The Dying Planet

by Witezon [archived by Warp5Complex_Archivist]

Summary

The crew goes on a ghost hunt. (04/11/2003)

Notes

Note from Kylie Lee, the archivist: this story was originally archived at Warp 5 Complex, the software of which ceased to be maintained and created a security hazard. To make future maintenance and archive growth easier, I began importing its works to the AO3 as an Open Doors-approved project in August 2016. I e-mailed all creators about the move and posted announcements, but I may not have reached everyone. If you are (or know) this creator, please contact me using the e-mail address on Warp 5 Complex collection profile.

Author's notes: Character crossover from the Traditions AU.

ENTERPRISE NX-01 BRIDGE

The bridge crew were performing their bridge duties—Archer was in his Ready Room; T'Pol was analyzing sensory data from the small system they were currently in; Reed just returned from the Armory; Tucker was in Engineering; Hoshi was making a few upgrades in her communications array; and Mayweather was maintaining station for the Sub-Commander's analyses.

Normal, somewhat boring, but normal. This downtime was what the crew needed after the last mission. After almost losing the Captain and Tucker to the Canemar prison planet, they all appreciated the boring. Phlox had finally replaced the lizard he had used to save Porthos' life and it
was settling in nicely. Everything was going well.

T'Pol was reviewing information on the 3d planet in this small solar system. Its sun was very old, not like the healthy, young suns of the Vulcan or Sol systems, but one in its death throes. That human term seemed appropriate for the death of a solar system.

Based on the sensory data, she estimated that the system would begin collapsing in on itself within the next 500 years. The old sun had 5 planets circling it, four in elliptical orbits and one in an erratic orbit, but always in retrograde. Interesting. It was the closest to the old sun and T'Pol was saving it for last.

There was some plant and animal life on planets 3 and 4. But that life was dying and non-existent on planets 1, 2, and 5. The sun wasn't able to produce the energy needed to keep maintaining life. It was a textbook example of a dying solar system.

T'Pol noted in her log that there were ruins on the 4th planet. The somewhat inaccurate dating that she could perform from orbit, indicated that the ruins were at least 10,000 years old.

She nodded to herself, that was expected for a solar system of this age. What was unusual were that these planets, at least at one time, had some type of life on them.

She arched an eyebrow in consideration of that. The sun must have been able to produce extremely strong energy to support such disparate life on so many planets. Planets 1, 2, and 5 were in extremes to each other—two probably had life-forms that thrived in extreme hot, volcanic temperatures and the other in extreme cold temperatures. Life on planets 3 and 4 were most probably humanoid. She based this on the ruins and the planets' chemical analysis that revealed there was an oxy-nitro environment.

Now they barely maintained any atmosphere at all. Most of it had bled off into space. It was the term Vulcan used to describe this process, but it had an additional reference for her now since the time the crew had spent locked up together in the warp nacelles.

One night the humans had gathered to tell ghost stories. Vulcans don't have ghost stories, but the Captain wanted her to mingle, so she mingled. Ensign Mantusco from Security had been the last storyteller of the evening. The first 5 stories had been "juvenile. At least in her opinion. However, Ensign Mantusco's story had at least been well-told and contained enough suspense and little blood and gore, to keep her interested. Of course, Commander Tucker had teased her wanting to know if Vulcans even had ghost stories. Everyone grinned, including Captain Archer.

T'Pol tilted an eyebrow in contemplation “why did she just think about that?”

She looked around the bridge, everyone was at their stations and her board reflected everything was working within normal parameters.

Without warning the bridge sunk into darkness. They were a few gasps of surprise.

"Lt Reed, emergency lighting."

"It's not working, Sub-Commander."

"Try placing the ship on Tactical Alert."

The red tactical lighting glowed harshly around the circumference of the bridge. Everyone was lit by its blood red light, and the shadows deepened around them.
T'Pol pushed a button on her console, "Bridge to Engineering. Commander Tucker, the bridge has lost all lighting. What is your status?"

At the same time, she looked around the bridge, "Report, all stations."

Everyone quickly went to work. Tucker replied, "Everything is fine here. I'm on my way."

All bridge stations reported everything was working normally, except the bridge lighting.

Archer stepped out of the turbolift and paused in shock. The bridge and everyone on it were bathed in the red glare of the tactical lighting.

Looking over at T'Pol, he made his way to his chair, "Sub-Commander, report."

"All stations are working within normal parameters, except bridge lighting. Commander Tucker is on his way."

Archer nodded. He looked around. It was eerie—as the ship was maintaining station, the normal blips and bleeps were quiet, and, of course, the lighting was red. The bridge crew were highlighted by the red glare, but because it was not meant to be the primary lighting, shadows appeared to be encroaching from every corner.

"Any other ships or anything in the area?"

"No, Captain. We are the only ship in our sensor range."

The turbolift opened and Tucker came out. He also paused and looked around. "Is it me or is this kinda spooky lookin'?" He went over to the engineering station and started running some checks.

Archer frowned at him. But, yeah, it was.

"Hoshi, are there any communications out there?"

"Sorry, sir. But I was just finishing some upgrades when the lighting went out. It'll only be a moment, then I'll check."

She finished as quickly as possible in the lighting, "No, sir. No communications in the area."

Archer nodded, "Trip, what about the lights?"

Shaking his head, "Cap'n, I can't find anything. Everything here says the bridge lights are on and working. I've got to get an engineering team to start tracing the circuitry to find the problem."

"Do it. This isn't the best lighting to work by."

"Goddamn it, T'Pol! You scared the...." Tucker took a deep breath and everyone turned to look at him. T'Pol had moved from her station to look over his shoulder. She always moved silently, as Vulcans do. Her quietness combined with the red lighting made her alien features more pronounced. No one on the Enterprise ever made the mistake of talking about how Vulcans looked like some demons in Earth mythology. But they sure thought it and now was one of those occasions.

Archer went over to them. T'Pol looked at both of them with her left eyebrow arched, "I apologize, Commander. I did not mean to startle you. I merely wanted to let you know that when I was recording my log entries about this system, there appeared to be a slight flickering on my M-6
Archer quickly pointed between them. "Trip, I just saw a flicker on engineering panel D-7."

Trip quickly pushed his scanner towards that panel. He checked it twice. "There's nothing showing up. But I'll put an engineering team together to find out what's happening."

He left the bridge and Archer and T'Pol went back to their stations. The crew kept stealing glances at T'Pol. Archer caught them. He knew she had to be aware. Vulcans pretended not to notice 'odd' human behavior, but they did.

He really couldn't blame them. Well, he could and would, but he understood. He surreptitiously studied her. He didn't see any demons when he looked at her. But what he had come to realize in surprise, was that she is very good-looking. He quickly clarified to himself, 'In a Vulcan sort of way.' He looked at her again.

She looked up at him, "Demon?"

He grinned at her. "Not from my point of view."

She arched an eyebrow. The bridge lights suddenly came back on. Everyone blinked in the brightness.

"Bridge to Engineering. Trip, we've got lights. Good job."

"Maybe not so good, Cap'n. Now Engineering doesn't have any lights. We're lookin' into that now."

"Great. Keep me informed." Archer looked over at T'Pol. She was running more analyses.

"Captain. I have been trying to run diagnostics of the ship's systems, but I keep getting blocked at different locations each time I try."

Archer frowned and looked at Reed, "Lt, run some diagnostics in your systems and see if you also get blocked."

Before Malcolm could complete that, T'Pol interrupted, "Captain, a section of Deck 5 has just lost gravity. Lighting is fluctuating. The atmosphere is stable and there are no personnel currently on that section of Deck 5."

"Archer to Engineering. Trip, what the hell is happening on Deck 5?"

In Engineering was Trip running a hand through his hair, "Cap'n, I just don't know. If you would release either T'Pol or Reed to assist, we could get more done."

Archer nodded, "Alright, I'll send both of them." He looked at them as they stood, "Get your reliefs up here and get down to Engineering."

They walked into Engineering, "How can we help you, Commander?" Tucker looked frustrated as hell. "Well, Deck 5 is back to normal, but now Sickbay is listening to human operas and Phlox is not happy. Something about scaring his lizard."

Shaking his head, "T'Pol, I want you to monitor and validate the sensor arrays, the gravity sensors, the main computer, and take charge of Engineering. Malcolm, I want you to monitor life support, communications, and our weapons systems. I'm going to leave Katy in charge of the warp engines while the rest of us try to track down the problems."
Looking at a screen, "T'Pol, we'll also call you and Malcolm to document where we've been and what we've done and found. If anything happens, I want you to point us in that direction."

He turned to his three work crews and all three went their separate ways. For 30 minutes nothing happened. They monitored their systems and ran checks, Katy monitored the warp drive, and T'Pol and Reed were comparing their analyses.

Suddenly the lights in Engineering turned green and something possibly related to music blasted out of comm system. Reed winced in pain, T'Pol frowned.

At the same time, "Archer to Engineerâ€”Trip, what is that noise?"

T'Pol was trying to trace the comm link back to the main computer and Malcolm was trying to disable the speakers. Malcolm and Katy were still wincingâ€”the noise was awful.

T'Pol replied in a loud voice, "Captain, I believe it is a Klingon opera. We received it during our last update from Earth. Commander Tucker and his engineering crews are going around the ship trying to determine the problem."

"Alright, anything else, besides the...opera?"

Trip walked back into Engineering and stopped dead in his tracks. "What is that awful noise? Green lighting? Everyone looks like a Vulcan!"

T'Pol tilted an eyebrow at him. Malcolm and Katy looked at their consoles.

"Trip," came warningly out of the comm system.

Shrugging apologetically, "Sorry."

"Have you figured out what's going on?"

Silence. Then T'Pol and Reed exchanged a glance and she said, "Captain, we have a theory."

Frowning, "Go on."

"Based on the surveys and diagnostics that have been conducted, we believe that the Enterprise is being affected from an unknown frequency being sent off into space from the 4th planet."

"What's your reasoning for that?"

"We have been noting an occasional, weak frequency coming up from that planet. It is also the only planet with any ruins left."

"Can we go down to the planet?"

"Yes, but we will need to be careful, as the atmosphere has been depleting. It will be breathable, but barely. An away team will need to keep their physical movements to a minimum."

A second, "Alright. T'Pol, you, Reed, Phlox, Sato, and a security team meet me in the Docking Bay. Trip, either you or Lt Kowalski need to come with us."

Sighing, "Cap'n, I think I should stay here. Katy will go with you to the planet."

"Then you're in-charge while we're gone. Archer out."
Once they were on their way, Archer asked T'Pol more about the planet.

"There are a few plants and small reptiles or mammals left on the planet. The atmosphere is oxygen-based, but very thin. We will tire quickly and should take that into consideration."

He looked back at her over his shoulder, "That means I should land the shuttle close to the ruins so we don't have to walk very far?"

She nodded, while checking her sensors, "Yes, Captain."

Phlox spoke up, "Captain, I also have an injection that I can give to help us with the environment, but I would prefer to only do that when we tire. T'Pol should be able to handle the environment for the longer than the rest of us."

"Why is that?"

Phlox answered, somewhat surprised, "Because Vulcan also has a thin atmosphere. Of course, not nearly as thin as this, but thin enough to cause races from higher oxygen content planets some discomfort." Going into story-telling mode, "When I was on Vulcan..."

"You've been to Vulcan?"

Smiling, "Yes, I attended a 2-week medical seminar on Vulcan. It was the first time that I had been on a thin atmosphere planet before. It was quite an experience."

Smiling in memory, "Vulcan isn't, excuse me Sub-Commander, exactly a recreational planet. It has a thin atmosphere, high temperatures, and very long sunny days. Oh, yes, very little water. Vulcan has raised hydroponics to its current level of sophistication."

"Oh." Checking some sensors, "We're coming into the atmosphere. We should be landing in about 10 minutes."

There were only a few turbulent areas caused by the atmosphere bleeding off. Archer landed them about 20 meters from the ruins.

They slowly left the shuttle. Even though they intellectually knew to expect a thin atmosphere, it still surprised them. They immediately felt the need to take deep breaths.

Phlox looked at them, "Just breathe normally. Everything is alright. We can spend 5 or 6 hours down here without significant problems."

Everyone looked around at the landscape. Dismal. Sad. The sky was an angry dark reddish-orange. Clouds raced through the sky. They were looking at a dying planet.

The wind whipped around them. Howling at them, pulling at their clothes, then disappearing. Shadows loomed making the area darker than they expected. The old sun barely giving sufficient light to make it day. It was chilly, especially when the wind blew past them. Thankfully, they had worn their heavier jackets.

The plant life, if it could be called that, was scraggly. Trying desperately to live, but slowly giving way to the inevitable. If there was any animal life, they didn't see it.

The ruins were before them. Uneasily Hoshi eyed them. They reminded her of that ruined castle she had walked through in Scotland.
Archer looked over at T'Pol. She scanned the area, "I do not detect any life in the area."

He nodded. "Let's go."

They slowly moved towards the ruins, looking around. Reed was up with Archer, T'Pol, and Phlox; and Ensigns Mantusco and Watson were with Sato and Kowalski.

Phlox remarked softly, "This reminds me of the story that Ensign Mantusco told us."

Mantusco, "You said it."

Both Archer and T'Pol looked at him, and he blushed. The wind howled around them again, and they tightened ranks.

"Captain, the wind is increasing to 20kph and the temperature is now 10C and decreasing. It should reach 0C within the next 4-5 hours. The daylight should also disappear at the same time."

Nodding, "Alright, let's get to the ruins and see what we can find. Everyone, keep an eye out and let us know if you see anything." Softly, "Doctor, please monitor everyone and if anyone appears to be upset with this place, let me or T'Pol know."

He nodded and Archer stepped forward with Reed. Phlox looked at T'Pol, "Interesting. Upset with the planet? I suppose growing up with all those ghost stories would make it possible to be upset on a planet like this."

He glanced curiously at T'Pol, "What about you? From what I understand Vulcans look like some Earth devils or something. Does that bother you?"

She looked at him, then back to where Archer disappeared. "No." Looking at the away team, "However, I would expect that Denoblia, like Vulcan, has heard the stories that are spread throughout space. Also, some of our databases contain information about other species that resemble some of the human and other species mythologies, but are very real."

She gestured for him to follow her as she scanned behind the group and to the sides. She made her way up to Archer.

He whispered to her, "Took you long enough."

She just looked at him, not exactly sure what he meant. "I was speaking with Doctor Phlox about ghost stories."

Frowning, "What?" He shook his head, "What I meant, was that I was expecting you to be up here with me."

She looked at him, then around at the ruins. They had slowly come up on them. It had probably been a large home at one time. There were some crumbling walls, but others were in astonishingly good shape. Parts of the roof were also intact. The building was stained in varying shades of dirty gray as any other color had faded away during the passage of time. Shadows chased them from the corners.

T'Pol was scanning them. She looked up at Archer, and shook her head.

"Let's go in." Archer led them into what was probably the entrance of the building. It had the look of a hallway. Not much was left, but lots of rubble and some remnants of what was probably broken furniture. They made their way deeper into the building.
T'Pol scanned the doorways along the hall and stopped. Archer came back to her.

"Captain, I thought I had detected an energy source, but now it has disappeared."

"Where was it?" She pointed into a room. He stared at it. Nodding at T'Pol and Reed, he led them in.

They looked around. It was a large room, probably 15 meters in length and 5 meters wide. It was almost intact with only a few holes in the ceiling, letting pale spotlights into the room.

Mantusco entered last, ensuring that nothing was following them.

"Captain?"

"Yeah, Hoshi?"

"Is this place just plain eerie or is it me?" She shuddered as she looked around. Katy looked at her sympathetically, so did Watson.

T'Pol walked over to a wall, scanning it. Archer and the rest were looking at Hoshi.

"Yes, it is. But it's our job to find out if that frequency T'Pol found is impacting the ship." He grinned confidently at her and she slowly smiled back at him.

He looked around, "T'Pol?" Everyone looked around the room, she wasn't there.

He drew his communicator, "Archer to T'Pol." Waiting. "Archer to Sub-Commander T'Pol."

Nothing.

"Reed, we need to find the Sub-Commander. Take Watson or Mantusco."

Reed nodded at Mantusco, they went over to the wall and examined it. Finding nothing. They looked at Archer, then went deeper into the room, examining the walls and floor. They disappeared into the darkness. Only their flashlights signaling that they were still there. That also slowly disappeared.

Archer looked everyone over. "Kowalski, Watson, go over and take another look at that wall. Something about it made her walk over there. See if you can find out what it was." Looking at Sato, "Hoshi, go help them."

She walked over to Katy and Steve to add her efforts. They scanned the wall again, searching for energy traces, hidden latches, indentations—anything. They slowly moved down to the next section, still searching.

Archer and Phlox stood together watching them and looking around the room. Archer walked over to wall and looked at it, trying to figure out what T'Pol saw that made it so interesting.

He touched the wall. It was cool and slightly rough. He ran his fingers over the texture. Frowning, he thought he felt a pattern. He slowly traced it and fell through the wall!

He felt the rush of cold air passing him, then something grabbed him and stopped his fall. He looked up—it was T'Pol. She took in his pale face and continued to hold his arm. Archer found himself trying to take deep breaths and it wasn't working. He slowly brought his breathing under control and T'Pol gently released his arm. He hadn't realized he was using so much of her strength.

He looked at her, "Thanks." Looking around, "Where the hell are we?"
They were in a room, a huge room. They both stared at it. T'Pol had been there longer, but she was still considering what she was seeing. Archer frowned.

Unlike the rooms above them, this one was in extremely good repair. The furnishings appeared to be made of wood and lavishly clothed in dark red velvet upholstery. The room was full of dark, bold color. Red, burgundy, green, gold, black, even touches of pink and purple. Elegant sofas, chairs and a chaise lounge were there. Gilded mirrors. Heavily polished wood floors covered in oriental rugs. Lit candle sconces. Lamps with fringe. A burning fireplace. Silken wallpaper on the walls. There were even lace doilies on the end tables. Over to the left was an opulently dressed dining room table. Set for 2 with candelabras, gilded china plates, wine glasses, water goblets, silverware, linen napkins. It was quite eerily genteel.

T'Pol looked up at Archer, "Captain, I presume this is something out of Earth history?"

With a stunned expression, "Yeah. I think its called Victorian or maybe gothic."

He looked at T'Pol, "Do you have any idea how it could be here?"

With an eyebrow arched, she turned to scanned the area, again, "It could have been scanned from our computer database. The furniture and furnishings are new. It would seem it was created for us."

"I should feel flattered, but somehow I don't." He grimaced as he looked around the room again.

"T'Pol, I don't see any doors or windows. How did we get here?"

"I have not been able to locate any exits. However, I believe that the entrance is activated when a certain pattern is traced on the wall in the room we were previously in. Some sort of shield is deactivated and then you 'fall' through."

"I take it the communicators don't work? Phasers?"

"You are correct, the signal cannot leave this area. Our phasers have also been drained of their charges."

Sighing, he looked around again, and walked over to the fireplace. The fire appeared to be real and it gave off heat.

"For some reason, I feel like a rat caught in a trap." He looked back at T'Pol who was still scanning the area where the entrance portal was located.

She looked up at him and slowly made her way to the area he was in, "I believe you are correct. We may very well be lab experiments. Yet I still have not been able to detect any life forms. This may be a computer performing its programming. Depending on what that programming is..." She stopped at his frown.

Thoughts of medical experimentations, vivisections, and torture crossed his mind. He was sure the same had already crossed T'Pol's.

She continued, "We may also be here awhile as the crew tries to find us."

He gestured to the table, "Is the food eatable?"

"According to the sensor, it is safe."
"I feel better in here. Is there more atmosphere in here? It's also warm."

"Yes, Captain. Evidently whoever has done this (she gestured to the room) has adjusted the room to the environmental norms for the ship."

"Let's search the room? You start on one side, me the other. If there's something here we should be able to find it."

She nodded and they began their search. After two-hours, "Well, T'Pol, that was fruitless."

"Unfortunately, I have to agree." She put her scanner on her belt and looked at him.

Trying to maintain a positive attitude, "Then, Sub-Commander, may I invite you to dinner? Who knows how long we'll be here until we can figure a way out or the others find us a way out."

Thinking about that, "Yes, Captain." She followed him to the table, and he pulled out a chair for her.

She looked at the chair, then at Archer, slowly sitting down in the offered chair. She gracefully picked up a bowl that appeared to contain green beans and offered it to him. He smiled and they ate, discussing their situation.

2-HOURS EARLIER IN THE DECAYING ROOM

Phlox shouted, 'CAPTAIN!' He started to the wall where the Captain had just disappeared. The others hurried back to him.

Reed spoke first, "Doctor, where's the Captain?"

"Lt, one second he was there, then he wasn't." He gestured to the wall. "He was touching the wall. I didn't see what he was doing, he was standing in front of me." Phlox shrugged.

Reed muttered, "Bloody hell." He looked over at the wall, "Right, then. If both the Captain and Sub-Commander disappeared at this particular section of wall, there has to be something there. Let's start again and find it."

Everyone but Reed and Phlox went back to that wall. Reed pulled out his communicator, "Reed to Enterprise."

Tucker answered, "Enterprise here. Malcolm, you guys must have done something right down there. We've not had any problems for almost an hour now."

"Well, I can't say that for down here. Both the Captain and the Sub-Commander are missing. The Sub-Commander's been gone almost a half an hour, the Captain about 5-minutes."

"What happened, Lt?"

"They were both looking at a section of wall, then they disappeared. We were searching for the Sub-Commander when the Captain disappeared. We're assuming they're together."

"Find them, Lt. Keep me informed about the situation. Enterprise out."

Reed looked at everyone. "Alright, Lt Kowalski, I want you and Ensigns Sato and Mantusco to continue to try and open that portal." He looked over at Watson and Phlox, "You two come with me, we're going to search the rest of the building."
BACK IN THE GOTHIC/VICTORIAN ROOM

Archer and T'Pol were eating dinner. Archer had some of the beef roulade and T'Pol had roasted squash. She looked up at Archer, "Captain, do you recall when we were staying in the warp nacelles and there was that one night when ghost stories were being told?"

This time arcing both his eyebrows, "Yeah. What about it?"

Taking another helping of green beans and offering it to Archer, "Once we returned to the ship, I did some further research on the subject of ghost stories and hauntings. It was...unusual."

Archer smirked, "I bet."

With an arched eyebrow, she continued, "This type of room appears in several different stories. Particularly in the stories where there are ghosts, vampires, werewolves—both in serious stories and humorous ones."

She took a moment to gather her thoughts. This was somewhat farfetched, but it was a possible scenario, "Captain, if this is a computer-generated situation we have been placed in, we should expect..." she trailed off at his shocked look.

"Are you saying we should be expecting vampires to attack us in our sleep?"

She nodded, "Depending on the motivation of placing us here, it would be illogical to ignore that possibility."

She looked at the table and her water glass, "Captain, there is also something else we should be considering."

At his quizzical look, "The away team must return to the Enterprise this evening. They cannot continue to work in the thin atmosphere of this planet."

"So, we're probably going to be stuck here, in this room, for the night?"

She nodded, "Yes."

She looked over his shoulder and both eyebrows rose, he turned to look.

A bed—a huge, 4-poster bed had appeared. It was dressed in satins and tapestries with lots and lots of pillows. Its canopy draped artfully to the floor from its posts. It looked as opulent as the rest of the room.

Archer looked up at T'Pol and grimaced. She hadn't changed her expression yet. She understood what everything meant, but...

She finally looked at Archer. "Captain, I believe we are supposed to share the bed?"

Staring at her, "Yeah, that's my impression."

He looked at his plate, then back to her, "You know, T'Pol, we don't have to share the bed. One of us could sleep on the floor or the sofa."

She looked at the floor, then the sofa. After a few minutes, "Captain, there is a high probability that something will happen during the night. It would be safer for both of us to share the bed."

BACK IN THE DECAYING ROOM
"Lt Reed, we need to go back to the shuttle and return to the Enterprise. We cannot physically remain here any longer without experiencing further physical problems." Phlox looked sympathetically at Reed.

Reed wanted to say they wouldn't leave, but he looked at the away team. They were exhausted, dirty, and physically couldn't go much longer in the thin atmosphere. He reluctantly nodded.

"Reed to Enterprise."

Tucker's voice sounded, "Enterprise here, Lt. What's happening down there?"

"Commander, we haven't been able to find the Captain or the Sub-Commander, and the away team can't stay down here any longer. Dr. Phlox has recommended that we return to the ship for rest."

Silence, then a sigh, "Alright, Lt. You've been down there almost 6 hours. Get back up here and we'll try again in the morning."

"Yes, sir. We're heading back to the shuttle now. We should be aboard the Enterprise in 30 minutes."

The away team took one last look around and walked tiredly back to the shuttle.

BACK IN THE GOTHIC/VICTORIAN ROOM

After they had finished eating, they went to sit in the living area and were discussing ghosts, vampires, and other monsters.

What was also going through Archer's mind was that he wasn't quite sure of the correct way to tell his Vulcan First Officer its time for bed.

Finally, he just got up, "Alright, T'Pol. We've done something like this before—actually a couple of times. So we can do it again. At least this time we've got a mattress, pillows, and lots of blankets."

She had arched an eyebrow, but nodded. "Yes, Captain."

They moved over to the bed and each took the side they always did. T'Pol on the right, Jonathan on the left. They went to bed with their uniforms on, but had taken off their boots. They had already removed their jackets earlier.

Archer started to grin, then chuckle. "You know, T'Pol, I don't think I've ever slept with a member of my crew as much as I seem to sleep with you. It's really sort of funny, in its own way." He looked over at her. She was watching him.

He had gotten used to that over the last couple of years. She nodded, "Indeed, Captain. It is not normal in the Vulcan High Command either, but we do seem to keep finding ourselves in these circumstances."

That was as close as she was going to get to admitting to being amused. He nodded, still grinning, "Do me a favor, Sub-Commander. Actually, two of them."

She arched an inquiring eyebrow, "First, I would like you to wake me if you need to leave the bed during the night and I'll do the same. I don't want one of us disappearing. Second, please call me Jonathan when we're in bed. It's too surreal to be called Captain in bed. Pretend it's a human-thing."
She blinked. "Yes...Jonathan." She pulled up the blankets, as the room had gotten chillier. They moved around and sorted themselves out, trying to get comfortable.

Archer shook his head at the situation. He could complain, but what good would it do?

"Jonathan, is something wrong?"

"I'm just trying to figure out how we got here and what could happen during the night. But since we can't do anything more than what we're doing, I suggest we get some sleep. Do you need to meditate or anything first?"

Surprised by him remembering her nightly meditations, "I will do a light meditation here in bed. The room is too cold for me to complete a full meditation."

Frowning, he had also noticed how cold it had gotten. He looked around the room, the fireplace was still burning, but the room was too large for it to do much good.

Now to a more delicate topic, "T'Pol, if it gets too cold for you, uhm, you can...I am..." 'Oh, hell with it.' "T'Pol, we can share the middle of the bed and our body heat. I expect you to roll over here if you get too cold. I need you to be fully functional to help get us out of here."

She was silent for a moment, then she looked over at him, "Jonathan, I am cold."

He smiled at her frankness and acceptance of necessity. He moved over to the middle of the large bed, and she met him there. She appeared to have some difficulty in deciding what to do next. He reached over and gently pulled her over to rest on his shoulder.

After an uncomfortable few seconds, she relaxed against him and then really surprised him. She moved around, trying to find a comfortable position. She finally rested her left hand on his chest and drew her leg up on top of his leg. She put her head in the area between his shoulder and neck. He froze; he wasn't expecting that at all. He figured she'd lean tensely against him and they'd both be uncomfortable.

T'Pol spoke in the darkness, "Is this acceptable, Jonathan? As you said, we need to rest and we cannot do that if we are not comfortable."

"Yeah, this is fine." He wrapped an arm around her and they both fell asleep.

DECAYING ROOM—THE NEXT MORNING

Tucker had come down with Reed, Phlox, Sato, and Security Ensigns Gomez and Torres. Trip had left Mayweather in charge of the ship with Kowalski in charge of Engineering.

"Commander, this is the wall both of them were standing at when they disappeared. We've run engineering analyses of it, we've scanned it, we've touched it, we've taken samples of it. Nothing."

Trip looked at it and ran his scanner over it. Nothing. He touched it. It was cold. No vibrations, nothing. He sighed. He looked over at Reed, "Malcolm, try the phaser."

Reed nodded and aimed his phaser to fire at the door. Nothing. He increased the power. Nothing. He nodded at Gomez and Torres to fire with him. Nothing.

Tucker shook his head at them, and went back to the wall. He frowned, 'What was that?' He put his fingers on a shadow on the wall.
"COMMANDER!" Reed shouted as he watched Tucker fade out and disappear.

IN THE GOTHIC/VICTORIAN ROOM "THE NEXT MORNING"

The room was silent. Artificial gray morning light slowly filtered in the room, followed by a thud.

T'Pol immediately sat-up followed by Archer. They quickly looked around the room to see what new problem was arising, literally. It had been a hell of a night.

Tucker stood up, dragging his eyes around this weird room. 'Where the hell was he?' He got even more confused when he saw Archer and T'Pol in bed. 'What the hell are they doin'?

He was shocked when they didn't jump out of bed in embarrassment. Archer looked at T'Pol, "How long was it this time?"

She barely stifled a sigh, "Approximately 2.5 hours."

Archer did sigh, "2.5 hours. Great. I hope whoever is doing this to us has made the coffee."

She looked over at the table and it was set-up for breakfast. "I believe they did." They both looked over a Trip, acknowledging his presence.

"Hello, Trip. I hope you had a nice trip down into our little bit of hell." Trip watched them put on their boots.

T'Pol spoke to him, "Commander, I would not lean against that wall. We have no idea what will come out of it next."

She turned to look at Archer, "Captain, if I remember the stories correctly, we do not have to worry about vampires until this evening."

Frowning at her, "Well, that's a pleasant thought."

At her arched eyebrow, he gestured an apology, "I'm sorry, T'Pol. I still can't believe last night." They walked around to the foot of the bed and looked at the torn bedcovers. He touched her elbow and they went to the table.

Trip was still standing at the portal entrance. Archer looked over at him, "Trip, T'Pol said you shouldn't stand there. Come over to the table and have some breakfast."

He walked slowly towards them, wondering if he hit his head, "Uh-huh. How are you guys doing this morning?"

They both looked at him, then Archer poured himself some coffee and T'Pol made some tea.

Tucker sat down next to Archer and got himself some coffee. "I'd say you were grouchy. Both of you. I didn't know Vulcans get grouchy. It's not logical." He smiled at his joke, but broke off when Archer glared at him.

Archer took a deep breath and nodded when T'Pol offered him some eggs. She took the toast and jam. "Trip, we've been stuck here for..."

"18 hours." T'Pol filled in the blank.

"And we can't find a way out. We're stuck in a strange gothic room in some type of laboratory experiment or..." he looked at T'Pol. "What were you saying earlier?"
"We could also be participating in a horror story. If this is computer-generated, we may have to complete it before we are released."

Archer passed the eggs to Tucker, then grimaced. T'Pol spoke up, "Captain, it would be a good idea to check your wound. It was difficult to clean last night in the candlelight."

He nodded, "Yeah, when we've finished breakfast. I'm starving."

He looked up at her, "How's your neck?" He noticed she was eating more than normal. "Do you feel okay?"

"I am well. I will need to clean that wound also. But I also agree, after we finish eating."

Trip just looked at them. They were acting different, but he just couldn't quite get a grip on yet.

"What happened to you guys last night?" Archer frowned again and exchanged looks with T'Pol.

"Well, let me see. A vampire, a werewolf, and oh yeah, ghosts. Can't forget those...ghosts."

T'Pol arched one eyebrow. "There was also a monster I could not name."

Archer nodded and finished his eggs.

Tucker looked at them, "What? Vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and an unknown monster."

"That is correct, Commander." She finished her tea. She got up and went to the bathroom, but first she looked around it before going in.

She looked back at Archer, who had watched her intently, and nodded. He refilled his cup and went into the bathroom with her.

Tucker trailed along behind them. "Cap'n, I'm not understanding what's going on."

T'Pol helped him out of his uniform top and slowly peeled away the bandages. She cleaned the wound again with some disinfectant, but before she could put clean bandages on it, he turned to show Trip.

Claw marksâ€”3 of them. About 3cm apart and about 8cm long. They weren't too deep where they ripped into his flesh, but they were extremely painful.

Tucker jerked, "What the hell happened to you?"

"That's not all." He turned back around to T'Pol and pulled down the collar on her uniform to show him two puncture wounds on the side of her throat. When he realized what he had done, "Sorry, T'Pol."

She nodded and taped the bandages over his wounds. She helped him pull his uniform back up and then turned to clean her wounds. He took the clean hand towel from her. He cleaned and dressed the punctures while she held her collar down.

Finally Trip came out of his stupor, "You're telling me, T'Pol got bit by a vampire?" They both nodded. His mouth was open, "Then you got clawed by a...werewolf?" They nodded again. He stared at them.

"You're not joking, are you?"
Archer frowned at him. "No, we're not."

T'Pol put her hand on Archer's shoulder, stilling him, and pointed out into the room. Archer and Tucker looked into the room and saw a ghost. It was a woman in a long ragged, dirty dress and she was carrying her head by the look of the throat her head had been torn from her body. She glided slowly through the room and turned to look at them. She opened her mouth in a horrid mimicry of speaking and then silently screamed at them. She slowly disappeared.

Tucker dropped his coffee cup. "Hell! Was that a ghost?"

T'Pol answered that one, "That is its appearance, but I hesitate to say it is real. I believe that all of this is computer-generated and we are in the middle of a story."

Archer grimaced at her. They both looked tired. "Trip, we've had a bad night. I don't think we got more than 4 hours total of sleep last night. We've had 'visitors' all night long." They left the bathroom and went to sit in the living room.

Tucker was more confused, "You guys are taking this awfully well. If I had been clawed by a werewolf or chewed on by a vampire, I'd be looking for a way out of here."

He did notice that they sat by each other. She on the dark red velvet sofa and he on a red satin chair. Trip took the other chair. "We've checked this room thoroughly, twice. The only entrance is the portal we all fell through."

He shrugged, "According to T'Pol's sensor, everything is coming out of that."

"Commander, since you are here, I would assume that Lt Reed knows where the entrance to the portal is?"

"Yeah, he does. But we can't figure out a way to open it. I probably got here the same way you did. I touched a shadow on the wall then, BAM, on the floor."

"Malcolm's tried firing his phase pistol on the portal, but nothing. I would guess he's gone to get a phase rifle or maybe grenade." He looked over his shoulder, "What else should I expect?"

Archer and T'Pol exchanged a look, agreeing to tell him everything, but the personal details. She went to the bed and straightened the bed clothing. She reached under the pillows and withdrew a large silver cross. Both Archer and Tucker watched her, but Archer kept looking across the room to the portal. She came back to them and sat down on the sofa.

Trip sputtered, "A crossâ€”c'mon T'Pol. That'sâ€”" He looked up at Archer, who was frowning at him again. Thinking about T'Pol's punctures, "I guess it's really not crazy at all." He got up and refreshed his coffee. "Would you tell me what happened last night?"

Again, that look between them, then Archer began, "Well, you know that T'Pol was missing first."

He chuckled, "Imagine a Vulcan suddenly being dropped into a room that looks like this."

T'Pol took a sip of her tea, "Indeed."

Trip shook his head as he looked at the room again. 'This is just too weird.'

"Then I fell through the portal and found T'Pol here. We searched the room thoroughly, scanned it, touched everything, and we couldn't find a way out. The communicator signal won't penetrate the walls. Then T'Pol and I sat down for dinner, which, by the way, has a habit of appearing when its time to eat. After that we went to bed. That's when all the fun stuff happened."
Trip snorted at that comment, then at the look he received from both Archer and T'Pol, "Sorry."

Archer looked at T'Pol, another silent message passed between them, "The room got colder and colder, the fire wasn't providing enough heat to keep the room warm. But eventually we fell asleep. We were asleep for about an hour," he looked over at T'Pol and she nodded, "then we had our first visitor."

T'Pol spoke up, "It was a ghost. The Captain was sleeping and something had awoken me. I felt a touch, at first I thought it was the Captain, as we had agreed we would not leave the bed without the other knowing. But when I looked at him, he was asleep. I looked around the room and saw nothing. I closed my eyes and to go back to sleep. A few minutes later, I again felt a touch on my face. It felt like a hand was drawing a finger down my face, and it was cold. Again, I saw nothing and closed my eyes. Evidently I was not acting sufficiently upset, because the next touch became more demanding. The pressure of a hand was on my throat and pushing down. Not enough to completely prevent my breathing, but to inform me that its intentions had turned hostile. I woke the Captain then."

She stopped and after Archer gave her a look, he continued, "T'Pol woke me up and at first I couldn't tell what was going on. Then she managed to whisper out that there was a hand at her throat." He shook his head in memory, "The pressure suddenly let up on her throat, and things got rougher after that. I was pushed down into the mattress and T'Pol was thrown down on top of me. Then we were being pressed, harder and harder, into the bed. There wasn't anymore give in the mattress and we were being crushed. I could feel T'Pol trying to rise up on her elbows to give us some breathing room, but the more she tried the stronger the pressure became."

They were both looking at the floor. Trip asked softly, "What happened next?"

Another glance between them, "We blacked out and woke up about 5 minutes later."

"Damn," slipped out of Trip. "But that wasn't all was it?"

"No." Taking a sip of coffee, now cold, he continued. "After laying there for awhile and nothing happened, we decided to try to go back to sleep."

He remembered that after they had woken up, she slipped off him. 'Jonathan, I do not know if it will provide any protection, but we should continue to try to sleep as we did earlier.'

He nodded, 'Yeah.' She lifted up so he could put his arm around her. This time she didn't stop with a hand on his chest, she placed her arm over his waist. Then he pulled her so she was lying more fully on his chest and he linked his arms around her.

He told her, 'I agree, this may or may not work, but at least we can't do anything without waking the other.' She nodded and put her head down on his chest.

Again, T'Pol, took over the story, "It was approximately 2-hours later. I again was awoken first. I could not see anything, but I knew we were not alone in the room. There was something in the shadows. But it just stayed there. Watching us. I woke the Captain."

Remembering, 'Jonathan.' She gently shook him and whispered again, 'Jonathan.' He didn't open his eyes, but said, 'T'Pol, please don't tell me that there's something in the room.' She kept her eyes trained on the shadows in the room, the light from the lamps had extinguished when the heat went off. The candles they had relit after the ghost flickered in the slight draft. 'I cannot. There is something in the shadows.'
She paused in her retelling of the story to Trip, and Archer went over to the table and got himself some hot coffee and brought T'Pol a fresh cup of tea, surprising Trip with that.

After sitting back down, "T'Pol told me something was watching us from the shadows. She said that we should relight the candle by the bed. It had blown out." He took a sip, "Since she was closer to the candle she reached up to get it and the matches."

"As she was reaching for the candle, something attacked from the shadows. It grabbed T'Pol, ripping her away from the bed, and dragged her back into the shadows."

Tucker shocked, looked from Archer to T'Pol. She looked into her tea, then up at both of them, "The vampire grabbed me from the bed and ran back into the shadows. He kept repeating, 'Now we'll see how much your husband loves you', and laughing. Then he licked my neck and bit me." Only her Vulcan control stopped her from rubbing the puncture wounds.

Archer took over, he looked at her, then over at Trip, "I got up and followed them into the shadows. I noticed the large silver cross sitting on the table and grabbed it as I passed. I followed the sound of the vampire's laughter and heard what he was saying to her. Then I heard T'Pol make a strange noise. I went toward it and found him biting her. Since I had the cross and crosses are supposed to stop vampires, I touched him with it. He dropped T'Pol and I pulled her behind me. I kept holding the cross against him and he kept screaming, eventually turning into ashes."

They were all silent thinking about that. "T'Pol was still bleeding. Not a lot, but a few drops of green blood were dripping down her neck. We stopped the bleeding."

They both remembered what happened. After the vampire disintegrated, Archer finally looked at T'Pol. She was in shock and bleeding. He still had her wrist in his hand and he pulled her into the bathroom, sitting her down on the side of the tub. He gently washed the blood away. 'How do you feel?' She had looked up at him and gently touched her neck, 'That was...an experience I would not want to have again.' He nodded and gave her a small glass of water to drink.

He had looked around the room and led them out. 'Let's go back to bed.' She arched an eyebrow at him. He grimaced, 'I know, I know. But where else are we to go? At least we can rest on the bed. But I want to move it against the wall. Since they seem to be attacking you, you can sleep against the wall.'

She nodded, a thought crossing her face. She helped him move the bed against the wall and crawled back into bed to sleep for the 3d time that night. He got in after her and pulled the blankets over them, scooting them both closer to the wall. He was determined to keep T'Pol safe, even if he had to stay awake for the rest of the night. She again turned into his warmth and closed her eyes. If truth be told, she didn't feel that well, so she initiated a pain controlling meditation. It seemed sluggish, she must have lost at least liter of blood...to the vampire.

'Jonathan?'

'Yeah?'

'Do you recall when I mentioned that we could be in computer-generated recreation of a ghost story?'

'Yeah, and now I agree with you. That comment about your husband sounded like something right out of some gothic horror story. I think that's why you're getting attacked all the time.'

Tucker still just looked at them, then said, "Okay, you've been attacked by a ghost and a vampire.
You're back in bed and T'Pol's down a pint of blood. Where does the werewolf come in and the unnamed monster?

He still stared at them, "Ya' know, if you weren't my Captain and T'Pol a Vulcan, I'd say you were spinning me a really good horror story. Now, tell me how you got clawed by a werewolf."

T'Pol arched an eyebrow and looked at Archer. He took a deep breath, "Alright, we'd been trying to sleep for almost 2-hours when I felt T'Pol stiffen. I looked around the room, then down at T'Pol. I asked her what was wrong."

She picked up the story, "I smelt something that reminded me of Porthos, but much dirtier, much more potent." She looked at Archer who had a surprised look on his face.

"Porthos?"

She nodded, "It was my only reference that I could associate with the smell. Then I recalled the werewolf." He slightly grinned at her, letting her know he was okay with that.

"I whispered that I thought it was a werewolf to the Captain. I told him according to legends, only silver bullets could kill them, but that logically anything silver should kill them. We had the cross. But we needed more weapons. A werewolf is supposed to be a vicious killer."

Trip thought, 'This is unbelievable and now I'm stuck in here with them.'

Archer took up the tale, "We looked around the room and I asked her where she thought it was. She nodded towards the bathroom. The candlesticks appeared to be silver, so I grabbed the candlesticks. They had been blown out again. I gave one to T'Pol and I kept the other. I also gave her the cross to hold. Since I was closest to the werewolf I needed one of my hands free."

Snorting at himself, "Yeah, right. That was a good thought, but didn't quite work out that way in reality." T'Pol looked at Archer with what could be sympathy.

Tucker glanced quickly back and forth between the two of them. "Well, what happened?"

T'Pol took up the story, "The werewolf ran out of the bathroom and pounced on us in bed. The Captain rose and hit out at it with a candlestick. He was successful, he got in 3 hits. I was also trying to hit the werewolf, but I was firmly wrapped in the bedclothes. So I was only minimally effective."

She paused, "The Captain turned trying to prevent me from being bitten and he was clawed in the back. He hit out behind him and the werewolf fell off the bedclothes and I was able to move again. I pushed the Captain down and hit the werewolf in the forehead with the candlestick and I pushed the cross at him. It howled and gathered itself to attack when the unknown monster raced through and grabbed it by the neck. They both disappeared through the portal."

Again, Archer and T'Pol remembered the nightmare. Archer remembered the intense pain he felt when he was clawed. He remembered T'Pol pushing him down so she could protect him. Then he felt her shaking his shoulder, 'Captain, Jonathan. You need to get up. I believe that your injury may become infected. We must wash it out."

She pulled him up and they made it into the bathroom. This time she had him sit on the side of the tub and gently pushed his uniform top down to his waist. He heard her take a deep breath when she had looked at the wound in the light of the candle flame. 'I need to clean it out.' He nodded.

She gathered the supplies and came back to him. 'Captain, you will need to lean back over the
bathtub, so I can clean the wound. You may place your arm around my waist for support.'

He wasn't going to argue, he was in too much pain. So he wrapped an arm around her waist and let her lean him back over the tub. She rinsed it thoroughly out. She knew she was hurting him, but there wasn't any other way. She quickly completed that and put some disinfectant on them as carefully as she could. He may need stitches, but she had nothing else to work with. She gently moved him back to a sitting position and taped bandages over the wounds.

He softly teased her, T'Pol, another favor. When we're in the bathroom or in bed, please call me Jonathan. Remember surreal. Now let's go back to bed.' He touched her arm, 'Thank you.'

She tilted an eyebrow at him he couldn't see and helped him back to bed. This time he slept on his side, leaning against her. This is where they were when they heard another thump and sat up.

"So, Trip, that's where you came in. Welcome to our little bit of hell."

"Well, thank you most to death, Cap'n. I can't tell you how much it means to be here and waiting for the next monster to come in and eat us."

He spread his hands out, "Isn't there anything we can do?"

T'Pol replied, "Commander, if you have any suggestions?" He looked at them again. They were injured and tired.

Sighing, "Well, I guess I can keep watch if you guys want to get some sleep. Maybe if you can rest, you can think of something to get us out of here. I'll also take a look around the room."

Archer and T'Pol looked at each other, then Tucker. Archer shrugged, he still hurt. "Just give us a couple of hours."

He looked over at T'Pol, "Don't even say it, T'Pol. I know Vulcans can go without sleep for long periods of time, but you've lost a lot of blood. For now, Trip is in charge of security." Archer handed him a candlestick.

Tucker looked at it with not a great deal of confidence, "Thanks, Cap'n. But what about the phasers? You didn't seem to use them last night."

"Fire yours at the sofa, Trip." He did. Nothing happened. "Damn, the charge has been drained." Taking a deep breath, 'great, security with a candlestick.'

Looking a little sheepish, "Ah, can I have the cross too?" T'Pol nodded and handed it to him. He took it and wrapped a small chain a couple of times around the arms and put it over his head.

Archer grinned understandingly at him and touched T'Pol's elbow. Tucker watched them lay down on top of the bed. There was definitely familiarity in those actions. He shook his head and started wandering around the room, but not going near the portal. He wanted back-up before he started there.

He tried not to watch them, but he heard Archer say "T'Pol" in the background. He looked around and saw her sit up and pull a blanket up over them. He could have sworn they were lying awfully close together, but he wasn't going there.

He pulled his sensor and studied each wall, slowly taking analyses of them. Nothing was showing up. He stopped by the dining room table and grabbed some grapes. He hadn't had grapes in months and these were sweet and juicy. He looked over at Archer and T'Pol and found them already asleep.
They must have been exhausted.

The second hour passed. Well, he'd give them another hour. Three hours should give them a good rest. Trip found nothing and carefully made his way over to the portal. He was scanning it as he approached it.

The energy levels suddenly shot up in his sensor. 'Oh, shit.' The portal opened and Hoshi and Phlox fell on the floor.

"Commander! Where are we? Did you find the Captain and the Sub-Commander?" Hoshi and Phlox stood up and they looked around.

Archer and T'Pol had gotten up and were already walking towards them. "Doctor, Ensign, nice of you to join us. Now please tell me that you've been able to keep the portal open?"

"Captain! We were just showing Lt Reed the pattern we found on the wall, when it opened and we fell through. But I think with that and the information we were able to gather, he should be able to get us out of here. We almost had it, then BAM. Here we are."

Phlox spoke up, "It was really quite interesting, the pattern reminded me of something, but I just can't remember what it is."

"I believe you are correct, Doctor. I also thought I had seen the pattern before, but I could not remember where either," T'Pol replied standing next to Archer.

Tucker shooed everyone away from the portal. "Let's not stand here, folks. Isn't it time for lunch or something?"

They turned to look around the room, "Fascinating. What kind of room is this? The colors are remarkable."

"Yeah, Doc. Ah, maybe you could go into the bathroom with the Cap'n and T'Pol. They've been injured."

Changing from tourist to Doctor, "Yes, of course. What happened to you?"

Before they could reply, Tucker spoke up, "T'Pol was bit by a vampire and lost some blood, and the Cap'n was clawed by a werewolf."

Everyone stared at them. Intrigued, Phlox looked at them again, "Really? I've never treated vampire or werewolf injuries before, but there's always a first time for everything. The bathroom?"

Archer sighed and gestured to the bathroom and they went in. Tucker and Hoshi stood at the door. "Commander, what happened to them?"

"Trip, let's do this story once. After we're done here, lunch should be on the table. It's fascinating how the table accommodates all of us, isn't it, Sub-Commander?"

She arched an eyebrow at him, "Yes, Captain, fascinating." She looked at Tucker and Hoshi, "Perhaps you could ensure that the table has made itself ready?"

"Ah, sure, Sub-Commander," and Tucker and Hoshi went to the table.

Phlox had pulled out his medical kit and said, "Alright, whose first?"

Archer seemed to be staring at her and not answering, "My bite has been healing, but if you would
She pulled her collar down and displayed the puncture wounds. Phlox looked at them, frowned, and ran his medical sensor over them. "How do you feel? I see that you've regained your blood volume, but the bite holes are ragged. I wouldn't be surprised if they were infected. I'll give you an injection of antibiotics."

Archer frowned at her, "Does it hurt? Why didn't you say anything?"

She looked at both of them composedly, "They are uncomfortable, but I would expect that your wounds are also. You did everything you could for me. I invoked a pain-controlling meditation, but it was only partially effective. The blood loss and the other visitations played into disabling the meditation."

Phlox watched the interaction carefully, "Ah, well, the Sub-Commander should be fine. We'll contain any infection. Now let's look at you, Captain."

He tried to get his uniform off, but couldn't because of where the claw marks were on his back. He didn't notice T'Pol walk over to him, but there she was helping him get his uniform undone. He smiled his thanks. She gently pushed it from his shoulders and down to his waist. She turned back to Phlox.

Phlox was reading his sensor of the Captain and watching them. 'Interesting.' "Sub-Commander, I assume you dressed the wounds?" At her nod, he asked, "Would you please take off the dressings? I'd like to put an antibiotic spray on them."

She arched an eyebrow, but nodded, and she removed them again.

Archer grinned at her over his shoulder and whispered, "This is familiar, isn't it? I really appreciate your help, T'Pol."

She nodded, "You are welcome, Jonathan." He was surprised she called him Jonathan in front of Phlox.

Speaking softly, "You did ask a favor from me in regards to bathrooms and beds."

Chuckling, he jerked forward when Phlox applied the spray. They both frowned at him.

"Sorry, Captain. These are quite deep. I may want to suture them on-board the ship." Looking around, "In a more sterile environment."

Phlox passed a large single bandage to T'Pol. "If you would, Sub-Commander. You've done an excellent job. Perhaps you should take up emergency medicine."

She nodded at his comments as she helped Archer put his uniform back on. He then gestured them out of the bathroom.

Taking their seats at the dining room table, Archer commented, "Ah, yes. I see the table hasn't disappointed us. It's set for lunch for 5."

Everyone looked surprised at his comment, except for T'Pol. She merely arched an eyebrow at him.

"Sir?"
"Yes, Hoshi? Wait, let me guess. You want to know what happened here." Again, they were surprised at his attitude change. Normally, the Captain saved any snide comments for T'Pol.

T'Pol noticed that he seemed to become angrier with each breath he took. She interrupted, "Commander Tucker, perhaps you could update Dr. Phlox and Ensign Sato. Please maintain a watch on the area."

Tucker nodded and they watched her turn to the Captain, "Captain, I need to speak with you. Perhaps we could return to the bathroom?"

He frowned at her, he was really getting angry and he didn't know why. He just was. He nodded, "Alright, Sub-Commander, let's go." He got up from the table and marched into the bathroom.

Everyone watched him and Phlox gave T'Pol his medical kit. If he was furious, the only one who could take his anger would be T'Pol. If he was sick, her strength would help subdue him.

She followed him in and closed the door. Tucker let go of a deep breath, "Damn it, this really is a little bit of hell."

Tucker told his wide-eyed audience what happened in this very strange room. When he got to the part where they saw the woman ghost, there was a thud in the bathroom. They all looked at the closed door.

Inside the bathroom, Archer had pushed T'Pol against the closed door. Acting totally out of character, he leaned against her, covering her body with his, and holding her hands at her sides. "I don't think a neck pinch is really necessary right now, T'Pol."

He nuzzled her neck, where she had been bitten. "I really am not pleased that someone else bit youâ€”no, not pleased at all."

She stayed against the door. She knew she could physically move him off her if she needed too, but in this small room he'd probably get hurt.

"Captainâ€”" She stopped when his mouth moved from her neck to her lips.

"Now, now, T'Pol. What about that favor you promised me?" He spoke against her mouth.

Her eyes darkened, she knew what was wrong now. She could smell the werewolf, something had released it and the only 'new' was the antibiotic.

She could do this. She softened her body against his, she needed her hands back so she wouldn't hurt him.

She spoke against his mouth, "Jonathan, I do not believe that this is the best location for this." He kissed her, roughly, pushing his tongue into her mouth, stopping her from talking.

He pulled back to again nuzzle her neck. "No, T'Pol, I think this is the best place."

But in his intense interest in her neck, he loosened his grip on her wrists. She slowly moved them up his body and unzipped his uniform top sliding her hand under his arm toward the wound. Yes, it was hot; a fever was raging in the wound. Apparently the antibiotics the doctor used caused a greater problem than the one they originally had.

Archer grabbed her and pulled her tightly against his body. With his face still in her neck, he bit her! She made a small noise of surprise and pain, then neck pinched him. He was unconscious and
she slowly lowered him to the side of the tub, and leaned him against her. She needed to wash the wound out again.

Everyone had gone quiet at the table as Trip finished his story. They were shocked.

"Trip, you saw a ghost? A real live, ghost?" Hoshi looked around the room for any signs of a ghost. They all took a quick glance at the bathroom door when they heard T'Pol make a sound that didn't sound at all pleasurable. They looked at each other and tentatively got up and went to the door.

Phlox knocked, "Sub-Commander, is everything alright?"

The door opened revealing an unconscious Archer, leaning against T'Pol with his uniform half off again.

Hoshi pointed in shock, "Sub-Commander, what happened to your neck?!"

She looked at Phlox, "Doctor, the antibiotic spray you gave the Captain had side-effects. We need to wash the wound out again." She had already started the water running.

Phlox took back his sensor and ran it over Archer. "That's not the antibiotic spray I intended to use. That one has hallucinogenic properties when used on humans. I don't know how it got switched."

She didn't look up, "I would suggest ghosts."

Everyone froze. Tucker finally said, "Alright, in this place that's not unexpected. From now on we double check any medications before we take them. What can we do?"

"If you would hold him upright, I can wash the wound out. Doctor, if you would double-check your medications." The rebuke was not missed.

"Yes, Sub-Commander." He double-checked them and after T'Pol was satisfied the wounds were clean, administered the correct ones. T'Pol got him dressed, again, and she and Tucker got him back on the bed. He was still unconscious.

Phlox came to T'Pol, Hoshi standing by her side. "Sub-Commander, what happened to your neck?"

Tucker came to stand by them. Expressionless she answered, "The Captain bit me."

They all looked at her neck in shock. It was very bruised and painful looking. You could see the human teeth marks where they had torn the skin and her original wounds bled slightly.

"This really is a little bit of hell," Trip whispered out, again. "T'Pol, you need to get those cleaned up. Human bites are probably just as bad as vampire ones."

She arched at eyebrow at him. She looked at Phlox, then back at Tucker, "Commander, if you would stay with him."

He nodded, "Yes, Ma'am."

T'Pol led her procession back into the bathroom. Hoshi stood in the door to double check the medications for Phlox. Phlox sighed at her, "Sub-Commander, I need you to release control, so I can evaluate the damage. I understand the pain must be quite severe."

She nodded and slowly released control over the wound. She lost color in her face and Hoshi reached out a hand to lend whatever support T'Pol needed. Phlox shook his head at his sensor
"Sub-Commander, you'll need more antibiotics and some pain reliever." She arched an eyebrow and nodded. He cleaned the wounds and placed a bandage over them. She looked at Hoshi, who double-checked the medications before he gave them to her.

He checked his sensor one more time, "Alright, Sub-Commander, you can reinitiate control over the wound." She did and they could see her color come back into her face.

They walked back out into the room. Tucker was standing by the bed and Archer was still unconscious. "That's a hell of a bandage, T'Pol."

Ignoring that comment she said, "Commander Tucker, I expect that since we have experienced another ghost attack, more will be forthcoming. The room has also gotten colder. We will need a plan of defense."

They stared at her, "The bed is the most defensible. Dr Phlox, I need you to stay with the Captain. The rest of us will prepare to defend each other from this area."

"Sub-Commander, I've still got the cross and my candlestick." Looking around, he found T'Pol's candlestick and handed it to her. T'Pol looked around the room and went to the table to get a knife for Hoshi. But before she got there, they all disappeared. Thwarted, she looked around the room again. Finally, she stopped on a table chair. Walking up to it, she broke it in three large pieces.

She went back to Hoshi, and gave her a large pointed stick. "Ensign, if a vampire comes at you pierce his heart with this stick and he will disintegrate. Otherwise just hit whatever comes at you with it." Hoshi nodded. She placed Hoshi closest to the wall, in front of the bed. The safest place, if there was one.

She walked over to Phlox and handed him another pointed stick. "Doctor, I expect you to defend the Captain. If he awakens and he is still not himself, I expect you to render him unconscious." He nodded, looking at his stick, then prepared an injection. He handed it to T'Pol for verification. She nodded.

She looked at them, "Commander, if you would take position to my right?" He nodded. Everyone had their places.

It was not a minute too soon. The portal opened and a darkness flowed into the room. It was a dark, dangerous fog, suffocating everyone in its shadows. T'Pol knew she was the quickest of the three, so she went over to Hoshi, the weakest defender. It was a good thing as Hoshi was desperately hitting at something. T'Pol hit out with her candlestick and simultaneously Hoshi stuck something with the end of the stick. A shrill scream sounded in the dark fog and it slowly disappeared.

Hoshi was breathing in short, panting breaths. Now that the danger was passed she was both euphoric and scared. She looked at T'Pol, who nodded at her. "You did well, Ensign."

"Yeah, that was great." A weakened voice came from behind them. They turned to look at Archer, and he wasn't looking all that well. They came closer to the bed, but still in their areas of defense. Archer looked at T'Pol, then the bandage. Phlox had run a scanner over him and he seemed to be himself again, but still experiencing a few side-effects. Phlox got up and went over to Tucker when it became apparent that Archer wouldn't talk with him there.

Archer gestured at the bed where Phlox had been. T'Pol slowly went over and sat down. Archer looked at her and then again at the bandage. He whispered, "T'Pol, I'm so sorry. I couldn't stop..."
myself. I just had to do it."

She looked at him and slowly nodded, "You remember everything that happened?"

His eyes darkened as he did, "Yes. It was like I was the wolf. Your scent all over me. Then that bite, it set me off. It was like someone else had marked you..." He trailed off at that comment.

She nodded, "And you felt the need to make the mark yours?"

Obviously embarrassed, he answered truthfully, "Yes."

She stared hard at him for a few moments. "I understand. You do know you were also affected by the wrong medication that Dr. Phlox gave you? It seemed to release the werewolf from the claw marks."

"Yeah, Doc apologized for that. He said that you think the ghosts had changed the medications."

She nodded and changed the subject. "I expect Lt Reed to get us out of this room soon." They stared at each other.

Phlox and Tucker watched them. Phlox leaned over to Tucker, "Commander, I don't know if the Captain's marks will fade from the Sub-Commander's neck."

"What do you mean?" T'Pol also heard this comment and waited to hear his answer.

"When I scanned the wound, I noticed a chemical compound that I couldn't identify. But it had the properties of a permanent genetic marking. I'll need to do more testing when we're back on-board." He shrugged.

Archer had been watching T'Pol listen. "What?"

She told him. "God, T'Pol. I'm really sorry."

She arched an eyebrow at him, "Are you?" His gaze hardened, but before he could answer another disaster struck. She whirled off the bed.

Hoshi shrieked. This time it was two vampires and a ghost. Phlox was trying to help Hoshi and the ghost was harassing Archer. Tucker and T'Pol had teamed up to kill their vampire and after a few hard hits from the vampire they were able to stake it. She sent Tucker to aid the Captain and she went to help Phlox and Hoshi. Neither one were fighters and were being beaten back. She struck from behind, surprising the vampire and Hoshi staked it.

She moved back to Archer and Tucker. The ghost was levitating Archer off the bed. Tucker was hanging onto his arm, trying to hold him back. She grabbed onto him and yelled for the others to grab him. They all had a hold on him, when the portal opened again.

She risked a glance to see what now would plague them, but it was Reed and the Security Team. The portal stayed open, so they must have figured a way to keep it open.

Reed looked at the sight of Captain Archer floating in mid-air with everyone hanging onto him. He shouted, "Sub-Commander?"

"Wide angle phaser blast 1 meter above us. On stun."

Reed knew that was awfully close to them, but he did it anyway. They all dropped to the ground. Taking a breath, she stood up. Tucker got up and Reed helped Hoshi and Phlox up. They all turned
to Archer and he was slowly getting up.

T'Pol put out a hand and he looked at her. He grabbed it and pulled himself up. Security was maintaining a watch around the room. Archer nodded at T'Pol and turned to Reed, "Lt. Does this mean we can get out of here?"

"Yes, sir. Whenever you're ready. Sorry it took so long."

"I think now is good. You can tell me all about it on the trip back to Enterprise."

They all quickly climbed out of the room. It was rather steep but no one complained. Only once the shuttle had lifted from the planet did the away team release a sigh of relief.

Trip looked at them, "Hell. That was hell. I thought we were going to be stuck there forever."

Phlox was running his sensor over them. "Captain, you and the Sub-Commander will need to stay in the decontamination unit longer than the rest of us. Since you've both had open wounds, we need to ensure nothing transmits to the crew."

He frowned, "Sub-Commander, it seems that you've got a broken rib."

Archer looked at her, "A broken rib?"

Tucker looked at them, "Yeah, she took a hit for me. I wish you wouldn't do that, but thanks."

She nodded. They all knew a hit that caused a broken rib on a Vulcan would cause internal injuries in a human.

The shuttle docked and everyone went into decon. After 20-minutes the only ones left were T'Pol and Archer. He looked at her as she smoothed on the decon gel. He felt better, especially after Phlox had given him an analgesic for the nerve pinch. He saw T'Pol try to put the gel on the back of where she broke the rib.

She was concentrating on that, and even though she knew Archer was watching her, his hand on her side surprised her. He gently rubbed in the gel.

"Thank you." He nodded, then taking a risk, he turned her neck so he could see it.

The vampire bite was healing with her accelerated Vulcan physiology. Soon it would just be a bad memory. However, his bite, well, it seemed to be taking up permanent residence.

He felt terrible about that. He had bitten T'Pol. He had bitten his First Officer. Hell, he had bitten a Vulcan. He stared at her, then the bite. It was still bruised and where he had torn the skin, scabs had formed.

She finally looked at him. "Captain, you are staring."

"Yeah, I am. I'm shocked and surprised. I feel awful."

She studied him. "Yet, you feel something else?"

She walked up to him and waited for his answer. He didn't turn away, he owed her the truth. "I feel all that, but I also feel a strangely pleased that I marked you."

He waved his arms frustration, "I know that's wrong and that makes me feel worse. I'm confused by the whole thing. I also don't know how to work with you after this. You're my First Officer and
we've got to work together, but now, in a primitive part of my brain, you're also a female and mine."

He took a step back, "I've always known you were a female, but I've also always associated you with Vulcan and First Officer. Strictly a professional relationship, a good working relationship was all I was looking for. I wasn't even looking for friendship, that just happened." He watched her reaction.

"Do you believe that you can no longer work with me, because you now see me as a female, and that you've also kissed and bitten me?"

With a serious expression on his face, "No, actually I believe I can. But the relationship has changed, due to the kiss and the bite. Can you still work with me?"

She thought about her answer, then looked up at him, "I am not sure how to interpret what you did and how I reacted to it. We can work together, but we will have to slowly redefine our relationship."

Staring at him, "I too never looked beyond a working relationship with a human, and I was also surprised by our developing personal interaction. That was unexpected."

She paused gathering her thoughts, "Our relationship has taken a different turn. I believe the word I am looking for is sexual."

Archer got a shocked, but not surprised, expression on his face, "Ah, yeah. We're definitely looking at each other differently now."

He took a step closer to her, "We can either ignore this 'thing,' or we can acknowledge it and work with it. You've always been my First Officer. My Science Officer. The only Vulcan I trust."

They contemplated each other, "I also think that neither Vulcan nor Earth will be particularly pleased by it."

He pointed to his mark. He wanted to touch itâ€”he was fascinated by it. He looked at her and she studied him. She nodded and he gently ran his finger along it. He touched one area where he had broken the skin. She moved at that and he touched it again very softly.

He frowned, "Does it still hurt?" She nodded once. "I'm sorry." She nodded again.

He had moved his hand to rest on her shoulder. "I want to acknowledge this and go forward. I believe we can still work together, but we will have to accommodate this change. But since we don't know what all the changes can be, we'll have to be truthful with each other. Can you do this? Or perhaps the question is, 'Should we do this?'

She tilted an eyebrow, and he grinned, "Should we? Yes."

He waited for her answer. They stood there looking at each other. Less than an arm's length apart and Archer's hand on her shoulder, but before she could give her answer, in walked Phlox and Tucker.

"Captain, Sub-Commander... Oh, I'm sorry." Tucker and Phlox stopped when they realized that Archer and T'Pol were having a serious discussion.

Archer thought he caught a rueful expression pass across her eyes, then they shielded again. He grinned at her and removed his hand. "Yeah, Doc, Trip, what can we do for you?"
Trip began, "Cap'n, two messages were received. One for you and the other for T'Pol." He gave each of them a disk. "They're from the planet."

Archer and T'Pol exchanged glances. "How's the ship?"

"No problems since we returned from the surface. T'Pol was probably right, it was a story we were acting out." Another glance.

Phlox hid a grin, "Well, you're both all done in here. Captain, your claw wound is healing nicely. I suggest you get a shower and come down to Sickbay for a few more tests and another antibiotic, and that should be it."

"What about T'Pol?" Everyone looked at her, and she arched an eyebrow at them.

"The Sub-Commander needs to come down to Sickbay and get her rib repaired. Then I need to run some tests on your...the...injury."

Archer smirked at them. "You can go ahead and call it an injury or a bite or even my mark. We were just talking about that." They all looked at T'Pol.

She looked back at Archer and said, 'Yes.'

His smirk changed into a grin, "Alright, Sub-Commander, let's go." He momentarily touched her elbow and they left the room. They weren't touching, but he was directly at her shoulder.

Phlox and Tucker watched them leave, with equally stunned expressions on their faces. Then Phlox got a big smile. "This is certainly a most interesting voyage, don't you think, Commander?" He followed them out of the decon unit.

Tucker was still standing there by himself, "Oh, yeah, we're in hell." Shaking his head, he left the unit.

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