to remake the bed out of habit and grabbing his cane for support as he turned to go to the bathroom that connected their quarters to Spock’s workspace and meditation area.

Spock was at his desk with his back to Jim, working away. After a quick glance to make sure that Spock wasn’t calling someone or anything like that, Jim crept up behind him and leaned on Spock from behind, leaning his cane against the chair as he wrapped his arms around Spock and rested his chin on Spock’s head. “Morning.”

Jim could practically feel Spock’s eyes flick to the time on the corner of his console display. “Good afternoon.”

“It’s barely past, and as you know I had a late night last night.” Jim shifted around, using Spock for support until he reached the desk and half sat half leaned on it, crossing his arms over his chest and absentmindedly running his thumb over his arm. He looked at Spock, genuine but feeling a little shier than he’d expect. “Thank you. For everything.” For handling Jim in day to day life, for talking him down last night, for comforting him, for supporting him, for handling some of the official stuff for him, for comforting him again, for maybe chasing away his nightmares… It was a lot to go unsaid, but Jim had the feeling Spock knew what he meant.

“Of course, Jim. Assisting you with whatever you require will never be a burden to me.” Damn, Spock really knew how to cut straight to Jim’s insecurities and pull them out by the root.

“God, you’re amazing.” Jim leaned down and kissed Spock on the lips, bracing himself on the arms of Spock’s chair. Their faces pulled apart just enough for Jim to look Spock in the eye when he talked. “Did you even do some mind thing to make my nightmares go away last night?”

“I did not.” Jim leaned back onto the desk in surprise at that, but Spock shifted closer as if he didn’t want to lose the closeness between them. “Or perhaps, not consciously. However, I did notice that as I was retiring for the night you were showing early signs of having a nightmare based on past observations of you during those experiences, but it seemed to calm as I joined you in bed and placed my arms around you.”

Damn, Jim really didn’t deserve Spock. He wanted to tell him that it was probably because Spock made him feel safer than he’d probably ever felt in his life, but Jim hesitated because he’d already been so vulnerable this past day that he wanted to go back to holding himself together a little bit. Plus, he got the feeling Spock probably already knew. So he settled for reaching a hand out to Spock and slowly starting to run their fingers together in a Vulcan kiss. “Thank you.”
Spock just nodded, meeting the kiss.

After a moment, Jim reluctantly broke eye and hand contact to lean back against the desk and crossing his arms again. “So speaking of nightmares, what’s the word on getting the one in our brig out?”

“A transport will be arriving between 1700 and 1800 hours to take him to a planet where a proper trial will be held. There will be a processing period, but then they will proceed with the trial.” Spock paused. “You will be contacted as necessary.”

“Damn.” Jim leaned back in surprise. “That was quicker than expected.”

“I spoke to Pike and stressed the importance of this, and after reading the full Tarsus file he agreed with me that a trial was of the utmost importance.” Spock paused. “I believe this may have been a situation where an admiral’s sway was useful.”

“Maybe so.” Jim smiled a little half smile. “I’ll have to thank him too.”

Spock nodded. “Indeed.” There was another pause, Spock seeming to debate the merits of what he was going to say before finally speaking. “Will you go see him again, before he leaves?”

They both knew he wasn’t talking about Pike anymore. Jim felt his shoulders creep up as his previously relaxed posture went away. “I don’t think so. I think that bastard gets too much satisfaction of having someone to pick at. I’ll be on shift to see the shuttle take him away, but I sure as hell won’t go have another chat so he can think he’s tearing me apart or something.” Jim huffed in frustration. “Just because I was getting upset and he wasn’t doesn’t mean he was winning, it just means I have a goddamn heart and can’t stay perfectly calm when discussing people suffering.” Jim paused, realizing possible implications of his words. His eyes darted to Spock. “I didn’t mean—”

Spock held up a hand reassuringly. “Do not worry Jim; I understood your meaning.”

“Good.” Jim relaxed and leaned in to kiss Spock once more. He was half in Spock’s lap as he rested a hand over Spock’s lower torso. “I know you’ve got a heart, and it’s right here. And it’s a great one.” He smiled at Spock. “You on duty right now?”

“I am.” Spock looked over something on his screen. “However—”

“You’re all good. You wanna work, keep working.” Jim glanced around. “But would it bother you if I just hung out in here, maybe just watching stuff on a padd and relaxing or something?” Jim didn’t really want to be alone right now.

Spock’s eyes were warm in that way that made Jim melt. It was similar to the way Older Spock’s had when thinking of his Jim that had always filled Jim with envy, but Jim thought this was better. Especially now when it was accompanied by the littlest uptick of Spock’s lips. “I will always welcome your presence, Jim.”

Jim grinned. “Love you too.” He leaned in for a quick peck on the cheek before grabbing his cane and going back to their sleeping quarters so he could grab his padd from the working area; he had a great afternoon imagined of chilling in Spock’s meditation area on those big comfy pillows and watching some classics.

Chapter End Notes
In mildly unrelated trek news, I'm all caught up on Disco now and totally ready to talk about it. Not sure how I'm feeling Thursdays as new episode days tbh; I kinda liked starting my week with new trek.

(More spoilerly thoughts will be confined to the comments)
Chapter 249

Chapter Notes

This part of this arc is probably starting to come to a close. I have vague ideas where I plan to go next, but for now we need to get Kodos settled...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The next day, Jim was on the bridge with the skeleton crew left behind for leave despite him not technically being scheduled for it. But what was the point of being captain if not to shift those rules a little now and then? He and Spock made the schedule, so he (and Spock technically, since he knew Jim was coming here today and hadn’t objected) should be able to tweak it some now and then if there was good reason. Like needing to be there on duty to see a certain murderous former dictator off.

Most of the day was almost too quiet. The only activity they got was occasional reports of people beaming up or down. They got one report of a lieutenant injured while rock climbing on the planet, but the planetary facilities were familiar enough with humans that they didn’t even need to do an emergency beam up. Still, it was the most exciting thing to happen for the majority of the day.

Until early afternoon ship’s time. The communication officer on duty turned to Jim. “Sir, we’re being hailed by a Starfleet transport vessel.”

“We’re expecting them.” Jim sat up straighter and tried to calm his nerves; he was ready for Kodos to be gone. “On screen.”

After a moment, the other bridge appeared and the individual in the captain’s chair began to speak. “This is Captain Chan of the transport vessel Rio Grande. Is the prisoner ready for transport?”

“Yes.” Jim could feel the confusion on the bridge since he and Spock had been keeping everything under wraps, but he didn’t let it distract him. “Is your crew ready to receive him?”

“Yes we are.” Captain Chan nodded. “Who from your ship will be overseeing the transfer?”

That was…not something Jim had considered. He resisted the urge to turn where he knew Spock would be watching him; Spock would offer to go do it. Jim knew he would. But Jim felt like he had to see this through. “I will.”

“Alright, Captain Kirk.” Captain Chan pulled something up, probably firing off orders to begin the process. “My team is beaming over now.”

“I’ll meet them at the brig.” Jim stood from his chair. “Kirk out.” The comm officer shut off the connection and Jim briefly looked out at the planet below before turning to the back of the bridge. He looked at the comm officer. “Tell the brig to prep the prisoner for transport.”

As expected, Spock met him before he could get into the turbolift. “Captain, I am willing to oversee the prisoner transfer if you would prefer.”

Jim smiled slightly, leaning on his cane for support. “Thank you, Spock, but I’ve got this.” He almost wanted to extend a brief Vulcan kiss, but he knew Spock wouldn’t like doing that on the bridge. He
settled for sending a pulse of affection through their partially shielded bond.

Based on the slight softening of Spock’s eyes, he got the message. “Very well, Captain. I await your return.”

Jim smiled, a little more real this time. “It won’t be long.” He entered the turbolift.

The team from the Rio Grande was waiting when Jim got there; he led them into the brig, where his own team had Kodos in cuffs. Jim ignored him in favor of grabbing a padd from the brig station and turning to the leader of the team. “Ready to receive the prisoner’s file?”

“Yes, Captain.” The redshirt in front held up a padd.

Jim carefully to pulled up and looked over the file with all the information he and Spock had complied over the past few days and began the transfer. It wouldn’t do to have Kodos loose on a technicality. He looked at the team leader. “He’s already been given one comm call in our custody, but I’m sure you know the rules for what else he’s allowed better than I do. He is a high flight risk, so the official we talked to has approved continued holding over monitored release.” Thank god for Spock and the security teams being willing to handle all of that for Jim; he wouldn’t have had the patience for dealing with bureaucracy to make everything official after the day he had.

The redshirt’s eyes went a little wide while reviewing the file and Jim felt a spike of…something, but it was quickly covered up. The expression that met Jim a moment later was neutral, controlled.

“What’s his next destination, Captain?”

“A trial.” Jim rolled his shoulders. “After that, we’ll have to see.”

“Okay.” Another flash of something, quickly contained. “Let’s begin the transfer.”

Jim stepped back to allow the teams to move, but stiffened up a little when Kodos stopped in front of him and briefly refused to move. Jim resisted the urge to glare. “What do you want?”

Kodos smirked as if he could feel Jim’s anger, which he might since it was probably radiating off of him. “Any last words for me, Captain?”

Telling him to go to hell would probably be unprofessional, so Jim just smiled back and consciously adjusted his cane, knowing it would catch Kodos’ attention. “I’m saving it for the courthouse.” He looked toward the teams, who were all watching with thinly veiled curiosity. “Let’s get moving.”

That seemed to get through to them; Jim signed off on the transfer and Kodos slowly but surely got out of his sight and off his ship.

Jim was back on the bridge in time to see the transport vessel leave, off to wherever the Federation decided was safe to hold him until they could do a trial. He figured that the excitement was over for today.

He was wrong.

The rest of the shift passed uneventfully. Jim and Spock had left the bridge, gotten dinner, and gone back to their quarters to talk about plans for the rest of leave when the call came in.

The communications officer on duty looked grim, and sitting at his desk Jim felt his own relaxed mood drop and tension creep up his spine instead. “What is it?”

The communications officer shifted slightly as if uncomfortable. “Sir, Captain Chan just hailed us.
She says the prisoner was just found dead in their brig.”

Chapter End Notes

This is random but does anyone else who writes get tired of assigning gender to minor characters? Like they're only here briefly, why do they need one?

Anyways, Disco night! I think I'll watch then check comments, so feel free to share spoilers/reactions! I'll put a spoiler warning here for the comment section hahaha
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! This arc took a turn I wasn't fully planning, but who am I to turn down some suspense?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim tensed and felt Spock doing the same across their quarters. He took a deep breath and looked at the comm officer. “Is Captain Chan still on the line?”

“Yes sir.” The comm officer nodded.

“Okay.” Jim took another moment to pull himself together. “Patch me through.”

After a moment, Captain Chan appeared on screen in place of the comm officer. “Captain Kirk. I take it you heard the news?”

“Yeah.” Jim resisted the urge to slump his head into his hands. “What happened?”

“Uncertain.” Captain Chan’s expression was serious. “Our chief medical officer is currently performing an autopsy. But as he was recently on your ship, I must request that you investigate on your end as well. Until we determine the cause of death, we can’t rule out the possibility that something on your ship or even on the planet could be responsible. As you’re still in orbit, can I ask you to investigate there as well?”

“We can do that.” Jim took a deep breath and let it out slowly. He looked back at the screen. “Keep me posted, alright?”

“Of course.” Captain Chan looked ready to go start investigating. “I’ll let you know when we discover anything, and do the same for us.”

“Will do.” Jim tensed again as he thought of something. “Wait. Can I ask something else, even if it seems unorthodox?”

Captain Chan looked wary. “What is it?”

“I swear it’s nothing too bad.” Jim looked at the screen, trying to convey the utmost seriousness. “Please just make sure it’s still him, odd as it sounds. If this is really Kodos, which I do believe, he’s faked his death to get out of consequences before. He shouldn’t get to do it again.”

There was something like sympathy in Chan’s eyes now; reading the file must have been part of the prisoner processing. “I will.”

“Thank you.” Jim felt his shoulders creep away from his ears, not realizing how much they’d climbed up. “We’ll let you know as soon as we find anything.”

“My crew and I will do the same.” A final nod, determined. “Chan out.”

The screen went dark and Jim slumped back into his chair, aware of Spock walking to his side even
before he saw the familiar blue uniform in his peripheral vision. “Did you hear all of that?”

Spock’s voice was quiet. “Yes.”

It wasn’t a surprise, Vulcan hearing and all. Jim sighed. “We were so damn close to bringing him to justice. So damn close to exposing the truth about Tarsus…”

“It is indeed unfortunate.” Spock crouched down to be even with Jim. “Are you alright?”

Jim snorted. “I’m not the one found dead in a brig.” He scrubbed a hand over his face. “This past—how long has it been? Two days? Has just been so much. Finding out Kodos was alive. Reliving all of the history that’s been covered up. Coming to terms with not taking Kodos out and letting the system do what it’s supposed to so the truth could come out, and then…” A thought occurred to Jim. Kodos dying just as the covered up truth was about to come out? What if it wasn’t a coincidence?

“Jim?” Spock’s concerned curiosity pulled Jim out of his thoughts. “What has caused your sudden shift in mood?”

Damn, the bond being open really did mean Spock could feel everything. Still, Jim hadn’t told him about Section 31 yet, and if what he’d been told was to believed it was best to keep it that way. He smiled up at Spock. “Told you my emotions are turbulent.” He schooled his expression and his emotions a little. “Just thinking of all the work we have to do. We should split up. You go talk to the brig crew, I’ll stay here and make some calls. Sound good?”

Spock was definitely a little wary, but he usually wouldn’t question Jim once he was in captain mode unless he was doing something really weird or endangering himself. This time was no exception. “I will do so, Captain.”

“Thanks.” Jim smiled, a little more genuine this time. “You’re the best, babe.” Despite switching into business mode, Spock didn’t turn down the Vulcan kiss Jim offered before he left.

Once Jim was alone, he keyed in the code his mother had given him with the promise to only use it for an emergency. This seemed to fit.

After a moment, Winona appeared onscreen. “Jim, what is it? Are you hurt? Is something coming after your crew?”

“No, I’m fine now.” Jim stared down Winona. “Did you do it? You or your people?”

Her confusion seemed genuine. “Do what?”

He was still skeptical; she’d lied about Section 31 for years after all. “Kill Kodos.”

Winona scoffed. “Jimmy, that was before I got involved. As much as I would have loved to take that bastard down once I found out what he did, he’s already dead.”

“He wasn’t.” Jim paused a moment, realizing how unclear this was. “He faked his death. Spock and I found him, and although I nearly killed him myself Spock talked me down. He was getting sent off to stand trial when the transport reported that he was found dead in his cell.” Jim stared her down. “It sounds like something a certain organization with a habit of doing sketchy things in the name of what they think is best for the Federation would do.”

“Hmm.” Winona was quiet, a considering look on her face. “It does sound like something we would do.” She tipped her head in consideration, looking back at Jim after a moment. “Admittedly, like you might expect from a secret organizations there’s not a whole lot of transparency, but I think word of
something that big would have gotten back to me. I don’t think this was us, Jim.”

“Great.” Jim ran a hand through his hair. “There goes my theory about Kodos’s death.” He narrowed his eyes. “You’re sure?”

Winona shrugged. “I can look into it, but I think you’ll have better luck looking into things on your end.”

“Alright.” Jim slumped a little. “Should we shut down this channel before it draws to much attention?”

“Yeah, probably for the best.” Winona smiled weakly. “Good luck getting to the bottom of this, Jimmy.”

“Thanks Ma.” Jim didn’t look as the screen went dark.

What had happened to Kodos?

Chapter End Notes

So what do you think happened?
Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! I've enjoyed reading your theories about what really happened to Kodos; a few of you might have just gotten it...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim sat slumped in his chair, trying to think of a new theory. He still had the idea that Kodos was faking somehow, even if that was harder to do in a Starfleet brig than a collapsing colony.

But how? It would depend on the medical report from the Rio Grande. Plus the report from Spock on their ship, and looking into the planet, and all the other possible causes of death that could have claimed Kodos.

Jim knew he should have been contacting the planet instead of brooding. Kodos had mentioned having a kid; someone would have to let her know her dad was dead. Jim would try to get out of that one if possible; there was no way he could look a child of Kodos in the eye and bring up Kodos’ death sympathetically, not when only the night before he’d been ready to cause it. Plus, on some level it still seemed like not having a dad would be better than a monster like that, although Kodos was probably nice enough to his kid. He was good at turning on that charisma to cover up his crimes.

Jim’s fists clenched. Kodos’ crimes would continue to go unprosecuted. There was no way to put a dead man on trial, no matter how guilty he may be. Once again, Kodos was escaping.

The wooshing of the door drew Jim out of his thoughts; he looked up to see Spock there. “All done reviewing the brig already?”

“Yes.” Spock still had that air of professionalism about him that was pretty standard when he was on duty, even if Jim was not holding himself to the same standard at the moment. Either unaware of Jim’s thoughts or ignoring them, Spock continued. “I spoke to the brig officers who were on duty while Kodos was on the ship; none reported suspicious activity that could have caused his death. They do not seem to be lying.”

“No?” Jim sat up a little. “You seem certain. Did you?” He gestured at his head, trying to indicate a mind meld.

Spock really was getting good at understanding him. “I did not. However, I reviewed the security footage and other records and found they corroborated the statements from the officers.”


Spock’s eyebrow went up. “Have you eliminated a possibility as well? What did the planetary authorities say?”

“I actually haven’t talked to them yet.” Jim sat up a little straighter, stretching his back. “I just followed a different lead I had.”

“Very well.” Spock was curious, but Jim was glad he didn’t push. “That can be our next priority.”
“Yeah.” Jim wasn’t looking forward to this; while he knew the importance of the process, getting justice for Kodos wasn’t exactly what Jim had in mind for today.

Before him or Spock could say anything else, the communication console went off. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Jim glanced at Spock before turning to the console and hitting the button. “Kirk here.”

“Sir, you have an incoming transmission from Captain Chan of the *Rio Grande.*” A pause, maybe getting more information. “It’s marked urgent.”

It must have been an update on the case. That definitely had Jim perking up. “Patch it through to my quarters.”

“Yes sir.” A bit of background noise, then the line went dead.

A moment later, a very tired looking Captain Chan appeared onscreen. “Hello, Captain Kirk. I just wanted to let you know you can call off the investigation on your end.”

Yeah, that definitely caught Jim’s attention. “You know what happened already?”

“Our CMO was able to identify the cause of death easily; high power phaser fire to the torso. And the man in the morgue is an exact match to the one we received from you and the information in the file you provided; no fake death this time.” A sigh. “Given that you were a part of this investigation, I’ll share everything with you. Best to know the real full story before it becomes a sensationalized piece about a private citizen dying in Starfleet’s care.”

Jim was going to object about it probably not being that bad, but growing up as the so-called Kelvin Baby meant he knew more about the sensationalist types than most. “Thank you.”

“It was a member of my crew.” Captain Chan slouched in the chair, looking truly exhausted. “He confessed, and his account matches the medical report, even if he disabled the security recordings at the time of the incident. We’re still working to see if we can recover anything.”

“We can lend assistance if needed.” Jim glanced back at Spock; even with most of the crew on leave, the two of them had enough computer skills to help.

“Thank you, but no need.” Captain Chan sat up, seeming a little more resolute. “My crewman has already confessed and all but officially plead guilty; I’d rather settle this quietly if I can.” The captain deflated once more. “Given the circumstances, I don’t exactly blame him, even if he still needs to be held responsible.”

Jim had a feeling, but felt the need to ask anyways. “What happened?”

Another tired sigh. “It was one of my most trusted officers; he’d been in charge of the transfer team. He told me the full story during his confession to me; apparently he’d had family on Tarsus IV who’d been part of the group Kodos said was moved to a secondary location, but he’d always found it suspicious that no one heard from them or found genuine evidence of a secondary settlement. When you handed him the file and he got to read over the real story, he said he lost it a little. So he went to confront Kodos about it when Kodos was in our brig, and the answer he got…” Captain Chan took a deep breath. “I think you can guess the rest.”

“I can.” Better than most probably. Jim almost felt a little guilty. “If you need help pleading for clemency in your crewman’s sentencing, I’m willing to weigh in.”
“Thank you, Captain.” It seemed a little more genuine this time, like it was coming from somewhere deeper than just professional courtesy. "I'm sure he'll appreciate that."

“Of course. It's the least I can do.” Jim paused to try to process everything. “Anything else we should know?”

“No, that'll be all. We'll contact you if we need to.” The professional posture was back. “Chan out.”

The screen went dark, and although Jim had mirrored the other captain’s squared shoulders and upright spine the moment before, he slumped back in his chair now. Kodos was dead.

Kodos was dead, and Jim had no idea how to feel about that.

Chapter End Notes

We've got at least one chapter left on this arc; it's been bouncing around in my head for a while now tbh. Then maybe the boys can enjoy some shore leave hahaha

Like last week, I'll do Disco then check comments, so feel free to go wild with spoilers
Jim sat in silence for a while, trying to process the mess of emotion in his head. There was so much to think about, and so much had happened that he was almost just going numb. But there’d also certainly been a lot to make him feel, and strong emotions at that…

He nearly jumped at the hand on his shoulder, but the touch was gentle and was accompanied by a pulse of calm in the back of his head and through the contact. He looked up into Spock’s deep brown eyes, now soft with concern in a way that Jim was glad he could see. How could he have ever thought Spock was emotionless or cold just because he didn’t express emotions?

The presence in the back of Jim’s mind became a bit searching. “Are you alright? You were giving off feelings of…distress.”

Jim smiled weakly. “I don’t know if that’s the right term, but I don’t know how I’d describe it, so…”

Spock settled on the couch near Jim’s desk chair so they could see eye to eye more easily. “Do you wish to discuss it?”

“Really?” There was a note to bitterness to Jim’s smile now. “I know you’re not really the biggest on emotional discussions.” Just cuz he knew Spock had emotions didn’t mean he thought Spock liked talking about them. That was definitely a no-no for Vulcans.

“At the moment, my emotions are not my primary concern.” Spock shifted closer to Jim. “Verbal processing with another person has often seemed beneficial for you. Please, allow me to assist you.”

“Alright.” Jim felt a little more warm instead of numb now. He took a deep breath and decided to start with the basics. “Kodos is dead. Probably for real this time.”

Spock nodded. “As he was in Starfleet custody at the time and there seemed to be a body to identify, that does seem likely.”

“Yeah.” Jim stared out over Spock’s shoulder. “He’s faked it already though. I think I was a little wary or suspicious before, but since I saw him and got confirmation he’d actually managed to dodge death before, I’m more wary now. Part of me doesn’t really think he’s dead, as much as I want this to be over.”

Spock quietly gestured for him to continue.

“And then…” Jim ran a hand over his face, holding it over his eyes. “Is it over? I can’t…I can’t really say I’m upset that Kodos is dead. As much as I agree with the Federation not having a death penalty, part of me still feels like he deserved it. But then I’m conflicted.” He dropped his hand. “You really did have me convinced when you talked about how bringing him to trial could have been good. How the record would have been officially set right. How his crimes wouldn’t just be
swept under the rug anymore…” Jim took a breath. “But you can’t try a dead man. For reasons I understand, but it feels like he’s escaping again.”

“That would be…” Spock paused, considering, “frustrating.”

“Yeah.” Jim huffed out a quiet laugh. “I guess. There’s just been so much happening, and it’s been an emotional roller coaster. I feel like I’m stepping off, but my stomach still isn’t sure where it’s settling—or if it is at all—and my head’s still a little rattled.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I am not sure I understand. Are you describing your emotional state, or are you experiencing physical symptoms as well?”

That got a genuine laugh from Jim. “Next shore leave, we’re tracking down an old Earth-style theme park and I’m talking you on a real roller coaster.” His expression grew a little more somber as his mood dropped again. “But I meant emotionally. I just need some time to sort everything out.”

“I see.” Spock pulled back a little. “I apologize for imposing on you. I did not realize that you did not wish to talk, and for that—”

“Baby no!” Jim grabbed Spock’s hands and leaned forward to give him a thorough kiss. When they finally pulled back for breath, Jim kept his forehead against Spock’s and their hands together, an intimate gesture that still wasn’t quite Vulcan kissing. He hoped Spock would be able to pick up on how he was feeling through the contact. “This has been amazingly helpful.” He looked up at Spock with something between a smirk and a smile. “When did you get all good at emotions?”

Spock’s eyebrow went up, but his eyes were warm. “Your praise is stronger than I deserve. However, I have realized that I am better able to control my emotions when I allow myself to fully process and understand them during meditation. Given my knowledge of you, I decided conversation would serve this purpose better than the solitary meditation I prefer.”

“You know me so well.” Jim couldn’t resist leaning in for a quick peck to Spock’s lips, even if it was a little awkward with how he was starting to grin. God, what would he do without Spock?

“I am gratified I have had the opportunity to grow to know you, t’hy’la.” Spock nuzzled their faces together slightly. “It has been a turbulent day, and the ship is still on shore leave. You require rest. I will retire with you.”

“Thanks babe.” Jim pulled back enough to really look Spock in the eye. “You’re right, I should just sleep on it and try to work through it more in the morning.”

“Very well.” Spock’s voice was soft as he helped Jim stand. “We will revisit the matter in the morning.”

“Okay.” Jim allowed Spock to lead him to their bathroom, and the usual nightly routine with Spock was calming. He felt himself start to settle.

But his mind was still working, almost in overdrive. Partway through brushing his teeth, an idea came to him.

He didn’t want to tell Spock yet; it could be dangerous. But it could be the only way to set the record straight.

So that night, before sliding into bed and Spock’s arms, Jim discreetly sent a message off on his padd. *I’m thinking of going public. You got my back?* Best to not go into too many details just in case. Plus, the person he was messaging knew what he was talking about.
The response from his mother was quick. *Always.*

Jim smiled, dropping the padd on the bedside table before rolling over to Spock. Tomorrow, he’d do what needed to be done.

Chapter End Notes

Maybe you can guess Jim's next move. But we'll see...
Chapter 253

Happy monthly fic anniversary eve! It's been (and still is tbh) a busy week, but this is a chapter I've been thinking over for much longer than it took the arc to get here. I hope you enjoy!

This is a heavy chapter and the formatting is weird; Jim is the only one talking but I broke up the dialogue for dramatic pauses and readability.

Even with all his resolve the night before, Jim took a little while to work up the confidence to do what he knew he needed to do. He wasn’t sure if it helped or hurt that Spock was on shift and not with him right now; while he was sure Spock could tell that Jim had something on his mind, it wasn’t like he hadn’t gotten plenty to think and feel about those past few days. Would he even have time to really enjoy shore leave? They’d been given a week, but the past few days felt like months already…

Not what he should be focused on. Jim took a deep breath and looked into the recording device attached to the console in the briefing room he was in. While part of him had wanted to stay holed up in his room, this needed to be something that he brought formality to. He was sharing something personal, but being Captain James Tiberius Kirk of the Federation flagship might lend some more weight than just being Jim Kirk, someone who survived something terrible. Maybe having the layers there protected him too, but he wasn’t going to get too into his head right now.

He’d deliberated between having a formal speech or just winging it, and ultimately he decided to just try drawing on everything that had been floating through his head over what felt like weeks, even if it was less. Had it really only been days?

That wasn’t important. He reminded himself to breathe, and then Jim checked how he was positioned on the screen, looking at the image that would accompany his testimony on an open broadcast to whoever in the Federation was willing to listen. He may not be able to get his message everywhere (he bet Nyota could have, but he didn’t want to interrupt her time with Christine), but he was getting it out.

He sat up straight and hit record.

“Hello. My name is James Tiberius Kirk, and many of you may know me as the captain of the starship Enterprise.” Breathe. “But that’s not what I’m here to talk to you about today.”

“Some of you may have heard about a prisoner dying in Starfleet custody last night. What I’m going to say is related to that, but I’m not trying to justify or condemn that. But what I say may still provide some understanding of what happened.” He hadn’t checked back in with Captain Chan, but he knew that the story was starting to get out. He wondered what had happened to her crewmember, but that would be out of his hands.

“While this may seem tangential, bear with me. I want to talk about an incident that happened over a decade ago, on a small colony called Tarsus IV.” Jim took a moment to calm himself. “Some of you may know the official story. There was a famine, half the people were said to get relocated to another
Jim paused once more, a passing thought wondering if he should have checked with Pike before going public with something Starfleet had classified. But the thought was quickly dismissed; truth was more important than regulation. “What I am about to share is the true story of Tarsus, albeit an abridged version. It will be upsetting, but I need the truth to come out.”

Here was where Jim always got stuck; he wasn’t sure how much detail to go into. So he took the advice Spock told him he’d gotten from a certain deceptively young looking old man, and decided to do what felt right. “Some of that story was true. There was a problem with the crops, half the people were separated, and the colony collapsed. But what happened to half the colonists is what I’m here to set the record straight on.”

Here goes nothing. “There was no secondary site; there never was. The colonists who were deemed inferior by Governor Kodos’ system of eugenics were led away with the promise of relocation, but actually just killed.”

And here goes everything. “I know this because I saw it firsthand. I’d initially been selected for destruction and led in with the others, but my father’s legacy protected me once more. They didn’t want the attention that the dead kid of a Federation hero would bring. They took me out of the room, but I snuck back because I’ve always been too curious for my own good. So I saw the soldiers with phaser rifles turned up high enough to disintegrate opening fire on panicked crowds until there was nothing left to fire on. I saw a situation that I didn’t think could get worse become a true nightmare, an atrocity.”

“Now I’m not here to speculate on the collapse of the colony, if it was just Kodos taking advantage of the famine to justify his murders, or if there was something more sinister at play. I can safely say that that man should never have been in power.” He’d thought about all of that before and never reached a productive conclusion, and he didn’t want to get lost in that now.

“You may be wondering why I decided to share this now.” Jim took a deep breath and stared directly into the recorder. “What I am about to say may be shocking, but the man killed in Starfleet custody last night was none other than Kodos the Executioner himself.”

Jim could already imagine all the articles saying he’d lost it, but he powered through. “While dead men can’t stand trial, we’d been preparing the case showing the man in custody was Kodos, and there is already evidence linking Kodos to the deaths, including the eyewitnesses like myself. I am willing to share this evidence.”

Hopefully that would calm some of the speculation, but Jim knew he had to finish strong. “You may still be wondering why I’m sharing all of this now. Many say that we shouldn’t speak ill of that dead, that we should let the past remain the past.”

He squared his shoulders once more, drawing on whatever strength he could. “I believe that truth is more important than reputation, and that we must view history honestly in order to truly learn from it and stop making the same mistakes. And that means not only listening to the stories told by those in power when something happens; as many of the victims of Kodos’ rule cannot speak for themselves, I know that I must step forward and share their story, grisly as it may be.”

Jim allowed his face to soften some. “For anyone out there who has seen or experienced something terrible and is afraid to come forward, to bring the truth to light, know that I stand with you. This is not an easy journey to make, but it can be an important one. Believe me when I say that I have been where you are now, and I know how terrifying it can be, how those who have hurt you or others can
haunt you and seem larger than life, stronger than you could ever be.”

He had to fight back the memories of Frank; this wasn’t the time. “But know that they are not. You are stronger; you have carried yourself through those horrible times, or you may be continuing to survive despite how difficult it is. Please carry on, and try to find support when you can. You never know how much telling the right person can save you, even if all it does is give you a lifeline to anchor yourself instead of helping pull yourself out immediately.”

Time to wrap it up. “How and when you speak your truth is a very personal decision, and your process deserves respect. But if you feel it’s safe to do so, don’t allow those who cruelly hurt others continue to hold power over you by making you keep their secrets; if you are in a place where you are able to, I encourage you to expose the truth. I recognize that I am in a much better, safer position than most when I share this. Still, I hope that by coming forward I can help others find their strength. Here, history deserves the truth. The families of those lost deserved to know what really happened. And I will not allow myself to be part of a cover up when I can share the truth.”

The enormity of all that he’d said and shared was catching up with him, and Jim knew it wouldn’t be much longer before he felt the need to collapse. “Please, remember all that I have shared. Thank you for listening.”

“Captain James T. Kirk out.”

Chapter End Notes

I may have slipped more thinking about current events into this chapter...

Also busy week means probably no disco for me tonight, so please no spoilers in the comments! We can freak out together on Monday
Jim slumped back in the chair when the transmission was done. That was…that was more than he’d revealed to most people.

Spock knew just about everything, both from Jim telling him and from their minds being linked. It must not have been fun to have a direct line to Jim’s brain during nightmares, even if their not-yet-full bond meant he probably didn’t see much.

Still, not even Bones had known everything. Not that Jim really said anything, but…

Bones knew some things, of course. Between looking through Jim’s medical history (the malnutrition was hard to miss) and being his roommate, he knew a lot. Jim wasn’t exactly chatty after his nightmares, but still.

But now god knows how many people in the Federation knew. Jim was hesitant to let any messages through in fear of the response. It wasn’t like many people would side with Kodos on the eugenics and murder front, but there were probably some people still around who’d survived because of Kodos’ favor and would probably try to deny what had happened. It was always those who benefited from a system who advocated for it or at least ignored its flaws.

And Jim didn’t want to deal with that now. So he ignored the comm, zoning out enough that he could ignore whether or not it was going off.

But he couldn’t ignore it when the door opened and someone came to stand behind him. He hesitated, not sure what to expect but feeling a little too drained somehow to turn around to see who it was.

But thankfully, the voice that came from behind him was familiar. Very familiar. “That was courageous, if possibly dangerous.”

“Sounds like me.” Jim tipped his head back to look up at Spock. “Aren’t you technically on duty?”

“We had been watching your transmission from the bridge, and when you did not respond to a hail from the bridge we became curious as to your current status.” Spock stepped forward and put his hands on the back of Jim’s chair, not breaking eye contact. “As first officer, it is my duty to ensure the well being of the captain.”

“Ah.” Jim smiled, a little tired. “Just duty?”

There was warmth in Spock’s eyes. “It was not the sole cause, simply the most justifiable reason while on duty.”

“I love you.” Jim leaned up and was glad when Spock leaned down to meet him in the kiss, even if
the angle was awkward.

It was a short kiss, maybe due to the angle, before Spock pulled back. “Why are you not responding to any communication?”

Jim sighed, slumping back into the chair. “Didn’t feel like seeing what the reaction would be.”

“I assure you that you do not need to be concerned.” Spock sat down in the chair next to Jim and began to scroll through the console on the table. “The reaction is overwhelmingly supportive.”

“Really?” Jim sat up, not quite believing it until he looked at what Spock was scrolling through. It really was…positive. “Damn.”

Spock shifted closer to him, probably knowing the physical contact reassuring to Jim. “You should not doubt yourself so much.”

“Maybe not.” Jim nuzzled into Spock, kissing his cheek. “Good think I’ve got you to help pull me out of it.”

Spock looked like he was about to respond, but then the comm in the room went off. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Damn, Spock must have turned the thing back on. Or Jim really had been ignoring it earlier… “Kirk here.”

Some hesitation. “Sir, Admiral Pike is on the line. He says its urgent.”

Oh boy. Jim sat up straighter, reluctantly shifting away from Spock in the process. “Patch him through.”

A moment later Pike’s familiar face came up on screen, looking stern. “Captain.”

Jim nodded cautiously. “Admiral.”

Pike sighed. “As your commanding officer and a Starfleet officer, I have to say that you should have consulted with me prior to speaking publicly about a matter that Starfleet classified.”

Jim slumped a little in his chair. “Understood.”

“However,” Pike let himself relax, a little amusement showing through his still professional expression and reenergizing Jim. “I think it takes a lot to come forward and stand up for what you believe in, Jim.”

Jim got the unspoken ‘I approve and have your back’ and smiled. “Thanks.” He almost said Dadmiral just for the hell of it, but decided he should probably bring up some professionalism. But Pike could probably read him as much as he could read Pike at this point.

“All right.” Pike glanced over to where he probably knew Spock was. “You might be hearing more from me or Starfleet, but for now enjoy your shore leave.”

Jim smiled. He still had shore leave to use up. “Will do.”

“Good.” He got an approving nod. “Pike out.”

The screen went dark and Jim felt himself leaning back toward Spock. “We still have shore leave.”
“Indeed.” Spock sounded like he already knew that.

Jim probably had too, prior to the sudden feeling of being emotionally drained that was settling in after the adrenaline rush of responding to everything that had happened. “So now what?”

Spock turned to him, Jim feeling the shift where he was against Spock’s shoulder. “What would you wish to do?”

“I… I don’t know.” Jim didn’t shift; for someone so lean Spock’s shoulder was surprisingly comfortable. Or maybe Jim was just drained. “I think I might want to stay on the ship. Avoid any hassle that might come from people wanting to talk to me.”

Jim could feel a little surprise coming from Spock. “If that is what you wish. I will support you.”

“You’re the best.” Jim nuzzled into Spock’s shoulder a little more. Maybe he’d been to worried to get enough sleep the night before; had he really rested this shore leave?

“You are tired.” Spock slowly rose, an arm wrapped around Jim. “You should rest.”

“I’m fine.” How much had he slept? Probably not much the day they found Kodos, then there was the day he did a shift that turned into trying to solve the murder, then was it today?

Jim wasn’t sure exactly how he got back to his quarters. Maybe he walked, maybe Spock carried him. All Jim knew was that he was passing out in bed before too long.

Chapter End Notes

Seriously, my default really does seem to be soft Spirk when I’m getting a little writer’s block hahaha

Anyways, let's talk Disco! So much happened!
Chapter 255

Chapter Notes

So the 100 chapter anniversary of them getting together just happened to fall on Valentine's Day, so expect some plot wrap up and some Spirk goodness. Not gonna lie, I had aspects of this end scene in my head for a while...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The rest of shore leave was decidedly less exciting, and Jim never thought he’d appreciate it so much. He and Spock mostly kept to their quarters, with Spock still working the occasional shift and Jim mostly catching up on sleep and reading; he’d been meaning to go through his old collection of paper books again. Reading them was comforting; digital books had their advantages, but they didn’t have that old book smell.

They also very carefully did some excursions onto the planet; Jim didn’t want to do anything that would draw too much attention to him, so they picked options where they were less likely to be bothered, like museums. Jim would say that he was doing it mostly to appeal to Spock if asked, but they both ended up reading just about every plaque and explanation in the place.

It was nice, relaxing. Not necessarily what Jim would have had in mind when planning his shore leave, but probably good for him after how the first half of leave had gone.

There were also the messages of support that continued to flow in, especially from the crew. Sulu and Ben’s call was mostly just checking in and talking about what was new with them, but Jim got the feeling they were both trying to see how he was doing as well. Nyota and Christine had just been on the planet, so they took the time to invite Jim and Spock out to dinner in a restaurant where they assured Jim there would be no concerns about press hounding him, and they were right. The food was great, a mix of local cuisines that Spock carefully went over with his tricorder to check that it was safe for Jim to eat, and Jim had to admit that just spending time with friends casually like this might have also been just what he needed.

Gaila and Chekov even swung by Jim and Spock’s quarters before they went out the day Jim made the video. Gaila hugged him long and hard enough that Jim could feel Spock starting to get a little annoyed in the back of his mind, and Chekov proudly declared that exposing a leader’s crimes was invented in Russia in what seemed like a show of support. (Jim stopped Spock from pointing out what often happened to those who went against Russian leaders for much of history.)

Jim’s concerns in that area seemed largely unfounded as well; he wasn’t sure if his mother had done something, if there really weren’t that many supporters of Kodos, or if they’d just ditched him when they found out how horrible he really was, but Jim hadn’t really had any problems. He’d gotten messages of support, requests for interviews, and surprisingly no threats or accusations of lying. He was sure his reputation helped as well; what would the heroic son of a hero stand to gain from lying about the leader of a colony that would have been pretty insignificant if disaster hadn’t struck?

Then of course there was the call from Bones.

It had started off kinda like the call from the Sulus, with Bones and Carol and Jo updating Jim and Spock on everything they’d been doing (Jim totally did not get emotional over Jo calling him Uncle
Jim, not at all). Once Spock left for his shift and Carol and Jo went off to do...something, there was a moment of quiet between Jim and Bones. Jim stared off where Carol and Jo had gone with a smile. “They seem to get along well.”

“Yeah.” Bones’ expression was soft in a way Jim had rarely, if ever, seen before. “It’s not like I really doubted they would, but it’s still nice to see, you know?”

“I bet.” Even this far away, Jim felt like he could almost sense the warmth of Bones’ happiness. “Good news for you and Carol; she passed the most important test.” He shifted, grinning at Bones. “Am I gonna have to figure out how to be best man and officiant at your wedding at once?”

“Easy kid.” Bones leaned back and put his hands up. “One step at a time. Not all of us live lives as exciting as yours.”

The comment was clearly meant as a joke, but the mood quickly sobered anyways. After a moment, Jim looked back at Bones. “I take it you saw the video?”

“Yeah. Yeah I did.” Bones took a deep breath and pinched the bridge of his nose a moment before letting go. He looked back at Jim. “I mean I knew about some of that, but you saw….” He took a deep breath and shook his head. “Your ability to nearly die never ceases to stress me. How on Earth did you manage to top “nearly starved to death” for worst thing to happen in one year of your life?”

Jim’s smile was crooked, easily slipping into the familiar dark humor. “It was on Tarsus actually.”

“Oh my god.” Bones threw up his hands and shook his head, glaring at Jim after a moment. “You’re going to be the death of me.”

“C’mon.” Jim grinned, a little more familiar. “You love me.”

After a moment, Bones’ glare softened. “Yeah, I guess I do.” He paused, looking at something back the way Jo and Carol had gone before looking back at Jim. “Alright, I gotta go. I’ll see you once it’s time to report back to the ship.”

“See you then.” Jim waved. “And Bones?” He paused, waiting for his friend’s attention to return to him. “Love you too.”

Bones rolled his eyes, but Jim could see the fondness there as they ended the call.

It was more than he’d gotten from his actual brother, who sent him an admittedly cute video of his nephews (who Jim had yet to meet; he’d have to talk to Pike about swinging it so they could go out to the colony Sam was on, even if only for a supply run) with the note, ‘Saw the video. Hope you’re alright. That was brave of you.’ Jim appreciated the acknowledgement, but he got the feeling this might become another part of his life that Sam missed and they wouldn’t really talk about.

But Jim wouldn’t let himself feel bitter about that, especially since today he’d had a revelation that he couldn’t wait to share with Spock.

Once Spock got off his shift for the day, Jim greeted him with arms gently looped around his neck and a quick kiss on the lips. “Guess what?”

Spock’s hands had already settled on Jim’s sides. “What?”

“I think we’ve officially had our first real fight, with the night I realized who Kodos was and wouldn’t tell you.” Jim picked up a quickly-suppressed flash of something unpleasant from Spock at the memory, but he powered through anyways. “Do you know what that means?”
Spock raised an eyebrow. “I admit, I am uncertain what you seem to be referring to.”

Best to cut to the chase probably. “Makeup sex, Spock. We get to have makeup sex.”

The eyebrow stayed up. “We have already reconciled, Jim.”

“Spock.” Jim dragged out the name a little, tempted to drop his arms from Spock but not sure enough about where he put his cane to be certain he wouldn’t lose his balance. “It’s a human custom I want to indulge in, and you get to have sex with me. Why are you disagreeing with this?” Jim paused, expression a little more serious. “I mean obviously if you don’t want to we don’t have to, but I thought it could be fun so—”

He was cut off by Spock’s lips on his, pulling apart a moment later so Spock could respond. “You present a logical argument.”

Jim almost laughed, but he was too busy getting picked up and carried to the bed.

Plus, his mouth was a little occupied.

Now this was how you celebrated shore leave.

Chapter End Notes

Ah, nothing like a fade to black where they're definitely banging. Happy Valentine's Day!

Anyways, I'm gonna watch Disco once I post, so feel free to talk trek in the comments!
Chapter 256

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Who's ready for a new arc? It's another plot bunny that I've had bouncing around for a bit...

Bonus points to whoever catches the (very brief) reference to recent science news this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Despite several people (including Jim himself, at times at least) suggesting he probably needed a shore leave after that shore leave, the Enterprise got back to duty as planned. Making sure they had all crew accounted for any only minor incidents or injuries, they left the planet. Really, no one had anything worse than mild strains or sprains that Sickbay fixed pretty easily or little bits of crew gossip about who did what with who over leave for the most part. Jim was the only one who’d had anything really...dramatic happen, it seemed.

After a brief rendezvous with the USS Opportunity to pick up some crew who’d gone further away for leave, like Bones and Carol, they were off once more to boldly go seek out new life and new civilizations, explore strange new worlds, and do all those exciting things mentioned in the captain’s oath Pike had passed to Jim.

Of course it was less exciting in day to day life; while they did get to go to previously unexplored planets and see new civilizations, some first contacts and some diplomatic missions to more interstellarily-established worlds, it was still a lot of star charting and science things that Jim only enjoyed because they made Spock get excited in that quiet way he actually allowed himself on the bridge.

Still, going where no one had gone before included making the map for those who came afterwards so they wouldn’t get sucked into weird anomalies or anything like that. Not that Jim felt people would believe half the stuff that made it into his logs, but he’d learned the hard way that it was best to be honest anyways, and while he and Spock were communicating enough to prevent problems now, Jim didn’t want a repeat of that.

But still, their post-leave missions hadn’t been too exciting. Mostly star charting and science stuff, although last week they’d gotten to visit a system with multiple inhabited, warp-capable planets. At first there was concern they’d have to work out some kind of arrangement when they first detected it, but they found that the planets had been communicating long before either was actually spacefaring and had formed a longstanding alliance. It was, to borrow Spock’s word, fascinating to see connected cultural development on different planets. The xenoanthropologists had a field day with it and it was all Jim could do not to have all of them stay back to study it, even if the people of the planets were quite open and willing to share their cultures.

It had been fun to visit peaceful cultures and participate in their rituals and customs as invited. Certainly better than the times everything had been violent and horrible. While Bones was still watching him like a hawk, tricorder at the ready, the whole time Jim was down there, the only thing Jim felt was enjoyment.
Well, at the time. Almost a week of stargazing and science later and Jim was feeling odd, but it couldn’t be related. Maybe cabin fever was just getting a little literal…

It was probably fine. Knowing Spock had a late night in the labs, Jim did his nightly routine and crawled into bed, feeling weirdly exhausted. Maybe he just needed a good night’s rest…

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Spock entered his and Jim’s shared quarters quietly, knowing his t’hy’la had likely already retired for the night. Their bond was quiet, moreso than usual, but as Spock had felt a strong wave of tiredness from Jim not long before the bond went quiet, he believed it may be possible that Jim was merely experiencing rare dreamless sleep.

Spock did not want to disturb him if that was the case; Jim was perpetually in need of more rest than he got. As Jim was a very light sleeper, Spock decided to leave the lights at their current level and navigate their quarters by memory, something his eidetic memory made simple.

Spock heard no noise from the bed as he followed his nightly routine, which was not unusual. If Jim was truly exhausted, he was likely to be quiet in his sleep.

So it was not until Spock got into bed for the night that he truly suspected something was amiss. As Vulcans evolved on a planet with no moon, their night vision, and thus Spock’s, was superior to a human’s.

While Jim’s side of the bed was inhabited, the figure there seemed…smaller than Jim typically looked, even if Jim did sometimes curl in on himself in his sleep. Additionally, while it could be a “trick of the light,” to use a human expression, Jim’s hair looked lighter to Spock’s newly adjusted eyes.

Spock now had sufficient cause to be mildly alarmed. He cautiously pulled back the blanket to reveal —

A child. A very young human; Spock had not spent enough time around young humans to accurately estimate how old this one was.

Removing the blankets caused the child to stir, and a moment later large blue eyes blinked open at Spock, first looking sleepy but then scared. “Who are you?”

It only took a moment for Spock to recognize those eyes, and milliseconds after that to catalogue the rest of the facial features for familiarity. “I am…” Spock was uncertain what term to use; it felt…uncomfortable to describe himself in any terms implying romantic intent when speaking with a child. “a friend. My name is Spock.”

Jim’s lower lip wobbled. “I don’t know any Spocks. Where’s my mama?”

If Jim did not have any memories, this could prove difficult. “She is away presently. However, she has entrusted us with your care.” It was a mostly true statement.

Still, the young Jim did not seem convinced. From his body language and the unshielded empathic energy Spock was able to recognize from being attuned to the adult Jim, it seemed like he was about to cry.

Spock was unprepared to deal with a crying child. Uncertain how to act, Spock reached out and gently yet firmly pinched the child’s shoulder, causing him to become unconscious.
Chapter End Notes

Uh oh, this doesn't look good for our boys...

Anyways, who wants more tropes? I'm always down to break out the real cheesy stuff...
Spock paced back and forth within the confines of the private room in Sickbay he had taken over, periodically glancing at the blond child on the bed.

There was no known logical reason for Jim to suddenly be a child. However, Spock had found no possible other reason for the sudden appearance of this child and disappearance of the adult Jim. Spock’s quick search of the ship’s sensors revealed no outside interference or transporter signal, and no odd energy surges from their quarters on any level the typical ship’s sensors detected. Spock planned to do follow up research in their quarters and using both internal and external ships sensors, but at the moment he had no believable theory for what could have caused Jim’s current state. Still, there was also no logical explanation for an unknown child resembling Jim to suddenly appear in Jim’s last known location.

Additionally, Spock had made brief, shallow contact with the child’s mind after rendering him unconscious, if only to attempt to confirm his hypothesis that this was indeed Jim. While the mind he saw was different than the one he knew, it was possible that was due to this child not yet experiencing many major life events that would go on to shape Jim into the individual Spock knew. Still, there had been a certain element or spark to that mind that Spock felt he recognized.

Spock ceased his pacing as the door to the private room opened, revealing an irate Dr. McCoy. “Dammit Spock, you better have a damn good reason for calling me here in the middle of the night. I know you claim to not need 8 hours every night, but for the rest of us—” He paused his tirade once he saw the child. “Why do you have a kid that looks like Jim?”

Spock tucked his hands behind his back. “Doctor, I believe—”

“Hmm.” Dr. McCoy had already begun scanning the child and did not appear to be listening to Spock. “Could Jim have a kid?” He looked at the preliminary scan results. “This kid looks about five or six, so maybe if Jim had knocked someone up without realizing it right before he left Riverside; the timeline would fit…”

“Doctor.” Spock was mildly affronted on his t'hy'la’s behalf. “As we both know, Jim has demonstrated no real desire for children and has engaged in preventative measures to limit the possibility of unintended offspring during sexual encounters. If he had intentionally had a child with a past partner, how likely is it that neither of us would be aware? Jim often refers to us as the two people who know him best, and as I have melded with him there are few to no major secrets between us. Additionally, how would a child of Jim’s from a previous relationship appear on the ship unannounced, notably at the same time Jim himself disappeared?”

Dr. McCoy narrowed his eyes and then relaxed his shoulders. “Ok, you might have some points. But
what are you saying; do you think this kid is Jim? Also, why did you not lead with the fact that Jim is missing?"

“I attempted to explain the situation, but you were occupied with the child. As for if he truly is Jim, that is what I am seeking to confirm.” Spock glanced at the child then back at Dr. McCoy. “Is this child a genetic match, beyond what a potential son would be?”

“One sec; let me run the comparison.” He focused intently on his tricorder for a moment before looking up at Spock in surprise. “It’s a match; just about perfect, and not the 50% you’d expect from a parent-child relationship.”

“That confirms my hypothesis.” Spock tightened his hands behind his back. “Somehow, the captain has been reverted back to himself at a much younger age.”

Dr. McCoy stared at the child, disbelief clear on his face. “I mean, we’ve encountered odd things before, but how?”

“I am uncertain.” Spock looked at Dr. McCoy. “We will need to investigate further; I will tell the bridge to return us to the most recent planets we’ve visited.”

“Alright. I’ll keep running tests.” Dr. McCoy looked down at the child. “We’ll have to see if he knows anything helpful. I’ll talk to him when he wakes up.”

“He knows nothing.” Spock replied perhaps too quickly, if Dr. McCoy’s odd expression was any indication.

There was an odd edge of amusement in the upward tug of one corner of Dr. McCoy’s mouth. “And how do you know that?”

“We very briefly spoke; he had no recollection of me and seemed to not recognize his surroundings; he seemed distressed.” Spock clasped his hands more tightly behind his back. “At that point I decided it was necessary to bring him to Sickbay and consult you.”

“Huh.” There was still some amusement in Dr. McCoy’s expression. “And if you were talking with him, why was he unconscious when I got here?”

Spock avoided eye contact. “As I have limited experience in this area, I was uncertain how to respond when he acted seriously distressed. I rendered him unconscious.”

Dr. McCoy’s laugh was loud and sudden. “You nerve pinched a child?”

Spock looked up, ready to defend himself if still somewhat uncertain this had been the correct course of action. “I needed to bring him here without creating too much of a commotion on the ship. A crying child would have attracted undue attention.”

“I’m sure you thought that all out in advance and didn’t just think of good rationalizations after the fact.” Dr. McCoy looked on the edge of laughter still. “Don’t worry Spock.” He reached across the biobed to slap at Spock’s shoulder. “I’ll show you the ropes in handling kids. You’ll be a pro in no time.”

“Thank you.” Spock was uncertain if he wished to spend enough time around children to warrant needing those skills, but the background would be necessary until they returned Jim to himself. “However, our priority should still be restoring Jim to his adult self.”

Dr. McCoy snorted at that as if it were obvious. “Of course.” He looked down at the biobed. “We’ve
just got a lot to do until we can figure that out…”

Chapter End Notes

For whatever reason Spock being awkward with kids is endlessly amusing to me, especially when contrasted with how much Bones loves kids. If you want an example of this from TOS, check out the episode Friday's Child. The kid thing doesn't come in til the end, but the whole episode is one of my favorites.

Anyways, it's Disco night! I'll watch tonight, so feel free to react below!
Hello everyone and happy last update of February! I hope it's been a good month for all of you; mine's been a little all over the place. But that's not what you're here for; back to the straight-up weird trek!

Both of them continued to watch the sleeping child, Dr. McCoy eventually breaking the silence. “So what the hell are we going to tell the crew? We’ll have to justify doubling back somehow, and people’ll question Jim disappearing.”

Spock had not yet considered that. “It will be difficult for many to believe.”

Dr. McCoy snorted. “Spock, this crew’s been through everything the two of us’ve been through. They won’t get thrown off by much.”

“You believe they would accept that Jim has been reverted to a child?” Spock raised an eyebrow. “You have witnessed more than much of the crew, and your initial assumption was that Jim had a previously undisclosed child.”

“Yeah, I also didn’t know Jim was missing.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “It’ll be different if people have the full story.”

Before Spock could respond, the child between them began to stir, and they looked between each other in alarm. Slowly, the familiar blue eyes opened and began looking around the room; Jim backed away from them. “Who are you? Where’s my mama?”

“Hey.” Dr. McCoy held up his hands placatingly. “My name is Dr. McCoy. It’s ok, we’re friends of your mom and you’re on a Starfleet ship. You’re safe.”

The child—Jim—did not look convinced. “Can I talk to her?”

They looked between each other and Spock finally spoke. “Not at the moment. We will arrange contact.”

His lower lip wobbled. “I want my mama.”

“We’ll get her, don’t worry,” Dr. McCoy smiled in a way that was likely meant to be reassuring.

Jim did not appear convinced. “I wanna talk to her now!”

“It is very late at night, and you require rest.” Spock did not think stating the specific time would matter for Jim. “You can retire to quarters for the night.”

“I don’t wanna.” Jim crossed his arms. “M’not sleepy.”

“You’re cranky.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “You need sleep.”
“No!” The child Jim pouted. “I don’t wanna.”

“Alright.” Dr. McCoy leaned against the biobed. “How about we go for a walk and see if we can wear you out?”

The pout did not dissipate, but after a moment of hesitation it did soften. “Okay.”

“Good.” Dr. McCoy held out his arms. “C’mere, kid.”

Jim shifted close enough to allow himself to be lifted off the bed, but then he began to squirm. “I wanna walk.”

“Ok.” Dr. McCoy set him down. “Just hold my hand so you don’t get lost, ok?”

“Ok.” Jim still appeared wary, but agreed and took Dr. McCoy’s outstretched hand.

He looked back at Spock, but Spock kept his hands tightly behind his back. He was uncertain how to behave around this child.

The bond was still silent, despite the scans suggesting Jim was unharmed besides the age regression. It was…unsettling.

Spock had not realized how quickly the bond had become a stabilizing influence for his mind. It would not immediately negatively impact him to have that influence removed, but he would require more meditation tonight. However, he was uncertain how he would do so while watching Jim.

They had left Sickbay and were now openly traveling the corridors. As it was now nearly 0000 hours, the ship was very quiet. Seeing other crew members was rare.

However, rare did not mean impossible. As they traveled through the officer’s quarters, Spock saw someone unexpected. “Lieutenant Gaila.”

She smiled. “Spock. Len. We’re off duty, no need for formality.” She paused at the sight of the child now half hiding behind Dr. McCoy’s legs and crouched down to be at his eye level. “And who’s this little cutie?”

He smiled shyly at her. “Jimmy.”

Her eyes briefly went wide and she looked up at Dr. McCoy and Spock for confirmation. “Wait, as in—”

“Yes.” Spock looked down at Jim, who seemed to be leaning in toward Gaila more than expected. “This was how I found him when I returned to our quarters following beta shift. He does not seem to know anything beyond his chronological age.”

“Wow.” Gaila looked at Jim. “You must be scared, huh?”

He giggled, leaning a little closer to her. “I’m ok.” Jim giggled again. “You’re pretty.”

“Aww.” Gaila looked up at Spock and Dr. McCoy again. “Is he always this sweet?”

Spock’s brow furrowed. “No, he has been quite distressed most of the night.” He paused, looking at Dr. McCoy for confirmation as Gaila did the same. Both noticed the slightly dazed way Dr. McCoy was watching her simultaneously.

They seemed to reach the same conclusion. Gaila laughed nervously. “End of shift and a longer
“Dinner must mean my pheromone suppressants are wearing off.” She grinned. “Guess I was projecting friendly a little more than I thought.”

“It’s fine.” Dr. McCoy looked more relaxed than Spock typically saw him. “You’re fine.”

“Aaand I should probably get going.” Gaila stood up, ruffling Jim’s blonde hair. “Good meeting you, Jimmy.”

“Wait.” Spock looked at Gaila, an odd idea crossing his mind. “He has not been this calm since he was unconscious, and we will need to keep him calm until we can contact his mother as he has been requesting. He will likely be asleep shortly; would it be possible for you to…” He was uncertain how to continue.

Thankfully, she seemed to understand. Gaila smirked. “Are you asking me to babysit?”

Spock paused. “I believe so.”

“Awesome.” She looked up at Dr. McCoy, who did not appear any more clear headed. “Fine by you?”

He nodded. “All good.”

Gaila smirked again. “Might want to check that over again once the air has had time to clear.”

“I will confirm.” Spock glanced at Dr. McCoy, who seemed still slightly dazed. “Currently, I will entrust his care to you.”

“Alright.” Gaila bent down to pick up Jim, who went without protest. “What’s the plan?”

“You will care for him until we contact Commander Kirk tomorrow. Further plans will be determined then.” Spock nodded. “Goodnight, Gaila.”

“Night, Spock.” She picked up Jim’s hand and waved it as well before leaving.

Jim in safe hands, Spock prepared to settle himself for the night. But first, he needed to get Dr. McCoy to his quarters before he attempted to follow Gaila and Jim. He gently grasped his upper arm. “Come along, Doctor.”

Chapter End Notes

There's so much weirdness with Orion pheromones in canon. A lot of it can probably be attributed to forced heteronormativity in the writer's room. It's one of the many reasons I'd fight certain behind the scenes trek people (by which I mostly mean Rick Berman here, but Jbrams is on the list too, and probably others)
Chapter 259

Chapter Notes

Happy last update of February everyone! This arc is pure weird trek and I love it, so I hope you enjoy it too. Sometimes the lighter, cracky stuff is just what the doctor ordered. (Or maybe that's just me; but I love TAS soo...)

Speaking of doctors, guess who's back and ready to argue with Spock like they always do when Jim is in danger?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The next morning, Dr. McCoy was waiting outside Spock’s quarters before the start of Alpha shift. He scowled at Spock when he saw him, but it appeared to hold no more animosity than usual. “So maybe I dreamed it up or maybe my brain’s still foggy from the aftereffects of Orion pheromones,” here he paused to glare at Spock, “but let me make sure I’m caught up here. I’m gonna run through last night and you tell me what’s accurate.”

Spock crossed his hands behind his back. “Very well, Doctor, but as I need to reach the bridge shortly may we have this conversation in transit?”

Dr. McCoy rolled his eyes. “Fine, you hobgoblin.”

Spock began to walk toward the bridge, having already eaten in his quarters. “Ask your questions.”

“Okay. And slow down, dammit.” He paced after Spock, not quite keeping up. “So first, you came in in the middle of the night and found a kid where Jim was supposed to be, and naturally you just assumed it was Jim somehow reverted to a kid.”

“As there were no indications of transporter activity either onto or off of the ship, nor any other ships within our vicinity, and the child bore a remarkable resemblance to our Captain and said his name was Jim, there was no other logical conclusion.” Spock glanced back at Dr. McCoy. “You yourself ran the scans confirming the genetic match, so it is not logical for you to continue to doubt this.”

“You and your damn logic even though there’s no logic here. Jim is five years old and we don’t know why!” Dr. McCoy shook his head. “Unless you figured that out too.”

“I have not.” Spock paused outside the turbolift. “Do you have further questions?”

“You bet your ass I do.” Dr. McCoy climbed into the turbolift with Spock. “Did you really let Gaila just artificially calm a child version of Jim with Orion pheromones?”

Spock bristled slightly at the accusation in Dr. McCoy’s tone. “I did not wish for him to be distressed and possibly harm himself by wandering the ship alone and unfamiliar with his surroundings should he evade us, which given Jim’s intelligence even as a child is possible. Leaving him in the custody of a trusted crewmember, a close friend of Jim, who was also able to calm him seemed beneficial.”

“Yeah.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “And I bet it had everything to do with that, and nothing to do with you having no idea how to manage children.”
Again, there was an uncomfortable degree of accusation in Dr. McCoy’s voice. “As I have never imagined my future involving children, it did not seem necessary to learn those skills when others were more relevant to my life.”

Before Dr. McCoy could respond, the doors to the bridge opened. He stepped out with Spock and crossed his arms. “I need to get to Sickbay soon, but I’m dying to see how you introduce this to the crew.”

Spock had not fully considered that, but he did see how it was necessary. He advanced toward the Captain’s chair.

Sulu spoke as soon as Spock sat in the chair. “Sir, where’s Jim? Also, did you give the order to reverse course late last night?”

Spock paused, considering his answer. “I did give that order. As for the Captain, he is…indisposed at the moment. I will explain further in a shipwide announcement.” He turned to Nyota’s station. “Please open a shipwide channel.”

She seemed wary but nodded. “Aye sir.”

Once the channel was open, Spock activated the comm panel on the captain’s chair. “This is Commander Spock to all hands. Some of you may already be aware that we have reversed course; there is an important reason for doing so. Late last night, we made a concerning discovery regarding the captain, which is why I have taken command. He is—”

“Jesus Spock, you’re gonna make it sound like he’s dead again.” Dr. McCoy stepped forward and spoke into the comm panel. “Jim’s fine, he just somehow got turned into a little kid and we need to figure out what the hell happened. We’re doubling back to look for clues and see if we can change him back, but for now if you see a five-year-old human boy with blonde hair and blue eyes running around the ship, treat him well. Hopefully he’ll be back to bossing us around soon enough. Bridge out.” He shut down the comm channel and looked at Spock. “Was that so hard?”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I had wished to present the information more tactfully, but if you insisted—”

“Come on, you were going to give everyone on the crew heart attacks.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms.

“As you would know, that hardly seems medically possible.” Spock’s skeptical expression did not shift.

Dr. McCoy’s brow tightened. “Oh come on, we both know you know expressions, you just like—”

“Doctor, if you are truly anticipating widespread cardiac failure, perhaps you should report to Sickbay—”

“Really? Are you trying to get rid of me? Are you really—”

“Excuse me.” Both turned to Nyota, who, by the tone of her voice, was not on her first attempt at getting their attention. “Can one of you fill us in a little more on that announcement? Even by our standards, it seems a little hard to believe.”

Spock and Dr. McCoy shared a look, and for possibly the first time that morning Spock believed they may be in agreement. “Perhaps it will be easier to believe if you have seen it.”
“That’s for damn sure.” Dr. McCoy huffed out a breath, re-crossing his arms from where they’d gone to his sides during his and Spock’s disagreement. “I have the medical evidence if people want it, but I think it’s time we do some introductions.”

The rest of the bridge crew also seemed skeptical but curious, so Spock nodded and hit the comm panel once more. “Lieutenant Gaila, please report to the bridge. And bring…bring Jim with you.”

Chapter End Notes

This should go fine, right?

Anyways, Disco night! I’ll watch before looking at comments, so spoil away!
Chapter 260

Chapter Notes

Happy March everyone! This year is flying by, or maybe February is just short. Maybe both. But speaking of short, who wants kid!Jim's introduction to the bridge crew?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

There was confusion on the bridge from all but the lingering Dr. McCoy. Finally, Nyota spoke up. “What does Gaila have to do with this?”

Spock paused, considering his answer. “She has demonstrated a unique ability to calm Jim. As he appears to have no memories of the ship or anyone on it, he was quite distressed. Her ability to calm him proved valuable.”

There was still an edge of wariness there, but she cautiously nodded. “If anyone has Jim’s best intentions at heart, I’d trust it to be you.”

Dr. McCoy snorted. “You haven’t seen the child control method the hobgoblin approved yet.”

Before anyone else could respond the turbolift doors opened and Gaila walked in, a smile on her face and a relaxed-looking child Jim carried against her hip. She smiled. “Hey everyone! I’m guessing you wanted to meet this little guy?”

Spock clasped his hands behind his back, resisting the urge to check over Jim. As an adult, Gaila was one of Jim’s closest friends. He trusted her. She would allow no harm to befall him, although he was so vulnerable… “That is why I called you here, Lieutenant.”

“Okay.” She raised an eyebrow at the rank, but quickly shifted her focus to the blond child she carried. “Want to introduce yourself?”

Spock, attuned to Jim’s psionic state as he was, detected the hint of wariness before agreeing. Blue eyes looked around the bridge before looking at the floor. “I’m Jimmy.”

Spock observed a mix of disbelief and appreciation from the bridge crew; they seemed cautiously willing to believe, but he would not be surprised if they were also reacting to the fact that young Jim was a child most would consider ‘cute.’ Spock looked around the bridge. “Would you like to introduce yourselves?”

Nyota waved from her station. “You can call me Miss Uhura.”

A subtle nod from Jim, and the rotation continued up to the front of the bridge. “I am Mr. Chekov.”

“Mr. Sulu.” A slight wave, and Spock noticed both officers at the helm seemed to be behaving slightly oddly.

He dismissed it for now. “And as we told you last night, I am Mr. Spock and this is Dr. McCoy.” The latter’s attention seemed more focused on Gaila than Jim, and Spock connected this with his observation about Sulu and Chekov. He looked at Gaila. “Are you still freely outputting pheromones?”
She shrugged, careful to not jostle Jim. “Maybe? I haven’t taken blockers today.”

Spock looked around. “I believe it is beginning to affect the bridge crew.” There were quiet protests from around him, but Spock ignored them. “Please cease.”

“Fine.” Gaila rolled her eyes but then shut them as if concentrating for a moment. “It should be better now.”

Spock moved to the proper console on the bridge. “Computer, increase fresh air circulation to the bridge.”

“You know, this wouldn’t be as much of a problem if the senior staff didn’t have so many human men. They’re so susceptible to pheromones it’s ridiculous.” Gaila eyed the bridge appraisingly. “It’s a good thing I’ve never felt like mutinying. I’d have this place on its knees.” She realized the possible other meaning of her words and laughed slightly.

“Please do not.” Spock paused, realizing the lack of clarity of his own words. “Mutiny, or make such jokes around a child.”

“Aww, but adult Jim would have loved that joke.” Her grin waned at Spock’s eyebrow raise. “Fine. And it’s not like I’d mutiny anyways. I don’t really want that, plus I’d have to fight you and I don’t want that because us non-humans in Starfleet have to stick together.” She glanced at the sleepy-looking child she was still holding. “Plus having to fight Jim, since your mental stuff means he’s unaffected now too, at least when he’s himself.” She looked away and sighed. “So many reasons not to do it, even if it could be easy.”

“We can discuss problems with Starfleet’s diversity or lack thereof at another date.” Spock looked around the bridge crew, who was watching them with interest but appeared fully clearheaded once more, not that he believed they had been fully affected. “At the present moment, we should discuss Jim’s care.”

“We gotta stop the pheromones.” Dr. McCoy’s arms were crossed. “It’s got too many side effects for other members of the crew, and it’s cheating.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “I do not understand your meaning, Doctor.”

“You wouldn’t.” He rolled his eyes and looked around the bridge. “Anyone else think it’s cheating? Artificially lulling a kid like that?” There was murmured assent around the bridge, and he turned to Spock smugly. “See?”

“Very well.” Spock crossed his arms. “What do you propose to keep Jim calm and out of the many dangers a starship could present for a small, intelligent and very curious child? I plan to contact Commander Kirk in hopes her presence will assist us, but as that will take time, we require other solutions.”

“Use parenting, you—” Dr. McCoy took a breath and pinched the bridge of his nose before releasing it and glancing at Jim then Spock. “I’ll take him. I’ve already helped raise a kid; I can do this.”

“I’ll take a shift or two too.” Everyone looked over at Sulu, who was smiling. “It’ll be good practice.”

Chekov suddenly appeared excited and grabbed his arm. “Have you and Ben—?”

“Not fully there yet.” Sulu grinned. “But plans were made over shore leave, and we’re starting to set them into motion.”
There was a chorus of congratulations across the bridge.

Once the crew settled, Dr. McCoy spoke up. “We can work out a rotation later. For now, I’ll take him.” He walked over to Gaila, who still stood by the turbolift. “And we should tell Scotty to get a team babyproofing the ship.”

Nyota looked at Spock, who nodded. She turned partially to her console. “I’ll relay the order.”

“Good.” Dr. McCoy gently took Jim from Gaila. “Now I’m gonna show this little terror around the ship; the rest of you get busy working out how to solve this and keep the kid from getting himself killed in the meantime.”

“Thank you, Captain McCoy.” Spock was uncertain he kept his tone level.

“What, do you have different orders?” He raised an eyebrow challengingly.

For a moment, Spock was silent before acknowledging his actions were illogical. “No. Please proceed.”

Spock decidedly ignored the doctor’s smug look as he exited the bridge with Jim and Gaila.

Chapter End Notes

Once those pheromones wear off the real fun can start....
Hello everyone! We're getting into the chunks of this that I wrote who knows how long ago when inspiration randomly hit. Guess who comes in this chapter?

With Jim safely taken care of and the crew already preparing to investigate the cause of his predicament, Spock decided it was time to call the one person who could possibly help most in this situation. He turned to Nyota’s station. “Lieutenant, please find the means to contact Commander Winona Kirk and hail her.”

Nyota nodded. “Aye sir.” Spock turned back to the viewscreen, confident in Nyota’s abilities.

After a moment Winona Kirk’s face appeared on the screen. Spock nodded at her. “Commander Kirk.”

She nodded in return. “Commander Spock.” After a moment a look of slight confusion crossed her face. “Why are you in the captain’s chair? Where the hell is my son?” She was undoubtedly already aware of Jim’s tendency to endanger himself, attract danger, or perhaps both.

“That is the reason for my call. The Captain has been-“ Before Spock could answer the turbolift doors opened and there was a commotion from the rear of the bridge. Spock stood up to better see what was happening.

“Come back here you little-!” Dr. McCoy appeared to be chasing the deaged Jim, who was doing a good job of eluding him despite his short legs. “We need to finish the tour of the ship! I was just gonna show you the mess hall so we could get a snack!”

The young captain was evading the doctor by running around and occasionally under the bridge stations. “I don’t wanna! I wanna go home!”

A startled look crossed Commander Kirk’s features before she once more schooled her expression. “Jimmy? Jimmy is that you?”

At the sound of his mother’s look Jim stopped his running and turned toward the viewscreen, appearing about as confused as his mother had been a moment earlier. The expression of confusion was oddly endearing to Spock. “Mama?” After a moment he ran toward the viewscreen, appearing agitated. “Mama I woke up here and I don’t know anyone and I don’t know where I am and I just want to go home!” Despite the fact that the child’s face was turned away from him, Spock could imagine the pout and watering eyes. “Can you come get me?”

“Of course Jimmy.” Winona smiled at him. She glanced up at the bridge officers then back to her son. “It’s ok though Jimmy, you actually ended up with some friends of mine. They’ll take good care of you.”

“Really?” Jim glanced back at the bridge crew for a moment and Spock could see that his wide blue eyes were full of tears.
“Yeah.” She smiled encouragingly. “You know Mama works for Starfleet, right? Well they do too.”

Jim sniffled. “But you work at the shipyards. This isn’t the shipyards.”

“No, it’s not.” Something crossed Winona’s face before she looked up at the crew and back to her son. “But I know them and I trust them, and you can too.”

“Yeah?” Jim was beginning to sound a little less scared.

“Yeah.” Winona looked over the bridge crew. “There’s Mr. Spock, and Dr. McCoy, and Miss Uhura, and Mr. Sulu, and Mr. Chekov.” Jim looked over them all in turn and seemed relieved the names his mother said matched the names everyone had told him earlier. When he looked back to her she smiled. “That’s the same names all of them told you, right?” He sniffled and nodded. “See, I know them. I trust them to take care of you until I get there. And if they say that there’s other people you can trust, listen to them. I trust who they trust.”

“Okay.” He looked warily at Dr. McCoy, who had begun to approach him.

Dr. McCoy crouched down to get on Jim’s level and held out his hands. “See kid? You’re ok. Your mom will be here soon.” He glanced at Winona for confirmation.

“You bet I will.” Winona smiled at Jim. “You can go with Dr. McCoy now; I’ll be there in a few days, ok?”

“Alright.” Jim reluctantly stepped toward Dr. McCoy.

Making sure Jim allowed it first, Dr. McCoy carefully picked up Jim and held him against his side. “C’mon kid. Let’s go get you some food.” He looked back up to Winona on the viewscreen and shifted so that Jim was facing her. “Say bye to your mom.”

Jim rubbed at one eye with one hand and waved with the other. “Bye mama.”

“Bye sweetheart. I’ll see you in a few days.” Winona smiled and waved as Dr. McCoy carried Jim off to the turbolift. Once the doors closed her expression shifted to something more serious. “What exactly happened? Why does my son look five years old?”

Spock exhaled and sat back in the captain’s chair. “We believe we encountered something on a planet we visited that caused the captain to deage. As you may have been able to observe, he does not have any memories past his physical age.”

Winona muttered something under her breath that was likely a curse word, although the language sounded like Klingon and Spock saw Nyota straighten up in surprise out of the corner of his eye. She looked back at Spock. “Any idea on what it was and how to reverse it?”

“Negative.” Spock folded his hands in his lap. “It seems to have been a delayed reaction; I discovered him deaged in bed after he had gone to sleep last night. It is unclear what he was exposed to or on what planet; we are revisiting the last few we have encountered to ascertain what caused the reaction.” Spock paused a moment. “Due to the lack of memories, he was quite agitated by the unfamiliar surroundings. He has been asking where you were.”

“Alright.” Winona sat up a little straighter. “I’ll come right away. I’ll use leave if I have to, but there are admirals who owe me favors and god knows they owe Jim. I’ll be there in a few days.”

“Thank you.” Spock felt some of the tension leave his shoulders. “I am certain your presence will alleviate his distress greatly.”
She smiled. “No problem. In the meantime, try to figure out what caused it. I’ll be there as soon as I can.”

“We shall continue to search. I will have Lieutenant Uhura send you our coordinates and keep you updated on his condition.” Spock glanced back at Nyota, who nodded.

“Thanks.” Winona nodded and looked them over seriously. “Watch over my kid and don’t let him get into trouble. Kirk out.”

The screen went dark except for the stars visible out of the viewscreen. Spock stared at it a moment, mentally planning the next few days. While Commander Kirk’s should prove beneficial, the incident with Dr. McCoy’s clear loss of control of young Jim seemed to demonstrate that this would not be an easy few days.

Chapter End Notes

Are you ready for some chaos?

Anyways, I plan to watch Disco tonight so spoil away!
Spock took a deep breath. He was not fully meditating as he was on duty and needed to maintain an awareness of his surroundings, but he also required a moment to order his thoughts. It would be two days until Commander Kirk would rendezvous with them, and five days until they would reach the first of the first of the two planets they had visited. As both planets were in the same solar system, it would not take long to visit both.

Spock opened his eyes. His thoughts were…imprecise. But he had discovered that that was often true when Jim was endangered in some way. And while his physical health seemed stable according to Dr. McCoy’s reports, Spock was uncertain if there would be any adverse affects due to the rapid de-aging. This was, to Spock’s understanding, unprecedented in the Federation. This was not the sort of milestone Spock wished for Jim to have.

And yet, they had not found a way of safely returning Jim to his own age. There had been suggestions, many of them outlandish. The only possibility Spock had not immediately dismissed was attempting to use Jim’s transporter pattern, recovered from a prior occasion, to return his physical form to his adult body. However, there was no guarantee that returning his physical form would restore his mind as well.

So they had worked out a rotation for caring for Jim. Spock himself did not take any full shifts as his priority was running the ship while Jim was unable to. He did still intend to periodically check in, however.

Spock mentally considered the time; it had been a while since he had checked with Dr. McCoy about Jim’s status. He stood from the Captain’s chair, nodding toward the helm. “Mr. Sulu, you have the conn.”

He waited for acknowledgement before turning to the turbolift and beginning the journey to Sickbay.

He entered Sickbay and saw Dr. McCoy in his office. Spock walked over and paused in the doorway, clasping his hands behind his back and raising an eyebrow. “Doctor, I do not see Jim although you were tasked with watching him. If you are too busy, we could find another crewmember—”

“Oh calm down, he’s fine.” Dr. McCoy scowled. “I just put him down for a nap in his usual Sickbay room.” He looked at Spock, an odd mix of amused and possibly patronizing. “What, they don’t do naps for little kids on Vulcan?”

“It is not a common process, but I recognize that human children have unique needs, ones that you would understand better than I would.” Spock stepped inside, taking the seat across from Dr. McCoy. “What other needs do you anticipate?”
Appealing to Dr. McCoy’s knowledge seemed to ease his irritation; he relaxed slightly behind his desk. “Well, there’s a lot.” He leaned back, pinching the bridge of his nose. “Replicators will cover food well enough, even if we might have to program in more child-friendly options that are still healthy. The other big concern is where he’ll sleep; kids need stability, and bumping him to different quarters each night wouldn’t help him get settled.”

“We can put him and Commander Kirk in guest quarters once she arrives, but we will need to find a solution in the intervening two days.” Spock paused, looking at Dr. McCoy. He felt the Dr. could be a good choice given his experience raising his own daughter and his familiarity with Jim, but he would not order him to do so. Children could be…stressful, and Spock did not wish to force that responsibility on him.

Dr. McCoy eyed him seriously. “I may not be the mindreader here, but I think I can guess what you’re thinking. You want me to do it?”

“You are quite perceptive, Doctor.” Spock paused, considering how to present his argument. “Your familiarity with both Jim and children makes you an ideal candidate.”

“Yeah yeah.” Dr. McCoy waved a hand dismissively. “I’ll consider it. I’m not making any promises though.”

“Thank you.” Spock stood. “If there is nothing else to discuss, I believe I will return to the bridge. Please contact me when you’ve made your decision about—”

Spock was interrupted by a sudden loud noise outside the office. He and Dr. McCoy shared a concerned look before getting up and heading into the main room of Sickbay.

There, they saw a toppled chair outside the office and a quickly retreating blond child running away from it and them.

Dr. McCoy scowled. “Goddamnit, little troublemaker—” He began to run after Jim. “Come back here! You’re supposed to be napping!”

“’m not sleepy!” It was hard to hear Jim as he continued running, ducking around and under the various biobeds and other obstacles in his path. “I wanna go home!”

“We can’t do that now; your mom will be here soon though!” Dr. McCoy continued the chase, nearly tripping at several points where his agility at avoiding obstacles did not match Jim’s.

“No! No no no no no no no!” Jim continued running, seeming to gain a greater lead on Dr. McCoy.

This could not continue. Spock held out a hand and allowed more sternness into his voice. “Kroykah!”

Jim paused approximately a meter and a half from Spock, a confused expression on his face. “What does that mean?”

Spock lowered his hand. “It is Vulcan for stop.”

Jim’s eyes lit up. “You speak Vulcan?”

The corner of Spock’s lips twitched up. “As I was raised on the planet and have Vulcan heritage, I do. I am fully fluent.”
“That’s so cool!” Jim seemed genuinely excited and Spock made a mental note to ask Nyota about offering to tell Jim about various languages to hold his interest. At his current stage of mental development, he may learn quickly.

However, further linguistic developments were halted by Dr. McCoy reaching them and grabbing Jim. “Gotcha!” He looked at Jim seriously. “I think our next stop is the gym so you can work off some energy.”

Jim pouted. “Are there games there?”

Dr. McCoy’s expression softened some. “I think we can find something, kid.”

“Okay.” He squirmed slightly but settled in Dr. McCoy’s arms. “Let’s go.”

“Good.” Dr. McCoy looked back up. “Say goodbye to Mr. Spock.”

Jim’s small hand waved. “Bye Mr. Spock.”

Spock raised a hand in the Vulcan salute, earning another awed look from Jim. He watched them leave before turning and heading to the bridge. Perhaps this would not be so difficult after all.

Chapter End Notes

Do you think Spock's being too optimistic?

Also bonus points for catching the vague allusions to other trek here.
Chapter 263

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and happy Pi Day! If you like pie, I hope you got to have some to celebrate. If you like math, do something with circles maybe. If you like neither, enjoy mid-March. Anyways, this chapter was fun to write so I hope you enjoy! Getting a pov switch...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Len trailed after Jim, or whatever little kid he still didn’t fully believe was actually his best friend, as he half ran through the corridors. For someone with legs so tiny, he sure did move damn fast. Len half jogged to keep up; it was annoying enough to have to deal with a full sized Jim when he had this much energy; he still hadn’t decided if it was better or worse when concentrated in a pint-sized package. For once Len was almost glad he wasn’t anywhere close to his chronological age physically; being physically 20-ish probably made this easier than being physically early thirties would have. Still, this was tiring. And Jim had just nearly run into another crewmember, who thankfully seemed to think it was cute. But this couldn’t go on. “Dammit, what was it that Vulcan said that made you stop?” He racked his brain until he thought he had it, shouting loud enough to be heard. “Hey kid, kroka!”

Jim paused, looking back at him curiously. “You mean kroykah?”

“Sure.” Damn, kids’ brains really were a sponge for language. Len was curious if Jim would keep any of it when he grew back up; this would probably be another weird experience someone on the crew got one hell of a paper out of. “Anyways, do you even know where we’re going? I don’t want you getting hurt or lost just because you couldn’t stop running.”

“I know! We’re gonna go to the gym to play!” His face lit up enough that Len almost felt less grumpy about this whole thing. Almost.

“We are. But you gotta stick with me; got it?” Len paused as he finally reached Jim at a normal pace.

“Okay.” He paused by Len’s side long enough for Len to ruffle his hair before grabbing Len’s hand and half dragging him down the hall. “C’mon, let’s go!”

Len resigned himself to getting pulled the rest of the way to the gym; at least once they were there Jim could burn off some of this energy.

But once there they hit an obstacle. The main room of the gym, which was just a big open space, was already occupied. Len figured it would be best to take Jim here because there was no way he was letting Jim around actual exercise equipment or weight machines, which the kid would definitely end up using as a jungle gym and getting hurt on, and he’d end up literally bouncing off of the walls in one of the smaller training, sparring, or practice rooms.

But it looked like their security chief, who thanks to Jim Len only really knew as Cupcake, was about to run a drill with what looked like almost everyone on duty this shift. Still, he paused when he saw Len walk in. “Doctor McCoy. I don’t see you here often.”
Ignoring that comment for now and deciding not to snipe back about how he was usually too busy patching up redshirts, Len decided to play it calmer. “Well our guest here had some energy to work out, so I decided to show him the gym.” Len let his hand rest on Jim’s head where he’d half hid behind Len’s legs because of all of the new people.

Cupcake’s eyes widened at the sight of Jim before snapping up to Len’s again. “Is that—”

“Yep.” Len ruffled Jim’s hair and looked down at him again. “It’s ok Jimmy; they’re friends. But we’re probably gonna have to find somewhere else for you to play.”

“Aww, ok.” Jim looked a little disappointed and started to turn away.

“Wait.” They both turned back to Cupcake, who had an odd expression on his face. “What game did you want to play, Jimmy?” He fumbled a little on the name, clearly not used to it.

Jim’s eyes lit up. “Do you know how to play tag?”

“I do.” He grinned and looked around at the assembled security people. “Does everyone know how to play?” There was a mixed response with most of the humans in the room nodding and the others mostly looking confused. Cupcake waved a hand dismissively. “It’s easy enough to pick up. You’ll get it.” He looked back at Jim. “Would you want to play tag with us?”

Somehow Jim’s smile grew even wider. “Yeah!”

“Alright.” Cupcake turned back to the rest of the room. “Okay security team, change of plans. We’re now doing an agility drill, also known as the Earth game tag. I’ll be “it” to start.” At the confusion from some people, he shrugged. “If you don’t know what I’m saying, get someone around you to explain. Basically, on my count, start running.”

“I think I’ll leave you to it and check in while you’re doing…this.” Len did his best to hold in a laugh. “I need to check in with the bridge, so I’ll let you watch this one for a bit.” At a tug on his pants, Len looked down.

Jim was looking up at him with the biggest blue eyes. “You’re leaving?” He started pouting and Len was really glad adult Jim couldn’t pull off that expression; on the other hand it would make people give in to whatever they wanted so they’d probably never have to fight anyone again.

Still, Len crouched down to eye level and put a hand on Jim’s shoulder. “I’ll be right back. You can play with your new friends, okay?”

The pout didn’t fully go away, but he nodded. “Okay.”

They turned back to Cupcake, who turned to the room at large. “Everyone know what we’re doing now?” The room seemed to agree, so he nodded approvingly. “Good, because we start in three, two one. Run!” The room burst into chaos with people running every which way; Jim giggled and eagerly joined in.

Satisfied for the time being, Len left the room to find the nearest comm panel. It didn’t take long. “Dr. McCoy to the bridge.”

The hobgoblin came through a moment later. “You are speaking to the bridge at large, Doctor.”

“Good. I wanted to check that Sulu was still on to help with Jim at dinner tonight.” Len leaned against the wall, tiredness from chasing the kid all day starting to kick in.
“I’m good.” He sounded excited, bless his heart. “I can’t wait to tell Ben I’m actually getting practice with kids. Who knew I’d get the opportunity out here?”

Len snorted. “Hopefully your kid ends up being less of a handful.”

Before Sulu could respond, Spock cut in. “How is Jim, Doctor?”

“I’m fine, thanks for asking.” Len crossed his arms over his chest. “But the little tyke is doing alright. He’s making friends with a security shift right now; they turned a training drill into a game of tag for him. If he gets the rest of the ship wrapped around his little finger like this you may have a mutiny on your hands, Spock.”

There was muffled laughter in the background, and when Spock spoke Len could practically hear the eyebrow raise. “As he is technically the captain of this vessel, I am uncertain the term mutiny would apply.”

“Yeah, whatever.” Len rolled his eyes. “I’m gonna go check back in on him. I’m sure I’ll see all of you swarming around him at dinner. McCoy out.” He shut down the comm link and headed back to the gym.

He almost laughed at what he saw there. The whole security team was still chaotically running around, but somehow in the middle of it Jim had managed to end up on Cupcake’s shoulders piggyback style and was holding on to his head, shouting out where he should go.

Len snorted despite himself and stayed in the doorway to watch. Jim might get out less energy this way, but damn if it wasn’t entertaining.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not the only one who thinks a five-year-old Jim would be adorable, right? He’d be able to rule the universe with one of those pouty faces kids do. (Puppy dog face? The word escapes me at the moment, but I can picture it perfectly)

Anyways I'm gonna watch Disco tonight so let's talk! It looks like there will be a lot do discuss...
Hello everyone! This plotline is mostly fluff, but sometimes that's the best. I already have more fun planned for once Winona gets here, but for now enjoy some bridge crew time.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The senior staff, with the additions of Carol Marcus, Gaila, and Nurse Chapel, had gathered together for dinner, due in part to most of them wishing to supervise Jim during their mealtime. Technically it was Lieutenant Sulu’s turn to watch over him, so he was closest to him attempting to get him to eat his vegetables, with what appeared to be limited success, even with assistance from Ensign Chekov.

At the other end of the table, Dr. McCoy was recounting the tale of Jim interrupting the security drill in the gym. He was unable to finish a series of more than three sentences without needing to pause for laughter from someone at the table, and the good mood seemed to be spreading to the whole senior staff and their guests. Dr. McCoy wiped at his eyes and sighed, coming down from a moment of laughter himself. “I think Jim ended up on the shoulders of damn near every officer and crewmember there. It was pretty great to watch.”

Nyota smiled. “Weren’t you there to wear him out?”

The doctor’s rare good mood did not seem to fade. “Yes, but he still seemed to enjoy himself, and I bet he’ll still crash pretty hard tonight.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Did the security team explain their rationale for carrying Jim?”

“Eh.” Doctor McCoy shrugged. “Something about adding strength training to their agility drill, but I think they were also worried about running him over.”

Gaila laughed. “Classic. I wonder where they learned to rationalize like that.” She pointedly looked over at Spock.

“I am certain I do not know what you are referring to.” Spock allowed a slight uptick of his lips as the crew broke into laughter.

There was a gasp from the end of the table and all eyes turned to Jim, who was watching Spock with awe. “Mr. Spock smiled!”

The crew paused a moment, all seeming torn between amused at Jim and uncertain who should respond first. Finally, Nyota spoke up. “Yeah, he does that on occasion.”

“It’s rare though.” Dr. McCoy paused. “That is, unless he’s around a certain someone—”

“Stop.” Dr. Marcus elbowed him from next to him, presumably to remind him they had agreed to not let Jim know of his future to limit his confusion and possibly distress.

“Right.” Dr. McCoy cleared his throat. “Chapel, how’s Sickbay been?”
She smirked. “You mean how’s it been with me and Geoff running things while our CMO plays babysitter?”

“Hey.” He crossed his arms. “I think I’m leaving everything in very capable hands with you and M’Benga.”

“Sure are.” Nyota smiled at Nurse Chapel. “I may be biased, but I think Chris here is the most capable person in Sickbay.”

“Hey!” Dr. McCoy’s familiar scowl was back, and Spock allowed his attention to drift between this and the other conversations occurring at the table.

There were many. Ensign Chekov and Gaila had joined Mr. Scott in discussing how to best “babyproof” the ship, suggesting that perhaps Mr. Scott’s assistant Keenser could prove instrumental as his small stature was similar to the deaged Jim’s size. Lieutenant Sulu appeared to be continuing to attempt to convince Jim to eat his vegetables. As Spock had seen Dr. McCoy unsuccessfully attempt similar tactics with an adult Jim, he did not believe the odds of success were high.

Dr. McCoy and Nurse Chapel seemed to be largely focused on their respective partners as Dr. Marcus and Nyota debated whose partner was more capable; the medical professionals themselves occasionally provided input but largely seemed content to observe their soulmates espouse their merits.

Spock listened and sipped his plomeek soup from his spoon. He did not reflect on the fact that observing soulmate pairs made him desire the return of his own soulmate—t’hy’la. It was odd to have Jim here and safe, yet still so distant.

The conversations shifted as Spock continued his introspection, idly watching the child at the other end of the table. He could see the similarities to the adult Jim would become, but he was still overwhelmingly a child, and it was difficult for Spock to consider much else.

He returned to the conversations at hand as Drs. McCoy and Marcus began talking to each other while Nyota turned to Jim, leaning in so she could speak to him across the others at the table. “So Jimmy, I hear you like languages. Would you like it if I taught you some?”

Jim paused, considering her seriously for moment. “Can you speak Vulcan?”

“Yeah.” Nyota paused, seeming a bit taken aback. “I also know a lot of Earth languages too, but—”

“I wanna speak Vulcan!” Jim slammed his small hands on the table, rattling his uneaten vegetables. He paused, glancing sheepishly at all the adults who were now watching him. “Please?”

“Okay.” Nyota laughed. “I’ll do what I can, but Mr. Spock may be better able to teach you.”

“That’s okay.” Jim’s eyes locked onto Spock and he smiled.

Spock nodded in return. He did not plan on spending much time with the deaged Jim as with Jim unable to attend to his usual duties they became Spock’s responsibility, although he did still intend to periodically assess Jim’s wellbeing. His Jim could not return unless they kept this child safe, so that was Spock’s priority.

“So what’re your plans for tonight?” Spock looked over as Dr. McCoy addressed Lieutenant Sulu. He shrugged. “I was thinking a walk through the arboretum, maybe show him the plants.” He turned to Jim. “How does that sound?”
Jim eyed him curiously. “What’s an arboreatum?”

“Arboretum.” Lieutenant Sulu smiled. “It’s a big room filled with trees and gardens. I can tell you all about the plants.”

“Hmm.” Jim seemed to think it over, then nodded. “Okay.”

“Great.” Lieutenant Sulu smiled wider. “Let’s do that after dinner.”

“Good.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “After that, bring him to my room so he can get some sleep.” He turned to Mr. Scott. “I’ll need my room set up with a child’s bed; he’ll be crashing with me until his mom gets here.” He looked at Spock and nodded; evidently he had made a decision.

Spock returned the nod. “Thank you, doctor.” It would be odd not having Jim in his quarters, but as Jim was not himself Spock would have to adjust until his Jim returned. For now, it would be best for Jim to find stability elsewhere.

Chapter End Notes

Me: This will be a nice, fluffy arc.
Spock: But I miss my t'hy'la.

Not to go all early 2000s author's note on you, but I felt like calling him out for bringing down the mood. C'mon Spock, accept the adorable child. Even if you don't really like kids. Can't he be an exception?
Chapter 265

Chapter Notes

Hello and happy Thursday everyone! We're getting a character showing up this chapter, and I'm also throwing in something from Disco that I've wanted to add in here (not plot spoilery I swear, just a character detail)

Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim was practically leaning out of Dr. McCoy’s arms as he attempted to read Spock’s padd. It was nothing that would interest a child; merely an update from different departments of the ship. Still, he stared intently at the screen. Spock wondered if Jim had already learned to read by this age; he knew many human children did not learn until they began school, which would have been not long after Jim’s current age, but Jim was a highly intelligent child; he may have learned early….

Jim was frowning at the screen. “Why do the words there look different than on the other padds?” He looked at Spock, suddenly excited. “Is it Vulcan?”

“No.” Spock quickly toggled the language settings, switching to a familiar vertical, swirling writing. “This is Vulcan script.”

“Woah!” Jim’s eyes went wide. “It’s pretty.”

Dr. McCoy glanced over. “It looks like weird sideways cursive.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “From the Vulcan perspective, your language writes sideways.”

Jim’s giggles covered the indignant noises Dr. McCoy was surely making. Spock switched his padd back into Standard.

Jim was still watching the screen closely. “Why’s it look different still?”

Spock resisted the urge to sigh. While as an adult he was open with Jim about his condition and Jim was quite understanding and accepting, Spock still preferred not to speak of it. While humans were typically open and accommodating about learning differences like dyslexia, there was still stigma on Vulcan around L’tak Terai, despite its similarity to the human condition. “It is to optimize the readability for me.”

“Huh.” Jim watched the screen a moment later before turning away. “Okay.” There was quiet for a moment before he spoke again. “Where are we going?”

“The main shuttlebay.” Spock did not look up from his padd.

He saw Dr. McCoy shift his hold on Jim slightly. “We finally managed to meet up with your mom. Are you excited?”

Jim shifted slightly, bringing a hand up to rub at his face. “Yeah.”
“Good.” Dr. McCoy smiled. “As fun as it’s been having you bunking with me, I’m sure you’ll be relieved to be with her again.”

Jim made a noise that was difficult to interpret. “Is she gonna take me back home?”

Spock and Dr. McCoy shared a look over his shoulder. Spock turned back to Jim. “We are quite far from Riverside.” He did not believe Jim would be able to comprehend the meaning of the exact figures at this age and cognitive level. “However, we have begun to turn back.”

“Okay.” Jim’s fists were clenched into Dr. McCoy’s shirt, although the doctor did nor appear to mind.

The turbolift slowed to a stop and Spock led them to the shuttle bay, where they observed a single person shuttle in the final stages of docking. Once it was finished and the proper clearance procedures had been observed, Spock, Dr. McCoy, and Jim, still in Dr. McCoy’s arms, approached.

The rear of the shuttlecraft opened, revealing Commander Kirk. She smiled at them. “Boys.”

Spock nodded. “Commander Kirk.”

She shook her head good-naturedly. “Winona.”

“We are on duty, so ranks are appropriate.” Spock raised an eyebrow.

“You’re on duty, but I’m not.” Commander Kirk—Winona adjusted the bag on her shoulder. “Now where’s the reason for my leave?” She looked around the shuttlebay, purposely avoiding the child poorly concealed behind Dr. McCoy’s legs.

Jim had managed to escape Dr. McCoy’s grasp to stand on the floor, and he had watched the exchange from behind Dr. McCoy. Finally, he peered around the doctor’s legs. “Mama?”

Winona’s demeanor softened noticeably and she squatted down. “Jimmy?”

“Mama!” He ran forward and embraced her with a force that nearly caused her to lose her balance and fall backwards. He pulled back just enough to look at her. “Is it really you?”

“It is.” She nuzzled her nose into his hair before carefully picking him up as she stood. She looked between Spock and Dr. McCoy. “Care to show me to my—our quarters?”

“Of course.” Spock nodded. “Follow us.” He turned and led them out of the shuttle bay and toward the guest quarters they’d selected.

Behind him, Winona began to speak to her son. “Jimmy, how did you get all the way out here?” Despite the question, her tone had a fondness often found in mothers speaking to their young children.

“I don’t know!” Jim’s voice was so difficult for Spock to read compared to the adult he was familiar with. “I woke up here and I didn’t know anyone, but there was a nice lady then you said they were your friends then—” The words faded in and out of comprehensibility as Jim spoke, doubtlessly informing her of the events of the past few days.

Winona seemed to be listening, occasionally prompting him to continue.

This pattern was only interrupted when they reached the quarters Winona (and by extension Jim) would be living in until the matter was resolved. They all paused outside the door. Winona adjusted
Jim on her hip, looking between Spock and Dr. McCoy. “We’ll need to get settled in, but I want to get briefed on this situation and what you know so far.”

“That’s the least we can do for you coming all the way out here.” Dr. McCoy crossed his arms. “How’d you get out here so quick anyways?”

She smirked in a way that reminded Spock of Jim. “That’s classified.”

Despite her joking tone, Spock considered it possible her method of travel was truly classified. He turned to her. “When would a briefing work for you?”

“Hmm.” She shifted Jim on her hip; he seemed to be growing drowsy. “Maybe once this one goes down for a nap; I doubt it will be long.”

Spock nodded. “I will assemble the senior staff to prepare.” With that, he and Dr. McCoy took their leave of the Kirks in order to make the necessary preparations.

Chapter End Notes

In case you missed it, Spock’s now canonically dyslexic (or the Vulcan equivalent) since it was introduced earlier this season in Disco. I thought that was cool so I wanted to include it, so ta da!

Anyways I’m gonna watch Disco tonight (even if I shouldn’t) so let’s talk trek!
Chapter 266

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone and welcome to the penultimate update of March! It's been a busy month for me, but here's hoping it can end nicely. April will be clearer for me, thankfully. And hopefully that'll mean better times updates for you!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Winona took a deep breath and pulled her hair back into a bun before leaving her temporary quarters. Having a small child again was…tiring. And she’d only been back with Jim for less than a day.

But now he was down for a nap, and she was heading to a meeting with the senior crew of her son’s ship. Thankfully the quarters they were set up in had a briefing room nearby, and Winona had managed to rig an impromptu baby monitor using her communicator and the comm panel in the room. She didn’t really want Jim freaking out if he woke up alone and no one showed up.

So now she looked around at the mostly familiar faces, some more than others, and settled her hands on the table. “So what the hell has been going on?”

The bluntness (or maybe the casual dash of swearing) seemed to throw most of the crew off a little; it seemed like Jim must not have fully inherited her leadership styles. But Dr. McCoy didn’t seem too fazed; he just snorted. “We told you the basics. Spock came back home one night to find Jim an actual child, more so than usual, and we haven’t worked out how or why. He seems otherwise unharmed, if unable to remember anything.”

Spock nodded. “While the Doctor’s account is imprecise, it is otherwise accurate.”

“Okay.” Winona nodded. “So that’s our starting point. What have we found?”

“We’re doubling back to the planets we last visited in case something there affected Jim.” Sulu spoke up from the other end of the table.

Uhura nodded. “They’re expecting us and seemed cooperative, but they wanted to see him before weighing in.”

“Science teams have come to no conclusions from our own analyses thus far.” Winona thought she detected a hint of frustration in Spock’s voice.

“Ditto for medical.” Dr. McCoy seemed more tired than frustrated, but that seemed to just be a part of who he was at this point. From how Jim described him and her brief impressions of him at least.

“Not the best thing to hear when your kid went from almost thirty to just past toddlerhood, but I know you’re all trying your best.” Her words seemed to relax the crew some, so Winona smiled. “So now should we compare stories about Jim as a kid? I bet there’s some good ones from the past few days.”

The good mood spread to the crew. “It has been quite entertaining.” Chekov grinned. “For example, when we were eating dinner…”
The rest of the meeting passed pretty easily, with them comparing stories. Winona held back on the most embarrassing stories of Jim as a kid, even if she was tempted. Still, if Jim was supposed to be in charge of these people they should probably still have some level of respect for him.

The meeting ended when Winona heard a faint noise from her communicator and signaled for everyone to be quiet. She pulled it out and opened her end of the channel. “Jimmy?”

The voice on the other end was faint and still a little sleepy. “Mama?”

“I’m here.” Most of the crew took this as their cue to begin getting ready to leave. “I was just out talking to some people, but I can come get you soon.” She glanced at the time. “Actually, wanna go eat dinner?”

There was hesitation on the other end. “…okay.”

“Great.” Winona started to stand up. “I’ll come get you.”

“Wait.” Her eyes snapped up to Uhura. “I need to talk to you and Spock.”

“Okay.” Winona looked around at who was still in the room. “Dr. McCoy will come get you and being you here actually. Sound good?”

Another pause. “Yeah.”

“Great!” Winona smiled even though she knew he couldn’t see. “I’ll see you soon, Jimmy.” She closed the communicator and looked at Dr. McCoy. “You don’t mind, do you?”

“Not at all.” His expression said otherwise, but he still left the room with only mild muttering.

Winona turned back to Uhura. “What did you want to talk about?”

“Admiral Pike contacted us this morning.” Her expression was serious, but not nervous like someone reporting an unexpected call from an admiral might be. “He wanted to talk to Jim since apparently Jim missed some regularly scheduled call between them. I didn’t give him details because I assumed one of you would want to talk to him.” She looked between them expectantly.

“Ooh.” Winona grinned and looked at Spock. “Please let me take this one.”

He raised an eyebrow. “I would like to be present, but I will allow you to do the primary speaking.”

“Great.” Winona rubbed her hands regather and looked at Uhura. “Lieutenant, make the call.”

She nodded and left to contact the bridge, and Winona got herself settled in front of the monitor.

A moment later, the familiar face of Christopher Pike popped up on the screen. “Jim, there better be a good explanation for—” He paused, finally looking up at Winona. “You’re not the Kirk I was expecting to see.”

Winona couldn’t stop her smirk. “Understandably.”

Chris sighed and rubbed his face. “What happened to him this time?”

“It is difficult to describe.” Spock, who was lingering over her shoulder, finally spoke up. “We believe the captain has been—”

“See, your mom’s right here.” Dr. McCoy unknowingly interrupted the meeting, but seemed more
focused on dropping Jim onto Winona’s lap. “I’ll see you later.”

Winona took a moment to check in with her son, who seemed alright. She was glad she looked up in time to catch the look on Chis’ face.

He always got so expressive if you really caught him off guard. His eyes narrowed down on Winona’s lap, then back to her face. “When did you have another kid?”

“Oh Chris.” Winona bounced Jim on her lap slightly. “You know exactly when I had a kid. You wrote your dissertation on it.”

“What?” Winona could see the gears turning, but he wasn’t quite there yet.

Maybe another hint. She turned to Jim. “Hey Jimmy, say hi to your Uncle Chris.”

He was a bit shier than she expected, but he might have just been a little tired still. He gave a little wave. “Hi.”

Understanding and so much more surprise crossed Chris’ expression. “That’s—”

“Yep.” Winona laughed and looked at Jim again. “You still hungry?”

He nodded slowly; he was definitely still waking up. “Yeah.”

“Alright.” She looked back to the screen. “We’re heading to dinner now, but Commander Spock is probably better suited to explain this anyways.” She grinned. “I just wanted to do the reveal.”

“Of course.” Chris looked up at Spock. “Commander?”

Winona bet that Spock would have sighed if he’d have allowed himself it. “I will share what we know.”

“Great.” Winona shifted Jim to her hip for easier carrying as she stood up, still trying not to laugh. “Bye boys.” She left them and headed to the mess hall.

Chapter End Notes

This arc has such great comedy potential, but I'm guessing it won't be too much longer. This was one of the few pre-planned arcs I had left; we'll see where this may go next...
Winona leaned back against the back of the couch and ran her free hand through her hair. “I’m holding up. It’s just…” She looked down at the five-year-old who now looked like he was getting close to sucking his thumb. “This is so weird.”

“Yeah.” Len snorted. “He was a cute kid. Is a cute kid I guess.”

“Damn right.” She rubbed her hand down Jim’s back. “It sucked to leave him. I don’t know if you got a taste of those puppy dog eyes, but man. They were strong.”

“Yeah.” He smiled, but after a moment it faltered. “I know how you feel though. My little girl’s still in Georgia; I rarely get to see her in person anymore.”

“How old is she?” Winona looked over at him curiously; Jim had mentioned that he had a kid, but Len had never brought her up to Winona before in the few conversations they’d had.

“My little Jo’s almost 12. It’s hard to believe how quickly she’s growing up.” He leaned forward and looked down at Jim. “She wasn’t that much bigger than that when her mom and I split and I left for
“Yeah?” Winona moved her hand from Jim’s back to his head again, softly running her fingers through his hair. “This was how old Jim was when I started accepting off world missions again. I’d worked at the shipyards for a while helping design and build the new ships, but eventually… I don’t know. It wasn’t enough. Sure, I had Jim and Sam, but I’ve never been one for staying still. I began to wonder if the reason I hadn’t gone back out was because I was afraid. If somehow George’s death had scarred me and left me earthbound. And I didn’t want that.” She looked at Len out of the corner of her eye, but there was no judgement there. “So at first I just took short missions that wouldn’t take me too far out or away for too long and left the boys with George’s parents, but then…” She sighed. “I grew up traveling around in space. It just feels right to be out here for me. I loved the boys, but Riverside felt… stifling. It was George’s hometown, so I felt like I couldn’t go anywhere without being seen as just his widow. So I took longer missions. I remarried so the boys could have someone stable in their lives, but look how that turned out.” She looked at Len out of the corner of her eye, still focusing on the sleeping boy on her lap. “I don’t know what Jim’s told you, but it didn’t go well.”

“Yeah.” Len looked back down at Jim. “I’ve heard just about all of it I think. I mean as his doctor, I’ve seen his medical history, which led to questions, but he was still pretty reluctant to share.”

“Yeah.” Winona found herself glaring at the bulkhead at the mere thought of what Frank had done to her kids. There was a reason she now had two dead husbands. “If I could go back and never marry that bastard, I would.”

“I know.” Len put his hand over her free hand where it was laying on the couch. “And Jim does too. He really does care about you, you know. You should have seen what a difference it made once you came on board. Not even Spock could get close to him.”

Winona snorted. “That’s funny because I hear the two of them are as bad as me and George were in the early days.” She paused again, thinking back over Jim’s childhood. “It probably would have gone differently if he were older. There would have been a much different reaction to me from him.”

“Hey.” Len squeezed her hand reassuringly. “You two worked it out eventually, right? You’ve seemed to get along the whole time I’ve known him.”

“I guess.” Winona looked down at the sleeping kid on her lap and stroked his hair once more. “It took years to get there through. And sometimes I think he still holds everything with Frank against me, which I can’t say I blame him for. Plus, it seems like we work better for each other in small doses.”

“He knows you tried, Winona.” When she looked up there was nothing but sincerity on Len’s face. “And he turned out good. He couldn’t have gotten to where he was without you.”

“Your influence can’t be underestimated either.” She smiled at him, aware that her traitorous eyes seemed to be watering a bit. “I know I’ve said it before, but I want you to know I mean it. Thanks for all you do for my kid.”

“Aww, don’t get all sappy on me now.” He looked away. “The kid’s probably done about as much for me as I have for him. I wasn’t in a great place when we met; he pulled me out of it. If nothing else, looking out for him has given me something to stay occupied with all these years.”

“Yeah.” Winona ran her hand down Jim’s back again before returning it to his head. “He’s a good kid. I think he’s got just enough of George to temper all my influence on him. Plus, he has all of you to look out for him. It’s good for him and I’m glad he found a family.”
“He had a family.” Len squeezed her hand and smiled a little. “It’s just gotten bigger.”

“Thanks.” Winona smiled and leaned the short distance between them to rest her head on his shoulder. “That means a lot, especially coming from you.”

“No problem, darlin’.” His southern drawl seemed a little more pronounced for just a moment; he rested his head on hers.

Both of them straightened up when the doors opened once more. Spock strode in and seemed to lose some of the tension from his shoulders when he saw Jim sleeping peacefully on Winona’s lap, although his hands remained behind his back. He walked forward and knelt on the ground before them; after a moment he cautiously placed a hand on Jim’s back before looking up at Winona. “How is he?”

She smiled. “He’s good. Out cold though. I should probably get him to bed.”

Spock stood instantly. “I can assist you.”

“Nah, it’s alright.” She carefully shifted out from under Jim before standing up and picking him up so he was against her torso with his head on her shoulder. “I may be 50 something according to the calendar, but I’m still in the same shape that I was when he was this little the first time. I’ve got it.” She glanced back at the two men who were probably her son’s closest friends in the universe.

“Thanks for everything you’ve been doing though. I really appreciate it, and I’m sure he does to.” She looked down at the blond head now resting on her shoulder. “He’s my kid, so he wouldn’t necessarily say it, but he would feel it.” She looked back at them. “So which way back to our quarters from here?”

Chapter End Notes

Still not exactly sure what happened here since I distinctly remember getting the chapter ready and hitting post, but sometimes tech is weird I guess. Anyways, I hope you enjoyed this chapter! There’s little to no canon backstory for Winona (although apparently there are trek novels that flesh her out, including some making her Native American), so I decided to take some liberties. Here’s to fandoms embracing the female characters that the narrative basically just ignores or mistreats. And if you want more Winona (or are curious about the two dead husbands comment), the 4th chapter of the extra scenes focuses on her, so feel free to check it out!

Also, anyone want to talk Disco?
Winona shifted and adjusted Jim where she had him balanced on her hip. She was standing on the transporter pad with Jim, Spock, Len, and Uhura, all ready to beam down to the one of the two planets the Enterprise crew had visited. Thankfully they were both in the same solar system, so it wouldn’t be too tough to get to the next one if this one didn’t work out. Still, Winona was ready to get this moving. She stared down Scott where he was working the transporter. “We all ready to go?”

“Aye, Commander.” He nodded and she didn’t bother to correct him on the rank instead of name.

She may as well have been on duty now with how much she’d jumped into helping with the mission to get Jim back to normal. The crew was great and she wasn’t expecting anything less, but losing Jim had obviously thrown them for a loop, especially Spock. She hadn’t asked yet if there was any telepathic weirdness from having Jim suddenly be a kid, but if there was he hadn’t really told her, which made sense. She was usually with Jim, and he seemed to be one of the few who acted as weird as she felt around Jim. But if this went well, this would all be reversed soon enough. She looked around. “And they’re expecting us?”

“Yes.” Uhura turned to her. “I contacted them myself and explained what I could of the situation. They sounded pretty eager to help, or at least interested in what was going on.”

“Good.” Winona looked around. “Anything else we should know?”

“No; I believe our prior briefing covered the other pertinent information.” Spock tucked his hands behind his back.

“Right.” Earlier they’d handed Jim off to Gaila so Winona could do another briefing with the senior staff, this time about the planet they were going to beam down to. It did sound like an interesting set of cultures, but she’d leave that to the xenoanthropologists. For now, her concern was getting Jim’s missing 20-something years of life back. “We ready?”

“Momma?” Everyone’s eyes turned to Jim. “Where are we going?”

“On an adventure.” She was sure the others could be alarmed by how quickly she could lie, but that wasn’t important now. She didn’t really want to get into the ethics or possible rule violations of taking a five-year-old who was actually a nearly-30-year-old and Starfleet captain on an away mission, so it was best to just keep things moving. Plus, Uhura said the planet’s natives had asked to see him, so hopefully they’d work it out.

She could practically feel Spock’s raised eyebrow, but she ignored it in favor of focusing on Jim.
Even if him speaking up a moment later was harder to ignore. “That is…a possible way to describe what we are doing.”

“And it’s what we’re sticking with.” She shot Spock a look before looking back at Jim. “You ready Jimmy?”

He tightened his hands in her shirt, but hesitantly seemed to agree. “Okay.”

“Great.” She turned to Scott. “Beam us down.”

A moment later, they materialized on a balcony overlooking the planet’s landscape. It was mostly Earthlike, enough that they didn’t have to worry about EV suits or other adaptive tech, but the greenish-turquoise sky and just slightly off feeling gravity reminded Winona that they weren’t in Kansas anymore. Or Iowa, which Jim was probably expecting.

But before he could say anything, they hear indecipherable chatter coming from the doorway to the building the balcony was attached to. They turned around and Uhura began fiddling with the universal translator.

It kicked in pretty quickly, enough to catch most of what the indigo-skinned leader of the small group approaching them was saying. “—truly remarkable! It appears to be just as we were told.” They turned to the lavender-hued individual next to them, seeming to respond to an unspoken question. Did these people have some form of sophisticated nonverbal expression? “But of course we will need to confirm. Then we can speak more freely.”

Spock stepped forward. “Greetings. We did not expect to return so promptly, but the circumstances have required it.”

“It would appear so.” The leader approached cautiously, staring at Jim even as he hid his face. “Is that—?”

“James Tiberius Kirk.” Winona hoped they’d recognize the name and they wouldn’t have to confuse Jim by jumping into an explanation. “And I’m his mother, Winona Kirk.”

The third member of the group, a deep purple in color, blinked one of their three eyes. “The aging rates of humans is truly as odd as your reported.”

The others in the landing party seemed to tense, all knowing exactly what being the young-but-over-18-looking parent of adult children typically meant, but Winona just smirked. “I bet they barely even scratched the surface.”

The deep purple one nodded. “I would like to learn more of the science of your species.”

“And we have people eager to learn more about the culture of you and your sister planet.” Uhura stepped forward. “But I think at the moment we’re more concerned about…” Her eyes darted to the kid against Winona’s side. “Jimmy.”

“Of course.” The leader made a gesture that Winona guessed conveyed understanding. “We did not anticipate such a change happening if an outworlder participated in the—” something the universal translator didn’t quite catch “—ritual. But this is a truly remarkable discovery.” A shift in expression, maybe to concern. “But he is unharmed, correct?”

“Fit as a fiddle, minus being pint-sized and missing a few decades of memory.” Len crossed his arms.
There was something that was probably confusion from the natives. “A stringed instrument is part of this?”

Uhura sighed and cast a sideways glance. “Len, watch the expressions for languages the UT isn’t used to.” She turned back to the hosts with a smile. “He means that Jim—Jimmy is physically well, minus the change in age and size and the fact that he can’t remember anything since he was that age initially.”

“Ah.” The three conferred among themselves before the leader turned to them. “It is as it should be following the ritual.”

“Great.” Winona shifted Jim, who seemed confused, on her hip. “How do we fix it?”

The leader looked at the others before turning to them. “As our rituals have chosen you, we may accept you fully. All will be explained.” They gestured into the building. “But first, let us be hosts once more.” The trio turned and headed into the building, the others following.

The landing party traded looks, and Winona shrugged. “We gotta play along to work this out.”

Spock nodded. “We must return Jim to his usual state.”

There was another spark of confusion from Jim, but Winona’s attention was quickly drawn to a scowling McCoy as he spoke. “Fine. But this time I’m scanning everything twice.”

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, props to the people who make detailed alien cultures in their stories cuz that is not easy. I'm pretty sure I'm drawing on a half-remembered fanart for something or other I saw when I picture these aliens. Still, they're mostly here as a plot device and will be fleshed out exactly enough to fill that role.
Chapter 269

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Hopefully it actually posts when I intend this week hahaha This arc is beginning to come to a close, but knowing my arcs we've got a few chapters left. We may make it to 300 chapters yet. I do have at least one more arc in mind, but that arc may serve as a good closing arc...We'll see!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Winona looked skeptically between their hosts. She still wasn’t sure she trusted this. Sure, was the one who told the landing party to play along, and their hosts were friendly and had provided food and drinks for the landing party while they waited for this thing to get sorted out (and sure enough, Len had scanned it all multiple times before he let anyone try a bite or sip of anything, all while Spock and Uhura tried, apparently successfully, to convince their hosts that no insult was meant by the gesture). Winona took a sip of her drink, which had an unidentifiable but somewhat berry flavor, and rubbed her hand down Jim’s back where he was once again slumping against her side. Once the initial wariness and concern that this wasn’t Iowa wore off, he’d been so curious and excited about this new planet they were on that he’d been running all over exploring the rooms they were in, with everyone carefully watching him. God knows what happened the last time they weren’t careful with Jim on this planet. Still, it seems like he’d worn himself out, and that five-year-old body was probably due for a nap anyways.

Everyone had sortof huddled around her and Jim; probably mostly for him since she was the outsider in their little tight-knit group. Still, there seemed to be only earnestness in Spock’s expression as he leaned in to her. “What is your assessment of the situation, Commander?”

“Really?” She huffed out a bitter laugh. “I think my genuine opinion might sound undiplomatic, but I’m not sure I fully trust this situation. They were clearly surprised by the Jim’s condition as much as we were, so who knows if they really know what’s going on?”

“This is their culture; I think they’d know what’s going on.” Uhura glanced over to where the same trio that had greeted them was still conferring quietly. “They’re probably just thrown off that someone from another planet got affected; they didn’t even really know life existed outside their solar system until around a month ago when the first subspace communications back and forth started; our first contact with them, their first with anyone outside their solar system, was still less than two weeks ago.”

“True.” Len tipped his head, then looked back to the now-dozing child half on Winona’s lap. “But I sure as hell don’t know what’s going on with Jim, so if they can’t give us an answer it may be a few decades before he’s ready to command a starship again.”

“We all desire an outcome where our Jim is returned to us.” Spock was watching him again in that odd way he’d been doing; he was damn hard to read but Winona would know that wistfulness of losing your soulmate when she saw it. She’d certainly lived it.

Which maybe made her next question blunter than it needed to be. “Are you still aging?”

Spock and the rest of the landing party stiffened; Vulcans really could get aggressively rigid posture
at times. “I am uncertain how that relates.”

Winona shrugged. “If someone’s soulmate is under 18 when they’re over, sometimes their aging stops until the other person is closer. If yours stopped, maybe it means Jim’s stuck like this more long term, or at least stuck with normal aging.”

“Maybe.” Len looked thoughtful. “It’d probably be too soon to tell; while we talk about it starting and stopping the body can’t just flip a switch; it’s more gradual than that.” Still, his hand was on his tricorder as if he was getting ready to scan Spock.

“Okay, let’s not give up on the people of this planet just yet.” Uhura looked between them seriously. “We don’t know for sure yet if they’ll be able to reverse this or not; it’s better to see and then plan for if it goes wrong.”

“No,” Winona smirked, but it felt a little hollow. “It’s best to plan for any outcome you can predict; prepare for the worst and maybe expect the best if you’re feeling optimistic.”

Uhura didn’t look convinced, but Spock spoke next. “It is logical to be prepared, although I too wish for the matter to be resolved here.”

Len huffed. “I think we can all agree on that.”

Before anyone else could respond, the trio who’d greeted them came back over. Like before, the indigo one stepped forward first. “We believe we can properly explain the process that has affected your Captain.”

“Great.” Len looked between them. “You gonna tell us before or after you fix him?”

The lavender one spoke this time. “It is not so simple; we cannot guarantee the success of the second part of the ritual until after it has been completed.”

The landing party shared a look that meant none of them found it reassuring, but they all knew better than to get into that with their hosts. Still, Winona was curious about one thing. “Why’d you let a visitor who you knew was leaving take part in the first part of a two-part ceremony?”

The deep purple one wiggled an appendage in what Winona assumed was their equivalent of a reassuring hand raise. “As stated, we were uncertain the effects would apply. We merely wished to show and share our culture.” They looked to the landing party more generally. “Still, we are interested in your data. Could you share?”

“We share an interest in advancing scientific knowledge, so we are willing to collaborate.” Spock looked between them, preemptively cutting off the protest to get on with it that Len was probably about to make.

The deep purple one did a facial shift that must have meant excitement. “We are grateful.”

“Great.” Winona looked between them. “And I’m all for scientific exchange and advancing knowledge, but can we get back to my kid?”

“Of course.” The lavender one stepped forward, focused on Winona. “You are the one he asked for post-transition?”

“Yeah.” Winona felt a little more on-guard. “He’s a five-year-old and I’m his mom, of course he asked for me.”
There was some gesture exchanged between the trio and the indigo leader stepped forward. “You and the child-captain will come with us.” Winona got up and picked up Jim; the rest of the team started to follow, but stopped at the leader’s next words. “Only them.”

While everyone was clearly ready to protest, Len got it out first. “C’mon, don’t you get why we might want—”

“It is the conditions of the ceremony, and the conditions must be met for a successful return.” The lavender one looked at them in a way that clearly conveyed seriousness.

“It’s okay.” Winona looked back at the rest of the landing party, trying to convey at least as much seriousness as their hosts. “I’ve got him.” With one last look back, she followed their hosts into a separate chamber.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone have ideas about what the meaning behind the ceremony may be? I’m curious if you can guess...

Anyways I’m about to watch Disco so let’s talk trek!
The room they led Winona and Jim into was definitely different than the one she’d been in with the crew. It was smaller, and lacked the large windows the room they’d been in had had. Even with little to no knowledge of the culture of this planet, Winona got the feeling this room was somehow special, almost sacred.

It was probably something Winona should have taken the time to appreciate and show proper respect for the space, but they needed to get Jim back. She looked at them seriously. “So this is where we get Jim back to normal?”

The lavender one stepped forward. “This is the chamber where the ceremony must be completed. It is a process of healing. If he has asked for you, you must be the one he needs.”

Winona shifted Jim on her hip and raised an eyebrow. “Needs me how?”

The lavender one did what Winona guessed was the equivalent to a shrug. “That is not for us to determine. As the chosen, you must find the role you need to fill.”

“Alright.” Winona nodded, looking around the room. It was a simple octagonal design, with not much in it besides the door they’d come in, another on the opposite side, and a skylight up above. She turned back to their hosts. “So are there any particular steps we have to do?”

The others remained quiet, the lavender one continuing to do all the talking despite being the quietest before. “We cannot tell you; you must discover it yourself.” A quick look exchanged with the others. “We will leave you now.” They began to leave through the door opposite the one connecting to where the crew was.

“Wait!” They showed no signs of stopping, so Winona sighed as they left the room and looked at Jim, who was still napping against her side. “I guess it’s you and me.”

With only the skylight above and no real idea how time worked on this planet, Winona wasn’t sure how long had passed with her sitting back against the wall and watching Jim continue to sleep where she’d laid him in the middle of the room.

She crossed and uncrossed her arms, watching Jim. “They say this is about healing, and what you need.” Winona looked at him closely. “What do you need?”

He just kept sleeping, seemingly oblivious to the change in surroundings.

Winona sighed and let her head thump back against the wall. She almost wished she’d had a padd so she could try to do some research while Jim slept. She’d picked up a good amount about what kids
wanted or needed raising her kids, but it wasn’t like they give you a manual when you took home a baby. George had seemed to have a good grasp on it with Sam, or George Jr. as they’d still called him when their dad was alive, but she could only draw on what he’d done so long since he’d died when Sam was a toddler.

She was glad Sam seemed to have turned out ok, running away and cutting ties for a bit notwithstanding. She had no idea how he managed to turn out so…normal, so domestic compared to the rest of them. Still off Earth, but still settled with a family. She couldn’t believe she had grandkids, or that her kids were starting to look older than her. She sometimes wondered what that other universe Jim didn’t fully know she knew about was like, where George lived long enough to see the kids grow up and start their adult lives and be there for all of them.

She was sure he’d sought out his own resources to help him deal with everything. It had taken her a bit to reach back out to him, but she was glad she’d managed to rebuild that bridge eventually.

Jim…she’d thought she’d fixed things. It seemed like things were good, if not perfect, but something told her she wouldn’t be here if it really was good. Jim…had had life throw a lot more at him than Sam did. And he was damn stubborn, probably more so than his brother, and somewhere he’d picked up hating going to others for help. It seemed like having the crew and his friends he’d made some progress there, but Winona knew she wasn’t exactly the best role model in that area.

Course, her experiences depending on people weren’t great. Her soulmate got himself killed being a self-sacrificial…not going there. And when she tried to find someone new, he…best not to think of Frank either.

Okay, best not to go down the rabbit hole of her own issues. This was supposed to be about Jim, not her.

Jim, who was starting to stir. He slowly woke up, then began looking around frantically. “Mama? Mama!”

“Hey! Hey Jimmy it’s ok!” She ran up and grabbed him, shifting to hold him on her lap with her arms around him. “It’s ok, I’m here.”

“Mama?” He seemed to calm down some once he looked her in the eye. “I thought you left.”

“No, I’m here. I’ll always be here for you.” Winona ran a hand down his back in a way she hoped was soothing.

He pulled away enough to look her in the eyes. “No you won’t. You’re gonna leave.”

“What?” Winona kept holding on. “I’m not gonna leave you, Jimmy.”

“You will.” His expression took on a seriousness that felt unnerving on a five-year-old face. “You’re gonna keep leaving over and over and over.”

“What?” Winona felt like a broken record, but things had clearly taken a turn for the weird. At five Winona had only left for work at the shipyards and always came back at night after getting Jim and Sam from daycare and school; Jim had no problems then.

“It’s true! You always leave, and you will all my life!” His lower lip wobbled. “I want you to be here mama; I trust you, but it feels like I can’t for much longer.”

Okay, that definitely didn’t sound like a five-year-old. Things getting…however they were getting must mean Winona was in the thick of it now. She just had to find her way out, for her and Jim.
I didn’t want to spoil it at the beginning, but some of you did indeed guess correctly what the ceremony would be! This is an interesting one to write as someone training to be a counselor; I’m definitely going to draw on my knowledge of psych while also trying to keep it a little lighter cuz let’s be real, we’re here for fun, not impromptu therapy for fictional characters. (Well maybe a little of that too; we all just want the best for them for the most part, right?)
Chapter 271

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! A slightly late but slightly long chapter cuz as much as this chapter fought me once it flowed it flowed. Ain't writing fun? Anyways, some counseling stuff did make its way in here, with me actually pulling out notes because I'm a nerd like that. But hey, free counseling tips for all of you. Because really, everyone could use a little support, especially in times like these. And because my version of this utopian future includes free, accessible, and encouraged mental health care. But I'll stop myself pre-rant so you can enjoy the chapter. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Winona took a deep breath, wishing she could remember what they’d done in those family therapy sessions back when Jim was a teenager. Okay, step one to repairing a relationship you messed up: acknowledge you messed up. “I left you. I left you with some horrible people at times, and I’ll own up to that, Jimmy.”

“You don’t get to call me Jimmy.” Those crossed arms, that tone, and that glare all felt much more like teenaged Jim. That would be much harder to deal with than adult Jim.

“Okay.” Stay calm. What was step two? Winona wracked her brain, finally remembering. Show you understand the impact, or work to understand it if you don’t. “I hurt you. I abandoned you, or at least it felt like that; like I didn’t care. It must have really cut you deep.”

A shaky upper lip, watering eyes. “I never needed you anyways.”

“Really?” Deep breaths. Winona could almost hear the nice Betazoid counselor’s voice in her head. Validate their feelings, don’t fight them, even or especially if you want to. “You didn’t want to depend on me.”

“Yeah?” A crack in the voice, sounding younger again. “It hurt when you left. I didn’t want to hurt.”

Winona was not good with this kind of vulnerability, but she knew she had to see this through. “I get that. No one wants to hurt; you didn’t deserve that pain.”

“Then why did you do it?” Those big blue eyes looked up at her, so much like George it made her heart ache.

“Because…” Damn George’s eyes, making her see her own pain when she looked at her kid instead of seeing Jim himself, her brilliant, caring, reckless but amazing son. “I can’t give you a good explanation. I honestly wish I could. There are so, so many excuses I could give. But no reason is worth hurting you like I did. I’m genuinely, truly sorry, Jim. And I wish I could promise to never leave you again. But I don’t want to set us up for more pain and disappointment.” She smiled, a slight trace of bitterness. “Plus, adult you usually wants me gone before too long.” Her expression sobered, looking him in the eyes and trying to show as much authenticity as she could. “I can’t promise you that, but I can promise you this: I will never, ever abandon you. I can’t always be there every moment of every day, but I swear I will do everything in my power to be here when you need me.”
A few tears escaped his eyes, and he sounded so, so young again. “How can I believe you?”

Breathe, Winona, breathe. She rubbed at her own eyes. The final step. “Because I’ll show it. I’ll be there for you. Or whatever you need me to do to fix this divide between us. You decide there’s nothing worth saving here, I’ll respect that. I’ll stay as close or as far away as you need, baby, and it’ll be your choice. As much as it would pain me, I’ll respect it. It’s your choice, and I’ll support it. Because,” damn her traitorous watering eyes, “because I love you.”

A sniffle, a pout. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

“Oh my sweet, caring boy.” She couldn’t resist the urge to kiss his forehead, even as her heart broke a little. She knew it wasn’t her fault alone that this Jim got buried away for too long, but damn if she didn’t regret the role she played in it. “This isn’t about me, this is about you.”

“No.” She wasn’t sure what was happening here, but somehow that voice had traces of adult Jim now. “It’s about us. A relationship can’t be one sided, both ends have to be there. We have to both be willing to share and talk.”

“We will.” She held her baby, no matter what age he was, to her chest. “Come back to yourself. Me and the other people who love you are waiting. We need you back. We miss you.” Winona took a deep breath that was shakier than she’d usually care to admit, but damn restraint right now. “We’ll talk it all out, Jim.”

“Jimmy.” She felt small arms wrap around her neck. “Thank you, Mama. I love you.”

There was a certain relief to hearing him say that, and Winona melted into the embrace as much as she could for a hug with a five-year-old who was sitting on her lap. “I love you too.”

For a moment, it was peaceful and…warm. Beautiful, even. Then Jim started to scream.

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Nyota was probably about three seconds from pacing. Winona and Jim had been in there for what certainly felt like a very long time. Len actually was pacing. Spock looked stressed, and she had the feeling that it would be pretty clear even to someone who didn’t know him as well as she did.

And then the screaming started.

The voice was weird and distorted, an adult and a child all at once, but it was definitely Jim.

That seemed to be all that Spock could take. Almost faster than Nyota could process, he was jumping up and running towards the door Winona and Jim had gone through and seemed to ready to try to pry it open with his bare hands.

“Cease!” They turned to see the lavender-hued native from earlier, who Nyota remembered as a spiritual leader. “The ceremony must not be interrupted!”

When Spock turned around, there was an almost feral glint to his eye that Nyota hadn’t seen since Khan. “Jim is in pain!”

Seeming to sense that this could go very badly, the deep purple one moved in a gesture that was probably supposed to be placating. “The pain means the ritual is nearly complete.”

Spock didn’t look convinced. He turned back to the doors. “I must get to him.”
The planetary natives looked concerned. “He cannot interrupt the ritual at this critical moment.” The indigo one that Nyota remembered as the planet’s leader stepped forward. “Contain him!”

“You don’t give us orders.” Len seemed as riled up as Spock, in his own way of course.

Damn, it was tough being the only member of this team who kept common sense when stressed. “Len, they know what’s happening better than us. Grab Spock!” He still looked ready to object, but one look from her shut that down.

They got on either side of Spock and tried to hold him back, but apparently Vulcans having three times human strength meant two humans weren’t enough to fully do the job. Len looked back at the natives. “A little help would be great!”

The indigo one made a gesture and soon a pair of lilac-skinned guards were helping them contain Spock, finally pulling him back from the doors.

Thankfully, the screaming stopped not long after. Nyota felt Spock’s heartbeat begin to slow where her hand was on his side, and his chest was still rising and falling with his breaths. A moment later, he went completely still, then slowly, reverently, raised a hand to his head. “Jim has returned.”

Nyota couldn’t help a sigh of relief at that. The natives would probably confirm soon, but if Spock felt it she’d believe it.

The lavender one nodded. “You may now enter the chamber.”

The doors opened and they all rushed in to see Winona kneeling on the ground, an exhausted looking but undeniably adult Jim laying across her lap with one arm supporting his back. He looked up at them and smiled tiredly. “Who’re you?” The smile grew a little more authentic. “Just kidding. Good to see you all.”

“Jim!” The relief was palpable in Spock’s voice, and he rushed in with her and Len close behind him.

She wasn’t sure when it turned into a group hug, but she certainly accepted it. Until Jim started squirming.

“Can I get some clothes?” It was only then that she realized how sudden the transformation must have been; he had scraps she recognized as what kid-him had been wearing covering...important areas, but that was about it.

“As your doctor and roommate, I’ve already seen it all.” Len refused to budge.

“Although my reasons differ, I too have already seen your entire bare body.” Spock didn’t move either.

“Thanks to your and Gaila’s adventures at the Academy, I’ve seen at least this much before.” Nyota decided that if no one else was leaving the group hug, she wouldn’t either.

Jim rolled his head back, only managing to rest it on Spock’s shoulder behind him. “Can we at least pretend I have dignity?”

Len and Nyota laughed at that (and she definitely saw Spock smile), but Winona full-on snorted. “I was giving you a bath this morning and you refused to stop playing with the rubber duck until you got pruny. That ship has sailed.”
“Fine.” Despite his protests, Jim had made no further move to get out of their group hug. “Just at least get me new clothes before we beam up; I’m not letting the crew see everything.”

Nyota felt Spock’s grip on Jim tighten slightly. “We will have Mr. Scott send you new clothes.”

Chapter End Notes

(counselor voice) So, how does that make you feel?
I'm just kidding, but I'm always open to any and all screaming in the comments. This arc started as a joke and ended (well not quite ended yet) here, so clearly we're all on this wild ride together. I hope you're enjoying it!

No time for Disco tonight so no spoilers please!
Better late than never, am I right? Anyways, it’s been an odd few days, but have a long chapter to make up for it! Bonus points to anyone who can spot a lingering effect of the ceremony (it’s subtle...)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Jim rolled his shoulders in the loose shirt and pants Bones had given him in Sickbay after doing a very thorough physical to make sure Jim was well and truly back to how he was supposed to be. Besides some lingering pains from regrowing and a headache, he was doing fine, but Bones was still denying him full clearance.

Bones was also the reason they’d left the planet in a rush; they’d barely had time to say a diplomatic farewell down there (and get Jim some clothes) before he was ordering a beam up. He’d started marching Jim to Sickbay practically before all their particles had settled on the transporter padd. Jim knew he was just worried, but it felt a little excessive. It wasn’t like mother henning was anything new for Bones though.

But Jim was back to himself and alone at the moment, both of which felt weird at the moment after the past few days.

He could remember everything. There was a weird quality to the memories from when he was five again, some degree of mental distance, but they still felt like his memories. And he remembered all of it, from the panic at waking up in an unfamiliar place (despite that he now knew it was just his and Spock’s quarters, which he knew damn well) to the relief when his mom showed up.

Jim hadn’t had a reaction that positive to his mom in a long, long time. He loved her sure, but…

But that’s what this had all been about apparently. He wondered if she really meant everything she’d said back in the ceremony chamber about talking about their relationship once he was back to normal. They’d never really been the talking type, time in therapy notwithstanding… They usually worked it out in other ways. Had she just been saying that because she had to? Was it all to get him back to his proper age?

Before he could really consider, the comm near him went off. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Bones had taken him off duty, but it wouldn’t hurt to answer, right? “Kirk here.”

“Sir, we’re receiving a call from Admiral Pike; he wishes to speak with you.” It didn’t sound like Nyota, which must have meant her and Spock were still talking with the natives about everything that had happened. Jim was sure it was scientifically and culturally fascinating, but he didn’t have the time to dig into that now.

Now, he had to answer before Bones showed up. “Put him through.”

“Yes sir.” The comm officer went quiet a moment, presumably patching the call through.

A moment later, the familiar face of Pike appeared onscreen on the monitor by the head of Jim’s bed.
He nodded. “Admiral.”

“Captain. Glad to see you looking more like yourself.” He got a small smile in that way he did when he was teasing Jim. “Although I thought it was Uncle Chris now. It seems every time I talk to you mid-crisis I get a new nickname.”

“Hey, that one was on my ma, not me.” Jim mustered a smile in response but crossed his arms. “She seems to have made you a member of the family.”

Pike raised his eyebrows. “The Kirk family would certainly be an interesting one to join.”

Jim huffed a laugh. “That’s one way to put it.” Really, Pike was already part of the odd little family Jim had cobbled together, but Jim had the feeling that could go unsaid.

But before either of them could even begin to say anything more, the door to Jim’s private room burst open, revealing Bones.

He looked at the screen with Pike on it like it personally offended him. “You’re not supposed to be here.”

Jim held up his hands placatingly. “Relax Bones, we’re just talking.”

“Huh.” There was no humor in Bones’ expression. “You need rest, not talking.”

Pike sat up straighter. “Why can’t he do both? I’m just checking in on him.”

“You can check in on him through the report I’m going to file, just like I’m sure you got the update on him being back to normal from the preliminary report Spock filed.” Bones crossed his arms and raised an eyebrow. “Go.”

Pike sternly raised an eyebrow in return. “I could point out that a lieutenant commander is hardly in any position to be giving an admiral orders,” he held the stern look for a moment, but then his posture softened somewhat, “but I know better than to interfere with CMOs treating their patients. Phil Boyce certainly taught me that before he retired.”

“He taught you well.” Bones didn’t waver in the slightest.

Jim looked between them but decided it was best not to get caught in the middle of this.

Finally, Pike relented, turning back to Jim. “I’ll check back in with you later, Jim.”

“Talk to you then.” Jim watched the screen go dark before turning back to Bones. “Would it have really been a problem for me to talk to Pike?”

“You need to rest.” Bones moved in to check his monitors. “Besides, what’s got you so grumpy?” He looked at Jim with a smirk. “Miss your nap today?”

“No.” Jim rolled his eyes. “Not that you’re one to judge on grumpiness, but also try going through a lifetime of growing pains in fifteen minutes and coming out happy.”

Bones’s face shifted to concerned so quick Jim almost felt bad. “Are you in pain?” He began scanning Jim. “Everything reads normal, but I wouldn’t be surprised if there were lingering effects…”

“No I’m fine.” Jim attempted to shove Bones’ hand away but stopped at the glare he got. “I’m ready to be back on duty.”
“You aren’t.” Bones crossed his arms. “I’m requiring a day of observation and that’s final.”

“C’mon Bones.” Jim tried sitting up, figuring arguing for his health was less effective laying down. “Our mission’s delayed enough as is.”

“Not my problem.” Bones had turned his attention to his padd, but looked up at Jim seriously. “I can make it two.”

“Fine.” Jim let his head thump back to the pillows. He looked back up at Bones. “One day works.”

“Good.” Bones made a final note on his padd before turning to leave. “Get some rest, Jim.”

Jim grumbled under his breath and was debating if he should actually try sleeping, but when he looked up next his mom was there. “Ma?”

“Hey Jimmy.” She looked tired, and understandably. Five-year-old him had been a handful.

He sat up in bed. “What are you doing here? I thought Bones shut down visitor hours.”

His mom just smiled. “You really think he controls me?”

“Fair enough.” Jim smiled. “But really, what are you doing here? Are we actually going to have that talk you mentioned?”

“What do we ever been the type for talking?” Despite her words, she settled into the chair by the bed. “We’ve always done more through actions, for better or worse.”

Jim wasn’t sure how he knew that she was referring to leaving as the actions, but he decided he wouldn’t let his mom keep getting down on something they’d already worked out. “You always came back though. Especially when I needed you.”

“Maybe.” Her smile was weak. “Does it really balance out though?”

“I think what we just went through says it does.” He smiled back for a moment before his expression went serious. “Look, I know we don’t exactly have the most conventional mother-son relationship. But it’s still a relationship, and one that’s important enough for us that we’re still there when we need to be. Sometimes a relationship isn’t always being there for each other, but it’s being there when it counts.”

He ignored the way his mom wiped at her eyes like he knew she would have wanted. “When did you get so smart about all this?”

“I don’t know.” He smirked. “I guess I’ve done a lot of growing up lately.”

She laughed, and both of them seemed more comfortable with bringing it back into familiar, lighter territory. After a moment, his mom looked at him again. “You sure have.” Her look was soft, but went serious again after a moment. “I hate to break the moment, but I think I’m leaving in the morning.”

It wasn’t exactly the news Jim wanted to hear right then, but he nodded. “Okay.”

His mom looked a little conflicted. “You sure? If you need me I can stay.”

“Nah, I mean it.” He sat up. “We’re adults with our own lives.” He hesitated. “Did you want to stay?”
She seemed deep in thought at that, finally speaking up after a moment. “My ship could probably do without me one more day.” She smiled at him. “Might be good to catch up with you as an adult, and god knows it would be worth it to give Chris some hell together.”


“Then it’s settled.” Winona got up. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

He held open his arms for a parting hug and was glad when she accepted, awkward as it was with him sitting down. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

After they separated, he watched her walk out, then fell into some much needed sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone pick up on the little thing I did to show a change? I'm curious about what you guess it is, and if anyone got it...

Also, who wants to scream about Disco pre-finale?
Chapter 273

Chapter Notes

Well some of you were close but no one quite got what I did; as of last chapter, Jim's mental narration refers to Winona as his mom, not her first name. Once I noticed I had done that I decided to roll wit it cuz it felt like a good way to show some family development. What do you think?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It felt good to stretch his legs again, and for those legs to be more than like a foot long each. Jim smiled. It was good to be finally cleared from Sickbay; Bones would definitely be keeping a close eye on him for a while now, but he was free in all the ways that counted.

It was pretty great. He and his mom had called Pike from Sickbay, and it had turned into a pretty fun conversation with the two of them reminiscing over their early Starfleet years with Jim’s dad.

It was a little less fun when his mom started eagerly sharing stories of Jim as a little kid the first time around, but they both looked so happy Jim decided to let it slide.

So here he was, a free man and ready for some reunions. He’d formally thank everyone once he was allowed back on duty, which would probably be another day at least. But for now, he’d take being out of Sickbay and the freedom that gave him.

Like the freedom to go back to his quarters now that he knew them again. The door buzzed open easily enough, but it was dark when Jim looked around. It was still pretty early in the day, late afternoon maybe, so there was no way Spock was sleeping. “Computer, lights.”

It helped Jim see, but that only revealed that Spock was not here. Jim shook his head fondly and made his way to the bathroom that connected what had been his room and what had been Spock’s room, now just connecting the quarters with Jim’s desk and their bed and the quarters with Spock’s desk and meditation area.

He found Spock exactly where he expected him: working away at his desk despite the fact that it was his day off. Jim walked over and draped his arms over Spock’s shoulders, resting his chin on the top of Spock’s head. “Whatcha doing?”

“Completing my mission reports for our most recent…incident.” Jim moved back so Spock could look at him. “It is important I send my reports to the admiralty.”

“Pike already knows though; he can fill them in.” Jim leaned against the divider that once sectioned off the bedroom but now just denoted the meditation area. “You deserve to relax, Spock.”

“Vulcans do not require the same amount of rest as humans.” This time, Spock did not look away from the screen.

“And half Vulcans?” Jim had to hold back his grin at the fact that he’d finally gotten Spock to pause.

“I will rest when I complete the report.” Spock began working again.
“Okay.” Jim got closer, leaning against the end of the desk further from where Spock was working. “I would offer to help, but my memories are a little odd. I do remember having a massive crush on a certain first officer who was probably doing a brilliant job of running the ship.”

Spock raised an eyebrow. “Was that the cause of your interest in Vulcan culture?”

“Maybe some.” Jim shrugged. “I do like learning about your background though.”

“I am grateful.” Spock turned back to the screen.

Damn, Spock really had shifted into business mode. That meant he had to be all tense and worried deep down, which meant Jim needed to help him relax. “I noticed you were a bit awkward with kids.”

Spock went stiff. “I had other duties to attend to.”

“Hey.” Jim scooted closer, resting a hand on Spock’s shoulder. “It’s ok; kid’s aren’t for everyone. They really aren’t part of my plan either; it’s just not a high priority here.” Jim smiled. “I got my ship, I got my crew, and I got you. What more could a man need?”

Spock paused for an entirely different reason there; Jim could feel the hesitation. “You do not wish for children?”

“No.” Jim crossed his arms, thinking. “A lot of things I guess. I never really had a good role model for how to be a father to kids, so I’d worry about screwing it up. Plus, I genuinely do care about other things like my career more, and I don’t think that’s a way to raise kids.” Jim looked at Spock. “Why? Your mind changing about kids?”

“Indeed.” Spock looked at him. “It would appear our plans align.”

“Awesome.” Jim smiled at how Spock seemed more relaxed; was this why he’d been kinda avoiding Jim? And there was definitely something else here; it didn’t really take Jim’s knowledge of Spock, their bond, and his own abilities to work that much out. “What’re you so curious about? You can ask me anything, Spock.”

There was a contemplative pause. “Many would consider you good with children. Why do you not wish for your own?”

“I don’t know.” Jim crossed his arms, thinking. “A lot of things I guess. I never really had a good role model for how to be a father to kids, so I’d worry about screwing it up. Plus, I genuinely do care about other things like my career more, and I don’t think that’s a way to raise kids.” Jim looked at Spock. “Why? Your mind changing about kids?”

“No.” Spock’s eyes returned to his screen. “While many Vulcans are experiencing increased pressure to reproduce, my family is seen as contributing enough in other ways.”

“Well that’s good.” Jim looked around Spock’s quarters appreciatively, trying to tamp down the dash of unwarranted jealousy at the idea of Spock making a kid with someone else. He paused as another thought occurred to him. “They’re not just saying that because—”

“I do not believe it is due to my mixed heritage, if that is what you are referring to.” Damn, Spock knew him too well.

“Good.” Jim nodded and watched as Spock got back to work. A thought occurred to him and he smiled. “You know, just cuz we don’t want to have kids doesn’t mean we can’t practice the act of making them.”
Another adorable eyebrow raise. “As our bodies are incapable of reproducing with each other without outside intervention, I do not believe it could be considered practice.”

“Okay.” Jim leaned in closer to Spock. “Then how about we just do the deed and call it me thanking you for running the ship while I couldn’t.” Jim held up a hand, anticipating Spock’s argument. “And no ‘just doing my job’ stuff. Obviously you don’t have to get involved if you don’t want it, but…” Jim trailed off, glad that he seemed to have more effectively caught Spock’s attention.

“Perhaps a break from my work is in order.” Spock closed the open windows at his terminal and moved toward Jim. “Let us celebrate your return to yourself, Jim.”

Jim grinned. “My kind of celebration.” He didn’t get out any more before he was following Spock to their bedroom, ready to do some celebrating.

Chapter End Notes

I think that'll be the end of this arc (more or less). I have some ideas, but does anyone have something they're dying to see these two take on? Speak now or forever hold your peace...

Anyways, Disco finale tonight! I'm not ready hahaha
Chapter 274

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! Can you believe we're already in the second to last week of April? And since I missed it before, a belated happy Passover and Easter to anyone who celebrates them, and happy Earth Day today! Let's celebrate by caring for the planet, and somehow hope that all doing our part has an effect when so much of the damage is from giant corporations that put their short term profit over people's actual lives. Anyways, enjoy the chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim smiled at the screen as Sam got him and Spock updated on everything happening with him, his wife, and their kids. There were so many pictures, and Jim could see and hear the mild chaos of the kids playing in the background.

Spock was staring intently at the latest picture Sam had showed them, which was his oldest, Peter, at five years old. “He bears a strong resemblance to Jim at that age.”

Sam looked a little surprised. “How would you know what Jim looked like then?” His focus shifted to Jim. “Did you smuggle some baby pictures aboard or something? Or did Mom show him?”

“I wouldn’t put it past her, but in what’s actually a long story and maybe classified, he has seen five-year-old me firsthand.” Jim smirked and glanced at the time at the corner of the screen. “And on that note we have to head out soon so we should start wrapping this up; my first shift back on the bridge after that odd adventure starts soon.”

“What?” Sam looked like he was still trying and failing to take all of that in. After a moment he seemed to just accept it. “I guess that has something to do with Mom saying to check in with you?”

“Maybe.” Jim shrugged. “Whatever the reason, it was good getting an update.”

“Good talking with you too, even if you claim half of it is classified.” Sam laughed. “Still trying to swing visiting us so the boys can see the ship?”

“Maybe.” Jim glanced at Spock. “We probably can’t move the schedule around too much, but I’m still not above showing off the ship to secure the coolest uncle title for life.”

Sam smiled. “Just learning that you are their uncle put you in that spot; with how they idolize you it seems like Starfleet might claim another generation of Kirks.”

“They have time to decide.” Spock getting up caught Jim’s attention and he glanced at the time again. “But I think I’m out of time to talk; gotta get to the bridge.” He waved at the screen. “Talk to you later, Sam.”

“Later, Jim.” Sam waved and a moment later the screen went dark.

“Alright.” Jim stood and followed Spock out of their quarters. “Good catching up with Sam, even if it still feels a little like he’s trying too hard sometimes.”
“You did still seem to enjoy talking with him.” Spock matched Jim’s pace as they headed to the turbolift.

“Yeah.” Jim stared ahead, thinking. “I guess it counts that he’s trying, right? And it is cool getting to see his kids; I think cool uncle is just the right amount of kid contact for me.” Jim smiled at Spock, thinking back to their conversation after he was released from Sickbay. “Still, I’m glad to be back on the bridge.”

“I am certain the crew is grateful to have you back as well, although some certainly enjoyed aspects of you as a child.” Spock paused as they entered the turbolift.

“Is that your way of saying everyone thought I was an adorable kid?” Jim grinned.

“I believe many would say so, although I much prefer you as you currently are.” Spock looked at Jim with a certain warmth in his eyes.

“Aww, love you too babe.” Jim leaned in for a quick kiss before the doors opened.

All too soon, the turbolift was stopping and he and Spock were pulling apart at the sound of the doors, followed closely by Chekov’s enthusiastic shout. “Keptin on the bridge!”

Sulu stood out of the captain’s chair. “Welcome back, sir; we’re glad to have you back.”

“I’m glad to be back.” Jim settled into the chair and grinned at Sulu. “You looked pretty comfortable here though.”

Sulu smiled back. “Someday.”

“Someday.” Jim nodded at him and settled back a bit into his chair. “For now, how about a status update?”

“Can do.” Sulu pulled up information on his console. “We’re studying this star; it seems to be of sufficient scientific interest as it is a rare type, but you’d have to consult with science to get a more solid answer on that.”

“Sounds good.” Jim glanced to Spock’s station, where he appeared to be already starting to analyze the data. He was about to ask for more information when the ship suddenly lurched, nearly making him and others fall from their chairs. He looked around the bridge in alarm. “What just happened?”

Voices from all over the bridge began to speak at once, with varying degrees of alarm.

“A solar flare disrupted our orbit—”

“The star’s gravity is beginning to pull us in—”

“All decks reporting, no casualties, other damage uncertain—”

“Helm is not pulling, up, sir—”

This did not sound good, but Jim trusted his crew to get out of anything. He had to. “Alright, we’ve escaped a literal black hole before, we can get out of this gravity pull. Anyone have ideas, preferably ones that keep our warp core intact this time?” He hoped the bit of levity would snap anyone freaking out out of their panic; he could certainly feel it rising up on the bridge.

Nyota spoke first. “Contacting Engineering to update them and see if we can get more power.”
“Alright.” Jim looked around the bridge and not at the viewscreen that showed them getting closer; they’d been at a safe distance but Jim knew he shouldn’t count on too much time. “Any ideas, no matter how odd?”

“Keptin!” He turned to Chekov, who appeared to be frantically doing calculations. “If we redirect slightly, we can use our inertia to enter a low orbit, and allow the increased momentum form the gravitational pull to break orbit after partially circling the star.”

“Like a slingshot?” It sounded out there, but what else could they do? “Spock, check his numbers. Sulu, Chekov, plot a course and execute it, quickly.”

He wasn’t sure how much time of frantic activity passed before there was some sort of confirmation, and despite the artificial gravity Jim was sure he felt some sort of shift in g forces as they started the maneuver.

This better work.

Chapter End Notes

Nothing like a fluffy first half to lull you into a false sense of security, am I right? It hasn’t been too long since I left you with a cliffhanger, but they really are so much fun (for me at least)
Chapter 275

Chapter Notes

Happy penultimate update of April everyone! Unless more inspiration strikes, I feel like this may also be the penultimate arc of this story. I like this one, and I already know what I want the last one to be. Still, I’m betting we’ll easy hit 300 chapters before we get all wrapped up here, so the end isn’t quite imminent. In the meantime, enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It felt like forever but it was probably not long at all when Sulu’s voice broke through the tension on the bridge, speaking louder to be heard over the frantic noises from damn near every piece of equipment on the bridge. “Attempting breakaway maneuver now, Captain!”

The feeling of increased g forces felt too real for Jim to be imagining it, and then almost without warning there was a shift, and suddenly the view went from the star they’d been orbiting seeming way too close to the star being gone and the distant stars outside moving past at a seemingly impossible speeds.

“What’s going on?” Jim’s question was directed at the bridge at large; he had no idea who could answer.

Just about everyone tried to.

“We’ve successfully broken orbit of the star—”

“Sir, we’re moving at impossible speeds, beyond our maximum warp capacity—”

“Engineering reports strain on the engines from the speeds required to break orbit—”

“Shields holding, but I’m not sure we can take the strain of this velocity much longer—”

They needed to slow down, and fast. “Uhura!” Jim turned to the back of the bridge. “Tell Engineering to give us as much power as they can manage, and maybe a little more than that.” He didn’t wait for a response before turning back around. “Helm, full reverse. We need to slow down before this speed destroys us!”

Everyone snapped into action; there was strong nervous energy on the bridge but everyone moved efficiently, albeit with some frantic shouting between stations. Jim resisted the urge to get up and go to Spock; the crew needed him to be calm and controlled now and it wouldn’t do to show the need for comfort. Still, he drew on the bond and cherished the moment of eye contact he was able to make; if they didn’t make it out of this…

But they would. Jim drew strength from Spock’s perpetual calm and projected calmness and certainty to the crew; he trusted every one of them with his life, especially his senior officers.

And that trust was earned time and time over, and again now. With a slight jerk they dropped down to a more reasonable speed and Jim breathed a sigh of relief.

And then everything went dark except for emergency lights; Jim had hardly noticed the automatic
red alert that getting caught in that star’s gravity had caused until the ringing in his ears marked its sudden absence.

Jim took a moment to calm his racing heart and control his breathing. It seemed like they were out of danger, but he knew better than to trust a situation like this. “Report.”

“We’re currently traveling at low impulse speeds—”

“Major systems failures, likely due to the strain of disrupting our increased velocity—”

“All decks sending in casualty reports, only minor injuries so far—”

“We seem to be in orbit of a planet, uncertain if known or unknown—”

“We need to start getting some answers.” Jim gripped the arms of the captain’s chair hard enough that his knuckles ached. “How soon until systems come back online?”

“Given Mr. Scott’s usual efficiency, I do not believe it will be long.” Jim turned at the sound of Spock’s voice, finding himself relaxing a little at the extra confirmation that his whatever-they-were to each other (everything. He was everything to Jim) was ok. He’d spoken during the initial report when they stopped, but it was easier to process one on one.

“Good.” Jim got out of his chair and went toward Spock’s station, pausing to lean against the railing. “What was it we were studying anyways? They said it was some form of rare star?”

“It was a so-called black star, named for its difficulty to detect on sensors and strong gravitational pull.” Spock spent a moment reviewing his station before turning back to Jim. “In our brief time before entering dangerous orbit, we did gather invaluable data.”

“Glad to hear it.” Jim hoped his voice sounded less sarcastic out loud than it did to him; he genuinely loved when Spock had something new to study and got all excited about it, but nearly losing the ship cut back on that excitement some.

Thankfully, at that moment the lights (and everything else) came back online.

“I am so getting Scotty the good stuff next chance I get.” Already mentally ordering scotch, Jim turned around. “Any new information now that we’re not flying blind?”

“Engineering has most systems back online, but warp engines will take time.” Nyota adjusted her earpiece. “I’m also picking up all sorts of chatter from the planet below.”

Right; they were in orbit of…somewhere. “Do we know what planet that is yet?”

“My navigational sensors are giving me a reading…” Chekov paused. “Keptin, requesting confirmation. It says the planet we are orbiting is Earth.”

Jim’s eyes snapped to the viewscreen; he hadn’t taken the time to look closely, but… “It certainly looks like Earth.” They seemed to be in a very low orbit, but Jim was sure that looked like North America below them. Or at least mostly… They needed to be in a higher orbit anyways since it seemed like they were probably still in the atmosphere, but the extra perspective could do them good too. “Lieutenant Sulu, pull us up into a more stable orbit.”

“Aye, sir. I think we have just enough impulse power to do it.” Sulu began to do so, and Jim watched out the viewscreen as their higher perspective let them see more. Could it really be?
“My sensors confirm the ensign’s analysis.” Spock looked up. “We are indeed orbiting Earth, Captain.”

“Alright.” Jim straightened up, trying to control his surprise and confusion. “We were nowhere near Earth, but if we got pointed that way before we hit high speeds…” He turned to Nyota’s station. “Hail Starfleet Command. I’m guessing they have questions about how and why we’re here.”

“Yes sir.” Nyota turned to her station and began to work, but after a moment she frowned. “Sir, unable to hail Starfleet.”

“What?” Jim felt his eyebrows pull together. “We’re practically close enough to knock on the door.”

She shook her head. “Nothing on any Starfleet channels, sir.” Nyota took a deep breath. “Plenty of other signals from the planet, but it’s like Starfleet doesn’t exist. I’m only getting silence.”

Chapter End Notes

Anyone already know where I'm going with this?

First week of no Disco and I feel like I'm getting withdrawal. This season was better than the first one for sure; if anyone checks it out after feel free to scream in the comments with, about any trek really. I've seen literally all of it.
Chapter 276

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! That end-of-semester stress funk is getting to me a bit (3 papers due in
the next week; wish me luck), but as some of you guessed our next arc is indeed TOS
inspired! I'm putting my own twist on it though, so I hope you all enjoy! I might be
going a little heavier into that TOS goofiness/social commentary balance...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“What do you mean, it’s like Starfleet doesn’t exist?” Jim whirled around to Nyota’s station. “What
kind of not exist are we talking about; did something happen?”

“Scans show no signs of destruction on a level consistent with the destruction of Starfleet, Captain.”
Jim turned to Spock at the sound of his voice. “However, there are signs of environmental damage
and other forms of destruction inconsistent with Earth as we know it.”

“Okay.” Jim looked around. “Any ideas on what happened? Can we really rule out something
attacking Earth when we were gone?” Jim really hoped they could; just cuz the 
Enterprise wasn’t
around this time doesn’t mean someone or something should have been able to get away with
attacking Earth.

“I think so.” Nyota looked awfully busy at her station. “If Starfleet existed and got destroyed, there’d
likely still be some equipment putting out static on our usual channels. But there’s nothing at all; total
silence like those channels have never been used at all.”

“So no Starfleet.” Jim looked around the bridge. “Any ideas?”

“We have previously encountered both alternate universes and time travel; both are possibilities we
must consider.” Spock was helpful as always, even if his options only raised more questions.

“Now we just need to narrow it down.” Jim had the best crew in the fleet; even if he was stumped
they could solve it, he knew they could. “Any clues?”

“I’ve been using the navigational sensors to try to figure it out.” Sulu glanced over his shoulder. “San
Francisco shows no sign of Starfleet and doesn’t quite look like the city I grew up in, but some of the
historical sites are there, including the downtown skyscrapers that went up in the early 21st century
tech boom, but I don’t think I see any more recent landmarks.”

“So maybe time travel?” Jim wasn’t sure if that was more or less comforting than the idea of an
alternate universe; if it was like the one that Spock went to, maybe better that it wasn’t an alternate
universe. “Any more proof?”

“I am calculating the probabilities based on our journey around the black star, Keptin.” Chekov
seemed too focused to contribute much more than that to the conversation.

“I think I’ve got it!” Everyone turned to Nyota. “The communications team has been analyzing all
the signals from the planet; we’ve reached a conclusion.” She turned away from her station to face
the bridge at large. “We’re in the year 2019, Captain.”
Jim wracked his brain for information on the time period. Still pre-World War III and even pre-Bell Riots, so it was a period of rampant inequality, environmental destruction, and escalating tensions and violence. Not the most fun time of human history to pop into. “We’re going to have to be careful.”

“It may be too late for that, sir.” Nyota pulled up something on her station and turned to him. “Permission to display on the viewscreen, sir?”

“Granted.” Jim gripped the armrests of his chair tighter; the tone of her voice didn’t sound good.

“We’ve been spotted.” Pictures, largely blurry and unclear, popped up on the viewscreen. Nyota took a deep breath. “We were only in low orbit for a little bit, but with the prevalence of personal phones with cameras, it didn’t take much.” The viewscreen began to pan through various images, including some that seemed to be reactions to the sighting. “It’s all over this era’s internet, sir.”

“Great.” Jim slumped back in his chair, already getting a headache from imagining explaining this to Pike.

“Unconfirmed UFO sightings weren’t uncommon in this time; I’ve heard that there were rumors of aliens spotted everywhere from rural Pennsylvania to San Francisco and LA to Roswell.” Sulu turned around in his chair. “And that’s just the 20th century US.”

“So this might just make it onto the conspiracy boards and no where else?” Jim really hoped so.

“I’m not sure about that, sir.” Nyota always got more formal when she was trying to be nice to him, not a good sign.

And he could see why a moment later; the next thing she displayed was something Jim thought was a post on what they called social media from the man Jim recognized as the then—now?—US president. It wasn’t the most coherent thing Jim had read, but one thing was for sure. It had a dangerous mix of arrogance and impulsive anger that Jim remembered was a hallmark of this president, and one of the things that had caused so many problems in the leadup to the Third World War. And this time all of that was directed at whoever was attempting to spy on them. Even if there was no spy, just a very lost spaceship. “Damn.”

Chekov finally looked up from his calculations. “Are they capable of sending a jet to us?”

Sulu looked down at his sensors. “We’ve reached a stable orbit, if lower than we’d usually be; I could barely get us above the clouds.”

“If the military is more rational than their leader, which would be an easy feat, they’d send a spy plane for reconnaissance first then follow up with the heavy artillery.” Jim tried to draw on his knowledge of the US military from the historical military tactics classes he’d taken at the Academy. “Starting in the late 20th century, they had planes capable of reaching altitudes so high the pilots practically had to get astronaut training. We should be on the lookout for company; start sensor sweeps.”

There were murmurs of assent across the bridge, but Jim was already preoccupied with what they’d do if someone did show up. He didn’t like the idea of shooting down someone just doing their job, although if he needed to defend his ship… But what about the possible impact on history? They’d already seen time travel create an alternate universe with Nero, and at such an already unstable time period being an unknown entity shooting down a military plane did not sound like a good idea…

If only those rumors of Klingons or Romulans with cloaking tech actually came through to
something. Were there other ways to hide? Could they fool the sensors of that time if they made it up to where there was an abundance of satellites that all did different things in this time period?

Jim didn’t have a good answer, but he got the feeling he’d need one soon.

He was right. It was Sulu who spoke up urgently. “Sir, we’ve got company.”

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: all of the alien sightings Sulu mentioned come from actual trek episodes across the shows (I think I got the location for the Enterprise one right). To anyone wondering how that works when this is an alternate universe, all of that happened pre timeline divergence, so I'm playing a little fast and loose with the rules. Maybe alternate universes splitting looks like a Y and they have overlap pre-divergence. As it's all fictional, it's pure speculation. If there is a time travel scientist here, hit me up (I almost made another trek reference there, but I'm not sure if she was actually a time travel scientist specifically...)
Hello everyone and welcome to the first update of May! I'm mostly ahead of finals but stress doesn't quite seem to care. Ain't that fun? Anyways, I have some fun things planned, so enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Dammit. Jim looked around the bridge. “Any information?”

“I’m listening in on their radio chatter, sir.” Nyota looked up. “We’ve definitely been spotted.”

“Great.” Jim looked around. “Okay, some civilians with odd photos could be dismissed, but I’m guessing the US military won’t be so forgetful. What are our options?”

“It is best to avoid harming the pilot or pilots as we cannot be certain at this point what their potential impact on history may be.” Jim wasn’t sure if this was a time he loved or hated Spock’s calmness.

“Okay, I wasn’t planning on opening fire but a good consideration.” Jim looked around the bridge. “C’mon people, we need ideas and we need them quick.”

“I could transport the pilots onto the ship.” Chekov looked like he was already running numbers.

“What about the plane?” Sulu leaned over to see what he was doing.

Chekov shrugged, still mostly focused on his work. “Planes crash.”

“While investigating something mysterious?” Sulu shook his head. “Too risky.”

Chekov raised an eyebrow; was he starting to imitate Spock? “And what is your plan?”

“We could tractor the plane into our cargo hold.” Sulu said it with half a shrug.

“Doing so would risk damaging the plane.” Spock furrowed his brow. “Is that an acceptable risk?”

“As if transporting the pilots out mid flight wouldn’t damage the plane?” Sulu scoffed.

“Alright.” Jim glanced back at Nyota. “They’ve definitely spotted us?”

“Yes sir.” Nyota looked over at him. “Not sure what kind of recording devices they might be carrying, but they’ve already given a description of us to their HQ.”

Yeah, this was going to be hard to cover up. Jim looked around the bridge. “We can’t let them get a full report in, and we definitely can’t risk the ship getting captured, not that they’d be able to pull it off. I think our best bet would be getting those pilots and trying to talk them out of reporting what they’ve seen.”

“And how’d you suggest doing that?” Sulu looked back over his shoulder.

Jim took a deep breath, making a decision. “We’ll tractor the plane into the cargo bay. While we’re
doing that, we’ll keep a transporter lock on the pilots so we can transport them out as necessary.” He looked around the bridge, seeing if everyone was following along. “Let’s do it.”

Everyone sprang into action with a chorus of agreement, and Jim got out of his chair. “I’m going to met them once they’re onboard; I think a personal touch is needed here.” He stood up out of his chair. “Tell me whether it’s the cargo bay or transporter room once they’re onboard.” He cast one last look around. “Spock, you have the conn.”

Spock stood from his chair. “Captain, I believe it may be advisable if I—”

“Spock, we’re still pre-first contact as far as Earth is concerned, conspiracy theories notwithstanding. You’ll forgive me if I sideline you a little bit.” Jim smiled at the resigned expression on Spock’s face.

“I merely wished to remind you of the potential for unintended and possibly catastrophic consequences of errors while time traveling and the danger of advanced technology falling into the wrong hands, as both of us are aware.” Spock said it so calmly, but Jim was sure he wasn’t imagining the spike in tension of the bridge at those words.

Certainly a little more personal than Jim might have expected. He couldn’t help the frown that spread over his face at Spock’s words. “No need to remind me, Spock. As you said, we both know personally how badly it can go if this goes wrong.” Jim turned and went into the turbolift without bothering to wait for a response from Spock.

Did Spock really think Jim would be so careless? Sure, Jim hadn’t lost anything to Nero on quite the scale Spock had, but it his loss was still pretty damn personal. What, did Spock think Jim was still a little regressed mentally?

Jim felt a slight poking feeling in the back of his mind, like Spock was tapping at his mental shields. Jim hadn’t even realized he’d raised them. Still, he was clearly stressed by this mission, so maybe it would be best to cut out all distractions…

Jim stepped out of the turbolift on the floor that held both a transporter room and the cargo bay. He paused at the first wall comm unit. “Kirk to bridge. Where should I be headed?”

Nyota’s voice came through a moment later. “We have the plane mostly intact in the cargo bay, but it seemed risky enough that we transported the pilots out. They’re in the transporter room.”

“Got it. Kirk out.” He ended the connection and started down the corridor. First stop, pilots. Second stop, show them their plane. Hopefully somewhere in between he’d convince them to keep quiet about what they’ve seen, all while making sure they don’t see too much. Piece of cake, right?

Jim took a deep breath in the corridor outside the transporter room. He could do this. He took another deep breath and stepped in range to trigger the door sensors, then stepped into the room.

The pilots were still on the transporter pad, looking a bit disorientated, or at least as far as Jim could tell with both of them still having helmets on. He stepped forward, holding his hands out reassuringly. “I promise you’re safe here; you can even take off your helmets if you want.” He gestured at himself and the transporter tech, thankfully a human this shift. “We’re human too; the air’s perfectly safe to breathe.”

Jim could feel the skepticism rolling off of them, but after a moment one of the pilots carefully pulled off their helmet, giving Jim the first look at a surprisingly young face framed by blonde hair slipping out of a bun. “Who the hell are you and what the hell is going on? Where’s our plane? Where are we?”
Jim smiled a little. “All good questions. I’ll start with the easy ones. We have your plane and I’ll take
you there in just a moment; as for who I am and where you are, that’s where this gets a little hard to
believe. My name is Captain James Tiberius Kirk, and you’re on my starship from the future.”

Chapter End Notes

Time travel is so fun, if also a mess to navigate rules wise. I like how Starfleet gets
progressively more aggressive in their approaches to time travel, starting with
documenting then actively ”fixing” timelines that they see as off (which, if time seems as
fluid as they sometimes make it out to be, seems like an impossible task to determine.
Whose idea of off?)
Man, grad school finals are not to be underestimated. One paper to go and I'm free of this semester though! So close...
Anyways, who wants to meet the pilots?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The pilot with no helmet smirked at Jim. “Your parents named you Captain?”

Jim smirked right back and raised an eyebrow. “You just heard you’re on a starship from the future, and that’s what you focus on?”

A shrug. “Hey, whatever’s easiest to process, right?”

The other pilot finally took off their helmet, revealing darker skin and short black hair. “She may want to talk names, but I’m more concerned about our plane. What did you do to it?”

“Caught it in a tractor beam for starters.” Jim gestured to the door. “We transported you out to be on the safe side, but we have your plane if you want to take a look.”

“Hell yeah.” The second pilot began moving off the transporter padd.

“One last thing before we move off names though.” Jim looked between them. “What are yours?”

“I’m Carol Christopher.” The first pilot pointed at herself and then the other one. “She’s Maria Rambeau.”

“Okay.” Jim nodded, trying to remember the names as best he could. They’d have to decide if minimal interference meant returning the pilots or if it meant keeping them here where they couldn’t return with ideas of future tech. Better call Spock. But for now, the plane. Jim smiled and gestured for them to follow him. “Right this way.” He turned and led them out the door.

It was only a short walk to the shuttle bay, but Jim couldn’t help but notice the pilots looking around curiously as they walked. In particular, they seemed to be checking out the crewmembers; Jim was thankful it only seemed to be human crew here at the moment; Spock must have issued some kind of warning or heads up. Probably for the best; didn’t want to shock them anymore than necessary.

And besides, they had plenty of questions already. Rambeau spoke up first. “So how did you get us out of the plane without us even making a move to get out from the cockpit?”

“A device called a transporter.” Jim looked over with an apologetic smile. “Not sure how much more I can tell you, what with it being future tech for you that humanity isn’t’ supposed to discover for another century or so.”

“Hmm.” She nodded, and Jim could tell she wasn’t quite satisfied with that answer.

“So what kind of service are you in?” Jim turned to Christopher at her question.
“Nothing quite like you’d be familiar with.” Jim looked away, not quite sure how to put it. “We’re not quite a military, nothing that aligns with what I remember the US having at this time, but we can still put up a good fight.”

That got a note of concern from Rambeau. “And should we be worried about this fight?”

Jim held up his hands reassuringly. “We won’t be doing any fighting if we can help it. Believe me, our ideal scenario was no one fighting, or even seeing us. But…”

“But now you’re the hot UFO theory.” Christopher nodded. “Little tricky to get out of that.”

“Unfortunately no. But that’s where you could help us.” Jim looked between them as they paused at the cargo bay doors. “I know it’s asking a lot, but would you be willing to keep your silence on us?”

The pilots exchanged a loaded glance before turning back to Jim, when finally Rambeau spoke. “That could depend on the shape our plane is in.”

“Well you can see it now.” Jim stepped forward and the doors opened, the pilots following then passing him to get to their plane.

After a moment of inspection, Christopher turned around from where Rambeau was still inspecting the plane. “Can you get a repair team out here?”

“Of course.” Jim glanced over his shoulder before going to the nearest comm box. “Kirk to Engineering.”

“Scotty here.” He sounded a bit frazzled.

“Got anyone you can spare?” Jim bit his lip, already expecting the answer.

“You mean while I’m fixing the warp core and doing general repairs?” Jim could picture his expression.

“Yeah.” Jim nodded despite knowing Scotty couldn’t see. “Definitely human, preferably down to work on old tech, like a 20th-21st century plane.”

There was muffled grumbling on the other end.

“We wouldn’t need many people. And they wouldn’t even need the high tech tools; low tech may be better here honestly.” Jim crossed his arms, glancing back at the pilots, who thankfully still seemed preoccupied with the plane.

There was a sigh that came through clear enough to hear the exasperation. “I’ll see what I can do, sir.”

“Thank you Scotty.” Jim grinned. “Kirk out.” He looked back again, making sure the pilots were truly occupied before making the next call. “Kirk to Bridge, get me Spock.”

After a moment, his soulmate’s voice came through. “Spock here.”

“I need you to look up a pair of names to see what their contribution to history may be.” Another quick glance back to ensure no eavesdropping. “It’s our pilots, Carol Christopher and Maria Rambeau. Can you do that for me?”

A pause. “Of course, Captain.”
He had probably already started. “Thanks Spock.”

“It is merely my duty, Captain.” Always that on duty formality; Jim thought it was mostly endearing again.

“Sounds good.” Another nod the person he was talking too would never see. “Kirk out.”

He ended the call and turned around, expecting empty space, but was surprised to see Christopher instead.

Jim tensed up. “How long have you been there?”

“Not long enough to hear too much of your conversations, if that’s what you’re wondering.” There was a look in her eyes that suggested otherwise though, and Jim got a little wary when she crossed her arms. “I have another condition for radio silence on you.”

“Yeah?” Jim crossed his arms, unable to stop the defensiveness already creeping up his spine. “And what’s that?”

She smirked. “I get to see more of this ship. And I mean the real stuff, the stuff I know you don’t want to show me.”

Chapter End Notes

Anyone able to guess where I'm stealing these pilots from?
Ooh, that post-finals tiredness is hard to shake. Grad school papers are no joke, people. Anyways, hopefully I’ll be better rested soon and able to get chapters up in a more timely manner. Anyways, a few of you did get the reference with the pilots (both references; props), so this should be fun...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim looked at her skeptically, trying to make a decision. “And why would you want that, Captain? —” he hesitated until she nodded, “Christopher?”

“You can call me Carol actually.” Her expression was a trained minimal expressiveness, but Jim could tell she was enjoying herself. The amusement was rolling off of her in gentle waves; she was excited.

He raised an eyebrow. “Why bother making sure I got the rank right then?”

A note of pride now. “Cuz I earned that. Now are you going to show me the ship or not?”

“Still deciding.” Jim crossed his arms. “Asking to see more stuff, secret stuff, doesn’t exactly fit with not reporting info.”

Carol didn’t look away, her expression challenging. “Hey Maria, how’re our comms?”

Maria had managed to get one of the two pilot sections of the cockpit open and was assessing everything for damage. She looked up at the sound of Carol’s voice. “Still intact, why?”

“They asking for us? Want an update?” Carol didn’t break eye contact with Jim still.

Jim could read Maria’s wariness from here. “Haven’t listened in but I’d bet so. Sudden radio silence usually isn’t a good sign.”

“Maybe we should give them an update.” She hadn’t budged. “Think the bogey’s a threat or not?”

“Carol.” Maria sounded a little exasperated. “What are you doing?”

Carol finally looked back at Maria. “Trying to work out a way to see more of this ship.”

The next mix of emotions from Maria was hard to read. “Carol——”

Jim felt like it was his turn to step in. It seemed like these two wouldn’t take anything less than the truth, so may as well be honest. “Look, we’ve got things here that most people down there couldn’t even imagine yet. And we’ve seen what can happen when that kind of thing falls into the wrong hands. And no offence, but I don’t quite consider your government the right hands at the moment.

The pilots exchanged a long look before bursting into laughter. Maria spoke up first. “What, you think we like or trust this administration?”
Carol scoffed. “Whole lot of people don’t agree with the government right now, even those of us who technically still work for it. Plus, if you look at a certain second in command’s opinions, the government may not agree with us.” She looked back at Maria with a smirk and got an eyeroll in response, although Jim could feel the affection there.

“Okay.” Jim looked between them, “So you aren’t going to report this?”

Maria looked like she was about to respond, but Carol spoke first. “We don’t want to. But my terms still apply.”

Jim rolled his shoulders. “Fine.” She wouldn’t really know what was important or not; he could just be careful about what he showed her…

“You’re giving me the tour?” There was cautious optimism in her voice now.


“Fine.” She looked back at Maria and there seemed to be a moment of mental communication.

Finally, Maria relented and pulled up what must have been the communication interface from the plane she’d flown there in. She pulled up what must have been part of the communication system for the plane. “Yeah, we read you. Still investigating the bogey, but it’s looking like it’ll probably be nothing. We’ll finish investigating then head on back.” She looked between them. “That’ll buy us some time, but we’re still gonna need to be quick. Where’s your repair team? I could use the extra hands.”

“On their way.” Jim turned at the sound of the cargo bay doors opening and a few redshirts walking in. “Or right here.”

The lead engineer stopped in front of Jim. “What’s the plan, sir?”

He nodded towards Maria and the plane. “That’s up to her; your job is to repair the plane until she determines it’s functional.”

The lead engineer nods and the group walks over when Maria gestures for them to come closer so she can get a better look at the tools they have and start giving them instructions for fixing up the plane.

In the meantime, Jim turns to Carol. “Ready for your tour?”

“Yes.” She squints slightly. “Going to the important spots, right?”

“Of course.” Depending on the definition of important.

The first place he takes her is the observation deck. She’s drawn to the windows like a magnet, admiring their low orbit view of North America. “You know, I’ve said it about planes before, but damn.” She let out a low whistle. “I prefer the view from up here.”

Jim smiled despite himself. “It’s pretty great, even if it looks a little different than how I know it.”

That definitely caught her attention. “Different how?”

Maybe that was too much; he should limit what he told her about the future, so it wouldn’t do to mention things like that it looked different because they had less than three decades before an earthquake coupled with existing climate change left a chunk of what she’d know as Southern
California under water. So he just shrugged. “A lot can change in a few centuries.”

She didn’t seem satisfied with that answer, but looked back to the view. “So what makes this place important? Is it some sort of command center?”

“Not quite. It’s more a recreational space really.” At her look and the protest he could practically feel, he held up a hand to stop her. “You didn’t specify what type of important. This also happens to be one of places where I had one of the first real, deep conversations with my soulmate. It’s a good spot to talk.” He sat down on one of the benches and gestured for her to join him. “So with that in mind, I gotta ask; why are you so eager to see the ship?”

Carol crossed her arms, stepping closer but not sitting down. “Can’t someone just be curious?”

Jim met her stare. “Curious usually isn’t quite so determined.”

She smirked. “You haven’t met me.”

“Maybe.” Jim tipped his head in acknowledgement. “But I get the feeling there’s something more here. So what is it?”

Chapter End Notes

Fun fact: a chunk of SoCal ending up under water in 2047 is star trek canon; it comes up in an episode of Voyager and they say afterwards it becomes a coral reef (not sure it's the right climate there, but who knows how much the climate will change in upcoming years....) Anyways, a fun part of watching all of trek is finding all those weird little easter eggs. There's plenty of them tbh
Chapter 280

Chapter Notes

It’s been a weird week but have a long chapter to make up for lateness; like I said, I may be late, but I won’t leave you hanging. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Carol squinted at him a moment and crossed her arms. “Really, can’t a pilot just be curious about the most advanced ship she’s seen?”

“Like I said.” Jim wasn’t backing down from the standoff if she wasn’t. “Curiosity only goes so far. What are you hiding? Is it a danger to us? Are you actually spying on us, despite what you said when we were with your co-pilot?”

She didn’t back down. “What would you do if I was?”

Damn, she was good. But Jim could be too. “Wipe your memory.”

She raised an eyebrow. “You don’t have anything that can do that.”

“Yeah?” Jim raised an eyebrow right back. “And how do you know that?”

“Because then you would have done that to my grandfather.” There was a moment where Jim could tell she mentally kicked herself for saying that, but she regained her composure quickly.

Jim, however, was just confused. “What?”

Seeming to pick up that his confusion was genuine, she paused. “Okay, it’s a long story.”

Jim gestured to the bench he was sitting on. “We have time.”

“Hmm.” She continued to watch him skeptically for a moment before joining him on the bench. “Okay fine.” She sighed. “So my grandfather was a pilot too, back in the 1960s.”

“Okay.” Jim nodded prompting her to continue.

She smiled a little ruefully, looking out at the stars. “The ‘60s weren’t too different than now from what I hear. Major social unrest, people fighting for change, a maybe-definitely earned distrust of Russia.” She looked over at Jim. “Generally, tensions were high. And in the middle of all of that, in the late 1960s, my grandfather, another Captain Christopher, gets sent to check out this weird anomaly that apparently dropped into the sky out of nowhere.”

Jim couldn’t help his smile at that. “Sounds familiar.”

“Exactly.” Carol nodded. “So naturally, I jumped at the chance to check this out.” She seemed more sincere than she had been her whole time on the ship. “He doesn’t remember much; apparently whatever they did to put him back and try to reset everything messed with his memory of it all a little bit. But he remembered some things.” She looked at Jim seriously, counting off on her fingers. “One, they said they were from the future, two, they seemed to lack a lot of the societal problems he was
seeing every day and be much more egalitarian, and three, there was a pointy-eared man.” She dropped the count and leaned back on her hands on the bench. “They almost took him to the future cuz they were worried about if he’d seen too much, but apparently they thought his son would have an impact so they couldn’t cuz he didn’t think he had a son yet.”

There was a lot to unpack there, but that last bit caught Jim’s attention. “How did he not know he had a son?”

Carol grinned. “’Cuz they thought he was a daughter. Of course, I don’t think my dad really had it figured out yet cuz he was pretty young, but apparently after a bit of weirdness my grandpa made his peace with it and told him about what they’d told him.” Her smile softened a bit and she looked out to the stars again. “Dad’s still at NASA trying to see if he can make that reaching Saturn thing come through.” She glanced at Jim out of the corner of her eye.

Picking up what she meant, Jim shrugged. “I don’t think I could tell you if he’ll be successful even if I wanted too. Humanity’s had too many firsts for me to remember them all.”

“Damn.” She deflated a little, but soon the confidence was back. Or maybe a dash of wariness being masked… “So was that you then?”

“We certainly fit some of the criteria.” Jim mentally ran through the missions he’d done and the ones he’d gotten a peek at courtesy of melding with Selek; he came up empty. “I don’t think it was us-us, but for reasons that give any reasonable a person a headache if they think too much, we might not be the only ship like this that can reach this part of the timeline.”

Carol looked confused for a moment than quickly masked it. “But I gotta ask, what’s your policy on kidnapping people who have seen too much? Cuz if you’re going for impact, I should tell you that my co-pilot does have a kid who you’d need to check out too.”

A strong burst of something that didn’t feel too great spread through Jim at the idea of being a time traveler in an advanced ship who captured a smaller vessel and took someone’s parent away. “I don’t want to do that. At all.” He paused, sighing. “But, I also know how dangerous it can be for someone to get their hands on too much knowledge or tech from the future.” He looked at Carol, hoping to convey his seriousness. “I don’t want that, especially with the state of your government. And one bad word from you or our copilot and our airspace is swarming with planes I don’t really want to have to fight.” He let an ounce of threat slip into his voice. “But let’s be clear, that’s not a fight your government would win.”

Carol looked around appreciatively. “Somehow I don’t doubt that.” She turned back to him. “Trust me, I get the importance of not reporting this, and so does Maria.”

“Yeah?” Jim crossed his arms. “You’ll understand if I’m a little wary.”

“That’s fair.” Carol thought for a moment before finally looking at Jim, her eyes lighting up a little bit. “What if I told you a secret I don’t want the government to know, in exchange for keeping your secret you don’t want the government to know?”

“Hmm…” Jim watched her warily. She would have a lot more to gain from telling them about him and the ship than whatever Jim would gain from having dirt on her, but she still seemed totally genuine about it, and Jim wanted to trust her… “Okay.” He looked at her seriously. “You have a deal.”

“Great.” She held out her hand for him to shake. He took it, and before he could let go, she leaned in. “Maria and I are more than co-pilots. We’re soulmates, and I’m planning on fully moving in with
Jim blinked and leaned back. “That’s it? I thought there was better acceptance for same-sex couples by this point.”

“Things were moving that way.” Carol released his hand and crossed her arms, looking at the ground. “But with the current administration, especially the VP, it’s looking like we could be back to Don’t Ask Don’t Tell. Or worse.” She leaned in conspiratorially. “The VP has supported conversion therapy.”

Jim recoiled. “That’s actual torture.”

“Right?” Carol raised her eyebrows emphatically before shifting into a more serious expression. “So you get why I can’t have news about me and Maria getting out, right?”

“Yeah, definitely.” Jim ran a hand through his hair and leaned back on his other hand. He looked at Carol out of the corner of his eye; he hadn’t had time to look closely before, but she definitely looked at least a little over 18. And reflecting on it, so did Maria. So one thing was bothering him… “You and Maria are definitely soulmates, right?”

The expression she shot him said “duh” more clearly than words ever could.

“Okay.” Jim tried to control his smile. “Scientific proof and everything?”

“Yep.” Carol crossed her arms over her chest. “We took all the tests that showed we’re aging, and that the timing was right.”

“It looked like it.” Jim smiled back when she smiled a little at that, but now they were reaching the part he really didn’t get. “So if there’s evidence that you’re legitimate soulmates, what’s with the pushback from some people? Soulmates are soulmates, and there’s even scientific proof.”

There was something wistful in Carol’s expression. “You really are from a better time, huh?” After a moment, she looked away. “There are just certain people who are obsessed with the idea that soulmates should fit their idea of what soulmates should be. Which, for better or for worse, means a very specifically gendered pair that can reproduce together.” She smirked out the window. “Maria and I are ten times the parents most of them are, but still. They’re caught in their ideas.”

“Damn.” Jim stared out the window with her, pausing after a moment when he thought of something. “Wait, what about the scientific evidence? That’s gotta count for something, right?”

“For some people it does.” Carol looked back at Jim. “For the people far enough to that side though, science doesn’t mean much.”

“Damn.” Jim rolled his shoulders and stood up. “Well, I’m ready to get the hell out of here. I’d offer you a ride, but I think they need people like you here and now. Plus, no way in hell I’m taking two parents from a kid.”

“Awesome.” Carol stood up. “Now how the hell are we going to pull all of this off?”

“I don’t know.” Jim started to make his way toward the doors. “But I know just who to talk to. He’s the smartest person I know.”
Alternate opening note: time for political commentary and mlm/wlw solidarity, two of the best things media can have
Chapter Notes

Look at me, getting back to chapters on time. And it's a little longer than usual, with cameos from some bridge crew folks being great. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

As they neared the turbolift, Jim paused one last time and glanced at Carol. “Alright, we’re definitely hitting the point of no return now. You sure you’re not gonna sell me out to the president or whoever you report to?”

She rolled her eyes, but Jim could feel the amusement there. “Nah, they’re not worth knowing this.”

“Good.” Jim grinned as they stepped onto the turbolift. He started them on the way to their destination. “Bridge.”

Carol glanced around. “So what, this is just a voice controlled elevator? Not that far past what we’ve got.”

Jim smirked. “Wait til you see the bridge. I think there’ll be some surprises.”

“What, like the pointy-eared man my grandfather mentioned?” Carol raised an eyebrow and smirked. “I don’t know if aliens will be enough to surprise me. I mean, even without what my grandfather talked about, I feel like I’m one of those aliens-probably-exist-but-just-don’t-want-to-talk-to-us-yet people, you know?” The doors had opened to the bridge while she was speaking and they both stepped out.

“That is a quite pragmatic and rather accurate assessment of Earth’s current relationship with extraterrestrial species.” Spock stepped over toward where Jim and Carol were standing.

Jim heard Carol, who had already looked a little awestruck at the sight of the bridge, swear under her breath (none too quietly though) at the sight of Spock. She whispered and Jim could hear the amazement in her voice. “The pointy eared man.”

Despite her quiet voice, Spock heard her and raised an eyebrow.

“Ohkay.” Jim was restraining a laugh as he looked between them, and he could feel the confused amusement from the rest of the bridge. “It’s a long story, but on to why we’re here. Did you find anything, Spock?”

“Indeed.” Spock held his hands behind his back. “I was able to look into our two pilots and—”

“Should I be hearing this?” Carol held up a hand to stop him and looked seriously between him and Jim. “You’ve spent like, the whole time I’ve been here telling me that it’s not good for me to know too much. So should I hear this?”

Jim crossed his arms and looked at Spock. “She’s got a point, babe.” The term of endearment slipped out so naturally that Jim didn’t even notice it until he felt the surprise from Carol. He tensed up a little; if there were people from his own time that didn’t accept inter-species relationships, how would
someone who just found out about extraterrestrial life take it?

Thankfully, her confusion melted into a shit-eating grin and she smacked him on the arm. “Calm down. I’m the last to judge on getting with your soulmate who you work with and people would disapprove of, remember?”

“Right.” Jim grinned back before pulling himself back into a more professional expression. “Just give us the verdict then, Spock. What did you find?”

Spock also slipped into professionalism, although Jim could feel his amusement. “The basics, Captain, are that I believe it is best to return our pilots to their current time.”

“That’s what I was thinking too.” Jim looked between them. “The only question is, how do we get them back to where they’re supposed to be without raising suspicion about us, and how do we then get back to where we’re supposed to be?”

“Mr. Chekov and I are attempting to reverse the process that caused us to travel to this time initially.” Spock glanced toward that section of the bridge. “We are still running simulations.”

“Alright; I’ll let you get back to it.” Jim turned to Carol. “Any ideas on how to get you back to where you’re supposed to be?”

She shrugged. “We still have a plane; why not just let us take off?”

“And fly right out of the ship?” Jim tilted his head skeptically. “Can you do that?”

Carol laughed. “The U-2 can barely take off in normal situations, but me and Maria are good. Maybe getting dropped out the back like a baby bird kicked out of the nest would be even easier than a typical takeoff.”

“Huh.” Jim wasn’t sure he was convinced. “I might just have to defer to your expertise on that, even if it all sounds unbelievable to me.”

Carol’s grin didn’t waver. “I’d want to check with Maria, but I think we could do it.”

“We can arrange that.” Jim walked over to Nyota’s station. “Lieutenant Nyota Uhura, our comms officer extraordinaire and the one who can connect you to anyone on or off the ship, basically.”

“Impressive.” Carol nodded, appreciation clear in her expression. “Nice to meet you.”

“You too.” Nyota looked at her. “Miss—?”

“Captain, actually.” Her cocky smirk could probably give Jim’s a run for its money. “Carol Christopher.”

“Nice to meet you as well.” Nyota shifted in her chair. “How can I help you?”

Carol leaned against Nyota’s station. “I need to get in touch with my co-pilot; she’s fixing up our ship.”

“She’s in the cargo bay I called the bridge from earlier.” Jim leaned back against the railing.

“Got it.” Nyota turned to her station. After a moment, she turned back to them. “Got them.” She turned back to the system. “Bridge to cargo bay, we’re looking for—“ She looked at Carol expectantly.
“Maria.” Carol’s smile softened just a little.

A few seconds later, Maria’s voice came through. “Rambeau here. What’s up?”

“Hey Maria. I’m here with a girl almost as cute as you.” Carol winked at Nyota.

Nyota smiled back. “I’m flattered, but I’m taken.”

“So’s she.” Maria’s voice was filled with fond exasperation even through the speaker. “What is it, Christopher?”

“How’s our girl?” Carol’s expression went a little serious. “The one here, not the one in Louisiana with your folks.”

Maria laughed. “She’s pulling through; they have a good team here. Why, what’s up?”

“Think we could launch her from up here?” Carol held up her hand as if to stop Maria’s objections already. “Before you say no, think it through. We gotta get out of here somehow, right?”

“I guess.” Maria didn’t sound too sold. “Let’s see what we can do, ok? It might be time for you to come back here and give me a hand instead of sightseeing.”

“Hey.” Carol was smiling despite her objection. “I’ll be down, I just might need a tour guide to get there.”

“I’ll be waiting.” Maria’s voice faded as she must have turned to check something on the plane. “Gotta go; this team is good but they don’t know our girl like I do.”

“I bet.” Carol grinned. “I’ll be there to help you soon.”

There wasn’t a response from Maria, who must have gotten back to work, so Nyota shut down the channel. She looked Carol up and down. “I might have to be your tour guide myself to get to see this girl cuter than me.”

“Hey, you’re plenty cute.” Carol held up her hands defensively. “I’m sure your soulmate is very lucky.”

“She is, and she knows it.” Nyota’s smile grew wider at the little bit of surprise from Carol at her boldness.

“Anyways.” As fun as it was to watch Nyota in her element (really, how was he the only one on the bridge crew with a reputation for being a flirt?), they were kind of still in danger. “Would you want to show her down to the cargo bay, or do you need to stay here to monitor the channels to see what the chatter about us is?”

Nyota looked at him, a little more serious. “I’d be interested in getting a look at their setup to better understand what we’re dealing with, sir. Plus, where better to monitor their communications than with them?”

“Fair enough.” Jim tipped his head in consideration. “You can show her the way; I should get updated on things up here anyways.”

“Aye sir.” Nyota nodded at him and stood, looking at Carol. “Follow me.”

“Lead the way.” Carol gestured for Nyota to go before her and then followed her to the turbolift.
Jim watched them go and shook his head, smiling. They both seemed to have plenty of sense to know to stick to the mission, but it also seemed like they could get into a hell of a lot of trouble together if they wanted.

But they wouldn’t get to find out. Jim refocused himself on the mission at hand. It was time to get back to their own time.

Chapter End Notes

A major divergence from TOS that makes this easier is the pilot in question being willing to go against the government; the other big change being the pilot(s) being women and gay. In my opinion, it’s just more fun when you don’t fully trust the government (I mean obviously you want a government you can trust, but still), have more diversity, and make it queerer. TOS did its best, but some treks definitely haven’t stood the test of time as well as others. But that’s a much longer conversation tbh
Guess who's at another big transition point for her grad program? If you guessed me, you're right. One more day of my first year internship, then it's really summertime... til summer semester at least. As the kids say, the grind don't stop. Anyways, enjoy some light plot and semi-heavy philosophical discussion.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Jim stepped over to Spock. “So, tell me you’ve got a plan.”

“We are still running simulations and calculating the trajectory and speed needed to return to our own time.” Spock nodded to where Sulu and Chekov were arguing over their consoles.

“Alright.” Jim nodded and crossed his arms, flinching back a bit when a noise from the simulation had Chekov saying something that sounded like swearing in Russian; if the Universal Translator was up, it didn’t have that phrase. “And the simulations are checking for survivability?”

“Of course, Captain.” Spock watched as Chekov and Sulu responded to another seemingly unsuccessful simulation. “Once Mr. Scott is available, we will have him input data on the ship’s current durability and shield status.”

Jim turned towards Spock at that. “Any word from Scotty on our engines?”

“In response to our most recent request for an update on the current status of the engines, his comments indicated that his time was better spent working than speaking to us.” Spock paused. “I was unable to get a precise estimate.”

Jim smiled. “Did you talk to Scotty or someone else?”

Spock paused a moment in consideration. “Lieutenant Uhura was the one who spoke to engineering; she did not indicate who she spoke too.”

“Yeah, that doesn’t sound too much like Scotty. Unless we really damaged our silver lady.” Jim glanced around the bridge; nothing was cracked this time, so it couldn’t be too bad, right?

“It may be best for us to shift our focus to the matter of our guests.” Spock glanced toward the turbolift. “It is imperative that they are safely returned to their own time period.”

“Yeah?” Jim shifted toward Spock again, not even really noticing that they were so close their shoulders could brush where they stood next to each other on the bridge. “You said you dug into their contributions; anything interesting?”

“Indeed; they will make many contributions in various ways, as will their descendants.” He paused. “I was not able to trace full lineage, but it may even be possible to have some on this ship.”

“That’d be cool.” Jim followed Spock’s eyes to the turbolift. “Me and Carol did seem to have the same smirk; maybe she’s a distant relative.”
“Regardless, it would be unwise to remove them from the timeline. As we have seen from merely the removal of your father from the timeline, even the loss of one individual can have noticeable effects.” Spock’s voice had dropped to a quieter tone, presumably to avoid being overheard.

Although it was decidedly old news now, it was still weird for Jim to think about how different his life could have been with his Dad around. Meeting that other him had been…interesting to say the least. “Yeah, as soon as I heard they had a kid I knew we couldn’t just abduct them. I wouldn’t want to do that to someone, knowledge of the future be damned.”

“Indeed.” Spock nodded. “We are in agreement, even if we may disagree on the possible impact of their knowledge of this ship and the future.”

“She’s not gonna tell.” Jim thought back to his interactions with Carol and looked at Spock, trying to convey genuineness. “She gets why sharing would be bad and doesn’t even trust the government; I may not have spent as much time with Maria but she’s seen less and I get the feeling that what one of them says typically goes for both. They’re that kind of soulmate pair.”

Spock raised an eyebrow at that. “You would consider it a soulmate trait to be in agreement?”

“Maybe.” Jim looked at Spock with a soft smile. “We’re a bit more of an opposites attract pair, but we still agree where it counts. Like sending the pilots back.” He looked away. “I’m glad you meant it and weren’t just saying it to appease Carol earlier when she was here.”

Spock’s eyebrow stayed up. “Have you known me to be deceptive?”

Jim’s eyebrow went up in return. “Do you want me to answer that honestly?” He sent a pulse of affection Spock’s way to soften the sass.

Spock looked away, his expression returning to its usual neutrality. “I trust that Lieutenant Uhura will be sufficiently protective of our secrets as she consults with the pilots.”

“Yeah, she’s good.” Jim thought of something and frowned. “She ok? It’s not like her to just leave the bridge like that mid shift, even if it was for a reason.”

Spock wouldn’t meet him’s eyes, and there was something hard to read from him. Concern? A dash of anger? Sadness? “I believe her task of monitoring the news of this time was beginning to emotionally affect her; the chance to leave the bridge and the news likely provided a welcome respite.”

Now Jim was concerned; his brows pulled together as he looked at Spock. “Uhura’s usually amazingly calm under pressure; what’s got her rattled?”

“I only saw parts of the broadcasts she was analyzing for speculation about our presence; as we appeared over the country known as the United States, she has been focusing on broadcasts from that region.” Spock paused, considering his words carefully. “There is a decided lack of respect for bodily autonomy, especially in reproductive matters for those capable of becoming pregnant; this seems especially true from those in power given laws they are attempting to establish.”

“Really?” Jim grimaced. “Send the message to lock down the transporters; I bet I’m not the only one tempted to try to talk or knock some sense into these people.”

Spock nodded. “I believe the power has already been diverted from transporters to engineering to assist with repairs while our energy is limited due to engine damage, but if you would prefer I can also relay your message.”
“Nah, no need.” Jim sighed. “The sooner we get those pilots back and get back to our own time the better. I’d rather not witness the destruction we know is coming, even if just hitting a reset switch on society seems like it did some good.” Jim didn’t necessarily like the idea that violence was the only answer, but he’d seen the kind of government firsthand where talking and being polite would do you no good. If lives were at stake and people’s rights were stripped away, breaking the rules or the system was sometimes the only way to go.

“Captain?” Spock’s voice pulled him out of his thoughts.

Jim blinked and tried to refocus; Spock was now at Nyota’s station. “What’s up?”

“Nyota has spoken to the pilots and they have reviewed their plane; they believe it will be possible to launch from our ship.”

“Alright.” The sooner they did this, the sooner they’d be home. “Let’s get this plan in motion.”

Chapter End Notes

Friendly (or not so friendly) reminder that it is star trek canon (TOS season 3, I forget the episode) that Kirk is pro-birth control and family planning and anti-people who say they think all life is sacred, but really only seem to care about things pre-birth. I don’t really want to get into serious debates here, but some stuff is too messed up to let slide without commentary. If you’re in Georgia, Alabama, or Ohio, know that we support you and are all hoping those bills don’t get to take effect without challenge or being struck down entirely.
Alright I am just about done with all school-related obligations (until school starts up again for the summer semester that is; grad school is fun). But guess what else is coming to a close? This arc! I hope you enjoy it; I'm not quite done with 2019 yet...

Jim made his way down to where they were keeping the plane one last time; he wanted to see them off himself. Plus, he had a few things he needed to make sure of.

He walked into the shuttle bay and looked around, trying to project confidence. He had to make sure that this would all work out. He made his way over to where Carol, Maria, and Uhura were standing with the engineers who’d been helping fix the plane.

Jim was almost there when the wall comm went off. “Bridge to Captain Kirk.”

Deciding talking could wait a little longer, Jim changed course to the wall. “Kirk here. What’s up?”

Spock sounded as calm and measured as always, even though the news had nerves, excitement, and relief all coursing through Jim. “Ensign Chekov and I are now confident in our calculations, sir. We have found the trajectory and speed needed to return to our own time, and Lieutenant Sulu’s simulations confirm it.”

“That’s amazing.” Jim found himself slumping over as tension left his body, but it returned a moment later. “But it all means nothing if our engines are shot.”

“I have additional news, Captain.” Spock paused, maybe checking something on his end. “Mr. Scott has returned new estimates on when the engines will be repaired. He believes we will have the engines back shortly; his precise wording was "within the hour".”

“Damn, he really is a miracle worker.” Jim laughed and ran a hand through his hair. “Alright then. It’s extra important we get our guests on their way then I guess.”

“Oh, indeed, Captain.” Spock’s voice was serious. “It is unwise to delay our return; our continued presence here only increases potential risks.”

“Right.” Jim nodded, knowing Spock couldn’t see him. “I’ll get them sent off properly, then.”

“Very well.” Spock’s voice was a calming presence for Jim as always. “I will see you upon your return to the bridge.”

Jim smiled; maybe his presence was as reassuring to Spock as the other way around. “I’ll see you then. Kirk out.”

Everyone else had noticed him by now; Carol raised an eyebrow as he walked over. “What was that about?”

Jim looked around and allowed the smile to spread on his face some. “We’re all set to go home. Not
right away, but we’re getting the final fixes done.”

The engineers lit up and one of them spoke. “That’s great sir; should we get back to help out?”

Jim looked between them and Maria. “Are you all done here? Cuz we’re not taking them with us, so that plane needs to be ready to fly.”

“We’re good.” Maria patted the side of the plane. “Our old girl is ready for takeoff, and we’ve already worked out the logistics of launching from here.” She looked at the engineers. “You’re free to go if you need to.”

The looked at Jim for confirmation and he nodded. “I appreciate everything you’ve done to get this plane back in working order, but if a few extra hands in engineering will get us back sooner, then that’s where you should be. Report to Scotty.”

There were a few “Aye sirs” and they were off.

Jim turned to Nyota. “Will you be able to tap into their comm channels?”

Carol smirked. “What, don’t trust us to not report you?”

Jim felt comfortable enough to roll his eyes at her, even if that had been one of the concerns that brought him down here. Still, her reaction was reassuring… “Hardly. We just want to make sure that you don’t crash the moment you leave the shuttle bay.” He looked seriously between her and Maria. “If you need assistance, we’re willing to step in and provide it. We can beam you to safety if need be.”

“That’s appreciated; I know we’d both like to make it home to our daughter no matter what.” Maria paused, thinking carefully before speaking. “But be as hesitant as you can; I’d like to live, but I’d also like to minimize the chance we end up getting held for interrogation due to us mysteriously surviving a crash that destroyed the plane.”

Carol held up a hand. “I hear that but also, still save us if it comes to that.” At Maria’s look she shrugged. “What? The government has had plenty of weird maybe alien stories that get glossed over eventually.”

“Dully noted.” Jim nodded, then looked back to Nyota. “But that brings me back to what I was going to ask you. I know you were already checking, but could you do another sweep to look for evidence of us?”

“I can, sir.” Nyota nodded.

“Good.” Jim crossed his arms. “I doubt we could delete anything, but…”

“I’ll see what me and my team can do.” Nyota nodded again, but before she could leave Carol spoke up.

“I wouldn’t do that.” Jim and Nyota looked over at her.

“And why’s that?” Nyota seemed genuinely curious.

“If you make an effort to delete it, the conspiracy theorists will be all over it, claiming it’s a government cover up. And the government will know it wasn’t them, so they’ll get suspicious.” She looked between them seriously. “Your best bet might just be leaving it so people start to pick it apart until everyone forgets or thinks it was just a weird angle or bad special effects.”
“Alright.” Jim looked at Maria. “As our other representative from this century, what do you think?”

She shrugged. “Carol does have a point. Trying to make it disappear could seem more suspicious than doing nothing.”

Nyota seemed to be considering it, then nodded when Jim looked to her. “They have a point, Captain. This may be a time where noninterference is best.”

The use of his title and the wording made Jim think of the prime directive, which was probably her goal. Earth was still pre-warp at this point, but… “It might be a little late for that since we abducted a pair of pilots, but I see your point.” He nodded at Nyota. “Get back to the bridge; it’s time we got these two back where they’re supposed to be so we can do the same.” He looked at Carol and Maria. “Are you two ready to fly?”

Carol smirked. “Born ready, Captain.”

Jim grinned. “Let’s do this.”

Chapter End Notes

On the topic of weird alien stuff that we all kinda forget about, does anyone remember that super bright moving light that was over LA (I think) a few years ago? The video was all over the internet but then I don't think I heard any followup. What happened with that?

Any last arc requests?
Chapter 284

Chapter Notes

Hello and happy last update of May! This arc is wrapping up, and I already know how I'm going to wrap this fic up... It should be pretty great. For now, enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Taking off would require depressurizing the cargo bay since they needed to open it up completely; modern shuttles and forcefields were set up in a way to allow the shuttles safe passage through them if necessary, but no such luck with the old plane.

Which is why Jim was saying his goodbyes now, as the pilots got back in their plane, rather than staying to watch them takeoff like he'd kinda wanted to.

Jim shook Carol’s hand as she climbed into her cockpit section; Maria was already in hers, on comms with their ground team running interference. Jim smiled at Carol. “Best of luck with whatever comes next; I hope you don’t get in too much trouble covering for us.”

“Eh, sometimes it’s worth getting in a little trouble.” Her expression was somewhere between a smirk and a smile as she looked back at him. “But with you going back to the future, there won’t be much for them to grill us on. What are they gonna point to as evidence that we’re lying, some civilian pictures of what could be a weird cloud?”

“Good thing the ship’s mostly white and gray I guess.” Jim laughed. “But seriously though, best of luck.”

“You keep saying that and I’m gonna think something bad is gonna happen.” Carol raised an eyebrow. “Is there something I need to know about? Is the apocalypse for real?”

There was so much Jim could say here, but he should say none of it. “Hey, if I’m here that must mean nothing gets too destroyed, right? Humanity’s still kicking.” He tried to play the next bit off as humor, but it came off oddly serious. “Besides, even if it seems like everything’s going down in flames, remember that the Phoenix will rise from the ashes.” That might have been too much to say, but Carol wouldn’t know that until about 50 years’ time. If she lived that long…

Jim couldn’t let himself focus on that. Better to focus on the definitely still living woman in front of him, who was rolling her eyes. Carol looked back at him, unimpressed. “Didn’t take you for the sentimental type, Kirk.”

Before Jim could respond, Maria poked her head out from her cockpit section. “Are you two about done? As much as I’ve liked this little look forward, the longer we’re here the more suspicious it is.”

“She’s got a point.” Carol nodded at Jim. “It’s been great. I would say see you later, but I kinda doubt it.”

“Yeah, I hope you get it if I say that I kinda hope I don’t see you again.” Jim smiled as they had varied reactions to his joke. He sombered up and slapped the side of their plane. “Let’s get this thing flying.”
“Aye Captain.” They closed up the plane, and with one last wave Jim left the cargo bay and headed to the bridge.

Once the doors to the turbolift opened, Jim scanned the bridge. “Status update on the takeoff.” He made his way to his chair.

“Cargo bay depressurizing is nearly complete, Captain. We are preparing to open the doors sufficiently to allow their egress.” Spock stood out of the chair, allowing Jim to take it.

“Can we get a visual?” Jim sat down and looked around the bridge, uncertain whose job that would be.

“On it, Captain.” Nyota did…something at her station. “Onscreen now.”

Jim turned to the viewscreen and sure enough, the view of North America was replaced by the cargo bay. “Great work Lieutenant.”

They watched as the doors opened, allowing the plane access to the open air outside. They were at a higher altitude than the plane usually flew, but Maria and Carol had run the numbers with the engineering team and figured it would be alright. Jim really hoped they were right; while he was willing to intervene, he didn’t want it to come to that.

The plane began to move forward, the takeoff supports the pilots had requested helping provide necessary supports. They neared the doors, and then the plane went through and dropped.

Jim felt a spike of panic, and he felt sure it wasn’t just his own. “Can we get a new visual?” He didn’t want to take his eyes off of the viewscreen, but he turned around to Nyota. “Can we tap into their comms?”

“On it, sir.” Nyota’s voice sounded determined, and a moment later they had a shot from outside the cargo bay and audio beginning to crackle over the bridge, not quite clear yet. “Got it.”

Had he put Nyota in for a commendation lately? If not it was time again. “Alright, how are they doing?”

The plane still looked like it was free falling with just a little bit of controlled forward movement. Jim gripped the arms of the captain’s chair. “Ready the tractor beam.”

“Wait!” All eyes turned to Nyota. “I’ve got the audio; they’ve got it.”

A moment later, a voice filled the bridge. “…Rambeau, Christopher, you copy? What’s going on? This have to do with that bogey you claim was nothing?” Were they suspicious already? That didn’t bode well…

“We read you.” It sounded like Maria. “And negative on that, we’re just hitting turbulence.”

The voice on the other end still sounded skeptical. “Turbulence makes you nose dive?”

“You criticizing my flying?” That was definitely Carol. “You try handling this turbulence. Plus, the bogey was a bust so we’re coming back down.”

“Rodger that.” The voice didn’t sound totally convinced, but continued anyways. “Prep for debrief once you land.”

Jim looked at the viewscreen, ignoring the agreement or snark that was probably coming through in
favor of trying to contain his concern. “Are they actually controlled right now? They’re way past their usual cruising altitude.”

There was a moment of tense silence, only broken by Chekov tapping away at his console. It was broken by his loud, relieved exclamation, something that felt celebratory and sounded Russian. “I have calculated their current trajectory and speed, Keptin.”

“And?” He knew he shouldn’t interrupt Chekov, but he could tell the tension on the bridge wasn’t just his, and they didn’t have time to waste.

“They are on path to safely return to a military base.” Jim felt his shoulders drop in relief at Chekov’s words.

“Awesome.” Jim sat back up in his chair. “Now we just need to get home ourselves.”

Chapter End Notes

I was gonna do a "guess the trek trivia" thing about Cochrane's ship being named the Phoenix, but honestly I like the whole “rise from the ash” symbolism too much to not give props to it.
And who's ready for the end of an arc? This one had its moments, like all the times I criticized 2019 (and the years before); I hope you liked that because there's a little more yet to come...

Jim hit the comm button on the arm of his chair. “Scotty, we good to go?”

It was a moment before the familiar voice came through. “Aye, Captain. The engines are ready when we are.”

“Great.” Jim leaned back in his chair. “Let’s get ready to go then. As soon as we’re a safe distance from Earth, let’s get ready to get them at warp speed.” He looked up towards the front of the bridge. “Chekov, send Scotty your calculations. I don’t want to end up in the wrong time because we weren’t coordinated well enough.”

“Aye, Keptin.” Chekov frantically hit some buttons and then nodded. “They have been sent.”

“You got it?” Jim found himself looking at the comm panel even if he knew it had no effect on if Scotty heard him.

“I’ve got them.” Scotty paused, presumably looking through. “Patch me through to your console, laddie. We’re going to need to coordinate this as we go.”

Jim looked between Chekov and Nyota. “Do it.”

“Already on it, sir.” Nyota did something at her station and then looked back to Jim. “Done, sir.”

“Thank you.” Jim looked back at Nyota. “And you’re sure there’s going to be no lingering effects of our presence here? No continued news on us being seen?”

She shook her head. “We’re all good, sir.”

Her increased professionalism and the underlying turbulence Jim felt from her made Jim concerned she was covering up something, but he would have to check back in with her later. For now, they had bigger problems. “Let’s get back to our own time. Everyone, ready your stations. Yellow alert.”

Jim looked to the front of the bridge and gave the signal. “Let’s go.”

Slowly but surely, they left Earth’s orbit and started pulling away, getting faster and faster the farther they went.

Farther from Earth, closer to the sun. They looked like they were on a direct collision course. Jim’s grip on the armrests tightened. “Are we keeping to our intended trajectory?”

“Yes sir!” Sulu didn’t even look back.

“We will need to enter the gravity well of the sun in order to create the ‘slingshot effect’ necessary for temporal displacement.” Jim could hear the unfamiliarity with the term in Spock’s voice; one of
the rest of the crew must have gotten to choose it. “This trajectory is correct, Captain.”

Jim trusted his crew, but damn if it wasn’t stressful sometimes. Their speed had only increased as they passed the orbits of Venus and Mercury; now the sun was practically all they could see out the viewscreen.

“Entering solar orbit now!” Chekov’s words almost felt unnecessary; Jim swore he could feel the jerk of getting into the Sun’s gravity.

He really hoped that there were no solar flares; with how much energy must be going to the engines to pull this maneuver off, Jim doubted there was a whole lot left for the shields.

The artificial gravity felt like it was malfunctioning; Jim swore he could feel more g forces than usual, but it had to be a trick of his imagination. Just like how it suddenly felt hotter, seeing the fiery surface of the sun so close; Jim didn’t know what kind of temperatures that kind of nuclear fusion generated off the top of his head, but he bet it would have made Vulcan look like Delta Vega mixed with Antarctica.

After what felt like far too long, Sulu began to shift his grip on the controls. “Preparing to break orbit.”

Chekov was frantically doing something at his station, either running numbers or talking to Scotty; Jim hoped it was the second one because those calculations better have been perfect before they sent the ship and everyone on it into nearly too close encounter with the sun. Chekov looked up. “Ready!”

“Breaking orbit!” Sulu somehow kicked the ship up even faster, and soon stars and the void started to reappear on the viewscreen.

Jim probably didn’t fully breathe until the ship started to slow and the sun was increasingly far behind them. Once they reached a stable velocity, he couldn’t help but jump from his chair. “End yellow alert.” He paced around the bridge. “Can we confirm time and location?”

Nyota shook her head. “Systems are recalibrating, Captain.” She paused, looking up in surprise. “We’re being hailed.”

Jim paused, a little wary. “Someone we recognize?”

“It’s a Starfleet signal, sir.” The relief on the bridge was palpable, probably even to people who weren’t empaths. Nyota looked toward him, still listening in on her earpiece. “Should I connect us?”

Jim nodded. “On the viewscreen.” He returned to his chair in time for the viewscreen to change.

On the other bridge, the captain stood from the central chair. “This is Captain Monica Danvers of the USS Lily Sloane. Not to sound inhospitable, Enterprise, but what are you doing here?”

“Not to sound odd, but where is here?” Jim tried for his best charming grin.

The other captain didn’t look impressed; there was something familiar about that expression. “Sector 001; not quite at Earth but nearby. How’d you get here?”

“One more weird question first.” Jim held up a hand. “What’s the date?” No, he’d get too confused with stardates and the old earth dates Carol kept using. “Scratch that. How long has it been since the last report form us, and what was it?”
Again, Captain Danvers didn’t look all that reassured by what he said. “Give me a moment.”

There was a tense few moments as the other crew must have been contacting command for the last report Jim had sent to Pike.

While they were waiting, Jim looked back to Nyota. “Outside confirmation may be better, but tell me what you’ve got on our systems.”

Chekov glanced back. “Navigational sensors confirm what Captain Danvers said.”

Jim nodded in acknowledgement but turned back to Nyota. “And temporally?”

“Not sure I fully trust the sensors yet, but we seem close to when we left.” Nyota fiddled with something at her station.

“Captain Kirk?” Jim turned back to the viewscreen, where Captain Danvers was watching expectantly. “We have the most recent report you sent to Pike; it was about two and a half days ago and you reported going to investigate a black star.”

“Alright.” Jim looked around the bridge. “Good work team; just a few days isn’t a bad margin of error.”

There was mumbled agreement from the crew, but Captain Danvers just looked confused. “Care to explain?”

“I’ll send you the report when I have it; it’s a long, weird story.” Jim ran a hand down his face.

Captain Danvers just cautiously nodded. “I look forward to it. Danvers out.”

Once the screen went dark, Jim remembered the need to check on Nyota. Looking around to make sure everyone else was busy, he wandered to her station and leaned against the console next to hers. “How are you holding up? You seemed awfully certain about us not being the newest big story.”

Nyota sighed, letting her shoulders drop. “Look, that time…” She shook her head. “Being connected to their news was…exhausting. It seemed like every minute there was a human rights violation, natural disaster, mass shooting, preventable death…” Another deep breath. “I don’t know how they did it. Seeing all of that, all the time…” Nyota looked back at Jim. “I don’t know if I would last in that world. But that’s why I’m so certain they’ll forget us; there’s too much else going on for them to care about us.”

Jim reached out and squeezed her shoulder. “I wish I could tell you it was ok. But I get how that kind of thing can wear a person down.” He looked at the chronometer. “It’s just about the end of the shift; why don’t you head back to your quarters a little early?”

For a moment it looked like she wanted to fight it, but then she deflated. “That sounds like a good idea, sir.”

“Good.” Jim nodded. “Take care of yourself.” He watched as she walked off the bridge toward the turbolift; he felt a little bad for exposing her to all of that, even inadvertently.

Still, they were back where they were supposed to be. Jim couldn’t wait for his shift to end so he could join the people relaxing.

Chapter End Notes
Bonus points if you catch the (medium obscure) trek reference this chapter.
“Captain’s log, stardate…” Jim rubbed his hands over his face. He could add the stardate in later. They’d time traveled only a week or so ago; Jim figured that earned him some slack in not quite remembering the stardate at the moment. “Stardate add it later. We’ve just rendezvoused with the USS T’Plana-Hath and Dr. M’Benga left to join them briefly; there’s been an unknown outbreak in a smaller Vulcan colony, and they need his expertise in Vulcan physiology since most Vulcan physicians are occupied on their own colonies and the doctor there requested backup. As such, Dr. M’Benga is leaving indefinitely and will return to the ship once his work at the colony is done. As for us, we’re beginning a patrol along the Romulan Neutral Zone. Things have been quiet, but there have been undeniable tensions between Romulus and the Federation since the destruction of Vulcan. Even if it hasn’t been officially acknowledged, it’s there.” Jim stared at his desk and let his thoughts wander a bit. Even if Nero had said he wasn’t aligned with the Empire, Romulans were still easy to blame for it all. Add in the rumors that some Romulans had celebrated Nero’s actions, and it was a mess. “This may be a time to hope for a little less than our usual levels of excitement.

Jim paused as he felt hands begin to slide along his sides and a mouth come to his neck.

His hands fumbled a bit as he hit the button to stop the recording and groaned. “Spock.”

Spock paused. “Yes, Jim?”

“Babe, I love you but I wanna get these logs done before our shift starts.” He started to lean away from Spock but his hands tightened on Jim’s sides, even if Jim did get away from Spock’s lips on his neck.

Spock leaned in closer again, closing the distance between them once more. “Our shift begins at 0900. It is only 0836 now.” He paused, his lips close enough to Jim’s ear for him to feel the heated breath when Spock spoke. “That allows sufficient time for…more pleasurable activities.”

“Spock.” Jim let his head fall back onto Spock’s shoulder and bit his lip, thinking for a moment. He looked at the log he was recording one last time. “Okay.” He leaned forward enough to save the draft and closed the log. “But we gotta be quick, ok?”

Spock didn’t respond, too busy getting his hands and lips on Jim’s.

“Mmm.” Jim pulled back a little when Spock’s hand came up to his face, a little more specifically than just holding it. “Are we gonna do this again? Meld while we—”

“Yes.” There was a certain roughness to Spock’s voice, and Jim felt himself reacting to it.

“Okay.” Jim nodded, surging forward for another quick kiss. “Let’s do this.”
At 0903, Jim and Spock reported to the bridge.

Jim relieved Sulu in the Captain’s Chair, trying to keep his expression professional. He and Spock were already late; best not to fuel the rumor mill more.

Lately, he and Spock had been…occupied in their quarters much more than usual. Not that Jim was complaining; he’d never turn down an opportunity to be…occupied with Spock. The melding was new, but Jim liked that. It made the connection between them feel so much more intense, and it almost seemed like it lingered when they were done…

But as tempting and distracting as those thoughts were, they were on duty now. Jim needed to focus. He shifted in the chair, thinking that if he and Spock continued this pace he might request a little more cushioning on the chair.

But back to business. Jim looked toward the front of the bridge. “Any update on Romulan activity?”

“No definite signs of Romulans, sir.” Sulu frowned down at his console.

Jim’s brow furrowed. “No definite signs? It seems like a yes or no question.”

Sulu turned around to look at Jim. “We’ve been getting some odd readings; I’m not confident enough to definitively call it a ship across the way, but it seems like too much to be nothing.”

“Hmm.” Jim nodded. “Keep monitoring it.” He hoped this wouldn’t turn into engaging the Romulans, but they needed to be ready just in case. He turned to Spock. “Anything on long range sensors?”

Spock was staring at him, his expression getting dangerously close to one Jim recognized (and usually enjoyed) but seemed out of place on the bridge.

“Commander.” Jim let his voice get a little sterner.

The change in Spock’s expression was quick. “Yes, Captain?”

“The long range sensors. Have you picked up anything that fits with Romulan activity?” Jim tried to project calm over the bridge despite the weirdness with Spock.

“Uncertain.” Spock looked toward Sulu’s station. “Lieutenant Sulu, send me the signals you have gathered so I can understand what we seek.”

“Can do, sir.” Sulu did something at his console, then turned to Spock. “I’ve sent it for your review and so we can coordinate.”

“Good.” Jim responded because Spock already looked occupied with the data he’d revived. “Realistically, we should prepare for the worst.” He turned to Nyota. “Tell the security teams to start running drills. And tell medical and engineering involved to. They’ll need to assess supplies just in case.”

Nyota nodded. “On it.”

“Alright.” Jim gripped the arms of his chair a little tighter. “Let’s hope for a quiet mission.”

Chapter End Notes
What do you think is happening next?
Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! Anyone else excited for this arc? It just may be the last one, but we'll be ending with a bang...

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

At first, it seemed like Jim might get his wish just this once. They still got the occasional weird readings from the other side of the Neutral Zone, but short of breaking the treaty themselves by entering the Neutral Zone for a closer look all that they could do was watch it on sensors and take long-range readings.

And Jim definitely didn’t want to break that treaty. In fact, he was fine with this mission being not much more than sensor sweeps. It gave him more free time when he wasn’t getting pulled out of bed for red alerts, and getting pulled out of bed now would be…unfortunate.

Because he and Spock had been spending a lot of time there. Jim wasn’t complaining, that was for sure, even if it seemed like Spock’s refractory period was getting shorter and Jim couldn’t quite keep up. Still, the spirit was definitely willing even if the flesh couldn’t quite keep up…

But for now, things were calm on the ship. They were eating in the officer’s mess with friends. It was nice, normal, even if Jim felt a little…off.

Whatever. It was probably fine. Jim tried to tune back in to whatever Bones was complaining about.

“…might need a reproductive systems specialist in Sickbay along with M’Benga once he gets back.” Bones shook his head. “I know these kinds of missions leave people with a lot of free time, but this is ridiculous and unparalleled. No other star charting or patrol mission led to this kind of increase in requests for condoms and other birth control for the replicators.” Bones powered through Jim nearly doing a spit take on the table. “On a side note, why does being the CMO mean I have to get reports on increased replication of anything that could be considered medical? I mean I get flagging individuals if they were replicating large quantities of something addictive, but reproductive health isn’t something I need to be overly involved with unless they request medical intervention or need a prescription.”

Jim made eye contact with Gaila and they both tried to control their laughter; across the table Nyota rolled her eyes affectionately and Chapel nodded, but Jim could feel her amusement. Next to Jim, Spock didn’t seem to react, but his hand seemed to be inching further up Jim’s thigh, reminding him that they just might be contributing to Bones’ numbers.

“That’s pretty unfortunate, Bones.” Jim tried unsuccessfully to control his smirk. “I’m glad that the Captain doesn’t get those alerts. Although now I’m thinking about all sorts of new things we could try to coordinate for crew recreation…”

Most of the table groaned, but Gaila raised her hand, jostling some of her red curls. “I’m down to lead that project!”

Jim laughed. “Couldn’t think of anyone better.” He reached out and high-fived her still raised hand.
It was a little surprise when Spock took the hand Jim had just high-five Gaila with and began holding it and running his hand over it under the table, but Jim hardly minded, and it didn’t even seem like Spock was doing it consciously, since his focus had shifted to Nyota. “On the subject of recreational activities, how have your attempts to organize a crew musical performance been progressing?”

“Pretty good actually.” Nyota paused to take a bite and eat it before continuing. “We have a solid group so far, but I’m still looking to add more.” She looked at Spock with a smile. “Your work with the Vulcan lute is impressive. I always liked it when you would play for me—and I’m still interested in learning, by the way—would you want to join?”

Jim felt a weird surge of something strong pass through him at the thought of Spock spending so much time with his ex, and before Spock could even respond Jim cut in. “I don’t know, Spock and I are keeping each other pretty entertained, recreationally.” He did his most suggestive smirk and draped an arm over Spock’s shoulders, keeping his other hand entwined with Spock’s under the table.

Nyota made a face at him. “He can speak for himself. And besides, no need to get territorial; I’ve moved on to better things.” She smiled at Chapel in a way that Jim would probably normally call sweet.

But right now, he was still feeling a little on edge. “Hard to imagine anything better than Spock.”

Chapel shrugged. “If he passed up on a certain gorgeous, brilliant, amazingly talented in every way head communications officer it seems he has room for improvement in the judgement category, but if that just cleared the way for us to get together then I won’t complain.” Another sappy (with just a certain hint of heat that Jim was definitely recognizing at the moment) passed between her and Nyota before they leaned in for a kiss.

A kiss that was starting to look like more than normal for a mess hall table. Spock cleared his throat, although with one hand all over Jim’s in his lap and the other seeming to inch that way under the table towards the same destination Jim wasn’t sure if Spock had much grounds for complaining. “I would be amenable, Nyota.” He glanced toward Jim, who bit his lip at that look in Spock’s eyes. “Although Jim is correct that we have been quite occupied with each other lately, and I find I do not object to spending my time so.”

“Well.” Jim smirked at Spock. “If it’s just not objecting to it, I may need to step up my game.” He winked at Spock.

Nyota, who had mostly separated from Chapel when Spock cleared his throat, turned back to them while still keeping her hands on Chapel. “Anyways, great to hear that Spock. I’ll get in touch with you later. For now, I think Chris and I may head to our quarters.”

“Sounds good to me.” Chapel shot her a look that didn’t leave much confusion as to what they were going to get up to, especially when Nyota returned it. They got up and took their trays to the recycler before leaving the room, seeming very close the whole time.

Bones looked where they left before turning back to the table. “This was a weird dinner, even by our standards.” He leaned back. “Should I be studying this? Is this some weird space thing?” He rested his chin on his hand. “I could ask Carol; she studied biology pretty extensively.” His eyes lit up. “I should go see Carol.”

“Whatever it is, I haven’t picked up this many pheromones in the air since I was last on a Syndicate planet.” Gaila shook her head as if it clear it. “I can’t sort out where all of them are coming form, but
there’s a lot.” Jim noticed her glancing at Spock despite her words.

Spock’s grip on Jim’s hand tightened. “As we have finished our food, Jim and I will now retire.”

Going by the little something Jim was getting through the bond, Spock definitely didn’t mean sleep, even if Jim betted they’d end up tired… “I’m down, babe.” Ignoring the reactions of those at the table still, they got up and headed out of the mess hall and to their quarters.

Once there, it didn’t take long for clothes to fall off and…other activities to commence. Spock melded them during again, which Jim was honestly starting to dig. Maybe their shields were just down, but he definitely was feeling Spock more than usual when they stopped for the night when he was drifting off.

Still, once Jim woke up all that good mood was gone. He wasn’t in his room, and that wasn’t Spock. Although he definitely saw some pointed ears…

Chapter End Notes

Writing this is an interesting experience cuz it's like a fight between the need for trek-accurate levels of horniness doing battle with my Catholic upbringing; thankfully I'm not Catholic anymore. I mean, I technically got confirmed so in the eyes of the church I'm forever Catholic, but in the eyes of the church I'm also probably going to hell, sooo...

Anyways, are you ready for this? It's gonna be fun...
Spock awoke with a distinct feeling of…unease. It was dissimilar to how he had been feeling upon awakening the past several days. Still, he felt that Jim would be able to alleviate this sensation as well, and then afterwards they could proceed to activities similar to what had been occupying much of their time previously.

Spock reached across their bed, but did not feel Jim. Curious. He sat up and opened his eyes but did not see his t’hy’la. It was unusual for Jim to awaken before him due to Vulcans’ lower need for nightly sleep, but it had happened on occasion when Jim was particularly anxious about a mission to the point of sleep disturbances. Spock rose and crossed through their washroom, pausing to ensure Jim was not merely occupied within, to check what had formerly been his quarters and was now his meditation and work space; it was not uncommon for Jim to make use of this space when he was having difficulty sleeping and did not want to disturb Spock, despite Spock’s repeated assurances of his willingness to assist Jim in any personal, professional, or other matters that troubled him.

And yet, Spock found this space empty as well. He paused in the doorway. “Computer, state current time.”

“Time is 0435 hours.” There was no deviation from the standard voice, despite its words causing Spock concern that grew difficult to suppress.

He had been uncertain of the time despite his typically impeccable sense of internal timing. He had noticed the change in himself, of course. Difficulty focusing, increased sexual appetite, a stronger desire to be near Jim and guard him from potential threats, either for his affection or to his person.

Spock’s elder counterpart had experienced Pon Farr when his Jim entered this universe. As they were nearly identical beings, it would be illogical to assume that Spock himself would be spared this particular Vulcan affliction as he had once thought possible.

His behavior since the start of this week aligned with the early days of Pon Farr, as described to him by his mother because the refusal of most Vulcans to speak of it meant that Spock had received only minimal education on it during his schooling. He had nearly been excluded from the class on the matter altogether as some at the school did not believe it would concern him, or worse, viewed him as an outworlder unworthy of the knowledge, but his parents had insisted he be allowed to attend.

Spock heard a snap and looked down to find the padd stylus he had been holding snapped in his hands. It was noteworthy as it was one of his, not Jim’s, and thus had been designed for members of species with above-human strength levels to use without having to worry about delicate handling like they would often have to with instruments designed for humans or others with similar strength levels.

His usual grip would not snap the stylus so. Spock looked at it carefully. Increased aggression could
be another symptom of Pon Farr; perhaps the thought of his negative childhood experiences had triggered this.

It could be avoided by the use of sexual contact as an outlet. With Jim here, Spock had not experienced violent expression.

He needed Jim. Spock was still largely in possession of his mental faculties, but if he went too long unaided and reached the blood fever he could not guarantee control of his actions.

But that was irrelevant; he would find Jim shortly. Spock walked over to the comm unit on his desk. “Spock to Captain Kirk.”

He waited for Jim’s familiar voice, but it did not come.

Spock pressed the button slightly more forcefully. “Spock to Kirk. I need to see you immediately.”

Still no response, although Spock knew Jim would respond to the urgency in his voice if he had heard.

There were many places Jim could be on the ship; a mess hall, a friend’s quarters, the observation deck, one of the various recreational areas...

Spock growled. He could not waste time exploring them all; he needed his t’hy’la. There was one faster way to do it.

Spock donned a uniform and quickly made his way to the bridge.

“Commander!” Lieutenant Talla rose from the center seat, hir antenna moving in surprise. “You aren’t due on the bridge for several more hours.”

“I am unable to locate the captain.” Spock turned to the science station. “Ensign, run a full sensor sweep of the ship to locate Captain Kirk’s biosigns using information on file.”

Ensign Moreno looked uncertain, but nodded. “Yes sir.”

Lieutenant Talla had walked over to Spock. “Is that really necessary, sir?”

Spock narrowed his eyes. “Are you questioning my orders, Lieutenant?”

Ze looked away at first, but then looked back, a hint of challenge in hir voice. “Where could he have gone? We’re in the middle of open space along the Romulan Neutral Zone, not orbiting a friendly planet or visiting another ship.”

Spock attempted to contain his snarl. “Do not be insubordinate, Lieutenant. Your reasons simply speak to why it is more important to locate the Captain as his disappearance would be increased cause for alarm.”

Ze seemed to back down slightly at that. Before Lieutenant Talla could respond, Ensign Moreno spoke up.

“Sir.” She was visibly nervous. “Sir, I’m not detecting the Captain’s biosigns.”

Spock was reeling, but Lieutenant Talla sprung into action. “Are there any reports of transporter use or shuttle use?” Hir blue skin had paled, but ze still seemed determined as ze looked around the bridge.
“Neither have been reported.” Spock was uncertain where the voice came from. Jim was missing. He needed Jim. Where was Jim?

“Commander.” Spock turned at lieutenant Talla’s voice. “If we’re not detecting biosigns, and there’s no sign of him leaving the ship, do you think it’s possible he—”

“No.” Spock was unable to contain a snarl this time. “I would be aware if the Captain was deceased.”

“Then what does that leave us?” Ensign Moreno shifted uncomfortably at the science station. “Sir, are you sure you would know if—”

“Yes.” Spock crossed his arms and looked around the bridge. “Has there been anything unusual this shift? Anything at all?”

“Well…” Lieutenant Talla’s antenna lowered slightly. “The anomaly we’ve been monitoring, the one Lieutenant Sulu first noted? It seemed to get closer then have a slight energy surge, but it was so brief and then it was back to how it had been.”

Spock stepped closer, nearly into hir personal space. “You did not think to inform a member of the senior staff of this?”

“It was so brief.” Still, ze seemed to be regretting that decision now.

“And yet whatever this is, possibly unknown, has now likely captured the captain.” Spock looked around the now solemn bridge. “He is likely being held—or worse—by the Romulans.”

“Sir.” Ensign Moreno cautiously spoke, her voice uncertain. “This doesn’t match the sensor reading for any Romulan ship.”

“And yet the location, timing, and the disappearance of the captain specifically cannot be attributed to mere coincidence.” Spock shifted, clenching his hands behind his back. “Yellow alert.”

Chapter End Notes

I seem to like the plotlines best that are just simultaneous disasters, but none of you seem to be complaining so...
Len groaned and rubbed his eyes, going for his coffee. It was too damn early, but apparently Spock was insisting that Jim being missing meant that the senior staff needed to all start their shifts early. So it was barely 0600 hours, and Len did not want to be working.

He glanced up to see Chris leaning in the doorway, looking about as tired as he felt. “In a minute, Nurse Chapel. I need coffee.”

“So do I.” She walked in and helped herself to his replicator, something Len would object to if it was almost anyone else. “Nyota and I weren’t able to have our usual morning cup together because she had to rush to the bridge.”

“Carol got to keep sleeping because apparently sciences aren’t dragged into this yet.” Len and Chris sat in tired silence for a bit, Len debating if Spock would really know if he napped on his desk to catch up on the sleep the hobgoblin made him miss.

“You know,” he looked up and saw Chris biting her lip, looking uncertain, “The Gamma Shift team said Spock seemed unusually short with them.”

Len grunted. “They don’t usually work with him. What frame of reference can they have?”

“True.” Chris tipped her head in consideration. “But still, think this could be linked to all the weirdness you’ve been tracking?”

He raised an eyebrow at her. “That was a whole different kind of thing, not aggression.” He looked at his computer console, wondering if he should check numbers on that since they were finishing what most of the ship considered night. “Besides, if Jim really is missing, which I will be panicking about once I’m awake enough to actually feel anything, Spock being on edge can be chalked up to that. He always gets a little snippy when something is happening with Jim.”

“You have a point.” She sat in the chair on the other side of his desk. “But still, I say we keep an eye on him.”

“Sure.” Len looked over the numbers on his screen. “Huh.”

“What is it?” Chris leaned over to see the screen.

“The numbers took a sharp drop in the wee hours this morning.” Len turned the screen to better let
“Interesting.” Her eyes flicked over the screen. “And can we rule out anything? That’s not just because people were asleep or something like that?”

He shook his head. “Compare it to the past few days.” He pulled up those numbers and displayed them on the screen for easier comparison. “It was a decently steady higher-than-average replication of forms of birth control before. Not like tonight.”

“Huh.” Chris sat back in her chair. “Does it correlate with when the announcement about the captain being missing came through? I could see how that could kill the mood.”

“Could be.” Len was glad to have a researcher like Chris here helping him out, and that her coffee seemed to kick in quicker than his. He pulled up the computer records of ship-wide announcements for cross reference. “Huh.”

“What?” She leaned forward in her chair again to better see.

“There was almost an hour between the drop-off and Spock’s announcement. It happened before.” Len leaned back, cupping his mug and taking another sip as if it would help him figure it out.

Chris mirrored him, leaning back and taking a sip from her own mug. She stared off over his shoulder, either deep in thought or as tired as he was. “Well this is an interesting turn.” She looked at him with a smirk. “Fascinating.”

He chuckled a bit at her Spock impression. “Getting better.”

Before she could respond, the man himself came over on the ship-wide system. “Attention crew of the USS Enterprise. As reported earlier, Captain Kirk has gone missing from the ship, as first discovered earlier this morning. A security sweep of the ship has confirmed this. As there are no shuttles missing nor signs of transporter use on our ship, we have no choice but to believe he was taken.”

Chris’ brows pulled together. “Should he really be sharing all of this on a ship-wide channel?”

Len shrugged as Spock continued, oblivious to any crew reaction. “Given our location, it is logical to assume he was abducted by the Romulans. Alpha shift science and communication teams, report to your stations. You will be monitoring all long-range sensors for any indication of the ship that has taken him. Time is of the essence. Move quickly.”

Chris and Len sat in silence for a moment until she broke it. “He did sound a bit shorter than usual.”

“Jim’s missing.” And Len was starting to feel awake enough for that to sink in. Where could he have gone? Dammit, Len would kill him if he managed to get himself into trouble in an empty area of space…

Chapel was quiet when she spoke next. “Do you really think it could be the Romulans?”

Len stared at his coffee, considering it. “We’re in the right area of space.” This could be an act of war if true, but he didn’t need to say it. Everyone on this probably knew. Hell, some would probably jump into a war with the Romulans easily with everything with Nero still only a few years back. But not everyone would be on the front lines like this ship probably would. “But god knows we’ve seen enough weird things to have this maybe be something else.”

Chris let out an almost laugh at that. “Let’s hope. We have enough to worry about.”
Len just grunted in reply and went back to his coffee. Not much they could do now but hope Jim showed back up soon so Spock would get off of everyone’s backs.

——

Jim rolled his head as the door to the brig area opened again. He was still feeling weird. He needed to get back to Spock. He needed Spock. He was feeling ready to fight these freaking Romulans if he needed to get back to Spock.

A Romulan paused before the forcefield to Jim’s cell. “I am Subcommander Tal. The Commander will be with you shortly. I advise you to cooperate with her.”

“Or what?” Jim sneered, not feeling the need to be diplomatic. “You know, I’ve killed a Romulan before. Not even just when we destroyed Nero’s ship, but I guess we killed a bunch then. I mean hand to hand.” Jim narrowed his eyes, stepping closer to the forcefield. “I’ll do it again.”

Subcommander Tal didn’t look impressed. “You mean when a Romulan showed how weak your Federation was?”

“I mean when we thoroughly destroyed him for attacking us.” Jim crossed his arms and glared. “Your government disavowed Nero and used him denying affiliation with the Romulan Star Empire before the attack to avoid war with us then. Why start it now if you were so eager to avoid it before?” When he didn’t get a response, Jim left the forcefield and sat back on the bench, leaning back on his hands. “You should let me go. I’m almost forgetting the exact shade of green Romulan blood was, but if you keep this up I’m ok refreshing my memory.”

Subcommander Tal’s eyes narrowed. “The Commander will be with you shortly.”

“Good.” Jim leaned against the wall and crossed his arms. “Maybe she’ll have more sense than you and let me go, or maybe I’ll just take her out instead.”

Subcommander Tal’s response to that was just narrowed eyes and leaving the room.

Jim groaned and let his head thump back against the wall. He did not need this right now. He just needed Spock...

Chapter End Notes

Me, accidentally (or maybe not) looking at sociopolitical implications of events from the movies in what could have just been a horny action plotline? It’s more likely than you think.
Chapter 290

Chapter Notes

Hello everyone! We've got two POVs again this chapter, and things are starting to get intense...Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Spock was off of the bridge, meditating. Perhaps because of the time he and Jim had already spent together during the earlier stages of his Time, it seemed their bond was stronger. Perhaps enough to reach Jim...

Spock meditated, concentrating on his bond with Jim. He could feel him, but it was odd; perhaps Jim was unconscious. Spock focused on reaching out. Jim...

The response came, but it was faint. ...Spock?

It took all of Spock’s effort not to break his concentration at the surge of emotion that filled him at the response from Jim. He was alive. Jim was alive. The relief was strong, but their continued separation made it bittersweet. Spock focused on reaching out again. Jim, t’hy’la, where are you? Who has taken you?

It was a moment, but then there were flashes of images. If Spock did not have an eidetic memory, he likely would not have been able to remember them as they were so brief. A cell, very basic. Jim had not seen anything else of the ship, Spock could feel it. But he had seen his captors; Spock saw flashes of uniforms and pointed ears, a few individuals in particular. Romulans.

Spock distantly felt pain as his hands clenched, driving his nails into his palms. They had taken his t’hy’la from him. He would not allow this. The rage began to fill him, at levels he had only experienced twice before. But he could not unduly alarm Jim. He breathed deeply and reached out again. Have they harmed you?

No. A pause. Questions...

Spock could feel the strain from Jim. While not psi-null, Jim was inexperienced in telepathic communication. Jim’s natural empathic nature meant that Spock was able to feel Jim’s emotions; fear was not strongly present as might be expected; instead there was a strong anger that mirrored Spock’s own. It seemed like confirmation of what Spock suspected, which was that their bond had grown strong enough that Spock’s…affliction had begun to spread to Jim as well. It was all the more urgent that they be reunited.

Spock? Jim seemed fainter; it was like there was something distracting him. Spock focused all his energy on trying to pick up on Jim’s awareness of his surroundings. Someone was joining him in the room; Spock only got a faint impression before the connection started to fade.

Spock kept his focus on Jim, maintaining the connection long enough to send one last message. I’m coming for you.
Nyota sat uneasily in her seat, looking at Len where he was leaning against her station. He crossed his arms. “So why’d you call me here?”

She sighed and sat back in her chair. “It’s Spock. Something is off.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Jim’s missing.”

“Yes but…” Nyota exhaled in frustration. “It’s more than that. I think something is up, like something serious.”

Len stood up a little straighter at that. “Well, you do know him better that just about anyone here, especially with Jim gone. If you think something’s up…”

“Something is up.” Nyota leaned in and gestured at the screen on her console. “Look at the time. Alpha shift already started, and he isn’t even here.”

“True.” Len shifted. “What do you want me to do?”

Nyota had a whole plan already. “Did you bring your tricorder?”

“Sure did.” Len held it up.

“Good.” Nyota glanced toward the center of the bridge. “I already talked it over with Hikaru, but to take someone out of command you need a commanding officer and a medical officer. I have Hikaru with me if necessary; can I count on you?”

Len looked at her, seeming to think it over. Finally, he spoke. “You can. But you’re not usually the plotting type; what’s going on?”

Nyota sighed. “I’m worried about Spock. That’s why I told you to bring the tricorder; I doubt he’d agree to go to Sickbay, but if you can just do a quick scan maybe we could talk him into getting checked out. Plus…” Nyota bit her lip, uncertain. “We’re not in the greatest place for a missing captain and unstable commander. Things with the Romulans have been uneasy since Nero; if the Federation’s flagship crosses the Neutral Zone, it wouldn’t be good.”

Len looked uncomfortable at that, definitely picking up where she was going with that. “You really think Spock would do that?”

“I hope not. But…” Nyota shrugged. “Yesterday he said he thought the Romulans took Jim. We didn’t have enough evidence to act, but with how erratic he’s been acting lately, I feel less certain than I’d like that he’ll keep us where it’s safe.”

Len looked like he was about to respond, but before he could Spock walked onto the bridge.

Nyota kept her voice down, mindful of Vulcan hearing. “Get your scans.” He nodded, and both shifted their attention to Spock.

He was standing in the middle of the bridge; he wouldn’t usually go for the captain’s chair while he was worried about Jim. “I have new information about Ji—the captain’s capture.”

Pavel turned around eagerly. “You know what took the keptin?”

“It is not a what, Ensign, but a who.” Spock rested his hands on the chair. “He is being held by the Romulans.”

Hikaru turned around. “The Romulans? What evidence do you have, sir?”
Spock stood up straighter. “In addition to the scans we previously recorded, I was able to make telepathic contact with Jim, and he confirmed my suspicions.”

Nyota could tell that she was not the only one feeling uneasy at that. “Is that all, sir?”

Spock turned around, eyes narrowing. “My telepathic abilities have been ample evidence for our decision making in the past.”

“Yes, but,” Nyota was going to point our what she knew about Vulcans being touch telepaths and Jim being nowhere Spock could make contact with, but Spock wasn’t listening.

He’d already turned back to the front of the bridge. “Time is of the essence. Take us into the Neutral Zone.”

Hikaru and Chekov shared a look, and then they both turned around to face Spock. Hikaru crossed his arms. “All due respect sir, but we’re not doing that.”

Chapter End Notes

Ah, the age old question about mutiny. Does it count as mutiny if the commanding officer shouldn't be in command? We'll certainly see see next chapter...
Chapter 291

Chapter Notes

Guess who's getting a chapter up early cuz she's trying to get more on top of it? Not sure how much it matters since I imagine that much like live TV that gets recorded, most of you just tune in the next day. Still, I always have the most fun when things start spiraling out of control for our characters, so it's getting real fun for me...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Nyota tensed as Spock clenched his fists; his voice was strained when he spoke. “I have given you a direct order, Lieutenant. The captain is in danger; this is not the time for mutiny.”

Hikaru didn’t budge. “We need more evidence. Crossing that border means war with the Romulans, and that’s not a risk anyone on this crew should want to take lightly.”

“They have abducted the captain; if a war begins it was they who provoked it.” Spock’s words were practically a snarl. “His life is in danger; we must act now.”

“Jim wouldn’t want us endangering the ship and everyone on it just for him.” Len crossed his arms, lowering the tricorder and closing it. “Look, we all want him back just as much as—”

“You do not.” There was an odd glint to Spock’s eye as he turned on Len, then he composed himself. “Dr. McCoy, why are you here? Your presence on the bridge, as usual, is unnecessary.”

“My presence was specifically requested, Spock.” He held up his tricorder. “And it’s damn good thing it was too. There were reports that you were acting strange, but these are some of the most irregular tricorder readings I’ve gotten from you, which is saying something. You need to go to Sickbay.”

Spock’s grip on the captain’s chair tightened; Nyota thought she heard metal creaking. “I need to remain here and ensure the captain’s safe return. It is urgent.”

“Spock.” Nyota stood, going over to the railing that separated the outer ring of the bridge from the lowered central section. “You have to see that your behavior right now is erratic. It’s perfectly alright to admit that Jim being missing has made you emotionally compromised; any of us probably would be if that was our soulmate. I know it isn’t very Vulcan to admit, but—”

“There is nothing unVulcan about my actions at the moment.” Spock’s usual tells for humor were there, but Nyota felt like she wasn’t getting the joke.

Hikaru stood. “Commander Spock, as the ranking command officer present, I am officially moving to temporarily revoke your command on the grounds that you are unfit for duty.”

“No!” Spock shouted in protest.

Hikaru didn’t waver. “Dr. McCoy, as the ranking medical officer present, do you concur that Commander Spock is currently unfit for duty?”

“Yes.” Len looked back at his tricorder readings. “Hell if I know what, but something is clearly up.”
“Okay.” Hikaru turned toward her. “Lieutenant Uhura, note the date and time. As much as I wish we could have resolved this more neatly, we’ll need to send this information to Starfleet Command along with everything we have on the captain’s disappearance.” He stepped forward, eyeing Spock warily. “I’ll be taking command, effective immediately.”

“Yes sir.” Nyota turned to go back to her station.

“You are making a mistake.” Spock’s voice had gone cold. “If we do not act quickly, lives will be lost.”

“And if we start a war with the Romulans, a whole lot of death could follow.” Len cautiously stepped closer to Spock. “But no one has to die today; let’s get you to Sickbay to figure this out.”

“Wait.” Nyota looked over at Len. “I’ll need your tricorder readings to include in the official report.”

“Alright.” Len stepped towards her then paused, looking back over at Spock. “He still needs to get to Sickbay stat though.” He glanced around the bridge, pausing on a security officer, Ensign Eddington. “Ensign, escort commander Spock to Sickbay.”

Spock’s nose crinkled at that. “I do not require an escort.”

Len raised an eyebrow, unimpressed. “Something tells me you do.” He looked between the ensign and Spock. “Now go.”

They left for the turbolift, Spock looking ready to complain under his breath and Eddington looking a little nervous.

Once they were off the bridge, the tension slowly started to ease. Nyota rolled her shoulders, surprised at the stiffness there.

Pavel finally spoke. “I am not certain if that was easier than expected.” He looked around. “What now?”

There was another pause, then Len moved. “Now I hand over this data so I can get to work on figuring out what the hell is wrong with Spock.”

“Sounds good.” Nyota shifted out of the way to allow him to upload it to her station.

The silence that filled the bridge started to stretch, everyone probably trying to figure out what their next steps would be. Jim was missing, and they’d need to find him, but how? And what would they do if it really was the Romulans?

This time the silence was broken by the comm system. “Ensign Byrne to the bridge.”

Hikaru stepped up the Captain’s chair and hit the comm button. “Lieutenant Sulu here.”

The voice on the other end sounded nervous. “Sir, we just found Ensign Eddington unconscious in a turbolift; there were no signs of a struggle though.”

“Thank you for reporting that.” Hikaru kept his voice level, but the tension on the bridge began to rise again. There was one person who just happened to be with Ensign Eddington and could incapacitate people with no struggle…

“Shuttle Bay to Bridge.” A lot more urgency on the other end this time.

Hikaru switched the channels. “Bridge here, what is it?”
“He—he came so fast we didn’t see it—knocked out a few of us—” A deep, steadying breath. “Commander Spock just commandeered a shuttle and left the ship.”

“Thank you for informing us. Bridge out.” Hikaru looked around the bridge. “Can we track that shuttle? Is he still within tractor or transporter range?”

“No sir.” Chekov sounded nervous. “His shuttle is traveling at maximum velocity, and his trajectory indicates a path across the Neutral Zone. He will enter Romulan space in less than a minute.”

Hikaru swore under his breath, saying something the universal translators didn’t get but Nyota raised her eyebrows in surprise at. “I guess there was no stopping him.”

“Sir!” There was a shout from the science station. “The anomaly we’ve been tracking? Its signature is shifting.”

“Shifting into what?” Hikaru jumped up from where he’d been leaning against the captain’s chair and sat in his usual chair, pulling up the readings on his console. “That’s…that’s definitely Romulan.”

“It looks like they’re accepting Commander Spock’s shuttle.” The science officer looked up, uncertain. “Do you think he really knew they were there? Could they have actually captured Captain Kirk?”

“I get the feeling we’re going to find out.” Len crossed his arms. “What the hell have we gotten ourselves into this time?”

Chapter End Notes

Well, what is our crew to do now? You’ll have to wait and find out...

End Notes

I hope you guys enjoyed! I’m going to have Mondays and Thursdays as update days so updates should be well spaced out.

Come say hi to me on tumblr at that-one-curly-haired-chick!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!