Echoes

by ladyeternal

Summary

James Kirk is a lot of things: genius, hero, playboy, starship captain. He is braver than is good for him, unafraid of the unknown, unreserved in his passions, and smarter than anyone gives him credit for.

And he's going to need all of that to save the life of the one person that makes any of it feel worthwhile.

Notes

I've been a Trekkie since childhood, and I'm an absolute sucker for the idea of loves that are Meant To Be, soul bonds, soul mates and mating season tropes. The reboot movies have only managed to add fuel to that fire, especially Into Darkness.

I have a lot of feelings, and none of them are expressing themselves well enough to elaborate, so I'll just say that I hope you all enjoy this, as it is the result of a personal headcanon combined with two tropes that are near and dear to my heart.

My love and gratitude goes out to my beloved beta, morganaconner, and patient cheerleader...
Feedback is adored, so if you like the fic, please comment! And the more details the better; I love knowing what people like about my work. ♥

Disclaimer: Star Trek TOS, Star Trek AOS and their characters are the property of their respective creators. I own little beyond a tabby that gets destructive when he feels ignored and am only playing in these worlds for my own amusement and the free entertainment of others.

Music: Say Something - A Great Big World
I’ll Be - Edwin McCain
Everything You Want - Vertical Horizon
Echo - Jason Walker

~ooooOOOoooo~

“I want you to know…”

“Is everything in there, Bones?”

For the first time since Jim had informed his CMO of his plan, Leonard McCoy held his opinions in check as he passed his captain a fully-stocked medical case. “Everything I can think of and a few things that I really hope you won’t need but I tossed in just in case calling Sick Bay isn’t an option.” A beat passed while Jim opened the case and did a cursory inspection of its contents. “Are you absolutely sure about this, Jim? That asylum you call a brain has come up with some pretty creative solutions in the past… and they’ve mostly all worked.”

Securing the case, Jim looked up at his friend. There was concern behind the doctor’s eyes, no longer hidden by his usual cantankerous sarcasm. “We’re too far out, Bones. We’ll never make it back in time, and the known colonies have all upped-stakes and gone home. Anything else we could pin our hopes on isn’t likely enough for me to risk it. Not this time.”

The gravitas that James Tiberius Kirk could bring to bear still caught Bones by surprise, even after nearly seven years of friendship. It took him aback even now, when he knew better than most what Jim was willing to sacrifice for his ship and crew. And in the face of the calm resolve in those bright blue eyes, he knew better than to keep arguing. “Well, hopefully he sees the ‘logic’ in your proposal and doesn’t argue about it too much. He can be a self-sacrificing sonofabitch, you know… just like his captain.”

Jim’s lips twitched into a smile at the corners. “That’s true, but at least we have sense enough to take turns.” That earned a derisive laugh from the doctor as Jim tugged the medical case’s strap over his shoulder. “I appreciate you quietly taking us off the duty rosters, too, Bones.”

“Nobody on this ship’s going to question the CMO putting the captain and XO on a little R&R for exhaustion,” Bones grumbled. “Not with how you two tend to burn the candles at both ends. Now go on, and don’t forget the passcode.”

Pausing in the act of turning to leave, Jim blinked at his friend. “Passcode?”
Bones rolled his eyes. “Just in case things get too far out of hand, I set up a passcode: kale forest. You say that even in a whisper and the computer will trigger an alert here in Sick Bay, in my private quarters and on my comm badge. I’ll be en route at a run.”

Both eyebrows lifted. “Kale forest?” Jim echoed.

“Well, that’s what the other word for this mess sounds like if you’re not paying attention!”

It took Jim a full thirty seconds to stifle the urge to double over with laughter.

* * *

Uhura was standing outside the doors to Spock’s quarters as he approached, her expression hovering between terrified and determined. A mirror of everything he wouldn’t let himself show. “Nyota.”

Turning, she was clearly surprised to see him. “Captain! I… didn’t realize you were off-duty yet.”

A small smile flickered around his mouth; Jim didn’t think he’d smiled with his whole face since the symptoms had first begun to manifest. “Bones put me on mandatory rest around the same time as Spock.” He watched her eyes narrow a bit at that, wondered when his feelings for her had lost their sexual edge. “For the same reason, actually.”

Her dark, expressive eyes flew wide. “Jim… do you know what’s wrong with him? He won’t tell me; he won’t say anything to anyone, but he’s in trouble. Everyone can see it from the way he’s been acting, and now McCoy—”

“I can’t tell you everything.” Jim keenly felt the need to get past her and into his quarters, felt time slipping away as he stood here that he should be spending in preparation. But there was a bond between them that wouldn’t allow Jim to just dismiss her without any explanation at all… and she had loved Spock. “It’s something Vulcans don’t really talk about with non-Vulcans, no matter how close they might be.”

“Then how do you…?” Uhura paused, her eyes narrowing again. “Did the other Spock tell you before…?”

“In a manner of speaking.” When he could see she wouldn’t let it go, Jim sighed and shifted the strap of the medical case on his shoulder. “You remember when Spock marooned me on Delta Vega?”

She nodded. “Turns out that’s where Nero had marooned the other Spock so that he had a front-row seat to Vulcan’s destruction.” Uhura gasped softly, the horror of that moment freshly replaying in her mind. Jim made himself keep speaking before she could interrupt. “While we were taking shelter in a cave, before we got to the Starbase and Scotty, he…”

Words faltered as thinking of that moment made the memories crash through him anew. Memories that weren’t his, that he had every and no right to: gifts given unintentionally from a man whose emotions had been more thoroughly compromised than Jim had even understood at the time.

“He melded with you,” Uhura said for him, suddenly understanding the flickers of something unnamed chasing each other across her captain’s blue eyes. “You saw more than just his experiences with Nero, didn’t you? You saw… you saw them… the other us, in the other Spock’s timeline.”

*I have been… and always shall be… your friend.*

*He’ll die, Jim.*

“Yes,” he finally replied, fighting down the memories and letting her face, her face from this life,
coalesce in his vision. “What’s happening to our Spock right now? He went through it more than once. His Kirk helped him survive it.”

Too many things collided in her mind in that moment; Uhura fought the urge to step back from him, irrational reactions flashing in her blood and clamoring to be expressed. She clamped down on them. “Just because his Kirk helped him doesn’t mean you have to be the one to help our Spock. You could tell me. I’ll do whatever it takes; you know that I can.”

The offer overwhelmed him, reminded him of all the reasons that Uhura was more than just a woman he’d lusted after in a bar nearly a decade ago. “I appreciate the offer, Nyota, but I can’t take you up on it. You said yourself that he won’t tell you what’s wrong. If I told you so that you could go in there in my place, he’d never forgive me.”

It was the answer she’d suspected, if not the one she’d wanted. Not that it mattered in the grand scheme of things; she and Spock had ended their affair for a reason, and she had a feeling that whatever Jim was planning would be enormously complicated by that fact if she were to take his place. “Fine. Just… don’t forget that this ship needs you, too. Nobody’ll be in there to stop him this time if Spock decides to throttle you.”

“I’ll try to keep that in mind.” Jim gave her upper arm a gentle squeeze. “I’ve got this, Nyota. Go kick someone’s ass in the gym or something.”

She sniffed derisively, but leaned up to brush a kiss over his cheek before doing so. Jim watched her leave, then walked past Spock’s door to his own and stepped into his quarters.

* * *

Meditation was not helping. No matter what he tried, the necessary katric rhythms always seemed to escape him. Spock ruthlessly quashed the frustration that rose like gorge in his throat as he attempted to start the cycle over again. He would reach the necessary trance and endure this… he had no choice…

The door to the bathing area he shared with the captain swished open, interrupting his thoughts before he could even get started. Spock felt his teeth grind at the sound of Jim’s soft footfall, hating that, even in this, he could not seem to make his human comply with his wishes without a fight. “I believe I left word that I was not to be disturbed, Captain.”

“You’re already disturbed, Spock,” countered the honey-soft voice behind him. “Pon farr is a disturbing time for anyone of Vulcan lineage…”

The Vulcan words, spoken with such calm surety, exploded across his attempt to remain in meditative pose. Spock was on his feet in an instant, rounding on his captain in an instant and snarling despite himself.

Jim seemed unfazed in the face of it, merely tilting his head up so that he could meet Spock’s furious gaze. “Or at least that’s the impression I got about it from your counterpart.”

“You’re already disturbed, Spock,” countered the honey-soft voice behind him. “*Pon farr* is a disturbing time for anyone of Vulcan lineage…”

The mention of his other self, now deceased, took some of the heat out of Spock’s sudden anger. He could feel his muscles uncoiling, his stance relaxing in the face of sudden consternation. “He… told you of *pon farr*?”

“We melded on Delta Vega,” Jim informed him, seeing the vaguest hint of a flinch around Spock’s eyes at the reminder of all that had passed between them four years earlier. “I’m pretty sure I wound up seeing a lot more than he ever intended to show me.”
“It would have been difficult for him to control the depth of the meld, given the loss of all that was familiar to him, and then of Vulcan itself,” Spock concurred. He was becoming more and more aware of the fact that Jim was wearing a very brief robe of Andorian silk. The fabric was as blue as the human’s eyes, and the bottom hem barely reached his mid-thigh; the captain’s long, muscular legs were on full display, and Spock could not suppress the urge to run his hands over them, to shove the human down to the floor and push them apart…

With a will, he forced his thoughts away from such paths. “Captain, I appreciate that you have a better understanding of my situation than most non-Vulcans would be capable of, given your unique experience with my late counterpart, but I’m afraid that only makes this intrusion even more unacceptable. As you are well aware, we are currently too far from New Vulcan to possibly reach the planet in time for me to participate in the traditional ritual. It is therefore imperative that I attempt to reach a deep meditative state which will allow me to suppress-”

“Except that’s not going to work.” Taking a careful step forward, away from the bag of medical supplies that he’d placed just inside the door, Jim watched Spock for any sign that his advance would be taken as aggression. He knew that there was a possibility that Spock would take his presence as a challenge, and he was prepared for that if necessary. “You’re half-human, Spock. That makes your pon farr more volatile than a pure-blooded Vulcan’s.”

“You cannot know that.” Spock felt his mouth go dry, felt a strange energy lacing through his blood. Mine, it whispered as Jim took another step closer. Claim. Take. Mine.

“I do know that.” Jim took another step, and another, until he was standing a foot away from his first officer. Spock’s breath was labored, and his dark eyes raked over Jim’s body in a way he’d only seen in memories before. “I saw it, in the meld with the other Spock. He could never control it that way. It was always koon-ut-kal-if-fee.” He tracked Spock’s eyes as they pulled back to his own, the half-Vulcan’s expression torn.

Mate. It sang in Spock’s katra, made his fingers itch to reach out and grip that golden skin until it bruised, to tear away the silk that left so very little to his imagination… “I have watched you die once already,” Spock managed, shocked by how hoarse his voice sounded on the words. “I will not end your life to preserve my own.”

“I know that, too.” Slowly, telegraphing every inch of the way, Jim lifted his right hand with only two fingers extended. Spock’s breath shallowed as those two fingers found their way to the side of his face just before his left ear, tracing their way down the arch of his cheekbone and lightly skimming across his bottom lip. Jim’s eyes, almost indigo now, never left his own. “That’s not why I’m here, Spock.”

Spock’s left hand snapped up, catching Jim’s right wrist; the action separated those calloused fingertips from his face, breaking off what Spock was certain were unintentional Vulcan kisses. It drew a gasp from Jim that did nothing to assuage the heatwantmatemine building in Spock’s blood like a tidal wave; nor did the way Jim’s pupils blew wide in desire as the bones of his wrist ground together in Spock’s grip.

“You are human,” Spock growled, desperate to suppress the dangerous desires flaring under his skin. “Even having melded with another version of myself, you have no conception of what you claim to offer. You? Who flirt and copulate so shamelessly with any being that can be called female without regard for the consequences on any scale? To you, mating is copulation: nothing more. To us, it is far more profound a bond.”

Anger drove Jim to take another step into Spock’s space, though the grip Spock still held on his wrist made it impossible to really get closer. “Always and never parting and parted,” he snarled back,
watching Spock’s eyes go huge in response. “Always and never touching and touched. I know what it means, Spock. That’s what I want.”

**HeatWantClaimMateMine.** “You can’t,” Spock breathed. “You have never even suggested-”

“You didn’t let me finish.” Spock blinked at him, the apparent non-sequitur confusing him. The grip on Jim’s wrist relaxed, but Jim knew that the first of what promised to be a legion of bruises were going to bloom in its wake. “In the warp core, when I was…” The grip tightened and he lifted his other hand to wrap around Spock’s, reassuring Spock that he was still here, still alive. “I was trying to tell you something, but you never let me finish.”

The memory dredged itself up, much as Spock hated to think of that day. It had replayed itself enough in his nightmares. “You wanted me to know why you came back for me… why you could not let me die. It was because we are friends.”

Jim smiled, letting his fingers stroke over the furnace-hot skin of Spock’s hand beneath his own. “No, Spock. That’s not what I was going to say. I…” He blew out a short breath, knowing Spock could sense his shame though his skin. “I should’ve told you sooner, but… you were with Uhura, and there were times I thought maybe you sensed it, but you never acted like it, or at least not how I hoped you’d act if you did.”

“Jim-”

“T’hy’la.”

Spock’s hand yanked free of Jim’s grip as the half-Vulcan took an involuntary step back. “That’s… impossible; where did you hear that word?”

“In the meld.” Jim stood his ground, letting Spock have a moment of space. He could almost taste the pheromones in the air, but Spock needed to accept this. They didn’t have time to waste debating it. “Not right away, it… the things he let me see, it’s like they got filed into my subconscious or something, because they come to me like… like echoes of things that never happened. I’ll hear their voices in conversations that we never have and see them out of the corner of my eye like ghosts.”

“But when I heard that word, it was…” He sighed as Spock continued to stare incredulously, though he could see Spock’s curiosity starting to take the edge off his panic. “I can’t really explain it, Spock. It was like someone rang a gong in my head, and it wouldn’t go away until I looked it up. Took forever to find it, too, considering.”

He didn’t need to elaborate; Spock knew how difficult it had to have been even for someone of James T. Kirk’s hacking skills. The loss of Vulcan had destroyed more than just lives and places, and Khan’s terrorism had done considerable damage to Starfleet’s own records. “I have no difficulty believing that someone with your tenacity would eventually locate some way to translate the word and place it in its cultural context, if that is what you chose to dedicate your time and energies to doing.”

Jim smiled, a broader smile than had graced his face in days. “I think that was almost a compliment, Spock. You must be worse than I thought.”

“And you have known of this since before Nibiru?” Spock shot back, ignoring the jibe and the subtle, flirtatious tone behind it. “You have known for all this time and said nothing?”

Jim resisted the urge to wince in the face of the accusation implicit in Spock’s tone. “There was nothing for me to say, Spock. Think about it: you were with Uhura when I figured it out. And then
when you two broke up, you threw yourself into your work; for months after, it was all I could do to get you to come play chess. You weren’t in any kind of head space for me to just casually drop ‘oh, by the way: we somehow managed to form this ancient soul bond when we weren’t looking and I’m pretty sure it’s destiny because our counterparts in the other timeline had it too’ into the conversation.” Unable to help himself, still stinging from Spock’s scathing rebuke of his promiscuity earlier and feeling far too exposed, Jim turned his head from Spock’s hostile glare to stare at the soft carpet beneath his bare feet.

Spock’s feet appeared in his line of vision: bare and pale, lined with delicate green veins, nails neatly trimmed. Jim looked up to find Spock much closer than he had been before, gazing down with an inscrutable expression on that beautiful face, those warm brown eyes no longer accusing but gentle, full of something that looked torn between longing and hope.

The sight of those eyes filled with tears as he’d been dying had broken Jim’s heart. What would they have done if he’d been able to confess the bond uninterrupted in that moment? How much time would they have gained: time that they could have used to consummate and settle their unusual bond; time to learn one another’s bodies and pleasures and triggers, until coming together for Spock’s pon farr could have been as natural as breathing?

How much time had his counterpart wasted, that the other Spock had gone to his grave with so much regret that even now it tasted like ashes in Jim’s mouth?

Without a word, Spock lifted his right hand into position, his fingers hovering over the psi points of Jim’s face. “Please, Jim,” he asked, voice soft and thready with hard-won control. “I do not believe you would lie to me, but… I need to see for myself.”

Rather than passively accepting the touch, Jim stepped closer, his hands coming to rest at Spock’s waist as his psi points made contact with those long, delicate fingers. “My mind to your mind,” he offered.

“My thoughts to your thoughts,” Spock replied, the ritual words automatic on his tongue.

* * *

It wasn’t like the last time. The last time, the person touching his mind wasn’t natural to his world. The last time, that person had been giving rather than seeking, pouring information into his mind like water through a funnel. A torrent of memories and emotions, echoes of over 150 years of life and love, that had left him gasping and in tears, struggling to make sense of it for months afterwards.

This time, it was gentler, less of a shock to his system. He could feel the path that opened in his mind for his Spock, his t’hy’la, and there was no strangeness or struggle in it. Only welcoming, drawing that beautiful, alien consciousness alongside his, beckoning to him: come and see.

There were places he didn’t want Spock to go, boxes into which he’d stuffed ugliness and pain that he couldn’t bear to pry open even for his bondmate. Not yet. But he could lead his Spock to the places where the other memories dwelt, strange and fragile and all the more precious because the man to whom they had originally belonged was gone.

He could show Spock the mirror image of that terrible day in the warp core, their roles reversed. He could show a thousand nights playing chess, filled with tiny smiles and genuine respect. A pon farr T’Pring had lived to see, only to refuse Spock for want of another, and the battle between them that had come of it.
They could see a desperate ploy, and a terrible reawakening. Travels through time and encounters with races both known and strange. And threading through it all was a bond that mirrored their own, consummated but only after far too many years left wanting. Too long held in abeyance by stubborn inability on both sides to recognize the truth of what lay between them.

*T’hy’la.*

They surfaced slowly. Jim felt Spock leave his mind as gently as he’d entered, though his fingers still rested against Jim’s psi points. His other hand, Jim realized, had come to rest at the small of his back, searing hot through the Andorian silk between them.

“He believes me now?” Jim asked, staring up into Spock’s eyes. He could stare up into those eyes forever, it seemed, lost in the expressive serenity of them.

“It would be difficult to imagine more comprehensive evidence being presented,” Spock replied. Jim’s eyes were almost violet in the dim light of his quarters, the pupils still blown wide from the arousal that Spock could feel thrumming under Jim’s skin, as real and vibrant and hungry as his own.

“Jim…”

“It’s not time yet.” Jim could feel the shift between them, palpable as the soft weave of Spock’s meditation tunic beneath his fingers. “Spock, I need…” His mouth went dry as those brown eyes turned somehow molten, the heat of the half-Vulcan’s nearness setting Jim’s body on fire. He was suddenly, achingly hard; knew Spock could sense it through the contact he still had with Jim’s skin. “Before it gets bad, before you won’t have any control-”

“Jim-”

“No.” Jim cut him off, not wanting to hear whatever Spock might have said. “Just… I need us to do this without the plak tow driving you. Just once, when it’s just us, before… okay?”

Something lingered on the periphery of his senses. Something dark that lay at the edges of his awareness like a coiled serpent, waiting to strike. Spock wanted to press, to know what hovered on the horizon of Jim’s mind like a storm about to break. But those blue eyes… so large and luminous in the dim light of his quarters… something in those eyes begged him to stay his questions until his pon farr had passed, to give Jim this moment before their world dissolved and Spock’s basest nature ruled him.

The precision of language could not frame the reply he wanted to give. And so he let his fingers slip from Jim’s psi points to cup his cheek, drawing a gasp from the golden human in his arms even as his hand slid back to gently weave into blond hair as silken as the robe his t’hy’la wore. He felt the tremor race through Jim’s entire body just before he leaned in, capturing those soft, parted lips with his own.

At once Jim’s arms slid around Spock’s waist, crushing their bodies together. Vaguely, Jim felt the world spinning around him, his feet stumbling blindly as the hand Spock had pressed into the small of his back guided him, the kiss unbroken as Spock moved with him. His fingers flexed into the tunic and tugged, urging it up Spock’s body so that he could get to the warm, smooth skin of Spock’s back even as Spock began to step into him, pressing him backward, step by step until his calves hit the wall of Spock’s bunk. His knees folded instinctively and he let out a mewl as his backside hit Spock’s mattress and their lips broke, his eyes opening to the sight of Spock dragging his meditation tunic up and over his head.
Spock watched Jim’s eyes dilate even further at the sight of him, pupils blown so wide that it was almost impossible to see the deep blue irises. Almost on instinct, Jim’s hands came back up, flattening against the taper of Spock’s waist and Spock groaned at the contact, at the flush of need and want that poured into his body until he could no longer discern what was his own lust and what was Jim’s. Jim’s legs were splayed just enough for him to stand between them, the silk robe offering no modesty and Jim obviously wanting none as he ran reverent hands up Spock’s torso, as if wanting to limn the contours of Spock’s muscles into his memory.

“You’re incredible,” Jim murmured, scrambling up to his knees on the bed. The robe barely clung to his shoulders, open at the front in spite of the obi belted at Jim’s waist, and Spock couldn’t help reaching out to unfasten the useless scrap of fabric, pushing the silk from Jim’s shoulders. Jim shrugged the robe off and tossed it aside, unable to care about wrinkles in the fabric when all he wanted was to touch Spock again, more, forever. “God, look at you…”

“You are not an unexceptional example of physical aesthetics, either, Jim.” Spock couldn’t help returning the caresses, letting his palms mould over the dip and sway of Jim’s back, his shoulders, his fingers carding through the nearly-invisible down across Jim’s chest.

One of Jim’s eyebrows quirked, a near-perfect imitation of Spock’s own affectation. “Oh, we have a ways to go if you can still use words that big, Spock.”

“It is not with the size of my vocabulary that I wish to impress you at the moment.”

Jim only had half a heartbeat to be shocked into a blush by that statement before Spock’s hands curved around the backs of his thighs, and then Spock was kissing him again and reality spun wildly, the half-Vulcan’s strength yanking his legs out from under him and up around Spock’s waist as they fell back together across the bed.

This time, the kiss didn’t break; Spock was consuming him, kissing him like he meant to devour Jim where they lay, nipping at Jim’s lips and licking his way into Jim’s mouth, crushing their lips together until Jim was drunk from it, moaning into Spock’s mouth every time he moved even a fraction away from contact. And all the while Spock kissed his body the Vulcan way: two fingers of each hand tracing feather-light caresses along the sway of his spine and the long plane of his chest, the curve of his buttocks and the corded muscles of his thighs. They drew him in lines of pure heat, of tingling energy that radiated under his skin and sank into Jim’s bones until all he knew was the throb of his pulse in every inch of his body, an aching hollowness that only Spock could fill.

Those hands came to rest at his knees, gentle but inexorable pressure that Jim had no choice but to yield to. Spock’s lips left his and Jim whined at the loss, his eyes fluttering open to watch as Spock sat up between his legs, brown eyes hooded as he surveyed the wanton human beneath him and began to remove the pants he’d worn beneath his meditation tunic.

The lack of heat blanketing Jim was shocking; he was sure he was shivering in its absence, or was he just shaking from how badly he needed, desperate for the way Spock’s strong, compact body fit so perfectly against his own? He didn’t know, couldn’t hope to tell, didn’t want to as he saw the pants slip from Spock’s long, long legs, exposing even more of that ivory-pale skin and…

And…

“Oh…” It sighed out of him as his eyes raked over the heavy Vulcan prepuce between Spock’s legs, the muscles working as Jim watched until Spock’s erection was fully unsheathed. It was not unlike his own, but where Jim’s flushed a deep maroon, Spock’s was the green of oak leaves on a moonless night, the double-ridged head looking almost slick as it emerged.
His fingers twitched, itching to touch it, to learn the differences by every sense he possessed, to know how sensitive it was and feel its weight in his palm, on his tongue, buried as deep inside him as it could reach. It barely registered that Spock must be gauging his reaction, but the thought was eclipsed by the subtle bob and flex of the muscles that controlled its appearance, so unlike a human male’s anatomy.

Deep in the shadows of the storm he wouldn’t let Spock see, Jim was so grateful for those differences that he could have cried.

Without even realizing it, Jim had curled upright, gravitating towards the space where Spock now knelt. He found himself looking up into Spock’s face and meeting Spock’s eyes, dark and careful and just faintly tight at the corners. It took a moment for Jim to realize that those slim, talented, sensitive fingers were curled into tense fists where they rested atop Spock’s thighs, the half-Vulcan’s body braced and trembling in the same moment.

The thought of Spock’s anxiety carried Jim even further forward, up onto his own knees and into Spock’s space. His hands reached out to take hold of Spock’s, pushing their way into Spock’s grip and drawing them around Jim’s body as Jim angled his head to mouth an open kiss along the underside of Spock’s taut jaw. Spock groaned and pulled Jim closer, pulled until they were chest to chest and hip to hip, the friction as arousal brushed arousal driving the breath from them both.

“You were too far away,” Jim managed, smoothing his hands up Spock’s arms, over his shoulders, down his back. His lips ghosted along the long column of Spock’s throat even as Spock tumbled Jim down beneath him again, his legs parting easily to accept Spock’s weight in the cradle of his hips. Sparks danced under his skin where need slid against need, and a soft moan rolled in Jim’s throat before he let his lips seal against the tender skin where Spock’s neck met his shoulder.

“Jim…”

His answer, when it came, murmured across Jim’s skin like a caress, cool where the half-Vulcan’s touch was hot as a brand. “I believe lubricant is essential to what you seek, t’hy’la, and that robe you wore concealed nothing.”

“You’re telling me you don’t keep anything in the bedside compartment?” Spock’s head lifted, an amused smile turning up the corners of his lips, and Jim couldn’t help laughing. “Nevermind; I get it: Vulcan mastery of body and mind somehow equals no masturbation. There should be some in the bag I left by the door to the bath; you should probably bring the whole thing over here anyway; we might need it, during…”

There was a curious eyebrow lift, and then Spock was gone from him again, unashamedly naked as he crossed to the medkit Jim had mentioned. The lack of blazing body heat against his own skin once again left Jim feeling strangely bereft, and he focused on the play of Spock’s muscles under that impossibly smooth skin as the half-Vulcan crouched beside the bag and opened it, giving the contents a quick perusal before locating the lubricant tube. When he closed the bag and stood, his expression was once again careful, something tense around the edges of his eyes. “This is a medical kit, no doubt stocked personally by Doctor McCoy.”

Jim swallowed and looked away, knowing that what came next might derail everything. “I had to tell
“My counterpart’s willingness to discuss private matters with someone of his timeline does not equate to my consent that our timeline’s version of that person should also share that information.”

The coldness in Spock’s tone made Jim flinch. Something like panic budded in Jim’s chest and he started to rise, needing to win back the ground he’d just lost. “I know; it was wrong and I’m sorry and you have every right to be angry—”

“I should at least have been present when you informed him that we are t’hy’la.”

Jim’s head snapped up. Spock’s expression was still a mask, the edge around his eyes still there, but something about the tone of his voice bled hurt, not anger, and Jim felt the constriction in his chest loosen just a fraction. “I didn’t tell him about that,” Jim offered softly. “Just about koon-ut-ka-li-fee, and that things might get a little… reckless… before it’s over even if we…” The tension at the edges of Spock’s face eased just a fraction and Jim shoved away the urge to beg him to return to the bed. “I would never have told him about t’hy’la without you.” A smile tugged at his lips. “That way he can yell at us both at the same time and get it out of his system.”

Spock paced closer to the bed, medkit in one hand and lubricant in the other. “The doctor’s protective nature is, perhaps, overly zealous where you are concerned.”

“Well, I did manage to die on him once.”

The words were out before Jim could think of their impact. Before the last syllable was gone from the air, Spock was on him again, the medkit tossed onto the shelf beside the bed and the lubricant bottle pressing into his cheek as Spock took his face in both hands and kissed him.

At once the flame was leaping between them again, Jim’s hands coming up to grip at Spock’s shoulders from behind even as Spock bore him back down to the mattress, ravaging his mouth and grinding down against Jim’s hips until his erection was riding slick in the cut of Jim’s hip and Jim could only hold on for dear life…

“Never again.” Spock growled it against Jim’s mouth, their lips colliding between words with bruising intensity. “You will never again speak of your death in my presence as if it were an amusing anecdote. Not when I could not even bring you the comfort you asked of me in your final moments. Not when I could not even bring you the comfort you asked of me in your final moments.

The fervent admonition brought tears to Jim’s eyes even as his breath stuttered in his throat, hitching on passion and emotion and the raw guilt that Spock had evidently carried since that moment. “I’m sorry,” he managed, the words hoarse and low between them as Spock’s kisses began to trail down his neck again, his sharp teeth pinching new welts into the skin of Jim’s shoulder and his hands gliding down to cup Jim’s backside and pull his hips even closer. The increased friction as Spock rocked against him was maddening, and Jim just barely recognized the starburst that was beginning to gather at the base of his spine. “Spock… Spock, please…”

It was by the grace of Spock’s telepathy alone that he understood, that he lowered Jim’s hips back down to the mattress and let the urgency that had been building between them drain away. The crests and waves of it had left them both dizzy, and Spock found himself centering his awareness on the rhythm of Jim’s breath, shallow pants gradually deepening into shuddering drags of air, soft sounds coming at the end of each exhale.

His control had been slipping for days; would likely be gone completely by morning. But he could
give Jim what he needed, what the beautiful man beneath him begged for with every breath and kiss and touch.

Two fingers wrapped around Jim’s erection as Spock brought their mouths together yet again: a surcease of pressure that helped bring his racing pulse back down, a languid exploration of lips and tongue that let Jim breathe, that brought him back from feeling that he might fly apart at any moment. The fingers that had acted as a firebreak against his impending orgasm withdrew slowly; a lingering kiss around the base of his erection that almost sent Jim right back to the brink; and then one of those sensitive fingers was gliding lower, slick and slow, and everything in Jim seemed to flip over in anticipation.

“T’hy’la...” It was a prayer, a promise as Jim’s legs fell apart and his hips canted up to give Spock better access as that finger found its target.

A flash from within that storm, and then Jim was relaxing, the taut furl of muscle giving way and welcoming Spock’s touch. He drew Spock’s head down before the half-Vulcan could question it, chasing Spock’s concerns away with deep, open, hungry kisses, fixing the way Spock’s finger felt inside him firmly in the front of his mind. He felt the tremor that raced through Spock when the sensation was caught by his t’hy’la’s telepathy and smiled against Spock’s mouth, determined to add fuel to the fire.

The first finger retreated, then returned slicker than before, joined by a second. Jim gasped and twisted his hips against Spock’s hand, chasing the sensation, a litany of filthy words falling through his mind and into Spock through the bond where their mouths met.

*Can’t believe how good you feel…*

*Is this the Vulcan version of rimming? I’ll show you the human version sometime; I wonder if you’re as sensitive there as a pure human…*

*God, I love your skin... I can’t get enough of you under my hands... why haven’t we been doing this since the Academy? Why did we wait so long...?*

*No, not three… I’m good; I want to feel you... wanna feel every inch of you for days, Spock, please...*

*Now... t’hy’la, I’m good I swear I am it’s gonna be so good need you in me please now...*

Hard, blunt heat snubbed in, replacing the fingers that had coaxed him open. Jim’s breath exploded as his head fell back, his legs pulling back against his chest and his arms wrapping beneath his knees as Spock braced above him and sank deep, maddeningly slow, Jim’s eyes rolling up into his head at the unexpected obdurate thickness of him... burrowing inch by inexorable inch until Jim thought he might go mad from waiting for Spock to bottom out...

And then he was, Spock’s pale forehead dipping to rest against Jim’s as he was finally fully seated inside him. Everything in Jim burned: the muscles gripping and quivering around that exquisite hardness, the legs and arms that wanted to wrap around Spock and never let go, every patch of skin the half-Vulcan touched, the corners of his eyes where tears of relief threatened.

Above him, Spock shuddered from the intensity of it, the movement rippling through his entire body and up into Jim’s where they were joined. Jim let out a whine, hips twitching restively in search of more...

Slowly, Spock lifted his forehead from Jim’s; Jim opened his eyes to see Spock staring down at him,
no room left in his eyes for neutrality. Without a word, he reached down and took each of Jim’s wrists in his hands, urging Jim’s arms to wrap around his shoulders instead of keeping Jim’s legs up against his chest. “T’hy’la…”

The angle changed as Jim, no longer able to hold back, slid his legs up and locked them around Spock’s waist. The shift inside him made his breath stutter and catch in his throat, his eyes floating closed again as Spock finally gave in to what they both needed.

Careful, at first. Spock was so careful with him, dragging out only a few inches and then pushing back in gently; almost undulating inside Jim, letting Jim grow accustomed to him. It wasn’t long before Jim was arcing up to meet him, drawing Spock’s mouth down for another kiss and another and another as he projected what he wanted at Spock’s telepathy.

Spock’s next thrust was longer, a little more forceful. Jim moaned and dug his fingernails into the smooth skin of Spock’s back.

Withdrawal almost slower than when he’d first entered, only to shove back in hard and fast. Spock’s name broke on Jim’s lips, his legs tightening around Spock’s waist and his hips riding up to meet the drive.

Faster, and harder, the natural slick of Spock’s erection keeping Jim from chafing as Spock began to let go and Jim clung and writhed, surrendering as Spock finally started pounding into his body in earnest, the slipcatchdrag of that doubled glans inside him setting Jim’s nerves alight from the inside out and carrying Jim out of himself…

This was what he’d been looking for… what had driven him into the arms of so many, human and alien alike… all that time he’d been looking for Spock, for the unyielding possession of his t’hy’la pulsing in his blood and thrusting against his hips and wrapping around his mind… driving away the ghosts and the echoes and the pain and letting him be enough… finally he was enough…

The meld snuck up on him; he hadn’t noticed Spock’s fingers slipping onto his psi points, the hard, punishing perfect hammer of Spock’s body inside his own never faltering. But then it was more: a double echo of tightness and heat, of finally belonging in a way that he could never have hoped for, of having wanted so badly in the wake of Jim’s death but never allowing it to show… of finally being given what had been so desperately desired…

It twined around and through him until Jim couldn’t hold back, erupting between their bodies with a hoarse shout of Spock’s name, quaking limbs clinging even harder as Spock paused long enough to ride out the cresting wave. And then starting again, claiming Jim with something like fury, chasing his own release as Jim moaned beneath him, sated and sensitive and shaking from the force of it.

And through the meld, Spock let Jim see every dirty, lustful thing he couldn’t say… how tight Jim was beneath him… how jealous he’d been of the women he knew Jim had taken to bed, flirted with, even simply graced with that glorious sunshine smile of his… how he’d longed to have Jim this way, how he would never again let Jim leave this bed unless it was in the course of their duties… how easily he could lose himself in Jim’s body…

The mantra of needclaimmatemine that sang in his blood as his climax finally overtook him, a cry triumphant howling free of his throat.

Another sense memory, but it was muted, an echo of thunder as Spock shuddered above him, spilling into Jim’s pliant, willing body for what felt like forever. Those deceptively slim arms slid around him, cradling Jim against his shaking form as he brushed tender kisses over Jim’s face and whispering Vulcan endearments until the last aftershock faded and their bodies were finally quiet.
For uncounted minutes, they lay entwined together, with only the thrum of the burgeoning bond between them. Jim focused on it, learning the shape of it in his mind, so different from the melds he’d experienced with both Spocks…

Until it registered that, for all Jim could feel the evidence of Spock’s orgasm cooling inside him, Spock was still hard.

“Spock?” The half-Vulcan stirred vaguely and Jim ran a hand up Spock’s spine, lacing into his lover’s short black hair and half-tugging. “Spock, what… you’re still…”

Lifting his head, it took Spock a moment to register what Jim was talking about. Realizing that Jim was flaccid in the space between their hips. Spock flushed green. “My reproductive physiology is primarily Vulcan… Vulcans penile musculature is very different from humans.”

Jim smiled wryly. “Apparently, I should’ve paid more attention in xenobiology.” Spock blushed even greener and Jim leaned up, kissing the rise of emerald on Spock’s cheeks. “See why I wanted to do this now, before everything gets out of hand?”

“I do, t’hy’la.” Gathering Jim close, Spock rolled them until he was on his back, giving Jim more leverage to extricate himself from Spock’s penetration. “I assume you will need a moment to recover before beginning your next experiment in comparative sexuality.”

An affronted laugh chuffed out of Jim, despite the fact that he did slowly lift his hips and let Spock slip free of his body. The loss of fullness made him shiver and Spock immediately drew Jim down to lie beside him, curling the human into the warmth of his embrace as his muscles relaxed and his penis drew back up into its sheath.

How long they drifted that way, sated and warm and languid, Jim couldn’t have said. He was still trying to process everything their lovemaking had churned up: memories that didn’t belong to him, sensation echoes of things that had happened and things that had never been, the very real sense of homecoming that had settled in his soul from the first moment Spock had taken him into his arms.

“Why will you not tell me?” Spock asked finally, stroking a hand along the base of Jim’s spine.

“Tell you what?” Jim left his eyes closed, concentrating on the way Spock’s skin smelled like regulation soap and meditation candles beneath the sex that still hung in the air.

“Why you are so relieved that my genitals are not more similar to humans.’” He felt Jim stiffen beside him, flattening his hand against the small of Jim’s back to keep Jim from fleeing the conversation. “Why the feel of my semen inside you is so disturbing to your mind. Why you are so accepting of the idea that I may injure you in the ferocity of pon farr.”

For a long moment, Jim debated whether or not to answer. What he could possibly say that carried no risk of Spock deciding to risk his own life rather than let Jim love him through the mating fever that would no doubt be upon him in the next few hours.

“This isn’t the first time I’ve slept with a man in order to save someone’s life,” Jim said finally. “And that’s all you get until after your pon farr is over.”

Spock shifted them until they were both on their sides, keeping Jim close enough to touch but able to look into Jim’s eyes. “Jim…”

Unable to bear the aching sympathy in Spock’s voice, Jim pushed in close, wrapping around Spock’s body and kissing him. “I’m not just doing this to save you,” he whispered when it ended. “But I have to save you before I can tell you the rest. It won’t matter until that part’s done. Okay?”
Doubt flickered in the back of Spock’s mind: a nagging fear that what was coming would somehow harm Jim in a way that went far beyond any physical injuries that might result from unrestrained lovemaking. But he knew his t’hy’la’s stubbornness all too well by now; Jim was resolved to keep his secrets, and the flames of *plak tow* were still growing in his blood, banked by their mating but not yet sated.

When they burned themselves out, he would have his answers. He only hoped that whatever Jim was keeping from him would not rise from those ashes to destroy them.

“As you wish, t’hy’la.”

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