Objective Data
by walkandtalk

Summary

A young Vulcan decides to find a mate for his guardian, Spock. After careful calculations, Cadet Kirk is obviously the superior choice.

Translation into French available: by Emily Bright
“...which marks the beginning of the First Republic of Bajor, which flourished between twenty and twenty-five thousand years ago.”

Jim sighed, propping his head in his hand and tried to keep his eyes open. This did not bode well for the semester.

“This period can be characterized by the great accomplishments of art, science, mathematics...”

His advisors warned him to get the history credit before his final year, but he ignored it, and now he understood why. No one should be expected to do a thesis, advanced tactical and command courses, and a campus job on top of the world’s most boring class at 0800 hours.

“...as evidenced by the classical architecture seen in B’hala by the great designer and artist, Sarisen.”

Jim doodled a few notes on his PADD and let his gaze wander. The lecture hall was half-filled with first year cadets in their first week, as evidenced by eager expressions and frantic note taking. Jim was sitting in the optimal spot: almost in the back of the room, an aisle seat nearest the door, something these fresh-faced cadets hadn’t learned just yet. He glanced around, noting a pair of cute Human girls to his left and a trim looking Kressari male a few rows ahead of him.

“...upon which the Bajoran caste system was built. Such evidence of these findings...”

And right in the middle of the room of a sea of cadet red uniforms, in the first row, the seat closest to the lecturer (a space that even cadets in their first week knew not to occupy) sat a lone Vulcan. This caught Jim’s curiosity immediately. He stuck out with his pointy ears, unfortunate choice of seating, black Vulcan robes, and he was puny. Vulcans were usually tall, and this guy looked like a child compared to the other students. Jim stared at him a few moments more, noticing that he didn’t even twitch, just stared at the professor, hands clasped, and not even taking notes.

“This calls for speculation to which of the first expeditions to Bajoran space yielded, what scholars later called...”

Jim’s PADD lit up with a message from his roommate.

lmccoy: Late night? I thought you said you didn’t have time for bed hopping this semester.

Jim stifled a snort and typed a reply.

jkirk: I slept in my room, unlike some. Early class this semester.

lmccoy: Lunch at 1300?

jkirk: can’t. work.

“That concludes today’s lecture.” No sooner did those words leave the professor’s mouth, Jim stood up and started making his way down the stairs to the door. As he got there, the short Vulcan came into view. Jim got a good look at him and realized with a shock, he was wrong.
The tiny Vulcan wasn’t short, like a kid. He was a kid.

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If there was one thing to be said for HIST108: Non-Federation Civilizations, it was easy, allowing Jim to multitask. He could listen to the lecture, take the occasional note, and read for his Interspecies Ethics class. Or Exochemistry. Or Advanced Astrotheory. Or any of the other six courses he was taking this semester because he was a glutton for punishment and saw his ticket off Earth at the end of the finish line.

Two weeks had gone by, and they had covered Bajor, Selay, and Kesprytt III. He aced his Command and Conduct essay and had found a great study group for Advanced Subspace Geometry, which was one of the few times he had this semester for anything that resembled socializing.

Not that he hadn’t had offers. In his history class, especially, a number of the first year cadets had chatted him up, including the pair of Humans, a rather handsy Andorian, and a Breen doing a semester at Starfleet as a cultural exchange. Breen. Seriously weird.

The little Vulcan kid was still in the class, still sitting in no-man’s land, attentively listening and never fidgeting. Jim hadn’t given him more than the cursory glance until week three, when the handsy Andorian tripped over the kid’s satchel before class, making the blue man spill his morning drink over his uniform. Jim only barely missed getting splashed on his way to his seat.

“Qi’tarr’wae,” the Andorian snarled. “Your boots will be in water.” Which probably didn’t sound like much, except to those that spoke Andorian and understood the implication of the slur, like Jim. The kid seemed to understand the full meaning as well, the tips of his ears turned green and he looked away, seeming to shrink in on himself.

“Back off,” Jim said in an even tone. “Not his fault the bulls left you their tails.” That, too, was a slur to any Andorian male. All eyes in the room were trained on the scene at the front of the room. The other man glared but didn’t challenge Jim, giving the kid one more disgusted look and took his seat. Jim glanced down. “You okay, kid?”

The young Vulcan nodded, wide eyed. Jim gave him a small grin and walked to his seat.

The next time class met, the kid moved his seat to the very back of the room.

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On Tuesdays, Jim could find a few minutes to meet Bones for lunch, which was mostly spent stuffing his face as quickly as he could and ignore the stink eye his roommate would give him while watching Jim eat.

“French fries don’t go in your milkshake, you heathen.”

“Don’t knock it until you’ve tried it,” Jim replied around a mouthful of fries.

“Disgusting,” Bones muttered, trying to take his attention off Jim’ train wreck of a lunch. “He’s here again.”

Jim reached over to Bones’ tray and tried to swipe a napkin but got his hand smacked. “Hey! You’ve got plenty. Who’s here?”

“He was here last week too,” Bones mused. “Same seat and everything. I think he’s staring at you. No! Don’t turn around.”
Jim smirked. “Is he cute?”

Bones looked over Jim’s shoulder, considering. “Yes. Some might say adorable. For a Vulcan.”

“Adorable?” Jim repeated, intrigued. “Is he my type?”

Bones gave him an enigmatic smile. “No.”

Jim scoffed, and turned around. “Since when don’t I go for adorable men...” Jim whipped back around, and glared. Bones was shaking from silent laughter. “It’s the kid, isn’t it?” he asked, kicking the doctor under the table. Bones nodded, immensely amused by himself. Jim flicked a fry at him.

“Do you know him?”

Jim nodded, resuming his french fry dipping. “In my history class. The kid’s auditing or something, I think.”

Bones’ eyes widened. “He’s coming over,” he muttered.

Jim looked around, and sure enough, the youth was headed his way. But instead of approaching their table, the kid kept walking and sat at another table, this time in Jim’s line of sight. He pulled out a PADD and wrote some things on it, occasionally making notes and glancing at Jim.

“He is looking at me,” Jim muttered, frowning at the kid.

“Maybe he’s shy?” Bones suggested.

“Or maybe he’s a stalker,” Jim muttered, and picked up his empty tray. The Vulcan kid was still looking at him, eyes following him as he walked.

“Are you watching me?” Jim asked.

The Vulcan flushed green, but did not look away. “Yes. I was trying to be covert, but obviously I have failed.”

Jim stifled the urge to roll his eyes. “Why?”

“There are many studies that indicate if the subject is aware of being observed, the subject’s behavior will invariably change.”

Great. He was a science project. “Why are you watching me?”

“I am gathering data on humanoid behavior,” the boy said earnestly.

“Look...”

“I am Senik,” the boy supplied.

“Look, Senik, it’s great you’re interested in science and all, but most humanoids don’t appreciate being secretly watched. It’s creepy. Either stop doing it or ask permission first.”

Senik nodded solemnly and Jim left to dump his tray.

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Jim worked at the Starfleet library in the astrometrics processing lab desk. It was both the best and worst job in the solar system, but Jim was magnificently suited for it. Every workday he took the bike across the bay from the Academy campus in Sausalito to ‘Fleet HQ in San Francisco. He sat at a counter for a few hours, minimal interruptions, and occasionally pressed a button on a machine or answered a patron’s question. He could spend the rest of the time studying, which was a huge bonus and far outweighed any tedium of button pushing and minimal foot traffic to his area.

So it was unusual when the minute his shift started, a patron was already waiting at his desk.

“So, you’re a fan of astrometrics?” Jim asked.

“I am interested in a great many topics,” Senik said, glancing around the empty room and desks that made up Jim’s area.

Jim waited silently and when it was obvious the youth was not going to speak, he cleared his throat and got Senik’s attention. “Can I help you with something?”

“May I observe you in this environment?”

Well, the kid got points for following the rules. “Sure. Why not?”

“Because my data will be compromised by your knowledge of my observation.”

Jim was unaccountably amused. “It was a rhetorical question.”

Senik nodded once. “What is it that you do here?”

Jim pointed to the two machines in the behind him. “If they beep, I press the buttons. If someone needs help finding astrometrics data stored in the database, I help them retrieve it. I spend the rest of the time studying. Make sense?”

Senik nodded. “Should I move away from the desk?”

Jim gestured to the empty room. “You don’t want to keep all the other people waiting, do you?”

Senik looked behind him and then back to Jim. “There are no other people here, Cadet Kirk.”

Jim rolled his eyes. “Stand wherever you like. Let me know if you need anything.”

Senik nodded, and Jim started typing at a computer console. He tried to concentrate on writing his tactical analysis report of this morning’s simulation, but was very aware of Senik standing at the desk. He glanced up once and sure enough, the Vulcan youth was staring at Jim.

“It’s rude to stare,” he said.

“I am somewhat unfamiliar with Terran social rules,” Senik replied, but took the hint and averted his gaze.

“When you say you are observing, are you observing me? Just me?”

Senik nodded once. “However, I believe I have observed enough, at this time,” the boy said. “I require your assistance, now.”

James looked up expectantly. “Yes?”

“Are you currently engaged in a relationship?”
“What does that have to do with anything?”

“It is part of the data I am collecting,” Senik replied.

Jim decided to humor him. “No. I’m single.”

Senik nodded. “Do you have a gender preference? Or preference for any species, humanoid or otherwise?”

Jim narrowed his eyes. “No, not particularly.” Senik nodded again.

“I request your assistance in another matter,” the boy announced and Jim nodded warily for him to continue. “I wish for you to accompany me to dinner.”

Jim’s eyebrows shot up to his hairline. “Dinner? Kid, I think you got the wrong idea,” Jim said. “While I’m sure you are a nice young person, I do have a preference for adults. I mean all the time. Adults only. That’s the rule.”

Senik tilted his head quizzically. “You misunderstand, Cadet Kirk. I am not requesting to partake in Human courtship. I have no interest in you in that manner.”

“Oh,” Jim said faintly, not entirely sure that was an improvement. “Well, I’m glad we have that settled.”

“Will you accompany me to dinner? There is a suitable establishment outside the library and--”

“Sorry, kid,” he interrupted. “I really don’t have much time for that sort of thing.”

“Humans require nourishment and social interaction to maintain optimum performance,” Senik pointed out. “It would be efficient to combine the two activities.”

“I’m functioning just fine, thanks,” Jim said. “I’ve got a paper due next week, so unless you’ve already audited Interspecies Ethics or have a first hand knowledge of the interspecies marriage practices--”

“I can assist you in your Interspecies Ethics class,” Senik interjected. “During dinner,” he added for clarification. “It would be the most efficient use of your time.”

Jim frowned. “You know about interspecies marriage laws?”

“I can assist you,” Senik repeated earnestly.

“What about your time? Aren’t your parents expecting you home?”

Senik’s face shuttered. “No. My mother is currently aboard the USS Stokholm.” He didn’t offer any more information, but Jim could fill in the wide gaps of knowledge with his own experiences. He considered a moment, and Senik met his gaze.

“Okay. I get off in three and half hours.”

Senik nodded....

And stood silently in front of Jim the next three hours and twenty nine minutes.
Senik led Jim to an eatery a block from the library, a fusion restaurant that catered to the diverse palates of Star Fleet personnel. It was a tad sophisticated for what was supposed to be, in Jim’s mind, a study session with a precocious pre-adolescent. The intimate tables had cloth napkins and real candles, a far cry from three full years of cafeteria food and greasy dives. A cheery hostess led them into nearly deserted dining room and a waitress brought them their drinks, a Coke and tea. Jim perused the menu, sipping on his soda when he noticed Senik staring at his beverage.

“Something wrong?”

“Your drink is carbonated?” he asked, obviously intrigued.

Jim nodded and pushed the drink towards the boy. “Want to try it?” Senik shook his head.

“Have you had it?” Jim asked. The boy shook his head again. “Then how do you know if you don’t like it?” Jim tried not to dwell on how much he sounded like his mother, and pushed the drink closer to the boy. Senik tentatively took the glass and held it up to observe. Jim watched expectantly, thinking all the ice in the glass would melt before Senik tried a sip. Suddenly, Senik put the glass down and pushed it back towards Jim.

“Spock,” Senik said suddenly without explanation.

Jim frowned. “What’s spock mean?” Was it Vulcan slang?

“I am Spock,” a smooth voice said from behind Jim’s head. Jim turned around to see a tall, lean Vulcan male. This was Lieutenant Commander Spock, by the looks of his instructor’s uniform. Jim pushed back his chair and stood at attention, out of habit. Spock ignored him. “Senik, you were expected to be home at 1700 hours.”

“I have asked one of my classmates to partake in a meal with me,” Senik replied, avoiding the adult Vulcan’s gaze. “It was not my intent to cause a disruption to your evening, tomasu.”

Spock glanced at the Human, still standing formally. “If you had informed me of your plans, there would have been no disruption. You did not answer your comm, but I was able to triangulate a signal.” He turned to face Jim fully. “Cadet, you are excused.”

Jim glanced over to Senik, who was obviously displeased. “Cadet Kirk cannot leave. My obligation to him is unfulfilled.”

Spock turned to Jim, questioning. “What obligation does this child have to you?”

Jim frowned, disliking the accusing tone. It’s not like he abducted the kid. “Sir, I’m not sure if-”

“I assured him that I could assist him with his Interspecies Ethics course,” Senik said firmly.

That made Spock turn back to the youth. “This assistance could be as effectively done through other means, such as a conference video.”

“Cadet Kirk’s time is valuable, as his course load is 42% more demanding than the average third year cadet. He is also employed at the library astrometrics lab, leaving little time for meals and sleep,” Senik replied. “Cadet Kirk rarely partakes in nutritious or frequent meals. I concluded that a shared meal would be the most logical choice, benefiting all parties.”

Although neither Vulcan had raised his voice, and it sounded like a they were commenting on the weather, Jim got the distinct feeling he was caught in the middle of an angry family fight.
“Look,” Jim said, both pairs of eyes turning toward the Human, “it’s okay, I should be going anyway. That extra 42% won’t get done on its own.”

Spock raised his hand and motioned for Jim to stay. “My apologies Cadet Kirk, please continue your meal. If you would not mind, I will join you and escort Senik home at the conclusion of the meal.”

“Oh. Sure,” Jim said, feeling incredibly awkward. Neither caught Senik’s pleased expression as Spock took a seat next to Jim.

Jim knew a few things about Vulcans. For one, most were touch telepaths and as such, didn’t appreciate casual physical contact, so Jim made an effort to keep all limbs to himself. He also knew that Vulcans were vegetarians, and in deference to his dinner companions, Jim was eating a fusion dish of vegetable lasagna with Tellarite cheese.

It was revolting.

After the second bite of fermented squash and cheese that reminded him of a cross of Wensleydale and feta, he abandoned his plate and tried to casually grab another roll from the communal bread basket. However, it was impossible to be discreet, because two pairs of Vulcan eyes were trained on him, unblinking and unjudging. Jim wasn’t sure if they were both naturally horrible dinner conversationalists, or if it was a cultural thing.

“So, what can you tell me about interspecies marriage laws?” Jim asked Senik.

“My knowledge of the topic is minimal,” the boy replied staring at his food. Jim frowned.

“You said you knew—”

“I said that I would assist you,” Senik corrected, spooning diced tomatoes into a brothy soup and stirring, refusing to look up. “My cousin is a product of an interspecies marriage, and would be an excellent source of knowledge.”

Cousin... Jim glanced at an annoyed Spock, correctly inferring that he was the cousin in question. The cousin that was responsible for Senik while his parents were away. The Vulcan (half Vulcan?) instructor’s lips were firmly pressed together, but he did not move to speak or correct Senik.

“Was it part of your plan to trick him into coming here?” Jim asked, gesturing to the disgruntled adult Vulcan.

“He would not have come on his own,” the youth replied, still not looking up. “I said I would assist you, and I have.”

“You should have said so,” Jim admonished.

“I am unfamiliar with Terran social rules,” Senik replied for the second time that day.

The level of awkwardness just went up a few notches. Jim snuck a glance over to Spock, who looked stern, but not murderous, at the young Vulcan’s bending of the truth. “Cadet Kirk is correct,” Spock said. “You were being purposefully vague to achieve your objective. An objective that is still not entirely clear.”

“May I be excused to the restroom?” Senik asked, and without a reply, got up and retreated out of
the dining room, both adults staring after him, befuddled.

Jim felt that the second ring of hell must be similar to this. Eating terrible alien fusion food with an adolescent under false pretenses, joined by a stern and proper Vulcan professor with perfectly trimmed hair that Jim was itching to run his fingers through, curious if he could untame the dark hair from its rigid position above slanted eyebrows.

Jim sighed, and Spock’s eyes swung back around to regard the cadet. “I think I’m his science project,” Jim shared.

Spock lifted one eyebrow, which Jim thought was a little incongruous on a Vulcan’s face, but was oddly appealing. “Please elaborate.”

“He’s been watching me for awhile, I guess. Observing me for a humanoid behavior project. I interrupted his observations at lunch today, so I think he’s trying to watch me in unique environments.”

Spock nodded thoughtfully. “Senik has been on Earth for two months, and is having difficulty adjusting to life here, away from his parents. I was the one that suggested studying his classmates for insight into non-Vulcan behavior. I did not anticipate that he would be so... thorough in his pursuit of understanding.”

“So you’re raising him?”

“His mother is of my father’s house. T’Mae is aboard the Stokholm on a scientific expedition from the Vulcan Science Academy and has granted me to-tashan, or guardianship, of Senik in her absence,” Spock said, sipping his own Vulcan tea.

Jim grabbed another roll, ripping off a piece and chewing it slowly. “Must be rough for him, not having any real friends his age here.”

“Vulcans do not require social interaction in the way that Humans crave,” the other man replied. Based on Senik’s odd behavior, Jim had a hunch that it was not entirely true, but did not disagree. “I have observed that Humans often try to draw parallels between themselves and other species where none exist, in an effort to create a relationship. It is how Humans relate to the universe.”

“So you think we all try to make others more Human because we couldn’t accept other species as they are?” Jim asked, a little perturbed. Spock wouldn’t be the first person to accuse Humans, especially those serving in Starfleet, of giving Earth undue influence in Alpha and Beta quadrants, to the point of a cultural hegemony.

“Not at all,” Spock said. “The Human trait of empathy has proven to be a valuable trait in the formation and continuation of the Federation. I believe it is a trait that I did not naturally inherit from my Human mother, but something I learned as I grew older.”

Human. Spock was part Human. “I hope you don’t think I’m being rude for asking, but I am very interested in hearing about your parent’s story, from an academic perspective, of course.”

“I would not be opposed,” Spock said, and Jim smiled gratefully. Over the next ten minutes, Spock shared the riveting story of Human Amanda Grayson and Vulcan Ambassador Sarek, a perfect parable for interstellar law and ethics.

Although Jim would never admit it to anyone, let alone Lieutenant Commander Spock, the story was also terribly romantic. Jim always had a thing for star-crossed lovers.
Hello gentle readers! I'm going to try my hand at other POVs in the next two chapters. I've only written in "Jim" but I want to try Senik and Spock. Spock POV is a personal favorite of mine, but I've never been brave enough to try. Wish me luck :-) 

Thank you for reading and any feedback.
Senik watched the Human and his cousin conversing, noting the gentle tilt of Kirk’s head, indicating interest. Spock’s own posture had loosened, his shoulders parallel to Kirk’s, also in apparent interest of the other. Senik inched closer, wondering if he could determine the diameter of Kirk’s pupils from this angle.

“Hey kiddo, do you need something?” a waitress asked in a condescending tone. Senik stood up from his hidden vantage point and turned.

“No, thank you,” Senik replied.

“You shouldn’t be spying on adults,” she said, shifting her tray of beverages to one hand.

“I am not spying,” Senik replied flatly. Spying indicated subterfuge- he was engaging in science. The waitress shrugged and left Senik to continue his observations behind the artificial ferns and started calculating Kirk’s breathing patterns, which might be elevated.

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When Senik finally emerged from the artificial ferns to take his seat, Spock and Kirk had obviously allowed the conversation to end. Kirk was looking at the poor reproduction artwork on the wall, chewing on his fourth roll, his lasagna abandoned for unknown reasons, and Spock was finishing the last of his salad. Senik’s own soup was probably cold at this point, all the more reason to end tonight’s observations.

“Cadet Kirk, thank you for accompanying me to dinner. I hope it has not taken too much of your time,” Senik said formally.

“No problem, it was...” Kirk struggled to find an appropriate word. “Fun.”

An interesting word choice, and another indication of social enjoyment. Senik nodded, mentally filing that subjective report with the other data to be synthesized when he was at home and mediating.

Kirk and Spock stood, saluted, and Kirk left the dining room. Senik watched Spock as his eyes followed the cadet’s figure as he made his way across the street and out of sight. Spock then turned to glare at Senik.

“When I suggested that you study your classmates for insight into Human behavior, it was not an endorsement for waylaying Academy cadets,” Spock lectured, pulling out his credit chip to pay for the meal.

Senik considered Spock’s words. “I will endeavor to be more transparent in my efforts, as far as it does not interfere with the objective nature of my observations.”

“That will be acceptable,” Spock replied, gesturing for Senik lead the way out the door of the restaurant.

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As was their daily routine, Senik and Spock broke their morning fast together. It was usually a silent affair. Spock had fresh fruit and oatmeal, while Senik still preferred synthesized Vulcan pir mah. Terran food had much to be desired.

After compiling his observations and synthesizing the data he had collected from Cadet Kirk’s first meeting with Spock, which would be referred to as the Restaurant Encounter, Senik had formed a hypothesis. As Senik was almost a third through the semester, he surmised that time was of the essence and should move on to the next stage of experiment.

“Cadet Kirk received top marks in his last three Command and Conduct courses,” Senik reported, taking his seat at the small table in the kitchen. Spock looked up from his fruit and raised an eyebrow. Senik interpreted this as permission to continue. “He is often in the top ten percent of his classes. In our shared history course, he is second only to myself.”

“Are you attempting Human small talk?” Spock asked, confused by Senik’s sudden attempt at conversation.

“Cadet Kirk is an admirable Human,” the boy said, ignoring his cousin’s question. “I find him to be intelligent, honorable, and industrious. Did you not?”

“I could not say,” Spock said carefully, still unsure of Senik’s intent. “I would remind you that most Humans prefer to socialize with peers of their own age.”

Senik nodded. “Cadet Kirk is 26.3 Terran cycles old,” he said, and then looked meaningfully at Spock. “1.6 cycles fewer than your own age. Cadet Kirk would prefer to socialize with you.”

Spock blinked. “I think not.”

Senik pressed on. “He is in the Command track at the Academy, finishing his final year. My research indicates that he is very likely to receive a commission aboard the Shenandoah, Farragut, or most likely the Enterprise.”

Spock considered this information for 1.9 seconds longer than necessary. Intriguing. “How does your research allow you to come to such conclusions?” Spock asked, reaching for his tea.

Senik flushed a light green, a deeply embarrassing habit that most of his peers had long grown out of, but Spock had never commented on it. “My afternoon classes are near the tactical training bays. Many of the instructors communicate regularly with Starfleet in the faculty lounge, which has poorly placed ventilation.”

“You were eavesdropping,” Spock supplied. Senik nodded. Spock looked down at him sternly. “It is inappropriate to listen to conversations you are not meant to be privy to. You may have heard classified information. I instruct you never to repeat anything you have heard to me, or any other being. Is that understood?” Senik nodded again and turned to his breakfast.

All in all, he considered breakfast to be a success for science.

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When Senik’s mother took a position as a scientist aboard the Stokholm, he was given two choices: to stay in the house of his estranged father, Stutok, or be fostered with his distant cousin, Spock. If pressed, Senik could not clearly outline the reasoning used to choose Spock over his father. Stutok could provide a proper Vulcan education, the household staff would see to his needs adequately. It was a logical option, but one that Senik ultimately passed over.
Senik had grown up hearing the whispers of Spock, son of Sarek and the Lady Amanda. He was a toddler when Spock declined a position at the Vulcan Science Academy to apply to Starfleet, a scandal that rippled through the scientific community. T’Mae, his mother, voiced no opinion on the matter as a scientist or relative, but every Vulcan child at school had somehow had something to say about half-Human Spock. Blood traitor. Kre’nath. Bastard. Senik once repeated what he had heard to T’Mae.

“Duhik,” she had said. Foolish. “K’lalatar prkori k’lalatar prnak’lirli.” Infinite diversity in infinite combinations. To discount Spock was illogical and to celebrate his uniqueness was what it meant to be Vulcan. "Although some do not remember," she went onto say. Some, he would later learn, included his father.

Three years later, Senik saw Spock for the first time. He had returned to Vulcan just before his graduation from Starfleet Academy, poised to be one of its most distinguished graduates. T’Mae brought Senik to pay their respects to their cousin. At the tender age of six, he spent the entirety of the visit standing at his mother’s elbow watching the adults converse, in particular his elder cousin. Spock stood out among the throng of natural colored robes, his Cadet uniform was like the sand of Vulcan itself.

Senik watched him raptly, cataloguing every difference, every unique mannerism and subtle expression. Spock was exotic. He was interesting and independent and cultured in ways that Senik’s peers were not. He embodied a future of possibilities that Senik was sure he was not to find on Vulcan.

2.7 years later, when Senik was nine and T’Mae gave him a choice, it surprisingly simple to make. ----

There were many things to dislike about his life on Earth. The climate, especially in San Francisco, was damp and cold. The food was too sweet or poorly spiced. Compulsory education was entirely deficient. The water tasted of shale. The commissaries did not carry Vulcan toothpaste.

Senik came to the conclusion that the only thing he truly liked about Earth were Humans. Unlike many of his fellow Vulcans (including his father), he found Humans to be fascinating. At their worst, they were cruel, to the point of madness. But at their best they were ingenious, adaptable, and compassionate. And Cadet James Tiberius Kirk was, by every objective measure Senik could calculate, the summation of the best Humanity had to offer.

Senik tried to keep that in mind while following Cadet Kirk across campus in the chilly evening air, twenty four hours after the Restaurant Encounter. He was meters behind him, trying to keep pace behind the Human in a manner that was both discreet but not “creepy” as Kirk had stated. Senik had consulted a Terran Standard dictionary about the word and concluded that his faux pas was not that he had been observing Kirk, but that he had been too successful in being unseen. He would endeavor to be more obvious.

Kirk was in the company of his Academy dormitory cohabitation partner, one Doctor Leonard McCoy. Kirk and Dr. McCoy were heading to a drinking establishment on the edge of campus, a popular destination for recreation and socialization during school hours. Senik watched as Kirk held the door for McCoy to enter first. While Dr. McCoy entered, Kirk turned in Senik’s direction and waved at Senik.

Senik felt pleased that he had achieved one of his objectives. Kirk had seen him and was extending a common Terran gesture of greeting. This was the sign of affirmation he was looking for. Senik must be following the unspoken rules of observing humanoid behavior.
Senik crossed the street to the establishment, unsure where Cadet Kirk and Dr. McCoy would have gone. He looked around the moderately busy pub to see Cadet Kirk and Dr. McCoy taking seats at a table in the corner. Senik stood, mentally weighing the benefits of observation vantage point against being jostled by patrons. He made his choice and moved to sit at the deserted bar counter, where the mirrored backsplash allowed him to study his subject.

“Hello,” a buxom blonde bartender cooed. “What can I get you, sweetie?”

“Tea. Earl Grey. Hot,” Senik said, tucking his feet under him, to better see over the counter. “Please.” She smiled, as if Senik had said something amusing.

“Are you waiting on someone?” she asked, making no move to get his beverage.

“Yes.”

“Do they know you are here?”

Senik nodded. “He has indicated his awareness of my presence.” The bartender smiled again. Peculiar. She left, allowing Senik to devote his attention to Cadet Kirk.

He was slouched, one hand on a malted beverage, the other hand gesturing wildly while he spoke to Dr. McCoy. His shoulders were angled toward Dr. McCoy, but not parallel. The doctor was furtively looking toward the bar, his attention held by the blonde woman preparing Senik’s tea. Kirk did not seem upset by Dr. McCoy’s divided attention.

“Earl Grey tea,” the bartender said, depositing the steaming cup in front of Senik. “Where are you from, kid?”

“Vulcan,” he replied, grabbing the cup and sipping it.

“Wow, long ways from home,” she remarked. Senik looked at her quizzically. “What are you doing here?”

“Yes, I’d like to know that too,” a familiar voice asked behind his head. Senik spun around in the barstool, almost eye level to Cadet Kirk, his companion Dr. McCoy standing next to him, darting nervous glances between Kirk, Senik, and the blonde bartender.

“I am continuing my observations,” Senik replied. “I interpreted your gesture as permission to resume per our understanding yesterday.”

Kirk’s mouth opened once, then shut.

“You waved at me,” Senik explained.

Kirk snorted. “I waved at you to go away,” Kirk hissed under his breath for only Senik to hear.

“I had interpreted the hand motion to be one of greeting. I was attempting to adhere to your rule.”

Kirk raised a hand to rub his brow in possible frustration. “Sorry about this, Christine,” he said to the bartender.

Christine smiled widely at Senik again, for no apparent reason. “Friend of yours, Jimmy?”

“Uh, kinda,” he said and turned to Dr. McCoy, “I think Senik and I need to talk. D’ya mind?” Kirk tilted his head slightly to the bar, seemingly communicating something important in a nonverbal manner. The doctor merely nodded, his eyes darting over to Christine again, his pupils dilating and
breathing rate increased twenty-three percent. There was an almost imperceptible flush at his cheeks and ears.

Fascinating.

Senik hopped off the barstool and retrieved his tea from the counter, following Cadet Kirk to the table in the corner. Dr. McCoy took the vacated seat, sidling up to the bar to engage Christine the bartender in conversation.

“How long are you going to play at this?” Cadet Kirk asked, taking his seat.

Senik pondered the question. “I am unsure what you mean. I am not engaging in recreational activities. I am observing your behavior.”

“Let’s try this another way,” Kirk grumbled, and then sat up, hands folded on the table, fixing Senik with a steady gaze. “The parameters of your observations are unacceptable. I am busy socializing off campus for the first time in weeks, and cannot have a Vulcan child following me around to every bar in Sausalito. And aren’t you supposed to be home? Where is Spock?”

“He is currently engaged in training exercises in the zero gravity laboratory,” Senik informed him. “He skilled as both a tactician and scientist. He has aspirations to serve aboard a starship within the next year.”

“How logical,” Kirk replied. “I’m sure he would also find it logical that you return home. Immediately.”

“Negative,” Senik said, taking a sip of his tea. “It is logical to infer he supports my dedication to my studies as a fellow scientist. Spock is considered to be intelligent and well educated by both Human and Vulcan standards.”

“I’m sure he is,” Kirk said, not arguing either point. Inside, Senik was deeply pleased. The cadet was quite obviously appreciative of Spock’s skills and attributes, a very good sign for his hypothesis. However, a thought occurred to Senik that made him reevaluate the past two week’s observations.

“Cadet Kirk, are you patronizing this establishment to obtain a mate?”

Both of Kirk’s eyebrows raised in astonishment. “A mate?”

“My research on Human social conduct indicates that they often frequent establishments such as this one to meet potential mates.”

“You are awfully preoccupied with my non-existent love life,” Kirk replied. “No. No mate. I’m here as Bones’s wingman.” He paused, and went onto explain. “I’m the guy who helps the friend approach a... mate.”

“I do not understand,” Senik said, eyeing the doctor, who was still sitting at the bar, this time watching Christine the bartender prepare a lime green concoction.”

Kirk sighed. “That’s Christine Chapel, one of the nurses at Starfleet Medical. My friend finds her attractive, but is uncomfortable approaching her. So on the nights that she works, I sometimes come down here with him, to give him a bit of social confidence to talk to her.”

Senik watched Dr. McCoy accept the lime green drink and smile enthusiastically. As soon as Christine turned away, the doctor grimaced.
“He does not like the drink she prepared,” Senik reported. “Yet he drinks it.”

“Yeah, well you do silly things like that when you like someone.” Senik turned back to Cadet Kirk, filing the factoid with the other data he had collected on Human courtship behavior.

“Are they suited for each other?” Senik asked.

Kirk shrugged. “Hell if I know. Why the interest in dating? Do you have some Human kid you’re interested in, looking for some love advice? Because I have to warn you, Bones should not be your guide in the romance department.”

“Ilogical. I have a wife,” he replied, missing the bewildered expression on Cadet Kirk’s face. Senik watched as Christine Chapel leaned over the bar and whispered something in Dr. McCoy’s ear, making him laugh.

“Well, that’s going well,” Kirk commented. Senik nodded, although not entirely sure what he was witnessing. “Time for me to head out, although I’m not sure I’ll want to be studying in my room tonight.”

Senik did not understand what was inferred, but decided that it was irrelevant. His subject was on the move to another area, which was not anticipated this evening. He thought quickly of possible solutions to this new development.

“I know of a suitable area for you to study,” Senik said. The Human looked at him with a quizzical look. “It is within the science building. You would not be disturbed.”

Kirk frowned. “The science building’s closed by now.”

Senik reached within his Vulcan robes and pulled out a chip watching Cadet Kirk’s eyes alight with interest. “Not to everyone.”

Chapter End Notes

Readers, you make me smile, I'm blown away by your responses. Thank you thank you thank you thank you.

To everyone who just wanted to coo and cuddle Senik, I hope you enjoyed it.
The engineering room was in ruins. Most of the crew was dead, ship heavily damaged, the gravity plates were disabled, leaving two known survivors, Ue and Caldera, holding onto the wall as debris floated around them. They were attempting make it to the escape pods, but the failing systems were ensuring that if they left engineering as it was, they would never make it to the escape pods before life support failed. Between the two of them, there was only one working gravity boot. Caldera was working to rewire her boots, and Ue was trying to comb through the ship’s damaged systems, finding any power they could divert to life support. Suddenly, the hiss of gas filled the dim room.

“Plasma leak!” Caldera shouted over the hiss of gas flooding into the engineering chamber. “We have support online for two minutes, max. I can’t fix these damn boots and reset the coils.”

Ue’s eyes darted between Caldera and her inoperable gravity boots. “Leave them. Get to the coils, I’ll buy us more time.” Caldera nodded and swung herself toward a wall to push off toward the coil, but overshot her swing, scrambled against the wall, and started somersaulting in the air in slow motion.

“Fuck!” she swore. Ue echoed the sentiment.

With nothing to push off of, she was dead in the water. Ue worked frantically at the panel.

“I’ve pulled all I got!” Ue called, careful to keep one arm holding onto the wall. “I’m going to try rerouting the power to the other panel, maybe it will reset the coils.”

Caldera flapped her arms uselessly. “No! It’s going to--”

But Ue had already sent the power surge, causing a shower of sparks. Immediately the lights returned and the gravity resumed. Ue and Caldera fell to the ground with twin thuds.

“Congratulations, Cadets, you have ignited a plasma leak, causing the warp core explode,” a voice called over the simulator audio channel. The channel cut out and Captain Pike sighed heavily, turning away from the viewing screen in the instructor’s observation room. “That, Commander, is what Humans call a clusterfuck.”

Spock nodded, unsure if he was meant to reply. Three runs through the zero gravity simulation, and all cadets failed to demonstrate even the initial competencies of the exercise. He watched as Cadets Ue and Caldera stood slowly, taking their places among the other cadets in the simulation lab deck, the other exchanging sympathetic looks.

“The results are not favorable,” Spock finally said. “Either the parameters of the simulation are not appropriate or--”

“--we have a batch of seriously unprepared cadets that are unfit for next month’s launch.” Spock felt illogically displeased by Pike’s assessment, however correct. Spock had been training these ten cadets specifically to serve the Enterprise on its maiden voyage. They had exceeded all the criteria on paper, but in practice had lacked the ability to juggle multiple demands under pressure.

Spock turned when the door behind them swung open, revealing Cadet James Kirk. He startled upon seeing Pike and Spock, taking a step back.
“Sorry, wrong room,” the cadet blurted, trying to turn around but another figure was blocking the doorway.

“This is the observation room, Cadet Kirk,” a familiar young voice corrected.


Instead of vacating, Senik stepped around Kirk and entered the room. “Tomasu Spock, Cadet Kirk voiced an interest seeing this part of the science building.”

Jim Kirk was able to hide his shock and embarrassment quickly behind a polite smile. “Captain Pike, pleasure to see you sir. Commander Spock, sorry to interrupt your busy evening again, just another miscommunication with Senik. I’ll be going now.” Kirk started to walk slowly backward, but Senik did not move.

Spock raised an eyebrow at his young cousin. “I am surprised to see you, tomasu Senik. I inquire as to how you and Cadet Kirk gained access to the building.”

“You have a key,” Senik replied simply.

Spock thought back on the day, realizing he had not made use of his building key in many days. “You have taken my key?”

“Yes,” Senik replied. Senik would not see this as an invasion of privacy or infraction. As his guest and ward, he was permitted to anything in Spock’s possession if it was logical for him to use it.

“You are not permitted in here at this time,” Spock replied. Senik blinked, obviously surprised. “Starfleet facilities are closed during certain hours,” Spock reminded the young Vulcan.

“It is illogical to bar access to building during certain hours,” Senik pointed out. “The building’s purpose is for learning, which can occur at any hour.”

Where Spock to indulge his Human side, he would have sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose, as he had seen Captain Pike do on occasions such as this. Senik’s application of Vulcan social norms to novel situations occasionally resulted in odd situations. During Senik’s first and only attempt at a Terran school for children, he attempted to leave after twelve minutes, having completed the all work for the day and refused to participate in group activities with the class. Senik and the school principal had engaged in a debate of interspecies pedagogy for over an hour before Spock arrived. That day, Spock withdrew him from the school and enrolled him in Academy courses.

“Please excuse my young cousin. He is unfamiliar with Starfleet protocol,” Spock said to Pike.

“It’s fine, Spock,” Pike replied benevolently, but then shot a sharp look at the Human. “Kirk, what’s your excuse?”

Kirk pointed to the young Vulcan, “I’m with him, sir. He suggested a tour of restricted and dangerous corners of Starfleet Academy.”

“I did not suggest anything dangerous,” Senik replied, craning his head to look back at Kirk, who was almost to the door.

Pike laughed, although Spock could not find anything amusing about the situation. It was interesting to note that Senik did not deny that it was his idea, confirming Spock’s suspicion that Senik had been continuing his “science project” on Cadet Kirk. He was unsure why the Human allowed it.
“Well, cadet, you just volunteered to be our next guinea pig,” Pike said, stepping forward to grab Kirk’s shoulder and usher him to another door connected to the simulation lab hallway. “Commander Spock, why don’t you and Kirk go down there and show them how it’s done?”

“Sir? Do what?” Kirk asked, glancing back at Spock with a worried look. Spock followed silently behind the pair, leaving Senik alone in the observation room, despite his shared confusion.

“It’s a new zero grav simulation,” Pike explained, hand tight on Kirk’s shoulder as if he might bolt. “You’re just the man for the job. Just follow Spock’s lead, you’ll do fine.”

He marched Kirk into the simulation lab, equipped as a fair representation of the engineering room of a constitution class starship, and turned to address the other cadets waiting on the observation platform. Spock silently gestured for Kirk to take his place on a yellow square on the floor next to himself.

“Commander Spock and Cadet Kirk will be demonstrating how this simulation is supposed to run,” Pike announced. The group looked down at their instructor and classmate with renewed interest. “Be taking notes, I expect a full analysis tomorrow.”

Spock turned to Kirk. “In this simulation, the ship has been heavily damaged. You are familiar with zero gravity protocol?”

“Yeah, my first semester,” Kirk said. Spock tilted his head, curious how a first year was able to enroll in an advanced course reserved for third years. Kirk went on to explain. “I took my classes out of order, trying to get them all in.”

“I hope that you remember the basic principles,” Spock replied.

“Oh sure, it’s like riding a bike,” Kirk replied, winking. Spock was unsure what exactly Kirk was trying to convey, but felt an odd feeling settle between his heart and stomach.

A few moments after Pike had left the lab, the room went dim, lights on red alert. The antigrav simulator started, mimicking gravity plate malfunction. Spock and Kirk started to float slowly to the ceiling. With the ease of practice, Spock grabbed Kirk’s arm and they moved in tandem, pushing strategically against floating debris to the wall where a computer console and the emergency equipment were located. Jim grabbed a pair of boots and handed them to Spock, and Kirk grabbed his own, allowing Spock to wrap his hand around Kirk’s arm as he pushed his feet through the boots. He pressed on the buttons and frowned when only one boot activated. He looked up at Spock without comment and grabbed his arm to provide the same tether hold, unaware Spock knew both his boots would be defective, as part of the parameters of the simulation. Spock went along with the simulation, putting his boots on and trying to activate them.

“We are only in possession of one function gravity boot,” Spock reported. “I suggest that we ascertain if there are any survivors in our immediate area.”

Kirk nodded, one hand secured to the wall, accessing the console. “No life signs in this section, sir.”

An alarm sounded, indicating life support had been compromised. Kirk immediately started scanning the ships systems. “Power has been compromised, a plasma coil is misaligned, and we have less than two minutes of life support.”

Spock’s brows furrowed, knowing that someone had changed the parameters of the simulation. They should have at least four minutes, which would have been sufficient time to come to the rational conclusion that Spock had determined. The abbreviated time forced Spock to take control of
the situation as part of the demonstration.

“Cadet, you are to make your way to the escape pod. I will track your progress from here and reroute power along your escape path.”

This was the solution. Two cadets in, one survivor out. Judging by Kirk’s dark expression, the irony of the situation was not lost on him. “You’ll die.” Like George Kirk.

Spock nodded shortly. “My physiology will allow me to remain here longer.”

“No,” Kirk said, tapping on the console screen. “It’s the aft coil,” he reported. “Manually realign it, and we got seven more minutes, at least.” Spock knew this, but also knew getting to the aft coil in less than two minutes was not possible. It was located between two large relay systems, only accessible from the jeffries tube behind engineering. In the engineering room, a Human arm could reach through the gap, but couldn’t touch the coil to realign it, which was dangerous and difficult to do without the proper instrumentation. It occurred to him that Kirk was disobeying his direct order, and the odds of success were not in their favor, but Spock saw Kirk’s intense expression and felt compelled to comply.

Kirk turned back to him. “Hold me,” he commanded, holding out his arm. Spock couldn’t help but glance at one of the surveillance cameras, hoping Pike knew what Kirk was trying to achieve. “I have an idea,” he insisted, and Spock obligingly took Jim’s arm to tether him and Jim ripped off his working gravity boot. Kirk then pushed himself upside down and grabbed Spock’s ankle as an anchor as he ripped open part of the wall and fished out a cable used for the anti-gravity machine.

“That is not part of our simulation,” Spock informed him.

“If I can touch it, it’s part of the simulation,” Kirk shot back. Which was correct. Technically.

Kirk started to tie the cable onto the gravity boot and handed the end of the cable to Spock. “Hold on and don’t let go.” Kirk braced his feet against the wall and pushed off like a swimmer toward the aft plasma coil, gravity boot in hand, cable trailing behind him. He landed against the large relays system, near the gap where Spock could make out the simulated plasma coil in the dim light. With one hand anchored on a relay panel, the other hand with the gravity boot, he tossed the boot into the narrow gap.

“It connected!” Kirk called, and then, as if fishing, wrapped his hand around the cable and started to pull back at an angle. “Almost there!” Spock watched as Kirk gave one more tug on the cord and then yelled, “got it!”

Spock mentally shook himself and turned back to the console. Kirk diverted the plasma leak and they had their seven minutes of life support. Spock looked back at Kirk, nodded, and they both made their way toward the door that would lead to the escape pods. Jim and Spock worked to manually open the door. Once open, they crossed the threshold, effectively ending the simulation in less than three minutes. The lights returned to normal and gravity returned, both landing on their feet. Jim smiled widely, bright blue eyes glowing. Spock caught himself staring openly at the man, wondering why he was the object of such an expression.

“What the hell do you call that, Kirk?” Pike’s voice rang in the simulation lab.

Kirk turned to one of the cameras and shrugged. “Inspiration, opportunity, and dumb luck.”

Pike laughed for the second time tonight, and Spock was still not sure what the amusing element was. “That’ll be one for the record books. The rest of you are dismissed.” The cadets on the
Kirk turned to Spock, face slightly flushed with the excitement of the simulation. “You aren’t mad I beat the test, are you?”

Spock shook his head. “Not at all. Your performance was a satisfactory example of the basic and advanced principles that simulation was meant to test. Your solution was... inelegant yet effective,” Spock said. It wasn’t tacit approval, but Kirk beamed anyway.

“Yeah, that’s me.”

He and Kirk walked out of the simulation lab into the observation room where Pike and Senik, balanced on a chair over a control panel, were waiting.

“I found your solution most impressive, Cadet Kirk,” Senik said.

“Did you alter the parameters of the simulation?” Spock asked, eying the control panel beside his young cousin. Senik sat back in his seat, shaking his head solemnly.

“No, I did,” Pike said, to Spock’s surprise. “You both do better under pressure, and I wanted to leave an impression on that group out there. You did even better that I could have imagined.”

“Only through a technicality,” Spock pointed out. “I will have to redesign the anti-gravity array so none of the components can be appropriated.” Spock glanced over at Kirk who was grinning unrepentantly.

“I thought Vulcans loved technicalities,” Kirk replied. Spock did not reply. Love was a strong word, but he had made his point in his Human way.

“You go ahead and take the kid home, Commander,” Pike said. “It’s the his bedtime, I’m sure.”

Spock hesitated, unsure how to best correct the captain’s assumptions politely. Vulcan children neither had ‘bedtimes’ nor required supervision to return home safely. “I am needed here, Captain. The simulation redesign and analysis of the other cadet’s performances would be-”

“Cadet Kirk can escort me,” Senik said suddenly. Spock glanced over to the Human in question, who was clearly surprised.

“I’m not sure...”

“Go on, Kirk,” Pike said. “I’m afraid Spock is going to keep me here another hour. Make sure the kid gets home safe.”

“If it is no inconvenience to you, Cadet,” Spock added. “I would be most appreciative.”

Kirk shrugged and turned to Senik. “C’mon, I’ve had enough excitement for one day.” The young Vulcan leapt off his chair and took his place next to Kirk. Spock watched their retreating backs as they walked out the door.


“I do not know.”
Fifty-seven minutes later, Spock stepped out of the transport and onto the walkway that led to his home. It was a modest ranch house in a quiet neighborhood on the corner of the Academy campus in Sausalito. Through the window he could see that a light was still on in the common area, indicating that Senik was still awake.

When he keyed into door, he was unsurprised to see that Senik was perched on a Terran-style armchair reading. He was surprised to see that Cadet Kirk was sprawled out on the couch, fast asleep.

“Cadet Kirk does not regularly partake in the requisite six hours of sleep, and is unlikely to reach the Human biological phenomenon of the REM cycle for optimal rest,” Senik remarked quietly in lieu of a greeting.

“He cannot sleep here,” Spock said, matching Senik's soft tone, which would be undetectable to Human ears.

“Why not?” Senik countered. “To wake him now would result in a 17 percent decrease in sleep efficiency. His first appointment is our shared history class. I will ensure that his hygienic and nutritional needs are met before class.”

Spock considered the logic of this, as well as his indebtedness to the man for escorting Senik home. “He will not appreciate you observing him while he sleeps,” Spock said. Senik nodded, inferring Spock’s acceptance, and stood to take his reading to another room. Spock gestured Senik to stop.

“I wish to know... are you unsatisfied here on Earth?” Spock asked, unsure how his fully-Vulcan cousin would view the emotional question.

Senik shook his head. “My needs are adequately met, tomasu.” Spock felt relief at that, and Senik continued. “Tomasu, are you unsatisfied with your life on Earth? Would you return to Vulcan for a more fulfilling life?”

“My needs are adequately met here, as well.”

“You have no family here,” Senik pointed out. “Will you return to Vulcan and find a bondmate?”

Spock shook his head. “You are young, and do not understand such things,” Spock said.

“I am telik,” Senik reminded him, as if that simple fact imparted a wealth of knowledge. “While you are fam’telsu, unbonded and vulnerable.”

_Vulnerable_ was about as blunt as any Vulcan would be about the repercussions Spock’s single status. Even his own mother would not comment on the issue, which was as Spock would prefer it. He had no wish to discuss the sensitive issue with his young cousin. “It is of no matter to you,” he said firmly.

"It is of great importance to me," Senik said, eyes wide. Spock softened at that, and brushed a gentle hand across Senik's hair, an acceptable gesture of affection for a Vulcan child. "The home you have provided me, in my mother's stead, is of great importance," the boy continued, ever logical.

“And what need or purpose does Cadet Kirk serve? I ask because I infer you have spent much of your leisure time watching or interacting with him,” Spock asked, glancing over at Kirk's prone form, a few meters away from where they stood. “If you wish to observe humanoid behavior, a diversity of subjects would allow you to gain a more thorough knowledge.”
Senik nodded thoughtfully. “I have observed many. As you may have noticed, Cadet Kirk is, by all standards that I am able measure, a superior example.”

With that surprising pronouncement, Senik trotted to his sleeping quarters to resume reading, leaving Spock alone with the unconscious Human.

He stood in the common area, considering what Senik had said. Of course Spock knew exactly who Cadet James T. Kirk was before he found him at the restaurant table. Spock, and every other Academy graduate, had studied the USS Kelvin, knew the story of George Kirk and his heroism, saving his crew and newborn son. Even Spock, who eschewed gossip, knew young Kirk had enrolled in the Academy shortly before Spock graduated. As an instructor, he knew that Kirk was superior in his studies, had heard his colleagues praise Kirk's intellect. Had heard the coy appreciation his other, more physical, attributes as well. *Spock knew exactly who Cadet James T. Kirk was.*

To be confronted with the man in person, was another matter. To have him sleeping on Spock's couch, snoring softly, an untouched cup of tea cooling on the coffee table, was also incongruous with the mental image Spock had developed.

It was many minutes before Spock realized he had committed the same faux pas that he warned Senik against, so he turned away so as not to stare at James Kirk in his sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Many thanks to the people who produce the Youtube videos of how to do basic things on the International Space Station, the trailer for the movie "Gravity" (absolutely terrifying!!), and my readers for indulging my wish to do my take on Kobayashi Maru-ish event where Jim has to turn to Spock, demanding the Vulcan to "hold me." Yes, 3000+ words just for that.

tomasu: family member
telik: bonded
fam'telsu: without a bond

Thank you dear readers, I adore reading your reviews, you are really keeping me motivated and provide that mental chocolate I crave. Flirty K/S ahead for all of you!
“Cadet Kirk, it is 0600 hours,” a voice called, sharply dragging Jim out of a dream. He opened his eyes to a half-lit, unfamiliar room. He was lying on a couch, a light blanket draped tucked around his body making him feel even warmer in the hot room. He started to kick off the blanket, aware he was still in his clothes, except for his shoes.

“Have you obtained a sufficient amount of rest?” Senik continued. Jim looked down to see the boy, dressed in his usual robes, standing near Jim’s feet. Jim propped himself up on his elbows to look around the room. Memories of the evening before still played in his head. Jim was still trying to sort them in their proper places. After the simulation, he had escorted Senik home, the boy had convinced him to try a cup of Vulcan tea, and he fell asleep. He dreamt of the simulation, of Spock demanding that Jim leave him to die, being physically pushed toward the exit, failing to grab the Vulcan in a desperate attempt change his fate.

It was especially jarring when he looked over to see the real Spock standing in the kitchen, dressed casually in a green tunic. He was filling something at kitchen sink, ignoring Jim on the couch. “Yeah,” he said, voice still groggy. “I’m sorry about crashing on your couch.”

Senik blinked owlishly. “As no damage to the furniture was incurred, apologies are unnecessary. My cousin agreed that it was inefficient and illogical to wake you.”

Jim glanced back at where Spock was standing, his attention still fixated on his sink. Was he avoiding looking at Jim, or was he always so intense? Or both?

“Well, thanks then,” he said, mostly to Spock. Senik nodded and Spock did not respond. Jim waited a beat before adding, “I better get going, or I’ll be late for class.” He flung the blanket aside, and started to get up. He caught Spock’s fleeting glance up at him, but the Vulcan turned his back, carrying what looked like an odd teapot to a table.

“You are to use the facilities here to ready yourself for the day,” Senik said, eyes darting between Jim and his elder cousin. “Food to break your fast will also be provided.” Before Jim could object, Senik plowed on. “If you do not, I have calculated that you are 82.4 percent likely to be late to class, causing a disturbance to the education of both you and our classmates.”

Jim appraised the boy skeptically. “How do you know that? You couldn’t possibly calculate the odds.”

“His statistics are sound,” Spock said from the other side of the room, placing the teapot on an what looked like an ornate Bunsen burner on the dining table. Jim looked at the Commander and shrugged.

“Well, thank you for your hospitality. Again.” Spock nodded in acknowledgement, his attention now absorbed in fiddling with the fancy Bunsen burner.

Senik marched off, leading Jim down a small hallway to a serviceable bathroom that had a stack of seven towels and a toothbrush.

“I will procure the appropriate garments,” Senik assured him. Jim smiled wanly and mentally steeled himself for walking into class wearing Vulcan robes.
As soon as Senik left, he jumped into the shower, surprised to find it was sonic, like on a starship, and not the standard Human water shower. Jim supposed this, as with the balmy indoor temperature, was a simple cultural difference. He made quick use of it, brushed his teeth with oddly flavored toothpaste (sandy and nutty flavored?) and was trying to tame his hair when Senik knocked softly at the door. He grabbed two of the many towels to tie around his waist and shoulders, guessing that he was expected to chastely cover himself in terry cloth.

When he opened the door, he was surprised to see Spock standing outside with a hanger of clothes. Their eyes met and Jim felt a delicious energy hum beneath his skin. Yes, that, Jim thought. He felt it at the restaurant, and stronger in the simulation lab, like a magnetic field was pulling him toward the other man.

“Senik wishes to know if you have any allergies or dietary restrictions.”

Jim smirked. “You mean he hasn’t deduced them all yet?”

“He has indicated that you have several,” Spock replied. His lips tightened and eyes softened, which gave an almost imperceptible impression of an amused expression. “He has been banned from obtaining your personal medical records, so I am gathering this information in a more conventional manner.”

“I appreciate the effort,” Jim said, smiling ruefully. “Well, I’m mostly allergic to shellfish, strawberries, soy, all root vegetables from Talos, and peanuts. That should cover most of it.”

Spock nodded and took a half step leave, and then turned back as if belatedly remembering what was in his hand and held the cadet uniform out awkwardly to Jim.

“It will not fit properly,” Spock said before Jim could say anything. “But it should be acceptable.” Jim accepted the hanger, careful not to touch the other man’s hands, and nodded gratefully. Spock stood half a moment longer, and then turned on his heels back toward the kitchen.

Jim closed the door, and held Spock’s old uniform up to himself, pondering the exchange with a small smile.

Who knew Vulcans were so adorable?

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Indeed the uniform did not fit properly. Slightly too long in all areas, but everything buttoned properly. When he came back into the open living area Spock was standing over the stove leaning over a skillet. Senik stood to the side, observing Spock’s technique intently.

“Your clothes are adequate?” Spock asked, then glanced up to verify that Jim would pass inspection. Jim felt a flush of warmth, probably not associated with the climate of the house.


“All has been addressed appropriately, with the exception of the eggs, as you see. I replicated them, unaware Human did not usually consume them in their raw form,” Senik informed Jim.

“You didn’t need to do that,” Jim said.

Spock gave him a look that was politely dismissive, a Vulcan shrug as it were, and transferred half the eggs to Jim’s plate with precise and practiced movements. He then transferred the rest to his own plate and carried both to the table. Jim followed the two Vulcans to the table and took his seat.
between them. He was gratified to find coffee and not tea at his seat, unsurprisingly prepared the way he preferred. He had to admit that in this once instance, Senik’s diligence to science had paid off for Jim.

They began breakfast, Spock and Jim with plates of scrambled eggs and fruit, and Senik with a bowl of clear broth. After a solid minute of silent eating, Senik turned to Jim.

“Do you require the stimulation of small talk?” Senik asked.

Jim openly stared at the boy. “Uh, no. But thanks.”

“I have endeavored to read more about Human social norms and pragmatics,” Senik said. “Humans desire to discuss trivial matters regarding weather, current events, and daily plans.”

“Well, I’m not much of a morning person,” Jim said awkwardly. “The silence is okay.”

Senik nodded solemnly, but Jim got the impression that it was not the answer the boy was looking for. “… unless you wanted to practice Terran small talk on me?”

Senik’s eyebrows raised in surprise, then he shook his head. “Perhaps in this instance, I would observe.” He glanced meaningfully at Spock, fork full of eggs hovering above his plate in surprise.

Jim suspected that Spock wasn’t keen on the idea, but didn’t know a way to politely decline without it seeming like Jim wasn’t interested. Because Jim was. Interested, that is. Interested in learning more about Spock.

Surprisingly, Spock spoke first. “Do you have a busy day today, Cadet?”

Jim nodded, schooling his face into polite expression for Senik’s scrutiny. “It’s Friday, so I have all my classes in the morning, followed by a long shift at the library.”

“Do find your work in the library appealing?” Spock asked. Jim noticed that Senik was absolutely still, adopting the same posture and expression he did while in their morning lecture.

“It pays the bills,” Jim said casually. “I can study while I work, which has allowed me to fast track through my Academy courses. I graduate in a few months.”

”Some do not share your diligence or efficiency,” Spock remarked.

“Well, I’m convinced my destiny is out there in the stars. To wait and spend more time here just seems... illogical.”

Spock tilted his head, considering. ”Your performance in the lab would suggest that you are well suited for duty aboard a starship.”

Jim smiled at that. ”You don't think I was taking unnecessary chances?”

”I think I am able to believe both of those statements simultaneously,” Spock said, making Jim laugh.

”I don't deny it. What about you, what do you teach?”

”Advanced phonology.” Jim was curious what a linguistics instructor was doing in the zerograv simulation lab last night, but Spock continued. “I will take my commission as first officer aboard the Enterprise when term ends.”

Jim perked up at that, very impressed. The Enterprise. Growing up in her shadow in Riverside, it
was all he could see when he envisioned his future. “That’s a fantastic ship,” Jim said, not without a fair bit of envy. Before he could ask more, Senik interrupted.

“Cadet Kirk, we must depart in the next two minutes, if we are to be punctual,” Senik said, standing up to take his bowl to the recycler. Jim took his cup and plate, followed suit and then turned to Spock who was still finishing his eggs.

“Thank you for the gracious hospitality of your house,” Jim said in accented Vulcan.

He looked up from his meal, his gaze unwavering. “Veling,” Spock replied. “You are welcome.”

Jim smiled and followed Senik out the door and down the path to the public transport to campus. When they entered the lecture hall, Jim moved a couple seats over from his usual spot and gestured for the boy to sit, still giving the boy a bubble of personal space.

"So I can observe you observing me," Jim explained. Senik did not comment or object.

In addition to reading for his next class, his mind wandered to Lieutenant Commander Spock. There was some chemistry there, but Jim was uncertain if he was misreading the Vulcan. Regardless, he was already silently plotting how he could run into Spock again. He had to return the uniform, after all.

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Jim caught shit from his roommate as soon as he walked in the door that evening.

"You sly dog," Bones said, punching him in the arm. "I didn't even see you leave the bar, who'd you leave with?"

"The annoying Vulcan child," Jim replied, smirking at the doctor's look. "I just made sure the kid got home safe and crashed on a couch somewhere," Jim explained, not wanting to go into the whole story of fallen asleep on kid's couch, now wearing Vulcan Professor's old uniform that smells like him and I like it. Bones eyes narrowed, but didn't ask any more questions.

"So, Christine?" Jim asked, glad when the doctor's eyes got a little misty and distracted.

"Yeah, she's great," Bones said. "She's got third shift tonight at the hospital, so I'm bringing her breakfast tomorrow."

Jim batted his eyes and put on his best sappy pout. "Oh, Leonard, why don't you ever make me breakfast?"

"Breakfast is for people you actually like, idiot," Bones grumbled defensively.

Jim thought back to a plate of scrambled eggs with a soft expression, to the doctor's unending annoyance.

----

Monday came and Jim found himself at his usual spot in the dining hall with Bones.

“Don’t turn around,” Bones muttered, discretely covering his mouth with a napkin. "Vulcan at your starboard quarter.”

Jim sighed. Senik really didn’t know when to take a hint.
“He’s still staring at you,” Bones commented.

Jim rolled his eyes and turned around, ready to chew Senik out for his behavior. He was brought up short when he met the intense gaze of Spock. His stomach did a funny flip as the Vulcan gestured to the empty seat at his table, apparently expecting Jim to join him. Spock searched Jim out. Why, he wasn't sure, but he was going to find out.

Jim glanced back over at his roommate, who was wearing a disbelieving look. "You make the oddest friends."

Jim shrugged and stood to join Spock. "It's my winning personality, I think." Bones rolled his eyes and stood to leave for his shift at the med facility.

Jim approached Spock’s table, energy humming beneath his skin. “Cadet Kirk,” Spock said in greeting.

“Commander Spock,” Jim replied just as formally, and set it tray down and took the seat opposite him.

“It is pleasing to see you,” Spock said.

“You don’t have to attempt small talk now, we aren't being watched,” Jim assured him, a small smile that he was sure Spock returned with his eyes.

“I did not mean it as a Human pleasantry,” Spock replied honestly. Jim smiled wider, holding Spock’s warm gaze. He knew he must look ridiculous, was positive Bones was making gagging noises across the dining hall, but he didn't really care.

"Well, it's good to see you too," Jim finally managed. "I have your uniform for you, I wasn't sure how you wanted me to return it."

That was a lie. Jim had the uniform for two whole days, cleaned, pressed and hanging up in his closet. He was still mapping out the best way to return the garment to Spock while still ensuring that the exchange would extended into something more than just a simple drop-off.

"I will be in the Cochrane building tomorrow, 1800 hours," Spock suggested.

"I can bring it there," he said, slightly disappointed. There went his excuse to visit Spock at his home again.

"I am attending a lecture on computer science application for transwarp theory," Spock added.

"Dr. Dwega’s, right?” Jim asked. Spock nodded and Jim perked up. “She’s working on some very interesting ideas that could really revolutionize Starfleet engineering.”

Spock nodded in agreement. “On a ship as large as the Enterprise, her theories could improve system efficiency dramatically. I thought you would want to attend as my guest, given your interest in the Enterprise.”

Jim was flattered that Spock remembered his interest in that ship in particular. “That would be great. Thank you, sir.”

Spock hesitated, then continued. "There is a restaurant across from the lecture hall, if you would care to join me for dinner afterward."
Jim processed the words for a moment. The last time he was asked to dinner by a Vulcan, he had misunderstood quite a bit. “Would you characterize this dinner as platonic?”

Spock shook his head carefully, searching Jim’s face. “If my romantic advances are unwelcome, I apologize, and will desist immediately.”

Jim felt like telling Spock he could advance on him right here on the dining table and Jim wouldn’t mind, but didn’t think Spock’s Vulcan sensibilities would appreciate the innuendo.

“No, I mean yes. Yes, dinner sounds good,” Jim said, trying to tamp down on his enthusiasm. “It all sounds great.”

Spock’s lips tightened again, and Jim was now positive it was a smile.

Unbeknownst to the pair, a Vulcan boy with digital binoculars was waiting behind a recycler station, observing the entire exchange with relish.

Chapter End Notes

(I believe there is a very strong correlation between true love and breakfast food.)

So, Spock making the first move. Thoughts?

Thank you dear readers. Sorry for the delay. I'm going to lay the blame directly where it needs to go: on myself Tumblr.

Thank you for your feedback, it is what kept me up tonight finishing this. All mistakes are my own, compounded my lack of sleep. You guys are awesome and completely worth it.
Stardate 2257.216

1232 hours: Subject Kirk observed conversing with Subject Spock at Starfleet Academy dining facility for 7.56 minutes.

Subject Kirk demonstrated behavior consistent with Human characteristics of heightened arousal. Pupils dilated, infrequent blinking, and intermittent grasping and repositioning of items on subject’s lunch tray that served no functional purpose. Behavior classified as “fidgeting,” possibly indicating interest of a romantic nature.

Subject Spock could not be viewed at an angle that would provide the necessary data to obtain enough significant data to support hypothesis. It is unknown if Subject Spock demonstrates Vulcan or Human behaviors to entice a mate.

Audio data limited. Lip reading and other communicative cues indicate a verbal exchange related to a future meeting.

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Stardate 2257.217

0600 hours: Subject Spock demonstrates behavior consistent with previous observations. No deviation or atypicality noted.

0847 hours: Subject Kirk continues to insist on new seating arrangement. All possible observable data is judged to be compromised.

1112 hours: Subject Kirk encountered an occupied Subject Spock in hallway in the Science Building. Subject Kirk made eye contact with Subject Spock and nodded once. Spock reciprocated the movement, resuming his conversation with Captain Pike. Upon completion of the conversation with Captain Pike, Subject Spock turned to look back at the retreating Subject Kirk for 2.58 seconds. Reason unknown.

1730 hours: Subject Spock verified initiation of Human courtship.

Senik stood outside Spock’s office in the Science Building until his cousin beckoned him inside.

“I informed you yesterday that I would not be joining you for the evening meal,” Spock said, attention centered on the process of tidying his desk for the evening.

“I have not forgotten,” Senik replied, as if forgetting could have been a possibility. “I am inquiring if your absence this evening is related to Cadet Kirk.”

Spock turned fully to address him. “Yes. I have asked him to accompany me to a lecture and dinner this evening, as part of a Human courtship ritual.”
Senik nodded, and felt compelled to take a PADD out and make notes. This revelation supported his working hypothesis. New data would be gleaned from this new development.

“Are you experiencing anxiety related to this event?” Senik asked, curious if Spock felt the Human emotion common in this situation. His reading referred to the emotion as “jitters.”

“Anxiety is illogical.” This was not a “no,” Senik noted, but did not verbalize this realization.

“I volunteer my services as your wingman,” Senik said.

“I am unfamiliar with term.”

“I have been informed by a reliable source that the presence of another can aid in achieving a level of emotional comfort needed for romantic social interaction to succeed.”

Spock was silent for a moment, eyes scrutinizing Senik. “Unnecessary,” he replied shortly. “Your support is appreciated. However, I must insist that you not interfere with or observe Cadet Kirk or myself this evening.” Senik opened his mouth to give a logical protest, but Spock continued. “This is a private and personal matter, not under the purview of your humanoid observations.”

Senik silently objected to that statement, but the most logical response was to simply nod in agreement. His pursuit of science would never be deterred so easily.

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2023 hours: Have recruited an employee of the dining establishment to aid me. She has required an odd exchange for services, but as it is neither dangerous nor taxing, I have agreed.

Senik was sequestered just outside kitchen facilities of a French bistro, playing kal-toh with a waitress named Louisa. By day, she was a young cadet who had a fondness for the Vulcan board game and tonight was willing to allow a Vulcan child wait in the prep station on the condition of playing a match and keeping quiet. The situation could not have been more serendipitous. Senik had calculated that this was one of four restaurants that met the criteria of serving vegetarian dishes, did not use peanut oil, and was within walking distance to the Cochrane building. This was the only one that had a waitress who was willing to relay information to Senik.

“There’s a cute couple in my section, in the corner booth. One Vulcan, one Human, just like you said,” Louisa reported to Senik, dropping her order off. “They ordered the spinach flatbread and two herbal teas.”

Senik nodded his thanks, making notes on his PADD. “When you serve them their drinks, make note of the Vulcan’s nostrils.”

“His nostrils?” she asked, eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

“Yes,” Senik replied, moving another piece on the kal-toh board. “It will reveal important information to support my hypothesis. Also, any verbal exchange you might overhear would also aid me in my mission.”

“Right, your mission,” she said dubiously, starting to prepare tea. Senik refrained from restating his objectives, sure that she was aware, and repetition would not aid him. Any data, even second hand from the untutored waitress-cum-cadet, was better than nothing. Louisa contemplated the board, and moved a piece. Senik quickly made his next move and Louisa countered, and grabbed the two tall mugs and bustled out of the station.
Two minutes later she walked into the kitchen, and came out with Spock and Cadet Kirk’s appetizer. She waited a moment, studying the kal-toh board.

“His nostrils were flaring,” she said, reaching over to move another piece. “Does that mean something?”

“Yes,” Senik said, making another note on his PADD, and didn’t elaborate.

Louisa returned to send up her order of mushroom and tomato crepes and asparagus quiche.

“The Human guy is trying to tell jokes,” she reported, rolling her eyes. Evidently, even most Humans knew better than to attempt the practice of verbal humor with Vulcans.

Senik made a few notes, but did not comment. This did not bode well.

Seventeen moves later, the waitress left with a single dessert, assuredly for Cadet Kirk.

“Do Vulcans eat refined sugar?” she asked, when she returned.

“It is not something regularly eaten in a traditional Vulcan diet,” Senik acknowledged.

“That’s what I thought. Well, your Vulcan doesn’t seem to mind splitting the chocolate cake.”

“Chocolate cake?” Senik repeated, most illogically. “He would not eat chocolate cake.” To ingest such a food would result in an impairment of the nervous system, including complex cognitive functions.

“Well, he’s practically eating it out of his date’s hand,” Louisa muttered, peering through the small window of the door leading to the dining room. Senik stood up on tiptoe to observe for himself.

As Louisa had said, Spock and Cadet Kirk were sitting in the corner of the restaurant, Kirk holding out a forkful of cake to Spock. Senik’s eyes widened as Spock put his hand on the fork, touching Kirk’s and guided it to his mouth. Senik could feel the heat of his blood suffuse his cheeks with verdant hues. Such a private act was not meant to be observed by others, let alone in a public place.

Shocking and scandalous were words that came to mind, words that his people would use to describe the scene that unfolded in front of his eyes. However the scientist in him also noted the empirical data. Spock was touching his face, running a finger across his cheek as if being thoughtful. His eyes were unwavering from Kirk’s, his other hand brushing against the Human’s once more before returning to his drink.

Despite much evidence supporting adherence to traditional Vulcan lifestyle, Spock was also quite Human in his mannerisms. Senik postulated that Spock was quite unaware of this.

“Hey, kid,” Louisa barked from the kal-toh board. “Make a move, I don’t have all night.”

Senik trudged back to the table, moved another kal-toh piece, and added his newest data into the PADD.

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2257.219

1600: Observed Subject Spock enter the living area of the household wearing brown tunic, as is customary on Thursday evenings. Subject spent two minutes preparing to join Subject Kirk on
campus, then returned to personal quarters. After a period of seven minutes, subject reemerged wearing a blue tunic.

Unknown what antecedent occurred to instigate this change. Possible theories include intermittent color blindness or skin rash. Terran fauna are known to use color to attract mates. Unknown if subject is aware of this similarity. Will continue to observe.

2257.220

0750 hours: Subject Kirk has approached me for courtship guidance, presumably in his endeavors to woo Subject Spock. I am faced with the dire ethical dilemma created by my dual positions as both tomasu of Spock and scientist as is yet unresolved.

“Senik, you’re married,” Cadet Kirk said suddenly before class began.

Senik looked over to the cadet. “You are stating a fact that we are both aware of.”

“If you don’t mind me asking, where is she, your wife?”

“I do not ‘mind’ you asking. My wife is on Vulcan, residing in the house of her parents,” he said simply.

“How did you two meet? What did you do together before you got married?”

Senik thought back to when he met the girl who became his bonded. “We have a traditional Vulcan bonding. We met at koon-ut, the appointed place. To what pre-bonding activities are you referring?”

“You know, dates,” Kirk asked. “Talking, getting to know the other person. Everything before the bonding.”

“Vulcans do not engage in pre-bonding activities. As telepathic beings, we are able to determine appropriate and logical pair-mates at a young age.”

“So you had an arranged marriage?” Senik nodded. Kirk seemed to contemplate this for a moment. “So Spock…’ his voice trailed off, his sentence incomplete. Senik stared at him blankly, unsure why the cadet had not finished his message.

Jim rallied and voiced the rest of his thoughts. “So has Spock dated before? Ever?”

“I am unaware of any previous attempts of courtship in any culture,” Senik verified. Figuring, as the Human saying goes, turnabout was fairplay, he posed his own question. “Is he meeting the Terran expectations of your social agreement?”

Jim’s eyes widened in alarm. “You know?”

“Know of what, Cadet Kirk?”

“Spock and I and our… dating.”

“Yes, I have observed behavior that would indicate this change in your social behavior, and have received verbal confirmation from my cousin. How would you rate his behavior in the understood standards of Human wooing? I ask, for the sake of scientific inquiry, that you be precise and descriptive.”
Kirk appeared to be temporarily rendered unable to speak, making an unusual rasping noise. When his typical countenance returned, he was smiling for unknown reasons. “He’s a perfect gentleman. Very… reserved,” Kirk supplied.

Senik nodded in approval. “A sign of respect and courtesy for Vulcans,” he added. Unlike himself, Cadet Kirk was sure not to have time to engage in an in depth study of Vulcan social customs. Perhaps Senik could appraise him of the basics.

“Oh,” Kirk said. “I thought it was me. Maybe he didn’t like my cologne.”

“Cologne?” Senik asked, unfamiliar with the Standard word.

“Humans wear it sometimes to smell good to others,” Cadet Kirk explained. Senik made the connection between the the concept and the artificial scents some beings used.

“Vulcans possess a keen sense of smell,” Senik explained. “The chemicals the Humanoids use here are offensive to our sensory processing.”

“Makes sense.” Kirk glanced around the rapidly filling room. “How do you stand it here, then? With so many people and so much to process?”

“Vulcan possess vastly superior mental faculties, and we are trained at a young age to withstand such overwhelming sensory input.”

Kirk nodded, and turned back to reading his PADD. He muttered under his breath, surely not intending Senik’s vastly superior auditory sense to pick up what he said.

“Now I just need to overwhelm a Vulcan with my own sensory input.”

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Stardate 2257.220

1912: My ethical dilemma continues.

It was Saturday, according to the Terran Standard calendar. Spock was to accompany Cadet Kirk to the holoplex to view a remastered Human classic video drama. Senik contemplated writing a message to his mother to request to remain on Earth for another semester. He had an interest in xenobiology, and the courses at the Academy are, admittedly, far superior than those that could be found on Vulcan. He realized how vast and varied Starfleet’s amassed knowledge is, gained through interspecies cooperation. Senik contemplated a possible future in which his may pursue science with Starfleet, much like Spock. He shared this thought with this cousin, before he left for his “date.”

“I infer that your humanoid behavior observations have inspired you to take an interest in Starfleet and the Federation,” Spock said.

Senik gave a small nod, almost tentative. “Do you think ko-mekh will approve?” Senik asked. He had not shared his interest with his mother. While she had never shown any disapproval of her Spock’s decision, she may arrive at a different conclusion when these variables include her own son.

Spock considered the question. “I do not believe your mother would condemn your pursuit of knowledge. She is a scientist, after all.”

“Do you approve?” Senik asked, a moment before he could properly analyze the question. Yes, he was seeking Spock’s approval. While not logical, it was a beneficial variable in his life.
“Senik, whatever you decide, I will always be proud of you,” Spock said solemnly.

Senik allowed himself to bask in the surprising emotional warmth generated by the statement. In a fit of creative inspiration, he took out his reading PADD and extended it to Spock.

“I have downloaded many fictional and non-fictional texts written by Humans about Starfleet,” Senik said. Spock took the extended device. “Perhaps you would avail yourself of this information, to better understand Cadet Kirk. There is an entire section related to courtship and Human romance.”

Spock scanned the screen finding the appropriate section of titles.

“Star-Crossed Prime Directive Love Connections, The Vulcan Captain and the Virgin Yeoman,” Spock read aloud, and then looked down sharply. "I do not think that these cultural texts are relevant to my relationship to Cadet Kirk. Nor should you be using them as a template for typical Humanoid behavior."

Senik nodded. “I have since inferred this,” he admitted. “However, they still serve as important artifacts of Terran culture.” Spock nodded, turning the screen off and left to change into casual attire.

Senik watched Spock leave the room with the reading device, unsure if he had contaminated his project’s data irrevocably. The reading PADD would be returned two weeks later.

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**2257.222**

1310 hours: Subjects Spock and Kirk engaged in conversation outside the officer's lounge. Subject Kirk's demeanor characterized as animated--

“What are you doing, H’gorth?” a deep voice snarled, the Andorian slur heavy in the air. Senik turned around to find the first year cadet that had tripped on his bag many weeks ago in his history class. The Andorian male was leaning over him menacingly, teeth bared in a predatory manner.

“I am conducting scientific observations,” Senik stated, unaware of what he had done to anger this man yet again. “It does not involve you.”

With strength and reflexes that rivaled Senik's own, the Andorian snatched the PADD out of Senik’s grasp. “What is this?” he muttered, scanning the files.

“Return my property,” Senik commanded.

The Andorian ignored him. “Subject Kirk? You’re spying on Jim Kirk?”

“I am not spying,” he explained. “I am conducting--”

“You’re being a we’Kweleth, H’gorth,” the Andorian said, taking a step toward Senik waving the data PADD menacingly. In a tactical defensive blunder, Senik found his back against a wall. “I ought to turn this into ‘Fleet security.”

Senik felt a surge of desperation and anger, quite unbecoming of a boy his age. Weeks of observations to be confiscated by unlearned security personnel, it was almost too much to bear.

“It would be illogical to take threats seriously from a man whose father’s shadow walks over a neighbor’s field,” Senik said firmly, completely aware of how base a slur he spoke to the Andorian. Shameful, but necessary in his mind.
Unfortunately, Senik was slightly less cognizant of how fast and hard an Andorian fist could move towards his face.

Chapter End Notes

Gentle Readers, Senik wanted the POV in this chapter, and we just don't think Spock-n-Jim would get a booster seat and let Senik order off the kiddie menu on their first date (yes, I know you'd let him join you on your dates... it's only logical.) He had to be sneaky.

I do want to write that scene. I have a thing for hands. And dessert. Yum.

Thank you, as always, for your kind replies and comments. I'd have Senik deliver a chocolate cake to all of you!
Spock arrived seven minutes early to Dr. Dwega’s lecture. He stood outside in a hallway with his back to a wall, providing him an excellent vantage point of both doors. He waited outside the entrance of the lecture hall for 1.43 minutes before Cadet Kirk pushed through the main double doors, dressed smartly in a grey linen shirt and slacks. Spock watched silently as the other scanned the small crowd that had gathered. When the bright blue eyes found Spock, Kirk broke into a tight-lipped smile and walked directly toward him.

"Hello, Coman- Spock," he said, almost tentatively.

“It is pleasurable to see you again, James,” Spock said, the man’s name odd on his tongue. The other man smiled widely this time, seemingly more at ease. Spock was gratified to see that they had both opted out of Starfleet uniform, certain that they both wanted as little as possible to remind them of their current perceived imbalance of power.

“It’s just Jim,” the man corrected. “James always sounds so… serious.”

Spock considered reminding Jim that this was a serious event, and he did not initiate a romantic relationship lightly, but decided to set that aside for now. “Jim,” he said, nodding. “Shall we take our seats?”

Spock led Jim into the lecture hall and was gratified to see that the most optimal seats for viewing were available. Jim stared at the empty first row and took a seat in the middle. Spock took the seat next to him. He could not help but to notice that there was 27.84 centimeters between their knees and only 9.3 between their respective elbows. He could feel the heat radiating off of the other man as well as a Terran fragrance, laundry soap, and mint all masking a more earthen natural scent.

Jim leaned over toward Spock, his mouth unnecessarily near to Spock’s ear. “Some of the professors are staring at us. I hope that isn’t a problem for you.”

Spock looked over to Jim, met his eyes, and was able to detect the fascinating pigmentation of the iris against the lack of pigment in the stroma of the iris.

“Is it?” Jim asked again. The lights started to dim and Spock broke eye contact.

“No,” Spock said finally. “Your opinion is the only one that is relevant in this matter.”

When a petite woman took the stage, Jim’s elbow was had moved 3.25 centimeters closer.

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Jim kept pace in the cool night air, his arms swinging casually back and forth, as they walked toward the small bistro Spock had selected for their dinner. He gait was relaxed, his head turned and attention centered mostly on Spock and not anything in their path, leaving Spock responsible for navigating them to their destination safely.

“Even in smaller vessels, it could be applicable. Some of those older ships have so many redundant systems. Reduce that and a runabout, and suddenly you’ve got...” Jim slapped his hand together and made a complicated gesture. “It would be very efficient,” Jim clarified as they approached the door
“Indeed,” Spock said, holding the door open for his Human date. Jim gave him a smile for the small gesture, and Spock was silently grateful his mother had taught him a few customs from her culture. As the host led them to a quiet corner, and he allowed Jim to take his seat first. They ordered their drinks and Spock answered irrelevant questions about his childhood and family. An appetizer arrived and the conversation turned to courses Jim had taken.

“And then he has the nerve to bring up some outdated postulate on transwarp theory that probably predates Vulcan warp capability, if that gives you an idea out of line he was. So this other guy leans over and says in this really thick Scottish accent-- I have no idea where this guy came from-- ‘Cannae ye see we’re not Byrean nor Qielian in this dimension?’” Jim guffawed loudly at his own story. Spock nodded his acknowledgement of the subtle play on words, but ultimately puzzled by the humor of the anecdote, but it didn’t seem to bother his Human companion. Jim finally sobered when the waitress came to refill their drinks, and then the rest of dinner was continued in comfortable conversation.

Spock was not naturally one for “small talk” but, like Senik, (and he was trying not to think of his young ward) he was aware of most Human’s needs to fill the moment with constant chatter. Jim occasionally asked a question or shared an anecdote, but also seemed equally content to sit in silence, a decidedly rare characteristic among many Humans, and Spock was appreciative of this.

“How’re your crepes?” Jim asked half way into their second course.

“Nutritious and appropriately prepared,” Spock replied. “And your entree, is it adequate?”

“Yes, it’s delicious,” he said, swallowing a bite. “Do you have a favorite food, or is taste unimportant to Vulcans?”

“We have preferences. It is logical that sensory pleasure is one of many measurable factors that would determine preference. For example, I prefer Terran mushrooms to the native edible fungus of Vulcan,” and took another bite of the mushroom and tomato crepe.

“What about in people? Do you have a preference in sentient life forms?”

Spock chewed, considering the question, realizing that Jim perhaps was asking a question of a more relevant and personal nature.

“I prefer intelligence and integrity over any genetic composition,” Spock said. He also suspected he had a preference for the yellow coloring of Jim’s hair, but didn’t feel it was appropriate to voice it just then. Jim looked like he was about to respond when the waitress bustled up to the table.

“Would you care for dessert? Our house specialty is our flourless chocolate cake.”

“I will take black coffee,” Spock said.

“I can’t say no to chocolate cake,” Jim said. She nodded and left their table. Jim suddenly frowned when she left the room. “She’s been staring at you, like she’s evaluating your facial expressions,” he muttered.

“I did not notice.”

“It’s weird, like that look your cousin gets when I’m doing something new and he has to document it.” Then Jim shrugged and the subject was dropped.
The waitress came back and set the coffee and a large slice of rich chocolate cake on the table. Jim licked his lips.  

“It’s got raspberries and whipped cream,” Jim sighed, grabbing the fork and immediately took a bite and groaned. “This really is amazing. Want to try a bite?”

Spock stared at the offered bite of chocolate cake on the fork. The sharing of utensils was incredibly intimate and somewhat taboo in Vulcan culture. Spock was only half aware of his actions until his hand closed over the fork, brushing against Jim’s. He closed his mouth over the fork, able to detect the cocoa, the freshness of the eggs used, the metal of the fork, and a taste of something that surely must be Jim. The realization was titillating.

“Do you think it’s good?” Jim asked, hand still on the fork. The barest of contact between Spock’s ring finger and Jim’s index sent him Jim’s muted wave of… interest.

Spock swallowed, unsure of how to categorize the experience, but nodded and released the fork.

“Another bite?” Jim asked, a smile blooming on his face.

“I should not indulge,” Spock said. “Processed sugar has a negative impact on my physiology. Much like ethyl alcohol is to Human physiology.” Jim nodded, then widened his eyes in comprehension.

“So when I was offering my soda to Senik when we first met at that restaurant by the library, it could have gotten him drunk?” Spock nodded. “Now I can see where you thought I was involved in the delinquency of a minor.”

Spock shook his head. “Senik is entirely too inquisitive for his own good. As he matures, he will find a balance to his curiosity and good prudence.” Spock paused, considering. "I have since changed my opinion of your character considerably. I may have to thank Senik for it." Spock was rewarded with a chuckle.

Jim finished the rest of his cake, a few appreciative groans that were probably entirely unnecessary, and the pair stood to leave.

“I will escort you to your dormitory,” Spock said, swiping a credit chip over their table.

Jim merely smiled and nodded. During their walk Spock calculated that Jim walked between 4-6 centimeters closer on the way to his dormitory than when they walked to the restaurant. Jim hummed a little in the companionable silence as he led Spock down a familiar path to one of the dormitories.

“Well, this is me,” Jim said, stopping at the door, rocking on the balls of his feet. “I had a good time tonight.”

“I have had an enjoyable evening in your company, as well. I will comm you tomorrow, if you would like assistance on your Exochemistry project,” Spock promised.

“That sounds great. Well…” Jim rocked again, an intent look on his face. Spock now recognized the expression that Jim was referring to in the restaurant, Jim was studying him, trying to find... something. Jim must have found it, as he gave a short sigh and smiled. “Goodnight, Spock.”

“Goodnight, Jim,” Spock murmured, and remained on the sidewalk and watched the man enter his building. From his vantage point in the shadows he could see Jim’s wide grin as he walked past a window and up the stairs to his room.
Several days later…

... her sensuous curves quivered under his skilled and rugged hands.

“Captain,” he husked out. He was the Yeoman, his attention to detail was paramount to pleasing the logical captain of his illogical heart and soul. His Vulcan captain smiled as his fingers dipped deeper, her moist passion spilled out onto the captain’s chair and...

Spock abruptly set Senik's PADD down. He was unsure of what he objected to more, the moist passion or the smiling Vulcan. Was this what Humans expected from Vulcan lovers? Was this what Jim expected?

He thought on that for a while, all the way to the holoplex were Jim was waiting, popcorn and drinks ready. Jim was insistent that helping him study for Exochemistry was not a date, and neither were their frequent but brief comm's over the past week. He claimed it was a traditional Human dating ritual, so for the first time, Spock found himself led down a dim hall through the throng of holomovie patrons.

“This was a Terran masterpiece from centuries ago. It’s been remastered so many times, no one is quite sure what the original was like, and I've never seen it in 5D with the extended director's cut,” Jim said, as they took their seats in the half-filled room. He handed Spock not one but two drinks. “Didn’t know what you’d like, so I brought choices.”

Spock inspected the unsweetened chai and took a tentative sip. “Thank you.”

Jim grinned and sat back in his seat, opening boxes of candy. “I know you say you don’t normally indulge, but I figure it’s Saturday and you might want to try some Human candy.”

Spock wondered why the Terran designation of this particular day on the Standard calendar would influence his behavior, but took an offered piece from a purple box and sampled.

Spock must have given some unknown facial expression, because Jim had to smother a rueful grin. “I take that you aren’t a fan of raisins?” Spock shook his head and swallowed the offending Raisinette. Before he could object, Jim held out a handful of different chocolate-covered candies. “Try these instead. I have a good feeling about it.”

Spock took one, fingertips brushing against Jim’s palm, a spark of interest. Jim flushed slightly in the dim light of the holotheater. Spock chewed tentatively, more interested in Jim’s pigment change. What did it feel like to Jim when their hands met? Was Jim aware of what the gesture might mean to a Vulcan?

“The mint flavoring is quite enjoyable,” Spock reported. Jim smiled triumphantly and handed Spock the box.

When the movie had concluded, the triumphant heroes rewarded by the princess, Jim finger were tracing the top of Spock's hand, and Spock had eaten an entire box of mint-flavored candy.

“The villian is still alive,” Spock pointed out as the lights came on and they walked to the exit. “And they have only succeeded in winning a minor battle against a rather well supplied military regime.”

“There’s a sequel,” Jim explained. “Actually, nine sequels. And three prequels, but we won’t talk about those.”
Spock could only nod. “I’d look forward to seeing the next one.”

Jim gave Spock a half grin. “You just used a contraction.”

Spock paused and thought back on his previous words. “Yes. I have eaten the entire box of these Junior Mints, and my cognition and fine motor skills are mildly impaired.” In confirmation of that statement, Spock attempted to place his empty candy container in the recycler near the door, and needed two tries to succeed.

Jim’s eyebrows shot up. “You’re a lightweight.”

“I am uncertain what you mean by that.”

“It means I’m taking you home,” Jim said. “Can you walk?”

Spock frowned, and then was belatedly surprised that he had made the expression. “My gross motor skills are mostly intact. I am able to see myself safely home, Jim.”

Jim shook his head. “I wouldn’t feel right. Anyway, you said yourself that your cognition is impaired, so I’m making this decision in the interest of safety. I’ll drive you home.”

As he couldn’t argue with the logic of that decision, Spock followed Jim out of crowded holoplex to the parking garage where Jim stopped in front of a motorbike.

Spock balked at the two-wheeled contraption. “I do not see how this option is safer.”

Jim smiled and handed Spock a helmet. “I’ve never been in an accident. I promise to be extra careful.”

Spock frowned again. “One should take the most amount of care when operating any vehicle, especially one with substandard safety features.”

Jim chuckled as he strapped his own helmet on and then reached up to help Spock thread the straps of his own. Jim’s face was close, he could smell a faint whiff of salted popcorn on his breath. Spock felt a sudden urge to find out what it tasted like on Jim.

“All set,” Jim murmured, looking up at Spock with a small grin. He turned and swung a leg around the bike. “Jump on and put your arms around me.”

Spock took his seat and threaded his arms around Jim and held on as the lights of Sausalito sped past in his peripheral vision. It was a most dizzying sensation.

---

When they arrived on the quiet street of Spock’s home, he stood and tried to disengage the complicated harness system of the helmet. Before he realized, Jim’s fingers were at his chin, batting away Spock’s clumsy hands.

“Remind me, no candy on the next date or you’ll never want to go out with me again,” Jim muttered, untangling the straps.

“Unlikely,” Spock said. “I will wish to continue our courtship.”

“Is that what we are doing by Vulcan standards? Courting?” Jim asked. The straps unfastened and Jim gently ran his fingertips against jaw and neck for a scant moment and then they were back at the man’s sides. Spock stood, staring at Jim, helmet still on his head.
“It is what we wish to make it,” Spock replied seriously. “My interest in you has only increased in intensity.”

Jim smiled ruefully. “You don’t see the point in playing around, do you?” Spock tilted his head, confused. Jim just shook his head. “I always know where I stand with you. It’s refreshing, that’s all. A good thing.” Jim reached up as if to touch Spock’s face, but merely lifted the helmet off of his head. “I feel the same, by the way.”

Jim escorted Spock to his door, unsurprised that Senik was watchfully waiting from the window, and bid them both goodnight.

Senik peered thoughtfully at Spock, standing in the middle of the communal room with no purpose. Spock looked back at him. “Unless you require anything, I must retire for the evening.” Without waiting for a reply, Spock turned and retreated to his room, and read through two chapters of “The Vulcan Captain and the Virgin Yeoman” with disgust and disbelief, before he was overcome by the processed sugar in his system and fell asleep.

The next morning Spock awoke at 0517, seventeen minutes later than was typical. He was otherwise completely refreshed. However, he spent seventeen fewer minutes meditating, which should not have had a significant impact on his day. Nevertheless, found himself mentally occupied by thoughts of Cadet Kirk all morning. The blonde, blue eyed male was illogical and irrational and very very Human. He was intelligent, inquisitive, and had certain indefinable quality that drew Spock in and held him. More than simple charisma, he was magnetism personified.

James T. Kirk was, quite possibly, everything a Vulcan mate was not. As Spock endeavored to be honest himself, all of this made Jim all the more attractive.

As if summoned by thought itself, Jim appeared at his elbow in the hallway. “Commander, do you have a moment?”

“I have a meeting with Captain Pike in twenty two minutes,” Spock said, tucking his hands behind his back.

“I can talk fast, I have to get to work soon anyway,” Jim insisted. Spock nodded.

“I got a message from Captain Cho this morning,” Jim said, rubbing his hands together nervously. “I’m to report to her CO tomorrow for a preliminary meeting. Do you know what this means?”

Spock blinked, making the mental connection. Captain Cho of the USS Shenandoah wanted Cadet Kirk, who was mere months away from graduating with honors, to meet with her first officer before official commissions were granted. There was only one conclusion to draw.

“I wanted to know what you thought I should do,” Jim asked, his voice low. “I mean, the Shenandoah is a great ship, but…”

*But it was not the Enterprise,* Spock thought. It was slated for short-range missions in the Alpha quadrant, while the Enterprise’s five year mission was headed for deep exploration of the Beta quadrant. Jim may spend his entire commission never to cross paths with the Enterprise.

“The Shenandoah would be an excellent opportunity for any cadet looking to obtain a variety of experience,” Spock said slowly. “After the two year commission, an ensign might be promoted to lieutenant.”
Jim stared at Spock’s sleeve for a moment then steeled his jaw and met Spock’s eyes. “What if… what if I’m looking for a bigger commitment?” Jim asked.

Spock wondered at the possible double meaning, wondered if it was just hopeful on his part so soon. He looked away, contemplating his response, when he eyes landed on an Andorian leaning over the small thin frame of a familiar figure, holding a PADD above his head. Senik. Spock started to walk, then run when the Andorian’s fist was pulled back. Spock sprinted down the corridor just in time to misdirect the arm and propel the man’s fist into the wall inches away from Senik’s head.

The Andorian cried out in pain, holding his fist and Senik darted out of the way as Spock grabbed the aggressor by the arm.

“What the hell?” Jim asked, two steps behind Spock. No one responded. A pair of cadets further down the hall were talking in their communicators, probably alerting security.

“Senik, are you unharmed?” Spock queried. Senik nodded and the Andorian struggled futilely in Spock’s grasp.

“He’s just a kid, Skeral,” Jim said, his voice appalled. “What is your problem with him?”

The Andorian’s antennae quivered and raised as Jim addressed him, but Skeral did not answer. Spock watched, wary of the Andorian’s behavior toward Jim. Senik leaned down to pick up the discarded PADD. “May I be excused?”

“Yes. Cadet Kirk, you are dismissed. We will resume our discussion at a later point.”

Jim looked about to protest, but nodded and turned to leave. Spock turned his attention to the Andorian in his custody, who was eyeing Jim hungrily. As soon as Jim was out of eyesight, Spock turned to the Andorian, unsurprised to see the man’s teeth bared in territorial defiance.

“You are to not speak, engage, or interact in any manner with either the Vulcan boy Senik or Cadet Kirk,” Spock commanded softly. “Is that understood?”

Although there were no witnesses, any security staff would report Cadet Skeral’s response to Commander Spock necessitated the administration of defensive neutralization. Although never mentioned in the incident report, perhaps it was a little overzealous.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone else want to read more of "The Vulcan Captain and the Virgin Yeoman?" 'Moist.' Gross.

Thank you dear readers, you know, I really really had this great scene where Senik wound up in the hospital over this, but I chickened out after the 30th comment of how much you guys like him. I couldn't even bruise him a little.

Thank you for your comments and kudos, I love hearing your thoughts. The end is within sight, I think!
Only an hour after the incident in the hallway, Jim was sitting at the computer console in the Astrometrics Processing Lab Help Desk trying to read through another dissertation on interstellar solidarity movements of the Beta Quadrant.

“I know you are watching me,” Jim said to the empty room, unsurprised when a head peeked out from behind a shelf. “Senik, I thought we had a deal.”

“Our agreement was that I obtain permission to observe you. That has already been obtained, and I was not made aware of any necessity to renew said permission,” Senik said, still standing near the shelf several meters away. “In either case, I have not been conducting scientific observations.”

Jim waited silently, watching in fascination as Senik wrestled internally with something. He walked toward Jim’s desk and handed him a PADD.

“I have made a separate agreement with Spock. I was to be transparent in my efforts, until the time that it would interfere with the objective nature of my observations,” Senik said. “I see now that my role as a scientist has become compromised, and it is only logical to end my study.”

Jim took the offered PADD, recognizing it as the one that Skeral had grabbed from Senik an hour earlier. “What is this?”

“My research and observations of the last five weeks. It is unfit to publish,” Senik admitted, a trifle woeful.

“But why give it to me?” Jim asked, simultaneously wary and intrigued by the imagined contents of Senik’s study.

“My hypothesis was sound, as evidenced by my data,” Senik said earnestly. “I believe this study may be of value to you.”

“Why?”

“Are you going to accept a commission on the Shenandoah?” Senik countered.

“I don’t know, it’s a big decision,” Jim said, deciding not to question how the young Vulcan knew about the potential offer from Captain Cho.

“Then you will want all the data available to make the most logical decision,” Senik said.

“It can’t be all about logic and data, Senik. It’s about what I want for me, for my career-”

“- and the people you care about,” Senik added.

Jim blinked, surprised by the Vulcan boy’s insightful answer. “Yes. That too.”

Senik nodded and raised his hand in ta’al. “Peace and long life, Cadet Kirk.”

Jim raised his hand in a passable salute in return. “Live long and prosper.”
No less than thirty minutes later, while Jim was intently reviewing the words on his screen, the prickling sixth sense of being observed returned. He looked up, surprised to find Spock standing at his desk, hands clasped tightly behind his back, expression blank.

“I apologize for interrupting your studies,” Spock said, void of any trace of emotion.

“Oh, it’s not studying. Senik was here, he wanted me to read his research paper,” Jim said, pushing the PADD away. “Are you okay?”

“I am well,” Spock said, but his posture said otherwise.

“Is Skeral…”

“He is under review by Academy security and will be appropriately disciplined,” Spock said.

“What did you-”

“I need to know-”

They both stopped and Jim nodded at Spock. “You first.”

“I need to know if you are having relations with Cadet Skeral.”

Jim’s eyes widened almost comically. “Did he tell you that?”

“No. And that is not an answer.”

“Well, the answer is no,” he said, now glaring. “You thought I was seeing other people?”

“I made no assumption, however it is not an unreasonable possibility,” Spock said calmly.

“Why would it be reasonable to think something like that? Who would I be seeing?” Jim stood up, slamming the PADD on the desk. “More logically, when would I have time?”

Spock opened his mouth, but nothing came out for a moment. “I see I have angered you. I apologize, it was not my intent.”

“Then make your intent clear,” Jim said, his voice sounded much louder in the nearly empty room.

“You have not asked to formalize our relationship,” Spock said. “I would not have you feel obligated to do so, nor would I want you to feel compelled in light of your possible commission aboard the Shenandoah. It is an excellent opportunity, and may meet your short term needs at this time.”

“My needs…” Jim muttered, the anger at the underhanded suggestion was boiling to the surface. “You think I was looking for a short term one-off with the Shenandoah and couldn’t handle a bigger commitment like the Enterprise. Well, I really like the Enterprise, more than anything, really. And this time I’ve been waiting for the Enterprise to ask me to commit, because I hear that’s the way it’s done. Did you ever think of that?”

Spock recoiled a half step at Jim’s words. “I do not believe you are speaking about starships anymore.”

Just then, one of the machines in the back room beeped, and Jim threw his hands in the air. “I give
“up!” he said to the empty room at large and turned to do his job without giving the surprised Vulcan another look.

Jim leaned over the large machine and was surprised when a hand abruptly turned him and pressed into a wall.

“You can’t be back here—”

“I am not giving up,” Spock insisted, his hand raised, caressing the side of Jim’s face. “I would not want you to dismiss me based on my poor behavior just now.”

Jim’s breath caught, forgetting what they were arguing about. Spock was touching him. Finally.

“You said yesterday that you always knew where you stood with me,” Spock said, leaning in, lips almost touching. “Beside me. I would have you stand beside me.”

“Even on the Enterprise?” Jim asked, looking firmly into the dark brown eyes.

“Anywhere,” Spock whispered, and Jim closed the gap between their lips with a satisfied groan. Spock eagerly and clumsily returned the kiss. Jimthreaded his fingers through thick black hair, delighting in the curve of Spock’s ear and the small noise he made when Jim nipped his bottom lip. Spock’s other hand reached beneath Jim’s uniform shirt and painted a wide path across his lower back, making him groan and grind his hips into Spock’s.

They broke apart when the help desk computer chimed, alerting Jim that a patron was at the desk. He was grateful they were both hidden from the view of the outside room.

“Oh my god,” Jim groaned, this time in defeat, resting his head against Spock’s chest. “This is the boring part of the library. No one comes here.”

Spock took a step back, straightening his black uniform, and running a hand over his slightly mussed hair. Jim couldn’t help but grin at the sight. He’d done it. He messed up those perfect Vulcan bangs.

“I am aware this may not be the most opportune moment, but am I correct in inferring you wish to engage in a mutually committed and exclusive relationship?”

Jim smiled, smoothing Spock’s shirt for good measure. “If you can’t infer that, I obviously wasn’t doing it right.”

Spock stared at Jim a moment in wonder. “If you are not otherwise occupied, I invite you to my home for dinner.”

Jim nodded, still smiling. “1800, after my shift?”

Spock nodded shortly and turned on his heel out of astrometrics without another word, leaving Jim to calm down and greet his record breaking third visitor one hour.

---

Jim and Spock sat opposite each other at the small table in Spock’s living area, staring at each other and not saying a word. The tension was thick, and all Jim could think about was dragging Spock by his lapels across the table and seeing how far down he could coax the delicious green flush from earlier.
“The soup is delicious,” Jim said, finally breaking the silence.

“It is the Lady Amanda’s recipe,” Senik said from the kitchen. “She advised me to include more salt to enhance the flavor of the traditional Vulcan dish.”

“Oh, well please relay my compliments to your mother,” Jim said to Spock. Spock nodded and slowly ate his own bowl of soup, occasionally glancing back into the kitchen area where Senik was chopping vegetables.

“How many courses are there?” Jim whispered, which was for naught, as Senik’s Vulcan hearing picked up the question.

“Seven,” Senik replied. “Or more, if my penance is unsatisfactory.”

Jim repressed a sigh. He had been hoping for a quiet meal with Spock, unaware that Senik had appropriated the evening for his demonstration of Vulcan guilt toward an honored guest. Seven courses of food prepared for the appreciation of the offended. Judging by Spock’s demeanor, this was not how he had planned the evening either.

Senik appeared at Jim’s elbow with a basket of freshly baked bread. “Kap,” Senik explained, and set it on the table. “The balkra is almost ready.”

“Senik, I’m not even upset,” Jim said again. “This is unnecessary. Illogical, even.”

Spock merely raised an eyebrow at Jim as if to say, you think I didn’t try that?

“I must reiterate that I now see the invasion of your privacy as a grievous error on my part, and in my zealous pursuit of science I neglected to be sensitive to the harm or discomfort I may have caused you. While you are willing to overlook this, I cannot allow the error to go unaddressed.”

“Then perhaps you should be serving your penance differently,” Jim suggested. “The Human way, in deference to my… cultural needs.” Senik perked up at that, turning around and waiting for Jim to explain. “You need to apologize, and then do me a favor.”

“A favor. Something I might not usually do in usual circumstances, in an act of goodwill. This is highly illogical.”

“Fine, it’s remuneration,” Jim said, and that seemed to appease the young Vulcan. “What I need is privacy. You, in your room, and no coming out or eavesdropping until the morning. Replicate some headphones if you need to, but your cousin and I need to speak in private.”

“As the walls are soundproofed in the standard way, headphones will be unnecessary,” Senik said, turning to take a casserole out of the oven. He deposited it on the counter to cool and removed the exceedingly large oven mitts and turned to address Jim.

“Cadet Kirk, I apologize for my behavior the last five weeks: observing you in your environment, appropriating your work and academic records, entering your dormitory, and distributing surveys among your living relatives.”

Jim was speechless. “You broke into my dorm? And talked to my mom?”

Senik flushed green. “I did not enter your room, merely the building.”

“But you contacted my mother. She filled out a survey?”
Senik nodded. “The data compiled from Winona Kirk and the Lady Amanda were used as—”

“Why would my mother be relevant in your data collection?” Spock said, suddenly finding his tongue for the first time. So, Spock wasn’t aware of the true nature of Senik’s scientific endeavors either.

Senik’s eyes widened in realization. “I am mistaken, tomasu. There are two parties I must make amends with this evening. Spock, son of Sarek, I have harmed thee,” Senik intoned the traditional words for the second time that evening, “and seek thy forgiveness in—”

“I request the Human apology as well,” Spock interjected, an almost brittle tone to his voice. “There is no need to list your grievances, I will hear them later. Go to your room. Now.”

Senik nodded, giving one last look at the couple at the table, and went his room and closed the door firmly. Jim sighed, and then glanced over to Spock. “Kids, huh?”

“I do not believe all Vulcan children are as he is,” Spock said.

Jim grinned. “I think that’s why I like him, and I can’t even be mad. I mean, if he hadn’t brought us together, who knows how or if we would have met.”

“How indeed?”

----

Twenty minutes later, Jim found himself being walked backward toward Spock’s bed, his hands anxiously tearing at the blue tunic Spock seemed to favor.

“Are you sure he can’t hear us?” Jim asked again.

“Yes,” Spock murmured into the skin of Jim’s neck where he was nipping a trail up to his ear.

“And he hasn’t bugged your bedroom?” Jim added. Spock stopped his exploration of Jim’s neck immediately, eyes wide. “You don’t think…”

“If you do not object, I possess a tool that will confirm no surveillance equipment is installed,” Spock said. Jim could only nod. Before Spock left he gave him one more deep kiss and left Jim alone in the bedroom.

As simple and standardly human as the living area was, Spock’s bedroom was completely decadent and filled with Vulcan treasures. The sumptuous red wall coverings and ornate statues all spoke of a homeworld far from Riverside, Iowa. Jim toed off his socks and flopped on the bed, which was surprisingly soft, save for something that was digging into his back. He reached behind his back and pulled out the forgotten PADD.

Not wanting to pry, but when the words “erotic bliss rising inside her like the Fire Plains of Kir” caught his attention and he could not stop reading.

When Spock returned with his device, he found Jim sprawled on his bed, one hand on the PADD and the other hand over his mouth, muffling his chuckles.

“It was part of Senik’s Terran literary artifact archive,” Spock explained, almost apologetically, alerting Jim to his presence. Jim looked up and smiled broadly. “He thought to share the stories as instructive, but I have not found them useful.”
“Good, because it’s complete nonsense, you know. No one has sex or romance like in the books or holos.”

Spock’s brow furrowed slightly, and turned on the scanner and set it on a tall chest of drawers. “I find myself grateful for that. The descriptions were... unusual and the biology was quite illogical.” Jim had just finished reading the part of where *the many colors of passion entwined in their rainbow of love* and had to agree.

The scanner beeped. “There is no surveillance equipment in the general vicinity,” Spock reported and Jim sighed gratefully. He really didn’t want to drag Spock back to his dorm room and kick out Bones. Jim set the PADD on the bedside table and stood up, taking Spock’s hands.

Jim gave Spock a fond half smile. “You know, I thought Vulcans didn’t like to be touched, I was always so afraid to touch you.”

“It is true that touch is a very intimate thing, saved between family and bondmates,” Spock said quietly, taking one of Jim’s hands and tracing the outside of his hand with two of his fingers. “This is ozh’esta, how two Vulcans would kiss.”


“And you are mine,” Spock said simply, which brought Jim up short.

“You first? You mean you haven’t…”

“I have never engaged in a romantic or sexual relationship,” Spock admitted. “I would not, if I did not feel…” Spock trailed off, unsure of the precise foreign emotions he was experiencing.


Spock nodded, and returned the gentle caress with renewed interest.

“If we were doing all of this the Vulcan way, what would happen?” Jim asked.

“I would have offered mnah, my proposal of marriage, days ago and if you accepted, I would bring you to my father’s house, and present you as my chosen mate,” Spock said, rapt attention on Jim’s fingers caressing his own. “We would have a bonding ceremony, and we would be telik, bonded and married.”

Jim pondered that while exploring Spock’s hands. “Is that what you expect of us one day?”

“Jim, we are not a Vulcan couple, and I have no such expectations of us,” Spock said earnestly. "We are together, it is enough.”

“Together,” Jim repeated. “I like that.” He hooked his two fingers around Spock and used them to lead him back to the bed and spent the next few hours showing Spock what else ‘together’ could entail.

----

The next morning, Jim opened an eye to see a rumpled looking Spock, complete with green-black stubble, sprawled over ¾ of the bed. Jim nudged the stray limbs out of the way and laid his head on the space between his shoulder and chest.

Apparently, Spock did not wake gradually. As soon as Jim’s head made contact with his chest, he
jolted and looked down at Jim with wide alert eyes.

“I have overslept by 1.8 hours,” he announced, disbelief evident in his voice.

“I don’t have class for another hour. Are you running late?” Jim mumbled, snaking his arm around the other’s torso, feeling the steady heartbeat in his side.

“No. I am unused to oversleeping. It is quite unusual.”

Jim moved his head to better look up at his lover. “We did many unusual things last night,” he teased, waggling his eyebrows for effect. “All of them worth repeating.”

Spock’s ear tips flushed, which only made Jim smile at the memory of that flush extending down his neck and past his clavicle. Jim had traced every inch of it with his tongue and discovered his Vulcan was slightly ticklish.

“I’ll be right back,” Jim said. He gave the shoulder a quick kiss and swung his legs down, finding his clothes in a heap with Spock’s. He fished out his underwear and trousers, intent on making it to the bathroom. Once he shimmied into his clothes, he threw a saucy wink to Spock, who was unabashedly watching him dress, and quietly opened the door to sneak down the hall to the bathroom.

As soon as he turned around, a short figure was at his elbow.

“You have engaged in coitus,” Senik announced loudly. Jim flushed with embarrassment and gestured for him to be quiet.

“You are supposed to be in your room,” Jim hissed.

“It is morning, my penance is complete,” the boy pointed out.

“Yes, it’s complete, which means you must have learned something about the private lives of people around you,” Jim whispered pointedly. “It’s none of your business what we adults do. Now leave me alone until I’ve had my morning coffee.”

Senik stepped aside to allow Jim to amble to the bathroom.

“Cadet Kirk, while this shall never make it into my final results, I am pleased to note that this behavior supports my hypothesis.”

“Yeah, great,” Jim grumbled, still incredibly embarrassed, but much too happy to let it get him down for long.

----

Captain Pike leaned back in his seat behind the desk, staring at his Vulcan officer. “And this relationship is romantic in nature?”

Spock nodded once, ramrod straight in his seat. “Yes, we are engaged in a romantic relationship.”

Pike took the PADD and started to read.

_The interspecies humanoid hypothesis has long been used to predict romantic and sexual interspecies relationships between all gendered humanoid species. This author has sought illustrate how this hypothesis can be refuted using biological principles of heterospecific biological cues. The collected objective data was fitted into a multivariate logistic regression model, denoting each set of_
environmental and biological covariates….

“An academic paper?” Pike asked. “Why are you giving me this?”

“A promising scientist has data that supports that a relationship between Cadet Kirk and myself would not only be beneficial to ourselves, but benefit our vocation and community.”

“Spock, do you need statistics to determine if you want to date someone?”

“No, sir,” Spock replied. “But it certainly helps.”

“Well, that’s great. When you two get hitched, I expect the prenup to be in a peer reviewed journal.”

“Sir?”

“Sarcasm, Commander. Permission granted. I want Kirk aboard the Enterprise next month for training with the other command-track cadets and I’ll recommend him for lieutenant upon his graduation. You are dismissed.”

“Thank you, sir,” Spock said and walked out of the office, an almost discernable bounce in his step.

Pike waited until Spock had closed the door to scroll down to the bottom of the paper.

... reaching the conclusion that both Subject Spock and Subject Kirk, by all measures of objective data, are a superior combination. It is the opinion of this author that, given the opportunity, their emotional, physical, and psychic wellness would maintain at optimal levels for the duration of their existence.

<3 …… and they lived happily ever after…. <3

Chapter End Notes

Oh my goodness. Just a tiny epilogue, and the end *snifflers*

Gentle readers, thank you for your patience, I can't wait to comment on your kind words that have motivated me to sit down and get the rest of this story out. You are all just the best!
10 years later...

The commander of the Enterprise leaned back in his seat behind his desk, staring at his Vulcan junior officer. “And this relationship is romantic in nature?”

In the corner, another man snorted behind his hand. “Sorry,” he said. “Ignore him, Cadet, he’s just teasing you.”

Spock turned to stare at his bondmate. “Captain, I am endeavoring to maintain appropriate decorum on this training exercise.” He turned back to the cadet. “And I do not tease.”

Jim just smiled widely, and winked at the cadet who felt, contrary to the non verbal reassurance, unease knotting his stomach. “Cadet,” Spock continued, “why is Cadet Twi not here with you to request this special dispensation?”

Senik felt the tips of his ears warm, a reflex that he had never grown out of.

“The relationship is not romantic in nature… yet,” Senik said. “I thought it prudent to bring this matter to you now, before I approached Cadet Twi.”

Spock did not reply, but Jim snorted again. “Your request is granted, Cadet,” Jim said, ending Senik’s apprehension. “Commander, make a note of it in my log. Cadet, maybe you’d like to make use of the officer’s mess, which you have access to this week. Might as well take advantage of the privacy aboard while with Cadet Twi, before you all are back at the Academy?”

Senik raised his eyebrows, grateful for the man’s forethought. “Thank you, Captain, I will do that.”

“Is 1900 too early?”

“Too early for what, sir?” Senik asked, confused.

“Well, Spock and I will want to be sure to get front row seats for your first date,” Jim explained, his eyes alight with mischief. “I don’t think there has ever been a study of Andorian-Vulcan courtship behavior. I think in a week we could compile a couple terraquads of data—”

“Two point seven terraquads of data,” Spock supplemented.

“Yes, at least that much data in the span of our week-long training mission. I could pool resources from the rest of the science department. This study has real potential.”

Senik’s eyes widened in alarm.

“I do not believe that the captain intends to exact any revenge for your actions as a child,” Spock intoned from his seat at the desk. Senik relaxed fractionally.

Jim smiled and slapped him on the back. “Of course not,” he agreed and ushered Senik out of the door. Just before the pneumatic doors closed, Senik could hear Jim’s voice calling down the corridor:
“It’s not revenge… it’s science!”

Fin.

Chapter End Notes

The end!

Gentle, amazing, sweet, dear, awesome readers, you can expect your very own Senik (c)*** in the mail in 5-7 business days. You are awesome, make my day, wind beneath my wings, brain chocolate that sustains me during dreary work days. Always happy to read your thoughts. LLAP <3

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