It is a truth universally acknowledged that a Vulcan in the grip of pon farr must be in want of a mate. --A Pride and Prejudice meets Star Trek Story--
Chapter 1

Pride and Logic: Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a Vulcan in the grip of *pon farr* must be in want of a mate. Or, at least that was the conclusion the few people outside of Vulcan society who were aware of *pon farr* came to when they considered the peculiar seven-year itch of the Vulcan. However, like all emotional and carnal desires that plagued the Vulcan psyche, *pon farr* and the resulting *plak-tow* could be dealt with through very intense meditation. Meditation, unfortunately, was not a proven method for most Vulcans and the onset of *pon farr* required most to return to Vulcan to take a mate or suffer the agony of *plak-tow* and eventually death. For one Vulcan, whose veins flowed with an equal amount of human blood, meditation had always been the preferred course. While other Vulcans had despised him for his disadvantageous parentage, it was in this area that having human heritage was a distinct advantage. In the season of *pon farr* when logic and reason fled the normal Vulcan mind, Spock remained largely unaffected. So, when another seven years had lapsed since his previous *pon farr*, Spock made the decision not to return to Vulcan. Instead, he remained at Starfleet Academy in order to fulfill his professorial duties. As he had done each of the previous three years of his tenure at the Academy, Spock was to accompany the rest of the faculty to the New Term Formal, where new cadets were allowed to acclimate to Starfleet and meet their future instructors and classmates in a setting less hindered by the strictures of rank.

Despite attending the event several times as a new recruit and an instructor, Spock was never able to fully comprehend the logic behind a ball. Surely there were more efficient and logical means of introducing oneself to your colleagues than wearing constricting attire, imbibing alcoholic beverages, and engaging in savage dancing rituals. If debate instead of dancing were the order of the day balls would not be such an illogical endeavor.

"Then it would hardly be a ball," was his mother's reply to a similar observation of Spock's on the eve of his first ball.

Spock gazed at the picture of his mother on the view screen, noticing the amused set of her mouth as she regarded him.

"Promise me that you will at least dance with one young lady. Although it may seem frivolous to you, attending such events and mingling with your colleagues is necessary to advance in your career."

"My academic record and performance should be more than sufficient to secure the necessary promotions for advancement in Starfleet, Mother."

"Yes, Spock. However, advancement is often about who you know in addition to what you know," his mother paused and let out an understanding sigh. "Promise me that you will attend this ball and that you will dance at least one dance."

Spock paused to consider his mother's request. He knew that he could not deny any request that she made of him, no matter how illogical it appeared to him.

"You have my word, mother. I shall attend this ball and dance for exactly one dance."

Spock stepped before the mirror in his quarters and adjusted his dress uniform. He was almost grateful for the standard issue blue and black uniform that distinguished him as a commander. His attire for this year's ball required considerably less effort than his attire for his first ball as a student.
As a cadet he had to suffer through his mother's selection of a proper suit of clothes as she would not allow him to attend the ball in his cadet uniform. This time his choices were limited to whether he should wear the platinum or gold braid on his chest. Spock fixed the platinum braid to his chest before making his way out of his quarters only to be met by the smiling blue countenance of Lieutenant-Commander Shuran.

"I do not require an escort to every ball, Shuran," Spock greeted his friend and colleague.

"Good evening to you too, Spock," the Andorian laughed in reply. "I am well aware that you do not need an escort. Perhaps I just enjoy your sunny disposition too much to walk to the ball alone."

Spock simply raised one brow at his colleague's sarcastic reply.

Shuran laughed once more, before smoothing down his shock of white hair and adjusting his black and red uniform. "Let's go and give the new cadets a proper Starfleet welcome!"
Chapter 2

Nyota Uhura looked around the Great Hall, her eyes bright with wonder and excitement. Of all things, Nyota dearly loved a ball, especially a Starfleet ball. What better opportunity was there to observe and make sport of her neighbors? As a xenolinguistic student, Uhura considered herself a professional studier of alien character and culture as well as language. A Starfleet ball provided the perfect opportunity to not only observe people from every culture of the Federation but to also observe their interactions with one another in a purely social setting.

"Nyota!" A green skinned Orion woman waived enthusiastically from the entrance before hurrying over to Uhura's side. Uhura admired Gaila's Orion gown of white diaphanous silk that barely left much to the imagination. Uhura could have never pictured herself in a similar outfit, but as each cadet was to wear formal attire befitting their respective cultures, Uhura could find little fault with her roommate's revealing attire.

"Your gown is gorgeous, Nyota!" Gaila exclaimed before hugging her friend and bidding her to twirl about in a circle so that she could get a better look. "You left for the ball so early that I could not get a proper look at you."

Nyota smiled and self consciously smoothed down the sapphire material of her dress. Her attire was much more modest than that of her friend, but it suited her fine. Uhura preferred a more traditional ball gown with a full skirt that ended just before her shoes and a fitted sleeveless bodice that left her shoulders and neck bare.

"Why, hello ladies! Don't you both look absolutely ravishing tonight."

Uhura groaned as she turned from Gaila to see the smiling face of James T. Kirk. He was dressed impeccably in a black tuxedo. Uhura would never tell him this, but he looked very dashing.

"Hello, Kirk," Gaila gushed as she batted her eyes at the cadet.

Uhura groaned again, knowing that Gaila's honeyed reply would only further inflate Kirk's ego.

"No hello for me, princess?" Kirk asked as he sauntered over to Uhura and placed one arm around her waist.

"Hello," Uhura stated curtly as she shrugged out of his embrace.

"Is this horndog giving you any trouble, dollface?" Leonard McCoy asked as he joined them, his mouth twisted in a smirk.

"Nothing I can't handle," Uhura smiled at her friend before giving him an appreciative look up and down his person. "You look very handsome tonight, Len."

Cadet McCoy blushed, before coughing to hide his embarrassment. "You look quite pretty yourself."

"Thank you," Uhura replied, trying to hide a blush of her own.

Leonard McCoy was her second best friend at Starfleet after Gaila. Some would think it strange that she would count the older and always grumpy McCoy as such a close friend, but Uhura saw themselves as somewhat kindred spirits. He was a very practical person who wasn't afraid to tell it
to you straight. It was also comforting to Uhura to know that she was safe with McCoy. His awful ex-wife had done a number on him and McCoy had made it abundantly clear to all of the first year female cadets that he was in no hurry to let another she-devil sink their claws into his hide. However, Nyota Uhura was the one female at Starfleet Academy who was able to coax a blush out of McCoy.

McCoy could always make Uhura laugh, especially when he would put down his friend Kirk, whom Uhura learned to tolerate for McCoy’s sake. McCoy knew that Uhura got a perverse pleasure from his constant attacks on Kirk's ego, so he was always sure to lay it on thick when the three of them were together. As she and McCoy often studied together and Kirk was very dedicated in his mission to win a date from Uhura (and to learn her first name), Kirk was often in Uhura's company. Reluctantly, Uhura found herself warming to Kirk; he was beginning to grow on her...like a fungus. Perhaps that is why she had agreed to dance with Kirk that evening, after she opened the dance with McCoy. However, she resolved to only participate in a single dance with Kirk, one in which holding your partner less than three feet from your body was not a requisite. This concession would undoubtedly encourage said fungus in his pursuit of her, but Uhura knew that the small sacrifice would mean that she could spend most of the night free from his attentions.

A hush settled over the assembled cadets as the first of the Starfleet officers and instructors arrived at the hall. A wave of whispers and mutterings soon broke out amongst the cadets as a Vulcan and Andorian instructor stepped into the hall. The Vulcan was male, tall and broad shouldered with the bad haircut that all Vulcan men were known to prefer. "Apparently, they say that he turned down the Vulcan Science Academy for Starfleet," one female cadet whispered. "I heard that his family is of the Vulcan nobility," another male cadet replied. "Get this, I heard that his mother is human," McCoy whispered to Uhura. "Can you believe that a human woman would have married one of those cold pointy eared bastards?"

Uhura regarded the Vulcan with equal curiosity. She had taken to the study of the Vulcan language and culture independently before joining Starfleet. The society intrigued her like no other. She found it fascinating that an entire people would strive to rid themselves of emotion in the pursuit of logic. Uhura was too passionate of a person to regard such a life as anything other than a tragedy. She dearly loved to laugh while also realizing the therapeutic qualities of having a good cry. It was hard for her to imagine living without knowing love, joy, heartache or passion. Uhura thought the Vulcan was strangely handsome, if not a bit cold and prideful in his demeanor. "He does not look too pleased to be here," Uhura commented to Gaila, who was uncharacteristically quiet. "I wonder why he did not just choose to remain home rather than attend a ball he is incapable of enjoying."

"Who is that beside him?" Gaila practically sighed.

Uhura followed her friend's gaze to find it fixed on the Andorian who accompanied the Vulcan. Unlike his companion, the Andorian appeared to be delighted to be at the ball. A broad smile spread across his blue face as he spoke animatedly with his dour friend. His delight only seemed to increase when Captain Pike approached the pair. The Vulcan merely saluted his superior officer in greeting. Uhura had to bite back a laugh when Captain Pike brushed off the stiff salute and heartily slapped the Vulcan on the back. "I don't know either of those gentlemen," Uhura answered Gaila. "But it looks as if we shall find out their identities soon enough."
Uhura and her companions quickly stood at attention as Captain Pike walked towards them, the Vulcan and Andorian in tow.

"At ease, cadets," Captain Pike saluted them before turning to his companions. "I'd like to introduce you gentlemen to some of our most promising cadets. Commander Spock and Lieutenant-Commander Shuran, may I present Cadets Gaila, Uhura, McCoy and Kirk.

"Lovely to meet you all!" Shuran greeted them, his smile growing impossibly broader. "I trust that your first few months at the Academy have been pleasant."

Mummers of agreement rippled through the group.

Shuran smiled his approval before turning toward Gaila. "As this is a ball and balls are meant for dancing, would you do me the honor of dancing the first with me, Cadet Gaila?"

"The pleasure would be mine, Lieutenant-Commander," Gaila replied with a shy smile.

Uhura almost laughed outright at Gaila's display of reticence. In the months which they had been roommates and friends, Gaila had never been shy with males of any species.

After watching Gaila and Shuran make their way to the dance floor, the group turned expectantly towards Spock. Rather than emulating his friend's greeting and asking Uhura to dance, he simply bowed stiffly before hurriedly walking away. Captain Pike gave them an apologetic smile before leaving them to facilitate more introductions.

"Well, of all the nerve," McCoy began as soon as the Spock and Captain Pike were out of earshot. "Can you believe that green blooded hobgoblin? I know Vulcan's are known to be emotionless, but I did not know that they were so damn rude!"

Uhura smiled at her friend, before giving his arm a gentle squeeze. "I wouldn't take offense, Len. I am sure that he finds these gatherings to be quite beneath him. What can be more illogical than a ball?"

McCoy returned his friend's smirk before leading her out onto the dance floor for their promised dance. Kirk scanned the room, secure in the knowledge that he had his pick of the ladies. He soon joined his friends on the dance floor with a very obliging Edosian female.

As the night wore on, Uhura found herself to be thoroughly enjoying the ball. She even managed to enjoy her dance with Kirk, who kept his hands to himself as he was much focused on returning to his Edosian friend as soon as their dance was ended. Uhura had danced every dance thus far and she enjoyed the respite and the chance to observe the assembly.

Uhura observed Commander Spock standing stiffly alone a few feet from her seat. She contemplated attempting to engage him in conversation as she was eager to practice her Vulcan with a native speaker. However, the remembrance of his cold visage and hasty retreat during their introduction led her to change her mind.

"Come, Spock, I must have you dance," Lieutenant-Commander Shuran addressed his friend as he joined him on the sidelines. "I can't have you standing about in this stupid manner."

Spock turned to him, raising one brow in disapproval. "As you are well aware, I have already fulfilled my obligation to dance by standing up with Lieutenant Chapel."

"Yes, Spock. You danced one very stiff waltz. But, how can you content yourself with standing about when there are so many uncommonly pretty ladies in attendance?"
"I see very few females whose looks are above what one would call average. However, the cadet you are dancing with is visually acceptable."

"Acceptable? Come man, she is a goddess!"

"It is inappropriate for a superior officer to speak of a cadet in such…”

"Please, spare me the regulations," Shuran interrupted him. "As I am not an instructor and we are not on a starship, there are no regulations barring me from admiring a female cadet. Besides, this is a ball!"

Shuran scanned the crowd until his eyes came to rest on Uhura.

"Look, there is Cadet Gaila's friend. She is quite pretty; very pretty indeed. I have heard other professors rave about her academic prowess and she is fluent in Vulcan. Surely, you would enjoy a dance with her."

Spock's eyes drifted towards Uhura, who seemed to be strangely fascinated by the silk embroidery on the skirt of her gown.

"She is visually satisfactory, but it is highly unlikely that she is proficient enough to tempt me. Cease your entreaties and continue to indulge in the expressions of pleasure of your partner."

Spock was relieved when Shuran left him to return to the side of Cadet Gaila. However, his relief was short lived when Cadet Uhura walked by him to join her friend Cadet McCoy. She smiled coyly at him.

"Moi-tema, Zhe-lan Spock," she whispered in perfect Vulcan as she passed by.*

Spock quirked a brow in surprise. He deduced that she had overheard his conversation with Shuran. He flushed green at the sound of her tinkling laughter as she shared some joke with Cadet McCoy. He turned to find her large brown eyes fixed on his person, her eyes bright in challenge.

Spock held her gaze for a moment, before turning and hurriedly making his way out of the hall. He found himself to be uncharacteristically warm and in need of fresh air. However, he found the cool night air failed to return his temperature to normal. As he made his way to his quarters across the campus, he began to reassess his previous judgment that Cadet Uhura was simply visually satisfactory. Indeed, her appearance was far above satisfactory. That evening, Spock spent an extra hour in meditation trying to calm his emotions and suppress the warm feeling that suffused his person at the memory of a certain set of exemplary brown eyes.

*Moi-tema, Zhe-lan Spock= "Good evening, Commander Spock"
Chapter 3

Pride and Logic: Chapter 3

"He is just what a young Starfleet officer aught to be," Gaila sighed as she fell upon her bed.

Uhura smiled at her reflection in the mirror as she prepared for bed.

"Of whom are you speaking, Gaila?"

"Lieutenant-Commander Shuran, of course," Gaila protested as she sat up from the bed.

"Yes, Lieutenant-Commander Shuran is all you have spoken of for the past two months," Uhura replied, smiling at her friend's reflection in the mirror.

Those few months had been the most serene quarter at Starfleet yet for Uhura. The dorm room had been surprisingly free of half dressed young male cadets hiding under the bed. Gaila had been in bed every night by eleven and out of the door by seven. Gaila's bed was even made everyday and the bathroom floor was free of the used cotton swabs that normally littered the tiled floor. It had been paradise for Uhura and she had Lieutenant-Commander Shuran to thank for it all. Listening to Gaila sigh dreamily every night was a very small price to pay for such serenity.

"So, when should I wish you joy?" Uhura asked as she joined Gaila on her bed, drawing her legs up to her chest.

"Nyota, it is not like that. We are merely colleagues and friends," Gaila demurred as she urged Uhura to turn so that she could brush her hair.

"Hmmm, you may be colleagues, but you are definitely more than friends."

Gaila had been working closely with Shuran on updating the computer simulations used for pilot training. When they were not working together on this project, they could be found sharing meals together in the mess hall, jogging together around campus or sharing a table in the library, Gaila pouring over her class notes while Shuran worked on other matters, content just to be in her presence. Half the campus suspected that they were lovers. However, only Uhura knew that it must be much more than that. Gaila had her share of casual lovers, a string of male cadets who occupied her thoughts for no more than a week at a time. This was different. Uhura almost suspected that they had not slept together, which could only mean one thing: Gaila was falling in love.

"I often see Commander Spock," Gaila offered out of the blue.

"I can't imagine that those times are very pleasant," Uhura replied, remembering their encounter at the ball two months ago.

"No, they are not. He is so quiet and reserved and I am sure that he finds me rather perplexing. However, he is never impolite. Besides, he and Shuran are good friends and I cannot imagine Shuran befriending someone who was not a good person at heart."

"I suppose," Uhura offered noncommittally.

"He has asked after you…" Gaila replied airily.

"He merely asks after your health. He explained it as his attempt at performing a human nicety, but I think that you made quite an impression on the Commander at the ball."

Uhura snorted. "I am sure that I did. He made his opinion of me perfectly clear."

"I have never known you to hold a grudge, Nyota," Gaila replied as she stopped her brushing. "I am sure that he was just in a sour mood that night. You said yourself that Vulcans must view balls as being very illogical."

"I think it is more than being in a 'sour mood,' Gaila. Vulcans are masters at regulating the expression of emotion and they strive not to be affected by them at all."

"See, but Commander Spock is only half Vulcan. His mother, Amanda Grayson, is human," Gaila offered airily.

"How do you know this?" Uhura gasped.

"Computer genius, remember?" Gaila trilled.

"I cannot believe that you hacked into his personal files!"

Gaila simply shrugged. "A girl has to do something to amuse herself. But you are trying to ignore my point, Nyota. This dislike of Commander Spock is not like you."

Uhura sighed. "You are right, Gaila. I don't know why the Commander has gotten under my skin so easily. I have not even seen him since the ball. But, I do have his Advanced Vulcan Language and Culture Seminar next term, so I am sure I will be seeing a lot of him."

"Congratulations, Nyota! That class is very hard to get into and no one under third year has ever been allowed in."

"Well, I easily passed the placement test. Besides, I need the class for my Vulcan requirement. Even though I am already fluent, I have to take at least 3 credit hours in Vulcan language or culture."

Gaila yawned. "Well, I have to get to bed early tonight. Shuran has invited me and to accompany him to the outpost on Theta Sigma. Apparently they have been having some peculiar problems with their sensors and computers."

"Wow, you are already doing missions and it is only the end of your first year!"

"I know. I owe the opportunity all to Shuran," Gaila smiled dreamily. "Originally, an instructor in the Computer Sciences was supposed to accompany him, but she could not find another instructor to relieve her from her duties so close to the end of term."

"What about your own finals, Gaila?" Uhura asked with some concern.

"This quarter I only have two courses with final exams and one course with a paper that I have already completed. Lieutenant-Commander Shuran spoke to both of my professors. Since this is such a unique opportunity for a first year student, I'll be able to take my final exams remotely on Theta Sigma. Well…provided we manage to repair their communications system within the next three weeks."

"Well, it appears that you have everything sorted out," Uhura replied.

She was genuinely surprised that Gaila had managed to actually turn in an assignment early.
Uhura had already handed in her final papers, but her roommate had never demonstrated similar study habits. After wishing her friend a good night, Uhura turned off the lights and settled down into her own bed. She genuinely hoped that things progressed between Gaila and Shuran. She had never seen her friend so happy or her life so organized.

Uhura stood before the mirror brushing out her long ebony hair in preparation for taking her last exam. She was lucky in that she only had two final exams and both had been scheduled within the first two days of exam week. Other cadets would have hated such a schedule, but Uhura had not needed the extra study time. She was never behind in her studies and she was the cadet that the others sought out in order to beg her to share her stellar outlines.

"Incoming message for Cadet Uhura. Origin: Theta Sigma," the computer announced just as Uhura finished pulling her hair back into an efficient ponytail.

"Accepted. On screen." Uhura was looking forward to speaking with Gaila. It had been two weeks since her friend's departure to Theta Sigma and she had only sent one communication to Uhura letting her know of her safe arrival.

Uhura's image reflected in the mirror dissolved into an image of Gaila reclining in bed. She looked awful. Her usual healthy green glowing skin now had a sickly dull yellow undertone. Her dark blue eyes were rimmed in red and her copper hair lay limp against her scalp, weighed down by sweat.

"Nyota," Gaila croaked out horsely

"Oh, Gaila! Honey, you look awful. What happened?"

Uhura had known Gaila ever since they attended the University of the United States of Africa together four years ago. She had never seen her friend ill beyond a simple cold and those few times had been quite a trial. Gaila did not handle sickness well. Uhura could only imagine how trying whatever she now suffered from must be for her.

"I have a bad case of Theta-Sigma Influenza," Gaila coughed.

"You have the flu?"

"Yes, but it is so much worse than any earth-based flu. The inoculations we received once we arrived planet-side worked for everyone but me. I'm the only Orion to have visited Theta Sigma and I suppose the inoculation for the flu isn't very…” Gaila’s explanation was interrupted by a spat of bone shaking coughs that left her weak and tired.

"Don't worry, Gaila. I'll be right over. I have one final exam this morning and the very moment that I am done, I'll be on the next ship to Theta Sigma."

"Nyota, ships don't come here everyday. It is only an observation outpost."

Uhura considered this for a moment. "Well, I am sure that there must be a supply vessel or some ship scheduled to pass by Theta Sigma in the next day or so. I'll simply manage to hitch a ride and I'll beam down to the outpost. Easy as pie!"

Gaila coughed. "You are truly the best of friends, but you don't have to go through all that trouble for me."

"Gaila, would my being there make you feel more at ease?"
Gaila's eyes left the screen to examine the Starfleet issued blanket tucked securely around her. "Yes."

"Then it is settled! I'll be there as soon as I can. Rest well, Sweetie."

"Oh, Nyota, can you bring…"

"Ambassador Snuggles? Yes, I'll be sure to pack him."

Finding a transport to Theta Sigma had been easier than Nyota realized. True to her word, as soon as she finished her exam—which was in record time, even for Nyota—Uhura made her way with her bag and Ambassador Snuggles to the transportation center. On her way there, a communication from Theta Sigma came through. A very anxious and concerned Lieutenant-Commander Shuran informed her that he had made travel arrangements for her on the one ship scheduled to travel near Theta Sigma that week. There was a supply vessel with transporter capabilities scheduled to pass close to Theta Sigma in three days on which he has secured her passage. The vessel was scheduled to leave from New Los Angeles in two hours. Nyota rushed to catch a shuttle to make the journey from San Francisco to New Los Angeles and barely arrived in time. As the vessel was outfitted to carry supplies, it was not the most comfortable two days for Uhura. However, she bore it admirably knowing that Gaila would be put at ease by her presence. Soon she found herself standing on the transporter pad ready to beam over to the outpost.

"Commander Spock!" Uhura exclaimed upon rematerialization.

"Cadet Uhura," the Vulcan greeted her. His face as impassive as the day they met. "I was sent to direct you to Cadet Gaila's quarters."

"Thank you, Commander." Uhura replied, recovering her formality after the initial shock of meeting him wore off.

"Cadet," Spock called, breaking Uhura from her train of thought. She had been staring at him mutely for several moments. "Please follow me."

Uhura easily fell in to step beside Commander Spock. While normally she would have been curious about their surroundings, she found herself glancing surreptitiously at the Vulcan beside her.

"There is something which is causing you concern, Cadet," Spock addressed her after noticing her sidelong glances. "You are permitted to speak freely."

Uhura flushed at being caught in her perusal. "Commander, I was simply curious as to your presence on Theta Sigma. Cadet Gaila had led me to believe that the mission was purely about repairing the outpost computer systems while you are an instructor in advanced phonology and ethics."

"One could pose a similar query about your presence on Theta Sigma." Spock stated, his voice cool and level. "As a first year cadet specializing in xenolinguistics, your presence does not contribute to the successful completion of our task."

A surge of irritation spread through Uhura at this statement. Did he truly mean to suggest that her presence somehow impeded the mission?

"Cadet Gaila requested my presence, as you are no doubt aware. As she is very ill, I felt it was my duty as her friend to come and attend to her."
"The idea that your mere presence could be of medicinal benefit to Cadet Gaila is highly illogical. The medical officers have the situation well in hand. Your friend will recover admirably under their care. Therefore, one must conclude that your presence is indeed unnecessary and your long journey was an inefficient use of time and energy."

"As we are speaking freely, Commander, I have to argue that convalescence is not merely about logic and medicine. The presence of loved ones when one is ill can lift one's spirit and make the time spent in convalescence more bearable."

Commander Spock replied to this retort with a mere lift of his brow.

"I believe you inquired as to my presence on Theta Sigma, Cadet. As you are obviously unaware, I specialize in computer programming. Therefore, my inclusion on this mission is logical."

The remainder of their walk was completed in silence, with Uhura growing more annoyed with the Vulcan's manner with each step.

"Here is the entrance to Cadet Gaila's quarters," Spock announced upon their arrival.

"Thank you, Commander," Uhura stiffly replied.

"No expression of gratitude is required, Cadet Uhura. At 1800 hours we gather for the evening meal and debriefing. You will join us."

"Yes, Commander," Uhura replied as she repressed a sigh. She was not looking forward to sharing a meal with the cold Vulcan, but she recognized the invitation as an order from a superior officer and not a request.

"You are dismissed."

Uhura nodded to Commander Spock before entering her friend's rooms with a sigh of relief. Gaila lay in her bed under a sea of blankets looking even worse than when Uhura last saw her.

"Nyota!" Gaila greeted, a tired smile crossing her features.

Uhura moved to her friend's side and placed a kiss on her forehead.

"I'm here and I have brought along a friend," Uhura smiled as she pulled a worn blue stuffed creature dressed in a Starfleet uniform out of her pack.

"Ambassador Snuggles," Gaila smiled as she clutched the stuffed animal to her chest.

Uhura watched the scene with some amusement before bursting out in laughter.

"What is it?" Gaila questioned as Uhura fought to contain her amusement.

"Oh, I just realized why you are so enamored with Lieutenant-Commander Shuran!"

Gaila regarded her friend with a perplexed expression. Uhura merely pointed to the well-loved doll.

"Perhaps we should call your Shuran Ambassador Snuggles instead."

Recognition flitted across Gaila's face. Joining in her friend's laughter, Gaila struck Uhura with the stuffed blue doll that very much resembled an Andorian.

"He is not my Shuran," Gaila replied after their laughter had died down.
"No," Nyota smiled. "But he very soon shall be."

The two friends chatted amicably for a few more minutes before Gaila fell asleep. Uhura removed herself to a nearby armchair to work on some translation problems so as not to disturb her friend. It was not until she came upon a set of sayings of Surak that she became aware of a very intriguing fact: her entire conversation with Commander Spock had been conducted in Vulcan.
Chapter 4

Pride and Logic Chapter 4

Spock stood outside of Cadet Gaila's door, his eyes fixed on the spot where Cadet Uhura had stood moments before. He had been surprised when Shuran had informed him of her imminent arrival and requested that he meet her at the transporter room in the adjacent camp. He had related to Shuran that he felt her presence was unnecessary and illogical, but Shuran maintained that Cadet Gaila was unwell and had requested her presence.

Spock was becoming concerned about Shuran's interest in Cadet Gaila. While he could not fault his colleague for requesting the cadet's assignment on the mission given Commander Ubecca's unavailability and Cadet Gaila's unquestioned skill in computer programming and mechanics, Spock felt that the mission could have an unwelcome impact on Shuran's career. The student body and faculty members had already begun to speculate as to the nature of his relationship with Cadet Gaila. If Shuran continued to pay particular attention to the cadet for much longer, his reputation in Starfleet would be irreparably damaged.

Shuran had argued that Spock's concerns were unfounded as he was not currently engaged in a romantic liaison with Cadet Gaila and his position as an adjunct with the computer sciences department meant that any relationship he may pursue in the future would be well within Starfleet regulations. As Shuran did not have supervisory authority over Cadet Gaila and was not in an evaluative capacity in relation to the cadets, Spock could not fault Shuran's reading of Starfleet regulation. However, as humans would say, the appearance of impropriety can be just as damning as the presence of actual impropriety.

Yet, Spock had to admit that some of his concerns were based in a very human and illogical fear for his own reputation. If Shuran were to be so often in the presence of Cadet Gaila and if he were to come to an understanding with her, Spock would then be thrust into the company of her friend Cadet Uhura.

Spock was coming to realize that he had an inexplicable fascination with Cadet Uhura. Even though they had not crossed paths since the New Term Formal, he found that he was plagued with irrational yet pleasing visions of full lips spread in an engaging smile revealing a row of straight white teeth, an impudently raised dark brow, soft warm russet skin wrapped in turquoise silk, and exemplary deep brown eyes. Their initial meeting alone required that he dedicate an extra half hour to his daily meditation regimen in order to regain control. As the weeks since their encounter turned to months he found that his need for increased meditation had lessened. However, he had been unable to fully expel the cadet from his thoughts, a situation that he found…troubling.

He both dreaded and craved the sight of her during the two days in which he had to await her arrival after Shuran's announcement. He desired to engage the active mind that he had only briefly glimpsed two months ago, to have those large brown eyes fixed solely on his person, that sonorous voice caressing his ears and that musical laughter coaxed from those enticing lips.

Spock shook himself from his reverie. He was surprised to find himself still standing outside of Cadet Gaila's door one point eight minutes after Cadet Uhura had left his presence. He could still smell her scent on the air, a pleasing mixture of citrus and cinnamon. He noticed that his heart rate was accelerated 15.2 percent, his breathing increased by 10 percent and his body temperature had risen 1.5 percent. The corners of Spock's mouth twitched downwards. During their brief walk to Cadet Gaila's quarters, Cadet Uhura had already upset the mental balance that he had spent the past two days fortifying in anticipation of her visit. Spock calculated that his chances of surviving
several days in her presence with his emotional control firmly in place was only 40 percent. He estimated that he had four point five hours until the evening meal. With surprising reluctance, Spock turned from the door and made his way towards his quarters and his meditation space.

"Really, can you believe her coming all of this way just because her roommate has a little cold?" Nurse Chapel tittered as the officers gathered in the common room ahead of the evening meal. "Its all so ridiculous. I have the situation well in hand. What can she mean by coming all of this way? It is not as if she has any medical training."

"Indeed," Spock replied from his seat on the other side of the room where he busied himself reading reports on his PADD.

"I think it shows a concern for her friend that is very pleasing," Shuran piped up.

"I am sure that you would not engage in such illogical activity, Spock," Nurse Chapel continued as if Shuran had not spoken.

Spock forced himself to repress a sigh. Nurse Chapel's behavior had become most peculiar after the she had learned of Cadet Uhura's arrival at the substation. Spock could not comprehend the woman's dislike of Cadet Uhura whom she admittedly had never met. He had made the error of asking Cadet Gaila about the health of her roommate eight days ago while Nurse Chapel was present. After Shuran unnecessarily praised Cadet Uhura's beauty and intellectual prowess, Nurse Chapel inquired after his own opinion of the cadet.

"Cadet Uhura is visually pleasing. Her eyes possess a quality not commonly found among human females," he had replied in a moment of candor.

This proved to be the catalyst for Nurse Chapel's unusual behavior. Spock found it to be very unprofessional as well as personally displeasing.

Nurse Chapel continued in her verbal assault of the cadet, despite the fact that her audience had resolved to ignore her.

"I wager that this has lessened your appreciation for her fine eyes?" Nurse Chapel addressed Spock once her diatribe neared an end.

"I fail to see how Cadet Uhura's display of compassion for her friend is related to the superior aesthetic qualities of her eyes," Spock replied, his right brow raised in confusion.

Shuran suppressed a snort of laughter at Nurse Chapel's indignant huff.

Spock and Shuran were saved from the pleasure of hearing Nurse Chapel's reply by the entrance of Cadet Uhura and the start of dinner. Conversation during the meal largely consisted of Shuran enquiring after Cadet Gaila's health and regaling Uhura with stories about his boyhood on Andoria. Spock refrained from participating in the conversation, instead contenting himself with observing Cadet Uhura.

After the meal, everyone moved back to the common room to indulge in more socializing and extra curricular activities before retiring for the evening. Spock settled at a side table to engage in a solitary game of kal-toh. He did not bother to inquire if Shuran or Nurse Chapel desired to participate in the game, as Shuran freely admitted that he lacked the concentration and patience required for the intense game of strategy. Spock had previously learned not to invite Nurse Chapel to the game as she would focused most of her concentration on his person rather than on the task at hand and would consequently transform the jumbled mass of rods into such a mess that it would
take Spock hours to form the rods into the intended perfect sphere. Instead, Shuran and Chapel sat down to a game of cards.

"Will you not join us, Cadet Uhura?" Nurse Chapel offered sweetly.

"No, thank you. I think I'll work on some translation problems instead," Uhura replied as she settled into an armchair.

"Cadet Uhura is a great student and takes little enjoyment in anything else," Nurse Chapel laughed in reply.

Uhura set down her PADD and regarded Chapel with an arch smile. "I neither deserve such praise or censure. I am an adequate student and I take pleasure in many things."

"Yes, Gaila tells me that Uhura was just elected as next year's Vice President of the Academy Chorale Ensemble. It always amazes me how so many Starfleet cadets manage to be so accomplished. They sing, they dance, write arias, excel in all manner of intergalactic martial arts while still excelling in their studies. It is all so impressive. I barely managed to make it to class on time when I was a cadet!

"I have yet to meet more than a half dozen cadets whom I would call accomplished," Spock interjected, turning from his game of kal-toh to observe Cadet Uhura. He was pleased to see that she met his statement with an arched brow and prepared to challenge him before she was interrupted by Nurse Chapel.

"Yes, to be truly accomplished a cadet must not only be well versed in a variety of disciplines, but they must have a certain professional bearing, a manner in their walk and speech that inspires confidence in their leadership abilities."

"And to this they must add a commitment to improving their minds through constant study and testing," Spock replied, his dark eyes resting on Cadet Uhura.

"Why, Commander Spock, I am surprised at your even knowing any such cadets."

"I have known many such cadets, Cadet Uhura," Chapel replied, putting emphasis on Uhura's rank. "Perhaps you just have not had the benefit of mingling among the most elevated circles of the academy."

Shuran then asked if Uhura would perform for them all, his natural aversion to conflict leading him to bring the conversation to an end. Cadet Uhura politely declined, promising to entertain them another time. The party fell into an easy silence, absorbed in their respective tasks for another half hour, before Uhura excused herself to check on her friend.

Spock watched the cadet's retreat with a niggling and unfamiliar feeling of regret. He soon found himself growing disquieted by Nurse Chapel's renewed attacks on Cadet Uhura. Leaving his kal-toh unfinished, Spock excused himself from the party to engage in more meditation before retiring for the night.
"Those people are insufferable," Nyota complained as she brushed out Gaila's long red hair the next night. "I am only joining them for the evening meal again because you insist."

"It doesn't sound that bad, Nyota," Gaila reasoned. "From what you have told me Shuran has been nothing but kind, as I knew he would be. Commander Spock, well...he is just being a Vulcan."

"What about Nurse Chapel?"

Gaila paused at this, before turning towards Nyota and grinning conspiratorially. "I should think that much is obvious. She has it in for you because she is hot for Commander Spock and he could not be the least bit tempted."

"Well, I had gathered that much, Gaila. I am not a complete idiot. Why she has a thing for the Vulcan is beyond me. Going after a Vulcan is always a losing effort. That still does not explain why she was so rude to me. You've told me that she has been nothing but kind to you."

"Hmmm, excuse me if I still think that you are a bit thick, Nyota. Christine is pleasant to me because I am clearly not competition for her. Orion charms don't work on Vulcans. In fact, I think I might be repellant to the Commander sometimes!"

"Well, and we all know where your affections lay."

The two girls shared a giggle.

"Well, I have not told Christine as much. Still, the point is that Christine views you as competition for Commander Spock's attention and his affections."

"Gaila, I don't know why you insist on this issue. Outside of the professional context, I am sure that Commander Spock views me with nothing but indifference, if not contempt. He made that crystal clear yesterday."

"Hey, I did not say that Christine was right...although, I think she is. What matters is that she views you as competition and so she treats you as such."

Nyota rolled her eyes, before changing to conversation to more agreeable topics.

"Shuran has been awfully attentive," Nyota teased as she finished arranging her friend's hair.

"Oh, he has been so sweet. Why, he has dropped by three times today to see if I have improved."

"Yes, I was there too!" Nyota laughed as she rose from the bed and tucked the covers around Gaila.

"Well, I shall be sure to give him reports of your improvement tonight. Why, I bet that you will be well enough to leave your rooms tomorrow."

Nyota made her way towards the common area where Spock, Shuran and Nurse Chapel were already gathered.
"Cadet Uhura, I am glad that you could join us again. How fares your friend?"

Nyota smiled broadly. "She is much improved. I expect that she will be able to leave her room tomorrow."

"I did not know that you had medical training, Cadet," Nurse Chapel challenged.

"I do not have any medical expertise beyond the basic courses all future officers must take. I was simply stating my personal opinion," Nyota replied as she suppressed a sigh.

"Well, she did look much improved this afternoon. Not that Cadet Gaila was not as lovely as usual, but she looked much recovered. I am pleased that you agree, Cadet."

Nyota smiled at Shuran's attempt to smooth things over. Gaila was correct, he really was the best of men.

After the evening meal, the party retired back to the common room for entertainment before lights out. Nyota fulfilled her promise to perform by singing for them all.

Spock sat in rapt attention, his eyes never wavering from the face of the cadet as she performed. He had been anticipating Cadet Uhura's performance ever since Shuran's request the night before. He even found himself distracted from his tasks during the day, much to his displeasure. Spock found that the performance was well worth the mental disquiet he had experienced. While her singing was not perfect, occasionally her pitch faltered slightly, Spock knew that these imperfections would only be noticeable to the Vulcan ear. Despite these mistakes, Spock found himself to be utterly enchanted. When she finished her song, Spock remained still for a moment, still caught by the ecstasy of her voice.

Cadet Uhura accepted the applause of Shuran and the reluctant praise of Nurse Chapel with humility and made to return to her seat.

"Your performance was quite pleasing, Cadet, despite the slight errors in pitch."

Uhura turned to regard Spock with an unreadable expression. "Thank you, Commander."

"Cadet Uhura, would you please accompany me in a classical Vulcan song?" Spock requested suddenly, surprising the room and himself by his request.

Uhura stood half squatting over her seat, her mouth open in surprise.

"Umm, of course, Commander Spock. If I know the song, I would be happy to accompany you. But, we have no instrument. Do you sing as well?"

Spock felt his body temperature rise as the cadet addressed him, her large brown eyes fixed on his person with a look of intrigue and challenge.

"I do sing, cadet. However, I intended to accompany you on the Vulcan lyre. If you would excuse me for a moment, I shall retrieve the instrument from my quarters."

"I did not know that Spock played," Nurse Chapel stated in evident confusion after Spock left the room.

"That is not surprising," Shuran replied. "He very rarely plays for others outside of competitions. Why, he took second place in the All-Vulcan Music Competition a few years ago."
Spock did not know what had possessed him to make such a request of Cadet Uhura. He had resolved to pay less attention to the cadet, but found his resolve fading rapidly. After hearing her sing, Spock wanted nothing more than to hear her voice raised in song in his native tongue. From their conversation after her arrival, he was pleased to find that she was as fluent in Vulcan as Shuran had claimed and that she spoke the language with natural ease.

He made quick work of retrieving his lyre and soon found himself back in the common room seated by Cadet Uhura as he tuned his instrument.

"Valdena T'shaukaush," Spock stated as he lifted his dark eyes to catch those of Uhura. "Are you familiar with the composition, Cadet?"

Uhura blinked. "The Passion of Valdena. Yes, I know the song."

Spock nodded and began the opening notes of the song, his eyes remaining fixed on Uhura. Uhura shifted from foot to foot, growing nervous under the Commander's intense scrutiny. She began to sing, her voice wavering slightly during the first few words of the song. Nyota wondered why Commander Spock would choose such a passionate song to perform. Valdena T'shaukaush was an ancient song written before the teachings of Surak revolutionized Vulcan society. It was a beautiful and tragic song full of emotions as wild and untamed as Vulcan prior to the awakening. Nyota shut her eyes as she neared the end of the first verse, slightly unnerved by the Vulcan's penetrating gaze. While her courage would normally rise at any attempt to intimidate her in her professional dealings, she found that she was too exposed when she performed to mount a similar defense.

Spock continued to watch the cadet as he strummed his lyre. Gone was the nervousness of the opening lines. Her voice was strong and sonorous, swelling and quieting at the appropriate moments as if the Cadet had become Valdena herself, pining for her absent lover and embracing death. Spock had heard the ancient tune performed on Vulcan several times, but it had lacked the emotion and color that made the Cadet's performance so pleasing. While those performances had achieved near technical perfection, Spock now found them woefully inadequate.

After the song ended, a brief hush settled over the room that was quickly broken by Shuran's rapturous applause.

"Upon my word, that was even more lovely than the first song. Spock, you should really consider performing with Cadet Uhura at the All Academy Showcase at the end of the year."

"I do not think that would be wise," Spock replied somewhat hurriedly.

"Why ever not? It would be just the thing. The Vulcan Delegation is due to visit Starfleet at that time. I am sure that your fath…"

"I will consider your suggestion, Lieutenant Commander," Spock interrupted Shuran, his voice possessing an edge that startled his friend. "I will discuss the matter with Cadet Uhura at another time."

"I will be performing that night with the chorale," Nyota explained to Shuran, attempting to soothe over any offense caused by the Commander's brusque manner. "Besides, I doubt that my performance would be enjoyable for the Vulcan Delegation."

"To the contrary, Cadet. Your pronunciation was more than adequate and your performance was quite…fascinating. No one given the privilege of hearing you could come to a less favorable conclusion."
Nyota blinked. "Thank you, Commander."

"Your gratitude is unwarranted. I was merely stating a fact."

Soon after, the party went their separate ways. Nyota remained awake for some time after the others had retired. She could not understand Commander Spock. At one moment he was cold and unfeeling like a typical Vulcan, while a moment later he could be almost human. His request that she perform The Passion of Valenda had been quite a surprise, including the revelation that he sang and played the lyre. She wondered what use music could be to the Vulcan. For Nyota, music was all about the passions and emoting all that was illogical about human society...love, grief, pride, anger and lust. She found Vulcan music prior to the Awakening particularly beautiful because it was so saturated with these emotions. When played by a modern Vulcan, she had thought that all that made the ancient music beautiful would be lost. However, when Commander Spock had played, she found that her assumption had been in error. He played beautifully, so beautifully that Nyota had forgotten she was accompanying the commander she so disliked.

Finding that sleep was elusive, Nyota wrapped herself in a standard issue robe and headed to the common room to retrieve her PADD. Since she could not sleep, she would employ her time reviewing the eastern Romulan dialect's phonetic properties. Upon reaching the common room, Nyota was surprised to find the room already occupied. Commander Spock sat with his back to the door, his head bent as he played his lyre. Intrigued, Nyota quietly leaned against the wall by the doorway in the hopes that her presence would go unnoticed. The Commander had changed out of his uniform and was dressed in the all black standard issue pajama set of a fitted t-shirt and loose fitting pants. In the dim light of the room, Nyota thought that the black garment suited him. She did not recognize the song that the Commander played, but it was a gorgeous composition. She shut her eyes and leaned her head back against the wall as she let the sounds sweep over her. The melody was complex and soothing, featuring intricate finger work that relied on plucking the strings rather than strumming. Nyota found herself so relaxed and in tune with the music, that she began to hum along quietly.

"Cadet, the hour is late. You should be resting along with the others."

Nyota opened her eyes with a gasp. She had not realized that the Commander had finished his playing and set aside his instrument.

"Commander Spock! I...I could not sleep and came to retrieve my PADD. I did not mean to disturb you."

"There is no need to apologize. Your presence is neither disturbing or unwanted."

Nyota nodded. She found herself unaccountably flustered in the Commander's presence. She looked down to escape his inquiring gaze, only to encounter the Commander's bare feet, pale olive against the dark floor. Nyota found them strangely beautiful before realizing the absurdity of admiring the Commander's feet and returning her gaze to the Commander's face.

"Commander..."

"Spock. As we are in an informal setting, it would be acceptable to relax formalities, Cadet..."

"Nyota," she blurted out without thinking. "You can address me as Nyota."

Nyota thought that she saw a strange glint in Spock's dark eyes, a brief flash of pleasure. Surely, the late hour must have addled her brain.

"Wh...What was that song that you were playing? It was very beautiful. Is it another ancient
Vulcan composition?"

Nyota thought she saw another glint of pleasure in Spock's eyes before he answered.

"It is a Vulcan composition, but it is not ancient. I wrote it, Nyota."

Nyota felt a strange shiver of pleasure at the sound of her given name on Spock's tongue. His soft near baritone voice seemed to caress each syllable. Nyota shook herself mentally once again. Maybe she ate something strange that afternoon that was not agreeing with her.

"It was a gorgeous melody. Does the song have a name?"

Spock eyes darted suddenly to a point to the right and behind of her. In the dim light of the room, Nyota thought she saw the tips of his ears flush green.

"It is a recent composition that has yet to be given a name."

Silence settled between them until Nyota found herself growing nervous once more. She lightly stepped around Spock to run her fingers over the lyre.

"It is a lovely instrument. The woodwork is very fine. It so rare to find things that are handmade these days," Nyota commented as she fingered the intricate stone inlay that decorated the neck of the lyre. "May I?"

Commander Spock nodded his consent, his gaze once again intense. Nyota sat down in the still-warm seat that Spock had vacated and lifted the instrument onto her lap, mimicking Spock's posture.

"If you would allow me," Spock stated as he stepped behind her and lightly grasped her hands to adjust them to the correct playing positions. Nyota swallowed a gasp at the unexpected heat of his hands upon her own. "It is very difficult for a Terran to master the Vulcan lyre. While it may appear to be similar to Terran instruments, the proper Vulcan playing technique is quite different."

Nyota lightly strummed the instrument, testing each string and finger combination as she listened closely, her eyes shut in concentration. After a few minutes of producing seemingly random notes, Nyota was able to produce a very simple melody.

Spock's brow rose in surprise.

"'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,'" Spock murmured. "Fascinating."

Nyota frowned slightly. "I know it is just a silly Terran children's song, but it seemed easy enough to play."

"You mistake my meaning, Nyota. While I have never heard the lullaby performed on the Vulcan lyre before, your ability to play even the most basic of melodies without prior lessons is impressive."

Spock's breath caught in his throat at the dazzling smile Nyota threw his way. While he had observed the Cadet smile at Shuran or her friends, she had never before granted him such a sincere smile. A warm feeling blossomed in his chest and quickly diffused throughout all of his limbs. Spock found himself desirous to elicit as many smiles from Nyota as possible in the future.

"Thank you," Nyota replied, ducking her head and biting her lip in a manner Spock found captivating.
Another silence settled between them before Nyota quit her seat and reverently set down the lyre. She turned to the table and plucked up her errant PADD.

"Well, I have what I came for," Nyota stated somewhat hurriedly. "I should bid you…"

"Nyota," Spock's voice cut off her farewell and stopped her retreat. "I have given Shuran's suggestion that we perform together more thought. While I feel that performing at the All Academy Showcase would be inappropriate, especially given your previous commitment to perform with the Academy Chorale, a performance for the Vulcan Delegation would be more than acceptable. Starfleet is holding a banquet in their honor at the conclusion of their visit. If it would be agreeable to you, I would be honored to perform with you at the banquet."

Nyota stared at Spock, her mouth slightly agape in surprise. Performing for the Vulcan Delegation and before the top brass of Starfleet was a great honor as well as a daunting task.

"If you possess any anxiety over your abilities, let me assure you that your performance is more than adequate. We could schedule a series of practice sessions during the next term in preparation."

"I…I…Can I have some time to think about it?"

"Certainly," Spock replied with a nod of his head.

"Thank you, Commander…I mean, Spock," Nyota replied in a rush before offering Spock another bright smile. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Nyota."
Chapter 6

Gaila had sufficiently recovered by the next day that she was able to leave her quarters, although she spent most of her time in the common room putting the finishing touches on her final paper. Her professors had been sympathetic of her illness and granted her an extension until after the start of the winter quarter. However, Gaila was anxious to be done and worked diligently to complete her work in order to have as much time to enjoy the company of Lieutenant Commander Shuran while they remained off campus.

Nyota took the opportunity to walk around the perimeter Theta Sigma outpost. There was not much to see. Theta Sigma was a small planetoid with a rocky terrain that had little flora or fauna other than a few species of grasses. The air outside was breathable and the climate was warm and dry, a pleasant difference from the cool humidity of San Francisco. It was pleasant to stretch her legs and feel the warmth of the sun on her face and extremities. Nyota walked for over an hour, her thoughts moving from her anticipation of the final two quarters of her first year at the Academy, her plans for the summer break to Commander Spock. Gaila would have been delighted to learn the last turn of Nyota’s thoughts. While Nyota still did not credit Gaila’s assertion that Commander Spock was attracted to her (“Wake up and smell the pheromones, Ny!” had been her exhortation that morning after Nyota had told her about the night before), she was beginning to admit to herself that Spock was not as terrible as she had previously thought. He was a puzzle to her. He usually appeared so detached and condescending, yet last night she had glimpsed a side of him that almost made him appear human.

Having completed her final paper, Gaila joined the rest of the party for the evening meal. Shuran was sure to place Gaila next to him at the table and made a great show over fussing over her every need. Her water glass was never more than half empty and before she could even voice her desires, Shuran would offer her the salt, pepper, an extra napkin or a extra helping of the main course. Nyota could not help but be amused as she watched her friend engage in animated conversation with the Lieutenant Commander. She looked over at Spock and was surprised to see that his attention was riveted on the couple as well, but he looked far from pleased. His brow was slightly creased and his jaw was tight; it was the closest to a frown that Nyota would expect from a Vulcan. Nyota could not suppress the very pronounced frown that overtook her features at Spock’s display of disapproval.

Gaila excused herself after the meal citing fatigue, much to Shuran’s disappointment. Nyota made to assist her friend, but Gaila insisted that she stay and enjoy herself. Nyota glared at her friend. Gaila merely smiled and cast a quick look at Commander Spock before leaving for her quarters. The party soon broke off to be absorbed in their various amusements. Spock sat editing some reports on a PADD, Shuran tried his hand at kol-toh and Uhura busied herself with reading a copy of the ancient Terran text The Lord of the Rings. Nurse Chapel walked about the room, listless. Occasionally she would position herself behind Spock to read over his shoulder.

“You are so thorough in your work, Commander, I don’t know why you insist on editing your work over and over. I am sure that there is no better writer in Starfleet.”

Spock sighed lightly. “If I am as exemplary a writer as you claim, Lieutenant, it is only because I am disciplined.”

“If you are reviewing the reports from this week, be sure to mention Cadet Gaila’s illness and the medical care I have given her. The reports on the effects of the influenza on the Orion system…”

“Yes, Lieutenant, I have already included Cadet Gaila’s illness and the medical response in the report. I have also included a note regarding Cadet Uhura’s role in Cadet Gaila’s recovery.”
Nyota quirked a brow at Spock’s mention of herself. She had to swallow a laugh at the look of pique that crossed Nurse Chapel’s face. Nyota wondered if Spock had brought her own name into the discussion merely to annoy Nurse Chapel into speechlessness. If so, his attempt was a complete failure.

“How quickly you work, Commander. I am sure that I couldn’t read half as fast as you.”

“My work will proceed more quickly if you cease your interruptions.”

Uhura had to smother another laugh over Nurse Chapel’s attempts to gain Commander Spock’s attentions and his repeated rebuffs. Soon, Nurse Chapel left Spock to his work, as he desired, and took to walking about the room.

“Uhura, won’t you join me in a turn about the room? It is quite refreshing, especially after sitting so long in one attitude.”

Nyota set aside her PADD and regarded Chapel with a wary look. She was surprised to be addressed in such a friendly manner by Nurse Chapel. However, as she found that her back had grown stiff from sitting so long during the day, Uhura consented and joined Nurse Chapel, who threaded her arm through hers as they walked. After a few turns about the room, Nurse Chapel addressed Commander Spock.

“Commander, won’t you join us?”

Uhura looked over to where Spock was seated and was surprised to find that he had abandoned his PADD and turned his seat to watch their progress about the room.

“I believe that it would be illogical for me to join you. My desires and your own would be best served by my remaining seated.”

“Why, whatever can he mean,” Nurse Chapel gasped as she continued to walk the room.

“I will oblige you with a reply, nonetheless,” Spock replied, arching his brow in a manner that Nyota could not help but find appealing despite her better judgment. “You can only have two purposes in engaging in such an activity. Either, you mean to discuss some private confidence or you are aware that your figures are displayed to best advantage by walking. In the first, your purpose would be spoiled by the addition of myself to the party. In the second, I have a most satisfying view of the proceedings from my current position.”

“Commander! How should we respond to such a statement, Uhura?” Nurse Chapel tittered.

“Heavens if I know. Perhaps we should tease him. Laugh at him,” Nyota replied as she watched Spock with her hands resting on her hips. Spock returned her gaze, a slight grin turning up the corner of his mouth.

“Laugh at Commander Spock!” Nurse Chapel replied with genuine horror. “Commander Spock is not a man to be laughed at.”

“Then that is a tragedy, because I love to laugh.”

“Nurse Chapel has made an overstatement. Indeed, any person may be made an object of ridicule by a person whose primary focus in life is mockery.”
Nyota observed Spock with a wry smile. “I must agree with you, Commander Spock. There are such people whose primary object in life is a joke, but I hope that I am not one of them. I never laugh at what is wise or good. Inconsistencies, quirks, eccentricities, and foibles…in these I find amusement. Life would be dull without deriving some humor from such things. However, I suppose that you lack such faults, Commander?”

“As a Vulcan, I have made it my purpose to avoid such weaknesses of character by becoming a student of logic.”

“Weaknesses such as pride?”

“Yes, Cadet. Pride can be a weakness where pride is undue. However, where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation.”

Nyota turned her face from the Commander to hide the grin that tugged at her lips. Displeased that her plan to capture Spock’s attention had only led her to be ignored, Nurse Chapel spoke up to redirect the conversation.

“I hope that your evaluation of Commander Spock is complete. What is your result, Cadet?”

Nyota smiled at Nurse Chapel before turning towards Spock. “By his own admission he is a Vulcan without fault.”

Spock’s brow rose in challenge. “I have made no such admission, Cadet Uhura. No man or Vulcan is without faults. Although, I trust that mine are not of understanding. I cannot discount the failings and vices of others, nor forget offenses made towards myself. Some would describe my nature as too demanding or unyielding. My good opinion once lost is lost forever.”

“That is a failing,” Nyota replied, her grin falling. “But I cannot laugh at it.”

“There exists in every disposition a tendency towards some particular failing,” Spock replied, his face impassive.

“Your defect is a propensity to disapprove of everyone.”

“While yours, Cadet, is a tendency to willfully misunderstand them.”

“Well, who would like to join me in a game of cards?” Nurse Chapel piped up, tired of being a third wheel.

All assembled politely declined her invitation and opted to retire to their respective quarters for the night. Nyota was thankful that they would soon be returning to the Academy and that Gaila was well enough as to not delay their departure. Spock was similarly pleased that their time on Theta Sigma was drawing to a close. He began to realize the danger of paying too much attention to Cadet Uhura.
Chapter 7

After their return from Theta Sigma, Gaila and Nyota had but a short break before the start of the Winter Quarter. Both girls spent the brief week with Nyota’s family in Kenya enjoying home cooked meals and the warmth of the African sun before being thrown once again into their graduate studies. While Nyota was always excited to begin a new term, she viewed her new class schedule with some trepidation. Commander Spock’s Advanced Vulcan Language and Culture seminar was on Thursday nights. Nyota’s time on Theta Sigma had served to temper her dislike of Commander Spock, but she still had trouble sketching his character. He could be proud and aloof yet also be witty and even warm in his interactions with his friends and herself. Spock’s pale olive feet against the cool dark floors and his long fingers gracefully moving across the lyre as he was absorbed in his music still haunted her.

However, the rigors of the first week of classes soon alleviated Uhura of her nervousness. She was so absorbed in her classes, meetings and study sessions that she hardly noticed when Thursday rolled around and she found herself standing outside of the seminar room, her PADDs in one hand and a thermos of hot tea in the other. Nyota was unsurprised to find that she was the first student to arrive. While she did not make it a habit of being the first to arrive to class, she did like to be early on the first day in order to secure the best seat and to have time to review the first assignment. If anything, Nyota abhorred being unprepared.

“You are fifteen minutes and thirty seconds early, cadet,” Commander Spock stated by way of greeting as Nyota entered the seminar room.

“Good evening to you as well, Commander,” Nyota replied with a smile as she placed her PADDs and tea on the table.

The Vulcan merely stared at her in a disinterested fashion. Nyota was starting to think that his cordiality just a week prior had all been imagined.

“The man has all the warmth of a green ice cube,” McCoy had replied when she related the events of Theta Sigma to him the day before. She laughed lightly at the memory.

“I do not understand what is so humorous, Cadet.”

“Nothing, Commander. I was merely remembering something amusing.”

They fell into an uneasy silence as Nyota reviewed her notes from that day’s reading and Commander Spock prepared for the seminar busying himself at the lectern. Soon other students began to trickle into the room and seat themselves around the large oval table. Nyota was diverted to find that the seats in a three-chair radius around her own remained vacant until moments before class was scheduled to begin. The cadets who were left with those seats did not appear too pleased with the arrangement. Nyota wondered at this until Commander Spock seated himself at the seat directly to the right of her at the head of the table. Apparently the commander did not plan to teach class from the lectern, as other professors were wont to do. Nyota began to understand her classmates’ reticence to sit near her as she had unwittingly seated herself next to the professor. Nyota merely smiled to herself. She found it difficult to be intimidated by the Commander when the image of his delicately pointed ears tinted green in the becoming Vulcan equivalent of a blush was so fresh in her memory.

However, as the class progressed, Nyota’s good mood only soured. She found herself engaged in a heated debate over the morality of excluding V'tosh ka'tur from full participation in Vulcan society.
“I fail to see the logic of Surak’s edict that the V’tosh ka’tur be expelled. How is apartheid logical?”

“You are attempting to employ an imprecise analogy, Cadet. Surak’s edict concerning V’tosh ka’tur is quite different from the systems of apartheid seen in 20th Century South Africa and the United States of America. The Terran notion of racial categorization is highly illogical and has no basis in scientific fact. Race was used as an excuse for subjugation and genocide. Surak’s edict shares none of those characteristics.”

“Perhaps. However, it would not be imprecise to compare it to phenomena such as the Red Scare or the so-called Monkey trials of the same century. In both these instances, a difference in a religious, philosophical or political belief system was used as an excuse by one party to drive or marginalize another.”

“I understand your thought process, Cadet. However, I still maintain that it is flawed. Vulcan society prior to the teachings of Surak was a violent and hedonistic society in which unguarded emotion led to a constant state of war and blood shed. Had Vulcan continued in such a vein, we would destroyed ourselves given the rapid advancements in technology. Logic or the absence thereof was not a philosophical rationale for conflict as in the examples you cite, but the determining factor for a state of peace or constant strife.”

“I do not dispute the importance of the teachings of Surak in the establishment of a peaceful and advanced Vulcan society,” Nyota argued in reply. “However, I do dispute the assumption that all Vulcans not ruled by logic would be violent as a rule. Why not instead separate those V’tosh ka’tur who prove to be incapable of controlling their violent or destructive tendencies as other societies do? Why punish the Vulcan given to writing romantic sonnets the same as the Vulcan given to warfare?”

“In this we are not in disagreement, Cadet Uhura. Vulcan society currently operates in this fashion. V’tosh ka’tur are no longer expelled. However there are those that retain a high degree of…mistrust towards them due to the unpredictability of a Vulcan mind not governed by logic. It is rare for a Vulcan without logic to hold a position of importance. During the time of Surak, however, the discipline of logic was new to Vulcan society and the peace achieved by the mass adherence to the discipline was fragile. Surak logically concluded that the needs of the many outweighed the needs of the few. In order for the peace to be secured and maintained, the edict was a necessity. You must also understand that at the time of Surak Vulcan society was significantly more advanced than any culture present on 20th century Earth. Therefore, any analogy to Terran society is imprecise.”

Commander Spock looked from Nyota to address the entire class. “In order to be successful in this seminar, it is recommended that you strive to look beyond your emotional Terran notions. Ideas such as fairness hold little importance in the Vulcan way of thought. As we continue to discuss Vulcan culture and society post-Surak, you all must strive to use logic as your primary analytical filter.”

The end of class prevented Nyota from voicing the rebuttal that was on the tip of her tongue. Nyota bristled at the implication that logic was a superior analytical filler when discussing matters related to culture and society. People, be they Vulcan or human, could not be so easily compartmentalized nor was their most basic nature given to such radical change over a mere few centuries. Besides, if they were to take Commander Spock’s advice to heart, this would prove to be a very boring seminar. As the other cadets hurriedly gathered their belongings and fled the room, Nyota realized with some embarrassment that her argument with the Commander had taken the majority of the hour.
Nyota stood and began gathering her PADDs and half-empty thermos of tea. She had been the first to arrive and she did not desire to be the last one to leave. However, Commander Spock seemed to have a different idea in mind.

“Cadet Uhura,” Spock called switching from Vulcan to Standard.

Nyota suppressed a sigh before turning to face him. “Yes, Commander?”

“You performed admirably during today’s seminar. I regret that the other cadets have not displayed a similar passion for the subject. I begin to wonder if their reticence is due to their tenuous grasp of the Vulcan language.”

Nyota could not prevent her brow rising in challenge. “I did not think that passion was the way to be successful in this seminar, Commander.”

“Passion is not an evil when it is tempered by an excellent mind, Cadet,” Spock replied in an even tone, his face robed in his usual mask of inscrutability.

Nyota looked down quickly, oddly unnerved by the compliment and the reference to their earlier conversation.

“I wanted to discuss with you our upcoming performance for the Vulcan delegation,” Spock continued. “If you are still amenable to performing with me, we should schedule practice sessions while our schedules for the term remain relatively open. If you would send me your schedule, I can arrange for a series of sessions that would be convenient for us both.”

“Of course, Commander,” Nyota replied as she set down her tea and began scrolling through her PADD. “I will send my schedule right now.”

Spock checked his own PADD before nodding in confirmation of the receipt.

“I have taken the liberty of sending you some suggestions for further reading on the subject of the emergence of the teachings of Surak which you may find illuminating. They are not required for the seminar, of course,” Spock continued at Nyota’s look of mild surprise.

“Thank you, sir. I will be sure to review them.”

“If you do not have anything further which you would like to discuss, I bid you a good night.”

“No, I do not. Have a good evening, Commander.” With a nod, Nyota hurried from the seminar room and began to make her way to her quarters. She was no closer to understanding the Commander than she had been prior to class.

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“So, tonight Shuran is taking me to the only Andorian restaurant in San Francisco,” Gaila chirped happily as she and Nyota made their way to the gymnasium for their Friday afternoon dance class. “I haven’t heard good things about Andorian cuisine, so I am not sure how much I’ll enjoy it.”

“I still have some of my mother’s curry in the freezer if you want to eat before you go,” Nyota offered, having experienced Andorian food herself.

“Thanks. Now if I don’t like the food I won’t have to lie when I say I am not that hungry,” Gaila
laughed. “Hey, there is Jim and Len! Who is that piece of hotness with them?”

Nyota looked towards where Gaila had indelicately begun to point and waive to see Kirk and Len making their way across the quad with a tall broad shouldered Vulcan in civilian clothes. Nyota could not help but stare at the unidentified Vulcan, even after he noticed her perusal. He was unlike any Vulcan she had ever seen. His skin was tanned a deep olive and his ink black hair was worn shaggy and long as it curled around his ears and down his neck. His square jaw was lined with stubble and his full sensuous lips were curved into a broad smile. Vulcans did not smile, or so Nyota thought.

“If it is not the two loveliest ladies in all of Starfleet,” Kirk greeted them with his usual leer.

“Hey, Jim. Leonard,” Gaila drawled coyly, unable to turn off her charm whenever an attractive male was present, her current enthrallment with Lieutenant-Commander Shuran notwithstanding. “Who is your handsome new friend?”

“Easy, girl,” McCoy replied with his usual amused gruffness. “Let’s not go scaring off potential recruits before they’ve signed on the dotted line.”

“On the contrary,” the mysterious Vulcan purred as he took Gaila’s hand and brought it to his lips. “If every female cadet is as beautiful and charming as she then I shall sign up for Starfleet immediately.”

“I like this one,” Gaila stage whispered to Nyota as she removed her hand from his warm grasp.

“I’d watch out for the other one, Sybok. She’s beautiful, but she’s got claws,” Kirk teased as he gestured towards Nyota.

“Beautiful and deadly,” Sybok laughed. “An ideal combination for a female warrior, is it not?”

Nyota felt herself grow warm under Sybok’s dark amber gaze. She smiled almost shyly in reply, a response that nearly floored Kirk.

“You’ve got to teach me how to do that,” Kirk laughed as he slapped Sybok on the back.

“Ladies, allow me to introduce Sybok, formerly of Vulcan. He’s recently settled in San Francisco and is considering joining Starfleet,” McCoy began the introductions when it became clear that Kirk would not.

Sybok bowed slightly at the waist to both cadets causing Gaila to bounce slightly on her toes in delight.

“Sybok, please meet Cadets Gaila and Uhura. Gaila is in the computer sciences department and is one of the most advanced students in the department. She is also an incorrigible flirt with talents best not discussed in polite company.”

Gaila swatted McCoy on the arm with enough force to make him wince before accepting another kiss on her knuckles from Sybok. McCoy rolled his eyes before continuing.

“Cadet Uhura is in the communications department. She sings like a nightingale, dances like a gazelle and is one of the most brilliant students at Starfleet.”

Uhura smiled brightly at McCoy before bowing slightly towards Sybok. Despite witnessing his informality with Gaila, Nyota could not unlearn the habit of avoiding casual physical contact with
Vulcans.


Sybok’s smile grew. “Live long and prosper, Uhura,” he returned while giving her the accompanying salute before taking her hand in both of his. “I greatly look forward to better making your acquaintance.”

Nyota gasped at the contact of his hot hands on her skin and the words spoken in her mind. She was sure that her shock transmitted over the tentative bond created by the contact.

“Cadet Gaila! Greetings,” the voice of Shuran broke Uhura from her thoughts. Nyota looked over Sybok’s shoulder to see the Lieutenant-Commander striding happily towards them with Commander Spock following at a more sedate pace. Spock caught her gaze and his expression softened slightly about his eyes and mouth.

Sybok thankfully dropped Nyota’s hand from his grasp as he turned to greet the newcomers. Nyota instinctively cradled her hand against her chest as she tried to order her emotions.

“Lieutenant-Commander Shuran,” Gaila greeted happily. “You have found us just as we were meeting a new friend…”

Nyota barely heard the rest of the exchange as her attention was caught by the exchange between Commander Spock and Sybok. Sybok’s formerly relaxed posture went rigid and his skin paled noticeably as he gazed at Commander Spock. To the untrained eye, Spock wore his usual emotionless façade. But Nyota noticed the slight widening and sudden narrowing of his eyes and how his lips thinned into a fierce line as the softness she had previously observed fled. His posture seemed to grow taller and his shoulders squared as he regarded his fellow Vulcan.

“Spock, come meet Sybok,” Shuran smiled brightly as he turned to look at his friend, happily oblivious to the exchange that had just taken place.

“We are acquainted,” Spock bit out.

Nyota gasped as Spock’s eyes flew from Sybok to rest on her person. She could not help but notice the quiet rage that burned in his dark eyes. Nyota resisted the urge to look away as if she had done something wrong and returned Spock’s angry gaze with a challenging stare of her own.

“Cadet,” Spock greeted her with a stiff incline of his head before turning sharply and making quick yet determined strides away from the party.

“How singular,” Shuran murmured as he watched his friend hurry away. “I better go after him. It was a delight making your acquaintance, Sybok. Cadets,” Shuran nodded to them all before running to catch up with his friend.

“Now wasn’t that right peculiar,” McCoy drawled as he watched the officers depart.

“Yeah. I wonder what crawled up his butt,” Kirk replied. “Anyway, after showing Sybok around campus we were going to meet up at Colbert’s Pub for some drinks with Scotty and Hiraku. Are you ladies game?”

“I can’t make it,” Gaila sighed dreamily. “I have…a prior engagement.”

“I bet you do,” McCoy replied under his breath.

Gaila sent him a look that could kill a Klingon and uttered a phrase that Uhura knew to be equally
as nasty before giving Sybok a coy smile.

“However, I am sure that Nyota will be able to make it.”

Nyota glared at her friend who only waggled her eyebrows in response. They would have words later.

“Nyota,” Sybok repeated. “What an appropriate name. I would be most honored if you would join us tonight.”

Nyota’s irritation immediately fled at the sound of Sybok’s deep silky voice caressing each syllable of her name.

“Then I will be sure to come. What time, Jim?”

Kirk merely looked between Nyota and Sybok with an open mouth. “Dude, you seriously have got to teach me how to do that!”

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After agreeing to meet the boys at Colbert’s at nine that evening, Nyota and Gaila said their farewells and continued towards the gym. Gaila smiled broadly the entire walk there.

“I don’t see why you are so pleased. Thanks for just volunteering my time back there!”

“Oh, you will thank me later. I could smell the pheromones bouncing off the two of you, Ny! Sybok has it for you bad and don’t you dare tell me that you are not at least curious! I thought I was going to have to jump Kirk from the contact high,” Gaila laughed.

“Please. You must have got your nose hairs crossed,” Nyota replied dismissively. “But I will admit that he is very good looking.”

“Good looking? He is gorgeous!”

Nyota laughed lightly before agreeing that he was indeed gorgeous.

“Commander Spock did not seem to like him, though,” Nyota went on, her amusement fading.

“Perhaps that is just because another man was stepping on his turf. Males of all species can be very territorial when it comes to prospective mates,” Gaila replied seriously.

“Gaila, for the last time, Commander Spock is not interested in me.”

“Sure, sure. ‘The lady dost protest too much’ or however that saying goes. Just promise me that you will try to have a good time tonight,” Gaila continued as they reached the locker room. “And if you and Mr. Tall Dark and Gorgeous do get to know each other, be sure to tell me everything!”

Nyota sighed before giving her friend her word that she’d try to enjoy herself. As for getting to know Sybok, Nyota was equal parts cautious and excited.

V'tosh ka'tur = Vulcan without logic
Mene sakkhet ur-seveh = Live long and prosper
“I think that you should wear this outfit. It would show off your bottom rather nicely,” Gaila chirped happily as she laid out yet another outfit on Nyota’s bed.

“For the last time, Gaila, I am not going on a date. It is just drinks with Len and the boys,” Nyota sighed as she picked up the offending outfit to hand it back to her roommate.

“But, this isn’t just the regular group of guys. This is the boys plus one smoking hot Vulcan man who is completely into you! Wear the red mini-skirt with the fishnet tights,” Gaila replied as she pushed the outfit back into her roommate’s hands.

“I don’t want to give Sybok the wrong idea, Gaila. I am not interested in him, whatever your nose may have detected. I am wearing my jeans and that purple tunic. Nice, normal clothes that cover my body and won’t have me mistaken for a Xenubian street walker!”

“Fine, fine. Be boring. I was just trying to spice things up,” Gaila pouted as she plopped onto her bed.

“Anyway, enough fussing over me. I’ve got hours to spare but if you don’t hussle you will surely be late for your date with Shuran.”

Nyota was pleased at the slow smile that spread over Gaila’s features at the mention of Shuran.

“I’ll put the curry in the warmer while you get showered and changed,” Nyota said as she made her way towards the small common room of their quarters.

“Never mind that,” Gaila called as she made her way to the sonic shower. “I’ve decided to be open minded and give Shuran’s food a proper trial.”

Nyota laughed. “Well, you must really be well on your way to being in love if you are willing to rely on Andorian food for sustenance.”

“I know,” Gaila groaned as she leaned in the doorway of their common area. “What is wrong with me? I’ve been living among you humans for way too long. Who could imagine such a thing as a monogamous Orion!”

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Colbert’s Pub was packed, as was normal for a Friday night. The place was filled with Academy cadets in civilian clothes winding down from a long week of classes and reconnecting with friends after the winter break. Nyota weaved through the crowd waving to colleagues and hugging friends as she made her way towards a booth in the back of the pub. Scotty waved her over with one hand as he motioned for the waitress with the other to order another round of whiskey.

“Hey, dollface,” McCoy greeted her as he rose and gave her a hug. “I’ve saved you the best seat in the house.”

Nyota smiled as she slid into the booth and settled into the spot he had just vacated next to the wall. Nyota always preferred the inside seat as it offered her an unobstructed view of her friends and the entire pub. Scotty and Hiraku greeted her with a wide smile while Kirk offered his usual leer. McCoy resumed his seat next to Nyota, draping one arm around his friend in a casual
“So, where is Sybok,” Uhura inquired as she looked around the crowded bar.

“Our new friend has proven quite popular with the ladies. He’s out on the dance floor with some blonde draped around him,” McCoy laughed.

“He is rather charming,” Nyota replied.

“Whatever,” Kirk snorted before taking a swig of whiskey that promptly sent him into a coughing fit.

“Easy there, mate. That there is high quality genuine Scottish whiskey, not that milky stuff you usually chug,” Scotty warned.

“As I was saying,” Kirk continued once he had regained the power of speech, “The girls just like something exotic. Who has ever heard of a Vulcan that dances or laughs? It’s kinda freaking me out.”

“Perhaps he is V'tosh ka'tur,” Nyota murmured.

“Vish kosh ba what?” Scotty exclaimed.

“V’tosh ka’tur,” Nyota repeated. “It means ‘Vulcan without logic.’ We were reading about them in Commander Spock’s Vulcan culture seminar this week. They are Vulcans that rejected Surak’s teachings of logic. So, they don’t suppress their emotions or feelings like other Vulcans do. It’s actually how Vulcans evolved to behave.”

“Doesn’t that make them little more than snarling Romulans?” Hikaru asked with concern.

“Did Sybok act like a snarling Romulan today?”

“Well, no. But then, we don’t really know him,” Hikaru went on.

“What is there to know?” Kirk interjected. “He seems like a swell guy, despite his irritating ability to charm any woman he meets.”

“He hasn’t charmed me,” Nyota sniffed.

McCoy let out a loud guffaw. “Sure, keep telling yourself that. I thought you were going to dissolve into a puddle of goo this afternoon. I’ve never seen you so moonfaced over a guy before.”

“I was not moonfaced,” Nyota challenged after giving McCoy an elbow to his side.

“No, you’re right, darling,” McCoy apologized once his laughter had died down. “You were just drooling like he was a big piece of key lime pie.”

The rest of the table laughed heartily as Nyota fumed at McCoy.

“Did I miss something amusing,” Sybok asked with a smile as he sauntered over to the table.

Nyota’s cheeks grew warm. She was grateful for the noise and music of the club that hopefully masked their conversation from Sybok’s sensitive Vulcan ears.

“It was nothing,” Nyota replied. “These guys will just laugh at anything.”
“Nyota, it is a pleasure to see you again,” Sybok greeted her with a warm smile that made her stomach flutter strangely.

“How are you enjoying your introduction to Starfleet Academy?”

“Starfleet seems like an exemplary institution. The instructors and cadets I have met today have all been welcoming and polite, as have these fine gentlemen. However, my introduction has only been wanting in one aspect.”

“And what is that?” Nyota asked.

“I have yet to have the pleasure of a dance with you, Nyota,” Sybok answered as he held out his hand to her.

Nyota laughed shyly before gently urging McCoy to slide out of the booth to allow her exit.

“How does he do that?” Kirk asked as he watched Sybok lead Nyota to the dance floor.

“Like Uhura said,” Hikaru replied. “He’s charming.”

“I’m charming, but Nyota has never danced with me,” Kirk pouted.

“There’s a difference between being charming and unctuous,” McCoy replied before taking a sip of his whiskey.

Nyota followed Sybok to the dance floor, her hand grasped in his overly warm hand. Nyota was still surprised by Sybok’s ease with casual touching. However, Nyota supposed that as a V’tosh ka’tur he would have little reserve about broadcasting his emotions to others or being on the receiving end of them.

“As you have so astutely deduced, Nyota, I am not your typical Vulcan,” Sybok spoke to her mind.

Nyota gasped lightly before tugging her hand from his grasp.

“I apologize, Nyota,” Sybok said as he turned and placed his hands on her waist to position them for a slow dance. “I realize that it must be disconcerting for non-telepaths to communicate mentally.”

Uhura smiled nervously at him. “Yes, it is a bit uncomfortable. I also do not like the notion of someone being able to so easily read my mind.”

“Again, I apologize, Nyota. I did not mean to intrude on your thoughts. Normally with skin-to-skin contact with non-touch telepaths I am only able to sense vague feelings when not engaged in a mind meld. I am unusually receptive to your thoughts. Is it possible that you possess some telepathic abilities?”

Nyota looked up at him with wide eyes. “No, I am quite sure my gifts don’t include telepathy.”

“Perhaps you possess some latent talents of which you are unaware. It is possible that your talent with languages can be attributed in some part to your predisposition for telepathy.”

“My ‘talent’ for languages is a result of extensive study and hard work,” Nyota replied defensively.

The grin slipped momentarily from Sybok’s face as he tilted his head in study of her. “I did not
mean to offend you, Nyota. If you indeed were telepathic, your ability to master languages would only be slightly enhanced. The gift of telepathy would be no different than having perfect pitch or a photographic memory. It is a neurological attribute that aides but does not guarantee success in the mastery of language.”

They swayed to the music in silence for a few moments. Nyota pondered what Sybok had told her. She was curious to know if she were indeed telepathic and how she might improve upon her unknown talent. However, she found that her curiosity over Sybok’s reaction to Commander Spock was greater.

“This afternoon when we met, I couldn’t help but notice your reaction to Commander Spock. Are you acquainted with him?”

Sybok redirected his amber gaze from Nyota’s face to a point some distance behind her. Nyota could not help but note the resemblance to another Vulcan when she had posed a similarly innocuous question.

“We are brothers, Nyota.”

Nyota gasped. “Brothers? Does that mean that you are half human as well?”

Nyota felt Sybok stiffen beneath her fingers at the question. Before she could wonder at his reaction he continued.

“No. I believe the term that humans apply is half-brother. We share the same father, however my mother was Vulcan. When she passed away, our father took on a human wife who gave birth to Spock.”

Nyota looked at Sybok in amazement. Their reaction to each other that afternoon had been anything but brotherly.

Sybok’s intense amber eyes slid back to Nyota’s face. “As you might have deduced, we do not have the most brotherly of relationships. Indeed, there exists great enmity which, despite my best overtures, we have been unable to overcome.”

Nyota looked up at him with wide sympathetic eyes.

“This may be presumptuous as we have not long been acquainted, but I sense that you are a trustworthy woman in whom I can confide. May I share with you a story, Nyota?”

“Of course,” Nyota murmured.

Sybok smiled sadly before lifting one of her hands from his shoulder to bring to his lips.

“My mother, as I have already told you, was Vulcan,” Sybok began, retaining his hold on her hand as they danced. “Her name was T’Lyng. She was married to my father Sarek for only a year before she died shortly after giving birth to myself.”

Nyota squeezed Sybok’s hand in sympathy.

“I was raised alone by my father until I had attained fifteen years of age. Sarek was the best of fathers. I was doted on as a child, which was rare for a Vulcan child as we are taught to be independent from our parents at a young age. Our home was a happy one and I was well loved by my father, in his way. I was given the best education and was expected to become a preeminent scholar. Then he took a human wife, Amanda Grayson, who soon after gave birth to my half-brother Spock. I soon found that the attention given me was now given exclusively to Lady
Amanda and her son. I was almost forgotten and lived in my own home as a stranger. Lady Amanda had taken an instant dislike to me and saw me as competition for her son. She began to poison my father’s mind against me until I lost the favor due to me as the first son of Sarek.”

Nyota shook her head in disbelief. “That is awful, Sybok.”

“Please do not think that I blame my father,” Sybok continued in an earnest voice as he pressed Nyota’s hand. “Although my father would never admit it, he was blinded by his love for Lady Amanda. You see, the death of T’Lyng was devastating to my father and it was feared that he would fade. He was urged to take another bond mate, but he refused suffering through the Time alone until he met Lady Amanda during one of his missions to Earth.”

“What is ‘The Time?’” Nyota asked.

“It is unimportant. You do not need to know,” Sybok replied as he brushed the back of her hand with his thumb. Nyota nodded her agreement and Sybok favored her with a small smile before continuing.

“I grew to become accustomed to my neglect and strove to be an excellent brother to young Spock. When he was very young, our relationship was a good one. He looked up to me as an example and loved me in his way. However, as he grew older he began to resent my place in the household. He strove to prove to my father that he was a better son than I, even completing the kahs’wan at the youngest age of any Vulcan child.”

“What is the kahs’wan?”

“The kahs’wan is a survival test in which Vulcan children on the cusp of puberty are sent into the wilderness without food, water or weapons to survive on their own for a Terran week. Spock ran away from home to undertake the kahs’wan at the tender age of six. I was so angry with him when he returned, even though we were all thankful that he returned unharmed. He could have died from exposure or been torn apart by wild beasts. His pet sehlat died defending him from a wild beast, but Spock cared nothing for this. He dismissed my concern as illogical and a sign of mental weakness. All that mattered was success.

“However, the true break in our relationship came many years later when Spock was sixteen years old. Spock had decided to undergo the ritual of kolinhar and expunge all emotion in favor of the path of pure logic. This is a state to which all followers of Surak aspire. I counseled Spock against this path. In my study I had learned that the path of pure logic was detrimental to Vulcan society and health. The way of kolinhar leads to insanity. Vulcans were meant to feel and express the full range of emotions, not expunge them. Logic, I told him was meant to guide the emotions, not to replace them. I shared this with my brother in confidence, as there exists a great prejudice on Vulcan against my kind. As you deduced, I am what they call V’tosh ka’tur. I resent that label, as it is the equivalent of a curse in the Vulcan language. I risked exposure by sharing this secret with my brother because I could not see him unwittingly choose the path of madness.

“Seeing this as his chance to cement his place as my father’s favorite once and for all, he told my secret to my father and to the high counsel. As I was exposed, I used this chance to tell the high counsel of my research findings and of the dangers of kolinhar and how the teachings of Surak had been corrupted. They dismissed my findings. Spock and Lady Amanda testified before the counsel against me, concocting stories about my erratic emotional behavior and how I was a danger due to my lack of logic. The counsel believed them and banished me from Vulcan society. My father was shamed and had no choice but to expel me from of the House of Sarek. So now I am a vagabond, traveling the galaxy without a home planet or a house name.”

Nyota shook her head in disbelief as she fought to hold back tears. A surge of sadness and anger
“How could your own brother betray you?” Nyota asked.

“I do not know. However, I do not hate my brother. I forgave him years ago for his treachery. I believe that there is still hope for him to be a good man. Perhaps he turned down the Vulcan Science Academy for Starfleet as a means of atonement. With Starfleet and their goal of peace and discovery, he may yet prove himself worthy of the House of Sarek,” Sybok smiled sadly before bringing Nyota’s hand to his lips once more.

“Please do not be angry with Spock on my behalf, Nyota. Anger poisons the mind and corrupts the heart.”

Nyota smiled sadly as she regarded him. Sybok was so noble and good. She could not imagine having such forgiving thoughts towards someone who had so completely ruined her life.

“Do not be sad, Nyota. I am at peace and I think that I too may find a new home and life with Starfleet,” Sybok replied. “I hope that I have also found a friend in you, Nyota.”

Nyota smiled, no longer as unnerved by Sybok’s telepathic communication. “I would be honored to be your friend, Sybok.”

Sybok smiled and kissed her hand again before pulling Nyota closer so that her head rested against his shoulder for the remainder of the dance.

He looked over Nyota’s head and was surprised yet pleased to find Spock standing stiffly by the bar with Captain Pike, whom Sybok had met earlier, and several other officers. Spock’s dark gaze was fixed on the figures of Sybok and Nyota. Sybok noticed the tightness of Spock’s jaw and the quiet rage in his eyes. Sybok simply smiled at his brother, before pulling Nyota closer to his person and dropping one hand lower on her hip. He was rewarded with the sight of Spock taking a step towards them, a visible frown on his face. Sybok’s grin grew larger revealing a row of bright white teeth. Hoping to antagonize his brother further, Sybok dropped a kiss onto the top of Nyota’s head. He had to swallow the laugh of triumph that almost escaped his lips at the fierce look that crossed Spock’s face before he abruptly left the pub.

So, his brother had an attachment to the small human presently in his arms that was so strong that he allowed emotions to crack his stoic facade. Sybok had to admit that Spock had a good eye for the human female, a better eye than their father. Sybok could hardly believe his good luck in his choice of plaything. He had thought the lovely Cadet Uhura would merely make a pleasant bed companion during his time in San Francisco. Now he could accomplish an additional goal: revenge.
Pride and Logic Chapter 9

Uhura laughed gaily as Sybok walked her back to the booth where their friends awaited them. She had only intended to dance once with Sybok, but he had somehow persuaded her to dance through five more songs. By the time she returned to the booth, Kirk was slumped over the table in a drunken stupor.

“About time you two got back from your dance,” McCoy began in his usual gruff manner. “I was beginning to think that you two had forgotten about us.”

“I am afraid that the fault is all my own, Leonard,” Sybok said as he slid into the booth next to Nyota, retaining his grip on her hand. “After our first dance, I simply had to have another and I forgot myself. Nyota is quite the gifted dancer.”

“Right,” McCoy said as he assessed the smiling Vulcan with cool blue eyes. “Well, the hour is late and Kirk here is nearly passed out. Scotty, you outdid yourself with the scotch and whiskey selection tonight.”

“I aim to please,” Scotty replied before downing his umpteenth shot of whiskey.

McCoy looked over at Nyota, who sat snuggled closely with the Vulcan. While McCoy had taken a liking to Sybok, he could not help but feel uneasy over Nyota’s sudden attachment to him. It wasn’t like Nyota to allow a guy such liberties, much less a guy she just met that afternoon.

“Well, we’ve got physical training early tomorrow afternoon and I’ve got to get Kirk functional. Scotty, Hikaru. Would you gentlemen be so kind as to escort Sleeping Beauty there back to our suite while I escort Ny home?” McCoy asked as he looked pointedly at them both.

Scotty and Hikaru gave each other a look before readily agreeing to his request. They said their goodbyes to Sybok and Nyota before taking Kirk by the arms to half carry back to the dorms.

“It would be my pleasure to see that Nyota arrives safely to her domicile,” Sybok offered, still caressing one of Nyota’s hands.

“Yes, Leonard. Sybok will see me home safely,” Nyota replied as she continued to smile at the Vulcan.

McCoy eyed their joined hands suspiciously. Sybok was awfully touchy feely, which he knew to be rare for a Vulcan. The few times he had to examine Vulcan patients had been very awkward affairs. The slightest touch resulted in some emotional transference that they found distasteful.

“Nyota, when did you get that scar?” McCoy asked, thankful for the convenient new injury to his friend’s hand.

“Oh, this,” Nyota replied as she pulled her hand from Sybok’s grip. “I burnt myself this morning in my communications mechanics practicum when I was fusing some circuits.”

McCoy took her hand in his and looked at it carefully. “Hmmm, that will scar up something nasty if you don’t get a dermal regenerator to it right away. I see you’ve tried to patch up yourself again. Why don’t we stop by my room on the way to your dorm. I can fix you up and check on Sleeping
“Thanks, Len,” Nyota smiled up at him.

“No problem, dollface. You know I can’t stand to see such pretty skin unnecessarily marred,” McCoy grinned at Nyota as he gave her hand a friendly pat.

He stood from the booth urging Nyota to follow his lead before turning to Sybok to say his goodbyes.

“Well, Sybok. I suppose we’ll see you around campus sporting some Starfleet issued threads in the near future. It was a pleasure meeting you.”

“Likewise, Leonard,” Sybok replied with a smile that did not meet his eyes. He held out his hand to McCoy.

McCoy glanced warily at the offered hand, before gripping Sybok’s sleeved forearm with one hand and patting his back with the other. Sybok smiled tightly and gripped McCoy’s forearm in a return gesture.

“I hope to again have the pleasure of your company soon, Nyota,” Sybok turned to Uhura with a warm smile.

“Likewise,” Uhura returned with a nod of her head, her hands clasped behind her back. “Goodnight, Sybok.”

McCoy placed one hand on the small of Uhura’s back as he walked with her from the pub and towards his dorm room. They walked in silence until they reached the campus grounds.

“That was an interesting night,” McCoy began. “Our friend Sybok sure seems to have taken a liking to you, Ny. You’ve taken a shine to him as well.”

“You and Gaila must be conspiring together,” Uhura laughed nervously. “Would it be such a bad thing if I did like him a little, Len?”

“Not necessarily, darlin’. I barely know the man, so I can’t judge one way or another,” McCoy sighed before looking at his friend from the corner of his eye. “And you know even less about him. You two sure looked chummy out there tonight.”

Nyota stopped her progress until McCoy stopped and turned to face her. “What do you mean by that, Len? Don’t tell me you’re jealous!”

“Well, darlin’. You can put those daggers you call eyes away right now,” McCoy exclaimed as he raised his hands in mock surrender. “I’m just saying that we’ve been friends for a while now and I’ve never seen you warm up so quickly to a guy before. I mean, the man is a damn Vulcan, but he was clinging to you like a fungus. Didn’t you find that the least bit odd?”

Uhura began walking again, thinking about what Len said. After a few moments, she had to admit that her friend was right. It wasn’t like her to fall for a guy’s charms so quickly. Even for a Vulcan without logic, Sybok was too tactile even by human standards.

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“The strange thing is that at the time it didn’t feel odd at all. I felt so safe in his arms, like it was the most natural thing in the world to be held by him. But, now that I think about it all, it was very strange. I don’t know, Len. I just feel so out of sorts.”

They continued the walk to McCoy’s room in silence, both friends deep in thought. When they
arrived, Jim was passed out in the common area, still fully dressed and sprawled out haphazardly on the small loveseat. Nyota could not suppress the chuckle that burst from her, despite her previously dour mood.

“He’ll be like that for the next nine hours at least and then wake up with a raging headache. I suppose I’ll have to write him a medical excuse for PT in the morning,” McCoy said as he carried a blanket from Kirk’s bed to spread over his roommate.

Nyota affectionately brushed Kirk’s hair back from his face. She had to admit that he was quite handsome when he wasn’t trying to seduce her. However, she would never tell him that.

“Alright, let’s take a look at that hand,” McCoy said as he reentered the common room, medical kit in hand.

Nyota watched as he took her hand gently in his while he applied the dermal regenerator. McCoy’s gentle yet firm touch was so different from Sybok’s presumptuous grip. There was no transference of Len’s emotions or thoughts. Her mind was her own; her thoughts and feelings under her own control. She knew that was what had her feeling so out of sorts. When Sybok had touched her she was always aware of his emotions and she felt his presence in her mind like a tangible thing. He had not been invasive, just present at the edges of her consciousness like a cloud on the horizon. Nyota wondered if that was normal for all touch telepaths. She thought about how she felt when Commander Spock had briefly touched her hands when he had demonstrated the proper technique for holding the Vulcan lyre. His hands had been hot like Sybok’s, yet they lacked the roughness of the V’tosh ka’tur’s hands. Spock’s hands were the smooth soft hands of a man who spent his days handling delicate machinery. He had not projected any of his thoughts or emotions to her that evening. But, perhaps as a V’tosh’ka’tur Sybok lacked Spock’s control. His touch had been gentle like Len’s, although as Nyota examined her hand held in her friend’s, she realized that McCoy’s touch did not make her burn like either of the Vulcans’ had.

“There,” McCoy announced as he finished attending to her scar. “Your hand is now as soft and flawless as the day you were born.”

“Thanks, Len,” Nyota smiled as she observed her friend’s handiwork.

They rose and walked to the door when they heard an unpleasant groan of pain emanate from the couch.

“Looks like Sleeping Beauty has awakened early,” McCoy said with a wry smile.

“Go look after your friend, Len. I can make it the rest of the way to my dorm alright.”

“Are you sure, sweetheart? It’s awfully late,” McCoy asked with a genuine look of concern.

“I am a big girl, Len. I can handle myself. Besides, I am a deadly female warrior, remember?” Nyota countered, recalling Sybok’s first description of her.

“I know you can. You’ve got to forgive a guy for being old fashioned,” McCoy laughed. “But about our new Vulcan friend. Be careful, Nyota. Something’s not rubbing me right about this guy. I can’t put my finger on it, but my gut tells me something’s not kosher. I’m not saying he’s a villain or anything. Just be careful, Ny.”

“I still think that you are over reacting, but I’ll be careful.” Nyota stood on her tiptoes and kissed her friend on the cheek. “Thanks for being old fashioned and looking out for me, Len. And thanks
for patching me up.”

McCoy blushed. “You’re my star, Ny. I’ll always look out for you.”

Nyota smiled again before giving her friend a tight hug. As she exited the room, she heard Kirk’s groggy complaint.

“Geez! Even Dr. Grump gets some love. What am I doing wrong?”

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“There must be some sort of misunderstanding,” Gaila said as she shook her head. “I just can’t see Shuran being best friends with someone who would do such a thing to their own brother.

Nyota and Gaila sat talking in their pajamas over breakfast in their common room the morning after. Nyota had told her friend all that Sybok had told her after Gaila had agreed to share the story with no one.

“I don’t think Sybok was lying,” Nyota argued. “He had such a look of honesty about him and I felt his sincerity through the bond.”

“Ok. That is another thing. The whole mind talking bit was a little freaky. I mean, I know Vulans are telepaths and melds are what they do, but no thanks.”

“I know, Gaila. He apologized after I objected. I don’t think he meant any harm by it or even intended to do it. But, the bond allowed me to see that he was telling the truth. Besides, Vulcans don’t lie.”

“Vulcans ruled by logic don’t lie,” Gaila countered as she gathered their dirty bowls. “Sybok isn’t ruled by logic. Besides, I didn’t say that Sybok lied, just that he may have misunderstood things. We don’t know Commander Spock’s side of the story.”

“You’re right, Gaila. We don’t. That’s the only reason why you are the only person I’ve shared this with. If there has been some misunderstanding, I don’t want to be part of the rumor mongering. But, I just know that Sybok was telling the truth. I…I can just feel it.”

“It is a tragic story. Poor Sybok. Poor Commander Spock.”

“Hmmm. Poor Commander Spock indeed. I can’t believe that I was actually starting to think he wasn’t such a bad guy. Damn him and his lyre and pale feet.”

Gaila snorted. “Pale feet?”

Nyota’s face grew warm. “Never mind. Well, it is not like I can ask the Commander to tell his side of things. I mean, it is not my place. Urrgh,” Nyota groaned as she walked to her closet to retrieve a fresh uniform for the day. “To think that I have an entire semester of seminars with Commander Spock and we’re supposed to practice together for the Vulcan delegation performance. Maybe I can back out of singing somehow.”

“That’s crazy talk, Ny. Whatever beef exists between Commander Spock and Sybok is their own. Performing for the Vulcan delegation is a great honor! Don’t pass up that opportunity because of someone else’s sibling rivalry.”

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“Pi’sa’kai,” Sybok smiled lightly as he answered the door to his apartment. “What an unexpected
pleasure.”

“Sybok,” Spock bowed slightly before stepping into the apartment. “We both know that my visit is neither unexpected nor pleasurable. State the nature of your business in this city and Starfleet Academy.”

“No greetings or words of welcome, pi’sa’kai?” Sybok replied as he sat heavily on his couch.

Spock’s face remained impassive as he stood by the door staring at his brother with a cool dark gaze. “Your presence here is unwelcome, Sybok. As you appear to be reluctant to divulge the reason for your visit to Starfleet, I will relate my hypotheses. Please correct any errors in my logic. I have deduced that you have come to Starfleet Academy with the knowledge that I am currently an officer and instructor here. Using this knowledge, it is your intent to antagonize me and disrupt my career as a means to avenge yourself for the wrongs that you incorrectly assume have been done to you by myself and samekh.”

“Your logic is flawless, pi’sa’kai,” Sybok answered, his tone even. “However, your conclusions are incorrect. While I was aware that you were serving in Starfleet and were teaching at the Academy, I did not come with revenge as my intention. I have come to seek your forgiveness and seek a new start. I have wronged you, samekh and Lady Amanda greatly. It is my hope that Starfleet can be part of my reformation and that through serving with this peace seeking organization, I may yet pay my debt to my family.”

Spock regarded his brother for several silent moments as he carefully weighed his words.

“It is illogical to try to undo the past, brother. However, I commend your efforts to make amends. If you truly desire the opportunity to reform yourself, I shall not stand in your way.”

“Thank you, brother. I am humbled,” Sybok replied with a bow.

“Forbearance is logical and in keeping with the teachings of Surak. However, it is illogical to forget,” Spock continued, his voice tight. “Should I find that you have deceived me or if you harm any of my colleagues or cadets, you shall find the consequences to be most unpleasant.”

“I thank you for the warning, but it is unnecessary,” Sybok replied.

“It is not a warning, brother. It is a promise.”

*Pi’sa’kai* = Little Brother

*Samekh* = Father
Nyota stood before her closet contemplating what to wear for yet another ball. Instead of an exclusive Academy formal, this ball was a Starfleet affair, a grand ball put on to honor the newly crowned queen of Sydothia. Nyota was extremely excited about the evening’s ball as it would give her an opportunity to interact with dignitaries and representatives from nearly all of the Federation member planets. She was also anxious to see Sybok again. Since meeting him two weeks prior, Nyota had only seen Sybok twice more. They danced together at Sulu’s birthday party last Sunday and she had run into him during her walk home from her first practice session with Commander Spock a few days ago.

That had been an interesting rehearsal. They spent the first quarter-hour of their meeting doing scales and warm up exercises before finally sitting down to choose a proper song.

“I would not be adverse to performing Valdena T’shaukaush for the delegation. You performed the song admirably during our impromptu duet,” Spock offered after they had discussed and vetoed several selections.

“Are you sure that would be a wise choice, Commander?” Nyota questioned, her eyes bright with challenge. “The song is quite passionate and I do not think that I could perform it with the detachment that would be required.”

Spock regarded her silently for a moment, his face its usual mask of stoicism. “As I informed you then, your performance was quite acceptable. Your…passion…lent the piece a vibrancy that is normally absent from Vulcan performances.”

“Passion is a very strong emotion. Would not such emotion be offensive to the delegation? Given the Vulcan council’s firm response to the V’tosha k’tur, perhaps it would be better to choose a composition written in the era after Surak?”

If Nyota searched Spock’s face for any sign of contrition, she was sorely disappointed. He regarded her placidly, his head slightly tilted to the side as if examining a peculiar specimen.

“I assure you that no offense would be taken. While it is true that Vulcans have long since turned from the unguarded expression of emotion that made pre-Surak Vulcan social life ‘nasty, brutish and short’, we have a high regard for our ancient art forms. Passion is essential for a performance of T’shaukaush as the composer intended. Although, it would be difficult and unbecoming of a Vulcan who is not V’tosha k’tur to perform T’shaukaush, there exists no such impediment when the piece is performed by a human.”
In the end, Nyota conceded to Spock’s desired song choice. They practiced the song a few times. The commander judged her performance to be more than adequate for public exhibition save for a few errors in pitch and pacing that could be perfected with more practice. He gave her a recording of the piece performed by a modern Vulcan singer as a guide for attaining the same level of technical perfection.

“I am confident that your keen hearing will permit you to recognize the errors in your performance and to correct them accordingly.”

Nyota nodded tightly as she took the tape from him. She was unused to receiving criticism on her singing skills and could not help but to bristle at the Commander’s cool dissection of her performance. For Nyota, singing was all about emotion and expression rather than technical perfection. Sometimes beauty was found in the imperfections. However, Nyota thought as she walked home, an emotionally detached Vulcan would find such sentiments most illogical.

“Ah, but in this respect I differ most acutely from my brother,” Sybok replied after Nyota had related her impressions on the lesson to him. “As a V’tosh’ka’tur, such sentiments are perfectly reasonable. I would be most honored if you would sing for me some time, Nyota.”

Nyota blushed and was thankful that her dark skin and the night hid her reaction. “If you would truly like to hear me perform, you can come to the Academy Chorale’s Winter Concert in two weeks. I’ll be performing a solo piece there.”

Sybok smiled, his grin not quite reaching his eyes, before reaching out to take hold of one of her hands. “I was hoping for a more private performance. Perhaps we can have dinner this Saturday night and afterwards you can sing to me of Valdena’s passion.”

Nyota felt heat suffuse her body at the request. She felt strangely light headed

She found herself almost agreeing to his request until she remembered a prior commitment.

“I am sorry, but I must decline,” Nyota replied with a frown. “Saturday is the Starfleet ball in honor of the new queen of Sydothia.”

Sybok smiled tightly. “It is no matter. Perhaps we can meet another time.”
“Yes,” Nyota replied. “Are you not attending the ball, Sybok? I was sure that Captain Pike’s latest cadre of potential recruits had been invited. What is better than a Starfleet ball for seducing new talent to enlist in the service?”

“You are correct, Nyota. I have been invited and will be attending. It must have simply slipped my mind for a moment. Would you do me the honor of reserving two dances for myself?”

Nyota smiled broadly. “I would be delighted, Sybok.”

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Uhura looked in awe around her as she entered the Grand Hall of Starfleet Headquarters. The great room with its high vaulted glass ceilings was packed to the gills with guests. Starfleet officers in their dress attire mingled with ambassadors and dignitaries representing all of the Federation planets. Nyota could not help the happy thrill of excitement that coursed through her veins.

“Don’t worry, doll, you look incredible as always,” McCoy assured her as he patted the hand that rested on his arm, mistaking her sudden grip on his forearm as a movement borne of anxiety. “I always said that green suited you.”

Nyota smiled at her friend before turning her eyes to look out once more over the assembled crowd. She did not see a sign of Sybok anywhere, but she supposed that in the crush of the great hall, it would be difficult to find one lone Vulcan. Soon Nyota found herself so swept up in the excitement of meeting new people from all over the Federation, that she soon forgot her anxiousness to find Sybok. There was still quite a bit of time before the dancing was set to commence. Nyota took advantage of the time to mingle and practice her language skills, McCoy acting as her gallant escort the entire time. Nyota was surprised by the patience he exhibited, maintaining his polite and engaging façade even as Nyota was engaged in a lengthy discussion of latinum trading rates with a Ferengi. Nyota was thankful for McCoy’s patience when she was accosted by an amorous Tellarite. However, he was unable to run interference when a Duvidian ambassador claimed her for the first dance. It did not seem to matter to the Duvidian that he did not know how to dance the rumba, as he used the dance as a perfect excuse to employ his many hands in the task of fondling Nyota’s form. She began to despair her choice of a backless gown when she felt the Duvidian’s wet webbed fingers on the bare skin of her lower back. Nyota was thankful when the dance ended and used the excuse of her extreme thirst as to avoid another invitation to dance.

Nyota sighed as she sipped her cocktail while standing on to the side of one of the many open bars that lined the hall. She hoped that the alcohol would help to dull the pain of her abused toes.
“Uhura!”

Nyota swallowed a groan as she looked up to find James Kirk winding his way through the crowd towards her. She plastered a smile on her face as he approached.

“Uhura, I am glad that I found you,” Kirk said as he came to a stop before her. “My, my, don’t we look lovely!” Kirk added as he looked her up and down.

“Thank you,” Nyota replied as she suppressed a sigh. “You look very nice as well. The dress uniform suits you.”

“I assure you that I look even better when it is on the floor,” Kirk replied with a waggle of his eyebrows.

“James Tiberious Kirk,” Nyota exclaimed, her hands coming to rest on her hips. “I assume that there was some reason why you were looking for me.”

“Oooh, I like it when you say my whole name. You even make ‘Tiberious’ sound sexy,” Kirk replied with a seductive smile.

“Kirk!”

“Ok, ok. Sybok asked me to make his apologies. He said that you would understand how the presence of certain parties prevented his attendance.”

Nyota frowned, her annoyance at Kirk now directed at another party.

“However, since he is unable to claim his dance with you, he has asked that I take his place. So, would you honor me with the next dance, Ms. Uhura?”

“Perhaps later in the evening, Jim. I suddenly do not feel like dancing,” Nyota replied with a small smile. She did not add that she also did not feel like being groped so soon after her encounter with
Feeling like she needed some air, Nyota began to make her way through the crowd towards one of the balconies that overlooked the bay. She was startled when a tall imposing figure dressed in all black stepped in her path.

“Cadet Uhura, would you please allow me the honor of your hand for the next dance?”

Nyota’s head snapped up and she regarded Commander Spock with a look of shocked surprise. He stood observing her, his face blank of all expression and his hands held stiffly behind his back. He looked gorgeous in his black dress uniform. If he were another man and she had not detested him so thoroughly at that moment, Nyota felt that she would have embarrassed herself with an unprofessional bought of swooning.

“I…I actually,” Nyota stammered as she tried to think of the words to deny his request.

Commander Spock simply tilted his head to the side, one dark brow rising toward his hairline in what Nyota thought to be an expression of amusement.

“Yes, thank you, Commander.”

Spock bowed stiffly at the waist. “I shall come to retrieve you at the appointed time, Cadet.”

Nyota curtsied slightly before turning and walking towards the balcony once more. She could not believe that she had accepted a dance with Commander Spock. She could not believe that she curtsied. She paced the balcony angrily, cursing her poor luck. She could learn to abide his presence during their weekly seminar and rehearsal, but she was not prepared to dance with him.

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Spock did not know what possessed him to ask the cadet to dance. He generally disliked the activity and only performed to the extent necessary for politeness. He had already danced his obligatory dance with the Andorian ambassador, Shuran’s aunt. However, he found his feet involuntarily taking him into the cadet’s path as she made her way through the crowd. He had been aware of her presence all night, despite his resolve to only think of her in a professional
context. She was a vision in her backless peridot silk gown, her lovely black hair loose about her bare shoulders and her dark brown skin adorned by diamond stud earrings and a matching solitaire necklace. He had watched as she laughed and conversed with several Starfleet officers and dignitaries. Spock found himself admiring her ability to mingle effortlessly with strangers, a skill he had yet to master. He watched with an unfamiliar feeling of jealousy as she danced with the Tellarite and the Duvidian ambassador, feeling his cheeks warm in anger as she suffered through the latter’s attentions.

All too soon Spock found himself leading Nyota out onto the dance floor, her small cool hand resting in his warm grasp. He felt her shiver at the contact and felt her confused feeling of attraction and arousal when he pulled her generously curved figure against his long lean form as the opening strains of a waltz filled the room. Spock looked down at her, his dual raised eyebrows somewhat mirroring the look of surprise so evident on her upturned face.

Spock found himself enjoying the feel of her in his arms as they glided as one about the dance floor. Her skin was cool and soft underneath his fingers, the muscles of her back moving underneath his palm as he led her through the dance. He was oblivious to all others in the room, his attention focused on the beautiful woman whose wide dark eyes were riveted to his own. Spock wished that their dance would never end, a most impractical and illogical thought.

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Nyota found herself unexpectedly mesmerized by the stoic Vulcan with whom she glided about the room. He seemed to be a natural dancer, a finding that surprised Nyota. He led her about the room with such confidence that she found herself following him without hesitation, her movements directed by his shifting hips and light pressure from his hand on hers. Nyota had waltzed before, but she had never found the dance to be as particularly seductive as she did now. She found the thought odd. She would not normally think of Spock and seduction in the same sentence, but as she starred into his coal black eyes lined with thick lashes, the description seemed apt.

The music abruptly moved from a waltz to a paso doble and Nyota found herself following Commander Spock’s lead and transitioning to the next dance with ease. Nyota took a deep breath, both thankful for the increase in personal space afforded by the dance and mournful of the loss of the Commander’s alien warmth pressed so close against her body. She used the first steps of the dance to clear her head and recall why she disliked the Commander. The military like notes of the music aided Nyota in her cataloging of offenses and she felt her ire grow as they continued the dance.

“We must have some conversation, Commander,” Nyota began with a wry smile. “I can abide one dance in complete silence, but two dances without any conversation would be most peculiar.”
Nyota watched as the Commander’s dark eyes seemed to clear and flicker over her face.

“Of what do you wish to converse, Cadet?”

“I don’t know. You could say something about the weather or the number of couples dancing. I could reply with something witty about a book I recently read.”

“Those all appear to be most illogical subjects of discourse, Cadet. However, if it is customary to engage in useless banter as one dances, then I shall endeavor to comply.”

Nyota felt herself smiling at the Commander’s dry sense of humor despite herself.

“I recently made a new acquaintance this week,” Nyota began. “I believe that you are quite familiar with him.”

Nyota noted with some amusement the slight thinning of Commander Spock’s lips.

“My brother Sybok has the ability to make friends and allies with ease. However, he has proven to be less skilled at maintaining those alliances.”

Nyota frowned at this reply. “He has been so unlucky as to lose your friendship and he has suffered greatly as a result.”

Spock was prevented from a reply by the entrance of Captain Pike, who was dancing with Admiral Nichols.

“I am surprised to see you standing up for yet another dance, Spock. However, with such a partner as inducement, I can understand your new love of the sport. You both move so well together, it is a pleasure to watch. I’ll have to bring you along to more of these diplomatic shin-digs, Spock. But let me not keep you from the attentions of your beautiful partner. She looks anxious for me to be gone!”

With a wink, Captain Pike turned his partner and proceeded to dance away.
Nyota’s cheeks grew warm at Captain Pike’s words and the increased scrutiny from the other dancers and observers that he earned them. She thought she saw a hint of green appear in Spock’s cheeks, but when she blinked the color was gone.

“Captain Pike’s interruption has made me forget the subject of our conversation, Cadet,” Spock began after a time.

“I do not think we were saying anything at all. We have tried at least three subject of conversation and failed at them all.”

“Perhaps you would like to discuss the seminar readings for the coming week?” Spock offered.

“Oh, no! I could not possibly speak of class work at a ball. My thoughts are always bent on other things.”

“Are you always distracted by present occupations, Cadet?” Spock asked as he starred at her curiously.

“Yes,” Nyota replied absently, her mind clearly elsewhere despite her confession to the opposite. “I remember you once saying that you do not easily forgive the transgressions of others and that your good opinion once lost is lost forever. I take it, then, that you are cautious of taking offense?”

“I am,” Spock replied in a firm, flat tone.

“You are also never blinded by prejudice?”

“Prejudice is illogical.”

“I suppose that it behooves those who never change their opinion to be sure of their judgment before it is set.”

Spock regarded Nyota carefully.
“What is the purpose of this line of discussion, Cadet?”

“Oh, I am just trying to understand your character, Commander,” Nyota replied with a false smile. “I am trying to sketch it out.”

“Have you been successful?” Spock asked, the corner of his mouth lifting slightly.

Nyota shook her head before responding candidly. “I do not believe so. I have heard such different and confusing accounts. I do not know what to believe.”

“I would caution you to not attempt to complete your study in the middle of a ball, Nyota. I fear that your results would not give due credit to the either of us.”

Nyota looked up at his use of her first name, remembering their previous moment of unexpected candor that night on Theta Sigma.

“I would have to agree with you, Spock.”

Their dance soon ended. Each party departed feeling quite differently than they had when the dance began. Spock found himself even more charmed by the beautiful cadet. He found her a most fascinating specimen, capable of eliciting a variety of emotions within him that he struggled to conceal. He found that he had an illogical urge to kiss her teasing lips into silence while also being angered by her presumption. However, he supposed that his brother’s influence was partly to blame for her behavior. He knew that he had to work harder to resist Nyota’s charms while keeping a closer eye on his errant brother.

Nyota found herself confused by their dance, a feeling that was both foreign and unpleasant. She disliked the commander intensely for his treatment of his own brother and for being the cause of Sybok’s absence from the ball. However, she found herself drawn to him in a pleasant way that was quite different from how she was drawn to his brother. They spent the better part of a half hour dancing in close proximity, their bare palms pressed against each others, his hand on her back, its searing heat impossible to ignore. However, Nyota never sensed the commander at the edge of her consciousness nor did she sense any of his emotions or thoughts. She felt that his control of his telepathic skills must have been masterful. Nyota felt that it was more likely that he kept his emotions and thoughts as tightly controlled as he did his expressions and words. He appeared to be a deeply private person, unwilling to converse with others and in close possession of his own confidence.
Nyota watched Gaila pick listlessly at her stack of chocolate chip pancakes topped with cinnamon syrup and whipped cream. Chocolate chip pancakes from Denise’s Café was Gaila’s absolute favorite food in the entire universe, especially when those pancakes were eaten at night. Nyota brought her roommate to Denise’s for dinner in an effort to cheer her up. It obviously was not working.

Lieutenant Shuran, the Andorian around whom Gaila’s world had revolved for the past few months, was incommunicado. He had cancelled three of their last dates and found that their nightly study sessions at the library no longer fit into his schedule. He did not answer his communicator when Gaila called and took several days to return her messages. Slowly and painfully, Gaila began to take the hint: Shuran was just not that into her. The deathblow had come when Shuran had taken an administrative assignment at the Federation office on Vulcan that would require his absence for the next six months at least. Nyota could not understand Shuran’s sudden coldness towards Gaila. They had seemed so happy and perfect together and Nyota had never seen her friend more committed to a relationship.

Nyota was miserable because her friend was miserable. She could not bear to see her usually vivacious roomie so lifeless and grave. Gaila had become a homebody, refusing to go out dancing with the girls and turning down invitations for parties left and right. At least the male cadets at the Academy were happy by the recent turn of events. News of Shuran’s desertion had spread like wildfire, renewing the hopes of countless male cadets that they could now experience the legend that was Gaila of Orion.

“You know what would really hit the spot right about now,” Nyota began as she speared a piece of French toast. “A spa day. We could get a mani and a pedi, facials and maybe get worked over by a pair hunky massuers. I’ll call that Elbian spa downtown to see if they can work us in for Saturday afternoon.”

“I see what you’re doing here, Ny,” Gaila sighed as she set down her fork, finally given up the pretense of eating. “I appreciate it, I really do. But no amount of chocolate chip pancakes or hunky German massuers will get me out of this funk.”

“You’re turning down the opportunity to have your naked body oiled down by a man named Hans with biceps the girth of small tree trunks?”

“I know!” Gaila exclaimed dramatically. “I hate feeling this way, Ny! It is so unfair. I, an Orion
woman in peak sexual condition, am weeping into a pile of pancakes over a man. It’s just not natural!”

Nyota got up from her seat to slide into Gaila’s side of the booth as her friend began to cry.

“It will be ok, Gaila,” Nyota soothed as she placed an arm around her friend. “I am sure Shuran is just working through his own issues right now. Anyone with eyes can see that he is crazy about you.”

“I thought he was, Ny,” Gaila sniffed. “But now I am not so sure.”

After her tears quieted, Gaila nudged her friend playfully with her shoulder. “Thanks for looking out for me, Ny. I will be myself again. It will just take some time.”

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Weeks turned into months as the Winter quarter gave way to the Spring quarter, the academic year winding its way to an end. Spock continued to hold practice sessions with Cadet Uhura in order to perfect their performance for the upcoming visit from the Vulcan delegation. He had found that it was becoming difficult for him to maintain his resolve to distance himself from the cadet. Spock found that it was almost impossible to regard the cadet dispassionately when he was thrown into her company during their weekly two-quarter seminar on Vulcan culture. She was the most outspoken and passionate student in the entire class. Spock found himself impressed each week by her ability to synthesize the readings and critique them in an incisive manner. The other cadets seemed content to merely absorb the readings and parrot back the opinions of the scholars. Not his Nyota. Spock soon found that the seminar had become less of a group discussion and more of a constant debate between himself and Cadet Uhura. Despite his resolve to no longer give her any special notice, he could not bring himself to rectify the situation.

If their classroom interactions caused Spock to grow more impressed by the cadet’s intellect, their weekly practice sessions helped him to grow enamored of her other qualities. He took great pleasure in watching her perform, his dark eyes observing every detail of her form as she sang; the way her eyes shut tightly whenever she sang a particularly poignant lyric, the long line of her neck as she tilted back her head, the way her throat trembled as her voice deepened, the way her hands clinched into fists as she sang of Valdena’s resolve to take her own life rather than live without her lover, the dampness of her dark brown eyes as she finished the aria. In the sitting room of his quarters, performing together as equals, Spock could almost forget that they were student and teacher and the regulations that made the desires of his heart forbidden and illogical.

He found it unfortunate that he could not follow his own advice and simply flee the planet as his
colleague Shuran had done. Meditation had failed him as well as all of his logical arguments against the prudence of pursuing a romantic relationship with a student. If only he had the benefit of time and distance. Spock took some comfort in the fact that the academic year was swiftly coming to an end. In a few short weeks, he would return to Vulcan and Nyota Uhura would return to her own homeland. If the passage of time and meditation at the Temple of Shakur did not serve to quell his illogical desire for the cadet, then he would follow the wishes of his kinsmen and bond with T’Pring. He would overcome this.

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Nyota laughed merrily as she walked down the path towards her dorm. Her cheeks were sore from laughing and smiling for the past four hours. Sybok made an engaging and entertaining dinner partner. After weeks of diligent pursuit, Sybok had finally convinced her to go to dinner with him. Nyota had not been trying to play hard to get. Her schedule had been so full with schoolwork, choir practice, dance classes, PT and her sessions with Commander Spock that she simply did not have the time for many outside social activities. However, the end of the quarter brought with it a short pause in the mayhem before the panic of finals took hold. Gaila had practically ordered her to go out with the handsome cadet, even offering to make herself scarce in case she wanted to bring him back to the dorm later in the evening.

“Just because one of us is unlucky in love doesn’t mean that the other should pass up an opportunity to get lucky,” Gaila had reasoned.

Nyota had been so pleased to see some of her roommate’s old spirit returned, that she agreed without complaint. She even gave Gaila free reign to choose her outfit and makeup for the evening. Nyota had begun to regret that decision when McCoy chose to stop by her dorm for an impromptu visit. Nyota had answered the door expecting to find Sybok only to come face to face with Len. He stood starring at her mutely for a good sixty seconds, his eyes wide and his mouth slightly open.

“Darlin’, you’re a little early for my birthday,” McCoy drawled once he had regained the power of speech.

“Do you approve?” Nyota asked as she spun around in a slow circle, displaying her short tight sleeveless cherry red tube dress with matching stiletto heels.

McCoy let out a whistle as he stepped into the room. “What’s not to like, Ny. Just don’t tell me you’re wearing that thing outside this room. Otherwise, I’ll have to follow you around with a hypospray full of tranquilizer for every male that you pass.”

“Ny’s got a hot date with Sybok,” Gaila trilled. “Doesn’t she look fierce? I am sure that even the stodgiest Vulcan could not resist her in that dress. In fact, maybe you should go by Commander
Spock’s office to test my theory.”

“Wait a minute,” Len replied, ignoring Gaila’s teasing. “You’re going out with Sybok?”

“Relax, Len. It is just dinner and it will be fun.”

“I just don’t trust that green blooded hobgoblin.”

“Hey! What’s so wrong with being green?” Gaila protested, stepping in between the two to glare at McCoy.

“Why not? “ Nyota argued, pushing Gaila aside to give the good doctor a glare of her own. “Give me one good reason why I should not go out with Sybok and enjoy myself?”

“Let’s just say I’ve got a bad feeling about this one. He is way too slick and smooth, Ny. I just don’t think he is all that he says he is.”

Nyota shook her head in disbelief. “So he is too charming? This from the man who is best friends with the campus Lothario?”

“Hey,” McCoy weakly protested. “Jim is a good guy, even if he is a bit of a lady’s man. He is a straight shooter and he is honest. This Sybok guy just waltzes in here with a sob story and a song and half the campus is in love with him. Something just doesn’t add up, Ny.”

“I don’t understand. I thought you and Sybok were friends.”

“We’re friendly but not friends. Jim and Sybok are friends and so by extension I’m thrown into his company quite a bit. Let’s just say that you are not the only filly he’s tried to wrangle.” McCoy sighed. “Just be careful, Ny.”

“Maybe you are just being paranoid, Len.”

“Really? Tell me, dollface, hasn’t he done anything that at least makes you pause and wonder
what he is really after?”

Nyota turned and walked over to the window, her hands settled firmly on her hips. She really thought Len was being irrational, but she would give his concerns the benefit of the doubt. While she thought Sybok was a nice guy, he had made her uncomfortable at times. He was awfully touchy, even by human standards, and she still could not shake the unease she felt at his cavalier use of his telepathic powers. But, he had never done anything to really cause her to distrust him. Perhaps it was his lack of logic that made his innate telepathy a bit hard to control. Besides, he had all the appearance of goodness about him.

“I don’t know, Len,” Nyota sighed as she turned towards him. “I just don’t get the same sketchy vibe that you do. You’re the only one on campus that seems to be wary of him. I mean, Captain Pike likes him and he’s the toast of the first year class.”

“For your sake, I hope that I’ve got him all wrong. I just want you to keep your eyes open and not be blinded by his pretty face.”

McCoy regarded her silently for a few moments before a genuine smile spread over his lips.

“You do look gorgeous, Ny. He stepped towards her and gently took her by the shoulders, rubbing his thumbs in circles over the smooth exposed skin. “You know you’re my girl, right? It’s my job to worry about you.”

Nyota’s angry look melted. “I know, Len,” she replied before leaning forward to place a kiss on his cheek. “Don’t worry about me. I’m always careful.”

McCoy blushed as he looked at his friend fondly. “Well, me and worry are kissing cousins. It can’t be helped.”

“Tell me again why you two aren’t shagging?” Gaila asked, startling her friends who had forgotten that she was in the room.

That evening Sybok took her to the best Ethiopian restaurant in San Francisco. Nyota was especially surprised by the choice in restaurant, as Vulcans were known for their disdain of eating food with their hands. Sybok reasoned that as a v’tosh’ka’tur he did not have the same aversions.

“Some food is best eaten with the hands, Nyota,” Sybok explained with a grin before brushing a
kiss across her knuckles.

They spent two hours talking, drinking honey wine and feeding each other portions of various vegetable wats wrapped in sour injera. In between bites, Nyota invited him to her performance before the Vulcan delegation.

“I would love to come see you perform, Nyota. But I will be off planet next week. There is some business I must attend to that cannot be avoided. Besides, I do not believe that my presence would be welcome.”

“Is it because of your brother?” Nyota asked, becoming annoyed on his behalf.

“While I do not believe that my brother would welcome my presence, I am more concerned by my reception by the rest of the delegation. You see, our family is quite prominent in Vulcan politics and society and several of my kinsmen will be in attendance. They do not look upon me with kindness in light of certain events,” Sybok replied, his eyes downcast.

Nyota reached across the table and clasped his hand in hers to offer him comfort. Sybok smiled at her sadly before continuing.

“Please, do not be sorry on my account. Your presence at the delegation event is quite an honor. You shall meet some of the most important members of the Vulcan high council. My kinswoman, T’Pau will be in attendance…”

“T’Pau?” Nyota gasped. “You are related to the great T’Pau?”

“Yes. The legendary T’Pau. The old Vulcan will never let you forget how legendary she is either. I look forward to hearing your opinion of her when I return,” Sybok replied before taking a large sip of his wine. “My father, Ambassador Sarek is also expected. You will never meet a colder or more ruthlessly logical Vulcan than Sarek. Well, other than T’Pau. I believe Spock’s wife is also expected to attend.”

Nyota nearly choked on her wine at Sybok’s last bit of news. For some reason she found the notion of Commander Spock being a married man to be both disturbing and surprising. “I didn’t know the commander was married.”

“All Vulcans are bonded to another at the age of seven,” Sybok casually replied. “T’Pring hails from one of the most respected families. She is a cold vain creature, a fitting mate for my brother. I
was once bonded to a female, but she too was taken from me when I was exiled.”

Nyota finished her wine in silence, her mood suddenly sobered.

After the meal, they meandered hand in hand around Pier 39 browsing various shops and enjoying the street performers. Nyota felt the unease that had overcome her at the news of the Commander’s marriage pass as she enjoyed Sybok’s easy smile and conversation.

“I had a wonderful time tonight,” Nyota began as they stopped near the entrance of her dormitory. “I really needed this.”

“It has been my pleasure, Nyota,” Sybok replied with a smile, his amber eyes moving from her own dark orbs to rest on her lips. “Thank you for favoring me with your company.”

Sybok bent towards her and captured her mouth in a kiss. Nyota’s shock soon gave way to acquiescence and she found herself leaning into his embrace, her hands clutching at the fabric of his tunic as she returned his kiss with equal ardor.

“The night is still young, Nyota,” Sybok breathed against her mouth as they parted briefly to regain their breath. “Perhaps we can continue to enjoy the pleasure of each other’s company somewhere more private.”

“I don’t know what’s gotten into me,” Nyota panted as she shook her head to clear the haze that had settled there. “I really should…”

Sybok cut off her reply with another kiss. Nyota’s protests were soon forgotten as her mind and body were filled with heat. She moaned into his mouth, earning a throaty chuckle from Sybok. Nyota fisted her hands in his hair as Sybok moved from her mouth to place wet kisses along her neck.

“Sybok,” she sighed as she ground herself into him. “We shouldn’t…”

“Uhura!”

Nyota was wrenched from the warm haze that had enveloped her at the sound of her friend’s
voice. Her eyes popped open to view Leonard McCoy standing not ten feet away, the hard lines of his features stark in the dim lamplight.

“Len,” Nyota nearly yelped as she hastily pushed against Sybok’s shoulders.

“It’s nearly curfew, Ny. You should really be getting back up to your dorm,” McCoy continued as he stepped forward, his jaw tight as he eyed Sybok.

Uhura glanced at the clock by the door of her dorm. She had only minutes to spare before missing curfew.

“You’re right, Len,” she sighed as she turned back towards Sybok. “I don’t know how I lost track of time. You should get a move on too, Sybok. Thanks again.”

Nyota made to kiss Sybok on the cheek before thinking better of it. She chose to wave goodbye to him and McCoy instead before hurrying up the steps to her dorm entrance.

Nyota sank against the wall of the turbolift on the way up to her apartment. She could not believe that she had engaged in a full-blown make out session in front of her building. She could have been seen by anyone. Thankfully there was only Len to witness her uncharacteristic behavior. She thought that she should have been angered by the interruption, but all she could feel was relief. It was not like her to behave in such a manner and she could not explain what had overcome her. If Len had not been there she was sure she would have done something she would have come to regret.

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“Do you make a habit of lurking outside of Nyota’s dormitory at night, McCoy?” Sybok sneered once Nyota had left.

“I just happened to be in the neighborhood,” Len replied as he eyed Sybok warily. “You know you could have landed Ny in some hot water. Oddly, violations of the curfew are taken seriously.”

McCoy began to walk towards the men’s dorms, Sybok in tow.

“Then there is a little rule called Social Regulation 134B that forbids overt public displays of affection on the Academy grounds,” he continued. “Now, that might not mean much to you to
have those blots on your record, but Uhura’s record is pristine. She’s been angling for a spot on the Enterprise since she landed here. I’d hate to see her hard work hampered because of a little moment of weakness.”

“I wouldn’t dream of standing in the way of Nyota’s goals,” Sybok replied.

“Of course you wouldn’t,” McCoy snorted. “Now, you might just see Uhura as a bit of tail, but that little gal happens to be one of my dearest friends. She’s at the top of her class and is the best student in her department. Correction. She’s the best damn student in the entire academy. When she gets out of here, she’ll have her pick of starships for assignment, although she’d only ever choose one ship. She’s got a head on her shoulders that’s something special and a heart that’s golden to match.”

“I assure you, Leonard. I am very aware of Nyota’s good qualities. She is a remarkable woman.”

“Then I’m glad we are in agreement.”

Soon they arrived at the entrance of the men’s dormitory. Sybok turned to the left to go towards his wing only to be stopped by a hand on his shoulder.

“One more thing, pal,” Len began. “I don’t know you or what you’re about. But I know Nyota. She’s no lightskirt and she ain’t easily charmed by a pretty face and a nice story. So, I’ve got no idea what she finds so damned special about you. But, she’s a grown ass woman and I respect her choices. However, if you ever hurt her…”

Sybok suddenly grabbed McCoy’s hand from his shoulder and tightened his grip until McCoy winced.

“I would not make threats that you are incapable of seeing through,” Sybok whispered harshly.

McCoy’s eyes widened and then narrowed suddenly. “I would never underestimate the damage a doctor can do with a well chosen hypospray.”

Sybok laughed before dropping his hand and patting McCoy quickly on the shoulder.
“Touché, doctor. Be thankful that you will never have to make good on your threat. You can rest assured that hurting Nyota is the farthest thing from my mind.”
Uhura walked down the darkened path from Commander Spock’s quarters towards her dorms. They had just completed their final rehearsal for their upcoming performance for the Vulcan Delegation. She was thankful that she would no longer have to endure more late night sessions with the dour commander. At the end of the session, he finally pronounced their performance to be worthy of the Vulcan Delegation.

“Your command of the aria has increased substantially over the time we have rehearsed,” Spock commented after their third run through of the song that evening. “No doubt this is due to your diligence and hard work. It is commendable that you are as dedicated to artistic perfection as you are to academic mastery.”

Uhura opened her mouth to thank the Commander for the compliment before thinking better of it. After spending so many hours in his company, she could anticipate his response to any statement of thanks. “Your gratitude is unwarranted, Cadet,” he would reply. “I was simply stating a fact.”

Spock put down his lyre before rising from his seat and crossing the room. He picked up a large parcel wrapped in black paper.

“I have taken the liberty of procuring a gown for you to wear Friday evening,” Spock said, handing Nyota the black package.

“What?” Nyota spluttered as she accepted the package. “I don’t understand. I have formal attire of my own that should be more than adequate for the evening.” Her surprise turned into annoyance. Was he afraid that she would embarrass him? The man was insufferable.

“I am aware that you possess adequate formal attire. The gown that I have obtained for you is a traditional Vulcan formal gown. I felt that it would be…fitting for you to be attired in the Vulcan way.”

“Oh,” she replied as her eyes dropped to the parcel in her hands. Her ire cooled until all she felt was embarrassment and confusion. “I can’t possibly accept this, Commander. How do you even
know my size?”

“I calculated your correct size through observation. If the gown requires tailoring, you can take it to the address written on the card inside for adjustments at no cost to yourself.”

“How much did it cost? I can pay you back.”

“The price of the gown is irrelevant as it is a gift,” Spock replied, cocking his head to the side. “If you insist on compensating me for the gown, consider it as payment for your performance tomorrow night and for your weeks of diligent practice.”

Uhura smiled broadly at this, shaking her head as she placed the package on the seat she vacated.

“And how should you be compensated for all of your hard work, Commander?”

Spock stared at her for several moments, his dark eyes blinking slowly. Uhura imagined that she saw a slight green flush highlight the tips of his ears before the tense silence caused her to look away.

Uhura still found her cheeks warm with embarrassment as she entered her dorm. She did not know why she chose to respond to the Commander in such a manner. It was hardly appropriate conduct and she had not meant to flirt. However, as she replayed the scene in her mind for the hundredth time, she could find no other way to describe her posture and her words. For a moment, it seemed, she had forgotten that she was speaking with her professor and with the Vulcan she claimed to so vehemently dislike.

Nyota was pleased to find her roommate absent when she arrived at her quarters. She was very anxious to try on the gown Commander Spock had purchased but she did not want to subject herself to more of Gaila’s teasing speculation. Gaila would undoubtedly exclaim that the gift meant that the Commander was madly in love with her and then devise ways for Uhura to discard the gown on the floor of Spock’s bedroom Friday night. Uhura quickly unwrapped the parcel and gasped when she observed the contents. Reverently, she held up the gown, enjoying the feel of the silk slipping through her fingers. She set down the gown and divested herself of her red uniform before stepping in front of the floor length mirror in their common room.

Nyota gasped again before slowly spinning in order to better view the dress. It fit her perfectly. The long sleeved silk gown hugged her figure, skimming the generous curves of her hips and
breasts. Across the chest and down the left side of the gown ran a silver satin strip adorned with High Vulcan script. The thulian pink gossamer wrap was decorated with scrolls in a lighter shade of the same hue and hit her mid calf.

“Ny, you look amazing! Where did you get that gown?” Gaila exclaimed as she entered the room.

“Commander Spock,” Nyota mumbled as she continued to admire her reflection. “It’s for Friday night.”

Gaila shrieked again before running to the bedroom. She came back with the card from the parcel, jumping up and down.

“I knew it!” Gaila nearly shouted. “This dress is a Eridanis original! They don’t come cheap.” Gaila paused as she flipped the card over before continuing, her voice dropping to a low conspiratorial tone. “Oh! He must really want your cookies, Ny.”

Nyota rolled her eyes. Gaila’s exuberance was even greater than she anticipated. However, upon seeing her roommate’s wide smile and bright eyes, she decided to indulge Gaila this one time.

“What’s so special about Eridanis?” Nyota asked.

“Eridanis is only the most talked about designer out of Vulcan. Her studio and shop is right here in San Francisco. She dresses all of the big celebrities.”

“I see.”

“No you don’t,” Gaila replied as she shook her head, sending her red curls bouncing. “Her dresses cost hundreds of credits if you buy them off the rack. But for an original like this beauty, you’re easily talking thousands!”

Nyota groaned. “I knew I shouldn’t have accepted this. It’s just too much.”

“Well, for us plebes, perhaps. But Spock is practically a Vulcan prince according to Sybok. I bet the Commander dropped those credits without blinking an eye.”
“Maybe you’re right,” Nyota replied as she bit her lip.

“Oh, speaking of Sybok, our disowned Vulcan royal, I have a bit of juicy news that might interest you. I thought it would make you sad, but in light of recent developments, you’re probably happy to be free of him so that there is more room for Commander Hot Pants.”

Nyota rolled her eyes as she sat down, her concern over the import of the Commander’s gift diminished for the time being. Juicy gossip was one of the few things in the universe that Gaila lived for.

“It seems that McCoy was right. Sybok has been a busy boy,” Gaila trilled as she plopped down on the couch beside her, crossing her long green legs as she leaned conspiratorially towards her roommate. “Apparently, all of this time while he has been working so hard to charm the pants off of you, he’s been flashing those amber eyes at Verna Ugway. You know, the second year whose father owns that huge flitter manufacturing company?”

Nyota shook her head, her face blank. Gaila shrugged.

“What,” Gaila exclaimed. “She’s not important. What is important is that they are engaged. Sybok is off vacationing on Risa with the family. Can you believe him? It must be for the money. She is such a nasty little spotted thing.”

Nyota gave her friend a scathing look.

“What,” Gaila exclaimed. “She is a little spotted thing. She’s four feet tall and covered in blue dots"

“Well, I suppose handsome disinherited princes must find some way to gain their fortune,” Uhura replied. “I wish them every happiness.”

As Gaila continued to chatter about Verna Ugway and other bits of gossip, Nyota could not help but to quietly reflect on her own feelings. She was surprised by how little she was affected by the news of Sybok’s engagement. While she genuinely wished them both well, Nyota also felt relief. If Sybok was engaged, she would be free from his attentions. She did wonder about the strength of his attachment to Verna. They had made out in a very public place on campus not even a week ago. If Sybok’s urgent off planet business was a vacation on Risa with his future in-laws, how could he in all good conscious engage in such intimacies with her? Indeed, if McCoy had not
arrived when he did, Nyota was sure that they would have quickly advanced to displays of affection less innocent than kissing. She suddenly found herself very pleased that Sybok was far away.

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Spock waited patiently by the entrance of the Grand Hall for Cadet Uhura’s arrival. Although he had offered to escort her to the banquet since she was attending as his guest, she insisted on meeting him instead. Spock found himself to be illogically annoyed by her insistence, but he was also thankful for her prudence. Spock found that his ability to ignore the charms of Cadet Uhura had waned significantly over the course of their relationship. He felt himself to be on the verge of succumbing, all of his logical objections based on Starfleet regulations and duty ringing hollow.

He now wondered about the prudence of his gift to the young woman. When he visited Eridanis’ boutique earlier that week, he had not intended to purchase anything for Nyota. He merely intended to purchase a new formal robe for the social events that he would be required to attend during the coming weeks as T’Pau’s kinsman. His great aunt had already expressed her expectation that he would attend her during her visit to Earth and she was known for her fastidious attention to attire. Spock had his mother in mind when he requested to view the new women’s collection, thinking that she would be pleased if he came bearing gifts when he returned to Vulcan in a few weeks time. However, all thoughts of his mother were pushed aside when the clerk pulled up the holo of the sangria gown. He immediately pictured the silk fabric clinging to the graceful curves of Nyota’s figure. Spock did not hesitate requisitioning a gown to be tailored to Nyota’s dimensions.

The sound of feminine heels clicking against the stone walkway alerted Spock to Nyota’s arrival, the steps matching the easy and precise cadence of her usual gait. Spock looked up to watch the cadet’s approach. He felt a strange warmth envelop him as he observed the sensual slide of the fabric over her long legs as she strode towards him. Her hair was not in her usual style, but was piled atop her head in an intricate bun studded with silver pins, one delicate curl hanging loose and framing the right side of her face. Simple diamond studs adorned her ears. He suddenly found his impetuous purchase to be most logical.

“Good evening, Commander Spock,” she said as she stopped before him.

“Good evening, Cadet Uhura,” Spock replied, her formal address serving as a bucket of cool water on his rising ardor. As much as he may have wished the opposite to be true, she was technically his student until the academic year officially ended at noon on Sunday.

“Your appearance is highly satisfactory.”

Her warm smile nearly wiped away his newly gathered resolve. “Thank you, Commander. This
dress is absolutely gorgeous. You have excellent taste.”

Spock bowed his head in gratitude. “I trust that the gown did not require an excessive amount of modification in order to attain the proper fit?”

Nyota smiled again. “Indeed, it did not. Your estimations of my size were remarkably precise.” She arched one brow and threw him an impish smile.

He suddenly felt unduly warm. He tugged at his collar and cleared his throat.

“My, my,” Nyota teased. “It would appear that I’ve managed to embarrass the unflappable Commander Spock. Perhaps I should refrain from complimenting you on your own attire for fear of making you blush.”

Spock quickly recovered his equilibrium, her teasing tone reminding him that they stood just outside of the Grand Hall that currently housed the Vulcan delegation. Indeed, it would not do for him to be seen having an emotional reaction towards a human female by other Vulcans. It was fortunate that Nyota was aware of such things and chose to limit her teasing accordingly.

“I do not require any compliments on my appearance,” Spock finally spoke. “The banquet will begin shortly. We should proceed inside.”

Uhura smiled at him once more before following his lead and entering the hall. A grinning Captain Pike soon met them.

“Spock,” the older man greeted them wine glass in hand as they entered the banquet hall. His exuberant welcome earned him a few indignant stares from the Vulcans in attendance.

“Captain Pike,” Spock greeted the man with an incline of the head before gesturing towards Nyota. “I believe that you are already acquainted with Cadet Uhura.”

“Of course,” Pike turned his wide smile towards the cadet. “Who could forget one of the academy’s brightest students? You are looking very well, this evening, very well indeed. Your gown is quite becoming.”
Nyota ducked her head as she accepted a kiss to the back of her hand. Spock watched the exchange with his normal impassivity, although he worked to suppress the small flame of annoyance sparked by the captain’s familiarity.

“There has already been quite a buzz about your upcoming performance,” Pike continued. “After hearing your lovely voice at the showcase last weekend, I am all anticipation myself.”

“The Commander and I have been rehearsing for several weeks. I hope we don’t disappoint.”

Pike shot Spock a knowing glance before returning his attention to the cadet. “Well, Spock has always been a perfectionist. I am sure that your performance will be nothing short of immaculate.”

“Thank you,” Nyota replied with a small smile.

“Spock. You don’t mind if I borrow your date for a moment? There are a few people I’d like to introduce her to before this thing gets started in earnest,” Pike asked, already offering his arm to Nyota.

“The cadet is not my…”

“I’ll take that as a yes, then.” With that, Pike whisked Nyota off towards a small cluster of Starfleet Admirals gathered on the other side of the hall. Spock watched Nyota’s retreat with interest, finding the slide of the silk over the curve of her back to be highly pleasing.

“Tonk’peh, Spock!”

Spock tore his eyes away from the cadet’s form to find his kinsman Selkek approaching him. Selkek’s inflection filled greeting earned him a few disapproving looks from the surrounding Vulcan delegates. However, Selkek did not appear to take notice.

“Selkek,” Spock replied as he stepped towards the advancing Vulcan. “It is very agreeable to see you. I was not aware that you were to accompany the delegation.”

“It is good to see you once more, cousin,” Selkek replied, his pleasure evident in the tone of his voice and the brightness of his dark grey eyes. “I am to present a paper tomorrow afternoon to the
Engineering Department as part of the information exchange. A colleague was slated to present, but personal business prevented him from making the trip."

"I find that I am grateful for your presence, Selkek. I believe that the coming days when I shall be required to attend to our great aunt will be less taxing with your company."

Selkek nodded his head, his lips thinning in an unsuccessful effort to contain a wry smile.

"I am in agreement, cousin. Enduring T’Pau should now be more palatable."

Selkek paused and glanced around the room before stepping closer to Spock.

"Cousin," he whispered, "I must inform you that my sister T’Pring is also part of the delegation. She is serving as T’Pau’s secretary."

"Thank you for informing me, but I was already aware of her attendance."

"Ah, then my sister has been in communication with you."

"No. I learned of the information in the dossier provided to all Starfleet officers invited to attend the banquet."

"Then perhaps you do not know," Selkek replied, almost to himself. "Cousin, it is imperative that we speak on the morrow."

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Uhura began to weave her way through the crowd back to Commander Spock’s side. After five minutes filled with introductions to various Starfleet bigwigs, Captain Pike was finally called away. Uhura was grateful to be brought to the attention of so many important personages, but she doubted if she would recall all of their names by the end of the night.

She spotted Spock speaking to another Vulcan not thirty feet from her. The man was about the
same height as the commander. He wore traditional formal Vulcan robes in deep blue and his black hair was styled in the signature Vulcan bowl cut. He bore a slight resemblance to Spock. Uhura thought that he was uncommonly handsome, with his dark grey eyes and full lips. There was very little to distinguish him from the other Vulcan men populating the room save for his animated way of conversing. His long slender hands fluttered in subtle gesticulation and his voice lacked the monotone quality of his peers.

As she neared the pair, the unknown Vulcan stopped speaking, his hands falling to rest by his sides. His eyes, which held a glint of curiosity, slid from Spock to Nyota before snapping back to his companion.

“Selkek,” Spock began, “may I introduce Cadet Nyota Uhura, a student in my Vulcan culture seminar. Cadet, please meet my kinsman, Selkek.”

Nyota smiled brightly at Spock before turning her pleased countenance towards Selkek. She bowed her head slightly before raising her right hand in the traditional ta’al.

“T’nar pak sorat,” she greeted.

Selkek could not suppress the small smile that graced his lips as he returned the ta’al.

“T’nar jaral,” Selkek replied. “Your pronunciation is very good for a human. Where did you learn Vulcan?”

“Thank you. I am self-taught. I relied on language tapes and conversational practicum that I was permitted to take at the local university.”

“Your study has been worthwhile. You should consider studying on Vulcan for a time, Cadet Uhura. Your pronunciation could be perfected with more interaction with native speakers,” Selkek continued with a quick glance towards his cousin.

Uhura soon found herself engaged in deep conversation with Selkek, the Commander listening silently by their side. Uhura was annoyed when the bell announcing the start of the meal was sounded, as it meant that she would most likely be parted from her new acquaintance. However, she was pleased to be seated next to Selkek once dinner began. They chatted contentedly throughout the meal and were soon on a first name basis. Selkek was even moved to share a few stories of Spock as a youth. Uhura could not prevent the giggles that escaped her after a few tales of the Vulcan equivalent of mischievous hi-jinks. She could hardly believe that Selkek and Spock
were kin. Selkek had such an easy and warm manner about him that Uhura suspected that he was v’tosh’ka’tur. She wondered how he could remain so pleasantly disposed towards Spock knowing that he betrayed his own brother for also being v’tosh’ka’tur.

“I think it is almost time for our performance,” Nyota sighed after an hour of pleasant conversation. “I hope that you find my singing somewhat palatable. I fear that it may be grating to the Vulcan ear. Commander Spock surely noticed a sharpness in my manner of delivery.”

“I shall not say that you are incorrect,” Spock replied, speaking for the first time since the start of dinner. “It is illogical that you could hold the belief that I find your performance unpleasant when I have expressed the opposite on several occasions. I have observed that you take pleasure in expressing opinions that are not your own.”

Uhura laughed at this. “Your cousin will have you doubt every word I say! I suppose I am unlucky to be in the company of a person so capable of exposing my true character. It is very unfair of you, Commander Spock. You are provoking me to retaliate by sharing my own observations of your person that may shock your kinsman.”

“I am not afraid of you,” Spock replied.

“Please share your observations, Nyota,” Selkek pleaded, delight evident in his tone. “It will be enlightening to learn how my cousin conducts himself amongst his students and colleagues.”

“The first time I met Commander Spock was at a Starfleet ball. And what do you think he did at this ball? He only danced once, even though he was made aware of a few ladies who were without partners and wanted to dance. This slight could be forgiven since he is Vulcan. However, he also baldly insulted a lady who stood well within earshot and offered no apology.”

“Well, the dancing I can very well understand,” Selkek replied. “But you must tell me the identity of the lady insulted and what was said that was so egregious.”

“The lady is speaking to you now,” Uhura replied with a smirk. “When his good friend pointed me out as a worthy dance partner he simply sniffed and replied ‘she is visually satisfactory, but she is not proficient enough to tempt me.’”

“Unpardonable,” Selkek replied.
“My comments were not meant to give offense. Rather, as I was unacquainted with you at the time, I was not aware of your high level of acumen,” Spock replied. “Perhaps it would have been logical for me to make your acquaintance before making such an assessment. However, I am not well qualified to recommend myself to strangers. I have not the talent that many humans possess of conversing easily with those I do not know. I am not capable of understanding the tone of their conversation or appearing interested in their concerns as is often done among humans.”

“My tongue,” Uhura replied, “does not wrap itself around Vulcan consonants with the same precision and rapidity of native speakers. To the extent that my limitation is not due to the physiological structure of my mouth and throat, I have always assumed that it was my own fault because I did not practice enough.”

Spock nodded, “Indeed, you have applied your time and energy logically. No one given the privilege of hearing you could conclude otherwise. May neither of us perform to strangers.”

Uhura stared at Spock, her mouth agape. Just as she began to form the words of her reply, their names were announced. Spock stood and indicated for Cadet Uhura to walk before him to the small stage above the podium where his ka’athyra was already set up.

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Spock began to play the opening strains of Valdena T'shaukaush and he felt his slight annoyance with his cousin’s familiarity dissipate as the gentle swell of Nyota’s voice filled the room. Indeed, everyone else in the room seemed to fade away as Nyota turned towards him and her eyes locked on his own. Spock nearly held his breath as Nyota began to walk towards him, her hands clasped to her breast as she sang to her lost lover. Spock knew that it was illogical to think that she was singing to him. It was evident that she was lost in the performance. However, in spite of his reason, Spock was enchanted. His previous logical arguments against his growing affection for Nyota once again appeared hollow in the presence of her vivacity and skill.

The sound of rapturous applause from the humans and polite approbation from the Vulcans broke Spock from his reverie. He stood and inclined his head toward the crowd as Nyota curtsied and beamed beside him. They made their way off of the stage and were surrounded by Starfleet colleagues wishing to express their delight over their performance. Spock politely thanked his well wishers as he watched Nyota receive enthusiastic handshakes and kisses to the back of her hand. While he felt that his own playing did not deserve such praise, he found that the admiration heaped upon the Nyota to be insufficient.

“Spock, tomasu.”
Spock turned from his admiration of Nyota to find T’Pau standing behind him with her attendants and T’Pring in tow.

“Dif-tor heh smusma, ” Spock greeted, his hand raised in the ta’al.

“Peace and long life, nephew. Thy performance was satisfactory, although thou still have not gained the level of proficiency of thine sa’mekh. If thou were to devote adequate time to practice, thou may yet master the ka’athyra.”

“I shall bear your counsel in mind, T’Pau.”

“See that thou dost,” T’Pau replied with an imperious lift of her brow. “Have thou greeted thy ko-kugalsu, Spock?”

Spock suppressed the desire to grimace before turning towards T’Pring and repeating his greeting.

“Na’shaya, Spock,” T’Pring replied. “Who is the kominh with whom you put on this display?”

“Yes, Spock. I desire to meet this woman. Her performance was very pleasing for a human woman.”

Spock inwardly bristled at the emphasis T’Pring placed on “kominh,” but quickly moved past the emotion when T’Pau requested an introduction. With a terse bow of his head, Spock turned from the women to retrieve the cadet. Nyota was suitably surprised when he related T’Pau’s request for the introduction. She nibbled her lip as she considered, a display of nervousness that Spock found endearing. He thought to offer some words of encouragement to allay her fear, but found that he was unable to lie. T’Pau was a formidable woman.

“T’Pau, may I present Cadet Nyota Uhura, a rising second year xenolinguistics and communications science student at Starfleet Academy. Cadet Uhura, T’Pau of Vulcan.”

Spock watched as Uhura curtsied smoothly before rising.

“Live long and prosper, Uhura.”
“Sochya eh dif,” Uhura replied.

T’Pau examined Uhura closely, her eyes narrowing as they swept Uhura’s person. Uhura squared her shoulders and returned the level gaze. Spock watched the exchange with interest. After a short time, T’Pau nodded in approval.

“Thine singing was quite pleasing to mine ear. I would like thee to attend me during my stay. I find that I wish to know more of thee, Uhura.”

Spock glanced at Uhura in surprise. To her credit, the cadet hid her astonishment admirably.

“Yes, my lady. It is an honor.”

“Yes. It is,” T’Pau replied. “I shall have my assistant send thee my schedule. I shall expect to see thee for the morning meal.”

She turned towards T’Pring who was watching the exchange with interest, her dark eyes fixed on Uhura.

“T’Pring,” T’Pau called. “See that thou send the information to Uhura this evening.”

With that, T’Pau swept away with T’Pring trailing in her wake. Spock stood stiffly beside Nyota, dumbly noting their retreat.

“Well, I suppose I couldn't refuse the invitation if I wanted to,” Nyota said to herself. “I know I should feel honored, but an order is an order nonetheless.”

“My kinswoman is not accustomed to having her wishes denied,” Spock replied. “It would appear that we shall be in each other’s company often in the days ahead.”

“I am sure that we will manage to endure it,” she replied.
“Indeed.”

Glossary:
T'nar pak sorat: a formal greeting
Dif-tor heh smusma: Live long and prosper
T'nar jaral: formal reply to “Live long and prosper.”
Sochya eh dif: peace and long life
Ta’al: the Vulcan salute
Tonk-peh: informal greeting; hi
Na’shaya: greeting
Ko-kugalsu: fiancée
Sa’mekh: father
Ka’athyra: lyre
v’tosh’ka’tur: Vulcan without logic
tomasu: kinsman; male relative
kominh: human woman

Chapter End Notes

Chapter Notes:
Selkek is an original character borrowed from Teresa F. and her story So Pleasing a Thing. If you haven't read that story yet, you should because it is great! You can find it here on her Elegant Extracts blog in handy pdf format. She is writing a sequel called Full Circle that features more of Selkek, my second favorite Vulcan. (Well, he might actually outrank Spock, but I know that is blasphemy.)

The dress that I described is based on a dress design I saw on deviantart by Eradanis-Requiem.
Nyota sat nervously in the austere sitting room, waiting to be shown to the private residence of T’Pau. Nyota was nervous to be invited to share a meal with the most important woman on Vulcan. She recalled Sybok’s description of the woman and felt that it was quite accurate. In her brief association with the revered lady, she had found T’Pau to be high handed and prideful. But Nyota had been genuinely surprised by T’Pau’s appreciation for her performance as well as the invitation—or rather command—to be her guest during her stay on Earth. She had not expected to meet the illustrious T’Pau much less to be so singled out by her. She supposed that in itself was a great honor and that the connection could be a great boon to her career. However, Uhura could not help but to think that the coming days would prove to be quite a trial. Not only would she have to deal with the imperious T’Pau, she would also be in the constant company of the disagreeable Commander Spock and his fiancee, T’Pring, who appeared to despise her. The one bright spot was that she would also have more opportunities to speak with the charming and gregarious Selkek.

"Ms. Uhura," a deep monotone voice broke her from her reverie, "her ladyship is ready to see you now."

Nyota rose and followed the attendant, smoothing down the skirt of her dress as they moved quietly through the halls of the embassy. She was happy to be out of uniform and opted to wear a floor length summer dress in deference to the Vulcan sense of modesty and the stifling temperatures at which private residences in the embassy were bound to be kept.

Nyota was shown into a sumptuously decorated parlor where T’Pau, Spock and T’Pring were already assembled. T’Pau sat on a throne like chair at the center of the room, two burly bare chested armed male attendants standing guard behind her.

"Ms. Nyota Uhura," the attendant announced her as she entered the room.

Spock turned from the window and his contemplation of the embassy gardens to face her. He walked stiffly to her side and bowed slightly at the waist.

"Greetings, Cadet Uhura."

"Good morning, Commander," Uhura replied with a slight smile as she took in his courtly address and attire. He was out of uniform, a state Nyota had never seen him in. He wore a long silver grey tunic adorned with white embroidery about the neck and wrists and black silk slacks. She had to admit to herself that he looked quite handsome in traditional Vulcan attire, although she preferred his all black uniform.

"Ha’tha ti’lu, Ms. Uhura. It is good of thee to join us at the appointed hour."

As soon as the words passed over T’Pau's thin lips, the side door slid open admitting a slightly ruffled Selkek.

"I apologize for my tardiness, T’Pau," Selkek said as he bowed towards her.

"It is a poor state of affairs, Selkek, when a human can be punctual when a Vulcan cannot."
"What more can one expect from one of his kind, toz'ot?" T'Pring replied as she rose from her seat, her expression fairly smug for a Vulcan.

Selkek's face flushed green for a moment before returning to its normal calm state.

"Now that we are all assembled, let us retire to the dining area to break the fast," T'Pau announced.

She rose from her seat with the aid of one of her attendants and led the party out of the parlor.

Uhura stayed back from the group and approached Selkek. She gave him a small smile while gently touching her hand to his arm.

"It is a pleasure to see you again, Selkek."

"I am equally pleased to meet with you again, Miss. Uhura," he replied with a more subdued smile. "I suspect that your company will make my stay here far more pleasant than I anticipated."

"Please, call me Nyota," she replied as she squeezed his arm.

"Selkek," Spock called from his place by the door, glancing quickly to where Nyota's hand gripped his cousin's arm. "We should not keep T'Pau waiting."

"No indeed," Selkek answered cheerfully. "We wouldn't want to sour her ladyship's good mood."

Breakfast was an interesting affair. T'Pau carried most of the conversation, speaking at length on various topics such as Federation policy, Vulcan music and education and even the proper technique for cultivating the plomeek plant. As her ladyship droned on, Nyota slowly consumed her bland plomeek soup as she observed the various Vulcans at the table. Spock appeared to be listening attentively to his aunt, nodding his head during intervals in her ladyship's monologue where some sort of agreement or encouragement seemed well placed. T'Pring divided her time between glaring at Nyota and watching Spock. As the meal progressed, Nyota noticed that T'Pring appeared to inch closer towards the Commander, as if in an attempt to claim him. Nyota had to take frequent sips from her water glass to prevent herself from smirking outright. If T'Pring felt that she was some sort of rival for her fiance', she was sorely mistaken. Every now and then her eye would catch that of Selkek who would send her surreptitious winks.

"Thou hast been very quiet, Ms. Uhura," T'Pau's loud voice rang out.

"I apologize if my terseness has caused offense. If there is some subject in particular on which you would like to converse, I would be more than happy to accommodate you."

T'Pring turned her cold stare onto Uhura. "I am sure that her Ladyship does not require any special accommodation on your part."

"What is thine subject of study?" T'Pau asked, ignoring T'Pring completely.

"Xenolinguistics, my lady, with a focus on phonology and acoustic engineering."

"And dost thou intend to teach?"

"Perhaps one day. However, my true desire is to serve as communications officer aboard a deep space research vessel."

"It is unfortunate that the Federation encourages women to partake in active service," T'Pau pronounced to the table. "It is only logical for men to be trained for combat while women are
groomed to serve in diplomatic and administrative positions. “

“Indeed, the female human is statistically weaker and less agile than her male counterpart,” T’Pring added. “The human female is also more prone to emotionalism, an undesirable trait in a soldier.”

Nyota glanced around the table, noting the placid faces of her dining companions. Selkek looked somewhat sympathetic, shrugging slightly at Uhura’s look of indignation. As T’Pau lifted another spoonful of plomeek soup to her lips, Uhura began to answer.

“Really, my lady, I think it unfair for women to be limited in such a way,” Nyota began, barely concealing her indignation behind a tight smile. “Female Starfleet officers have proven themselves to be just as capable in the field as male officers. Furthermore, as the Federation’s purpose is to promote peace and cooperation among the member planets, any over emotionalism or aversion to violence that may be erroneously attributed to human women would be an asset to a Starship, not a hindrance. Don’t you agree, Commander?”

She fixed her eyes on Spock’s waiting for his reply.

"Yes, that has been my experience as well, Cadet," Spock replied after finishing his spoonful of soup and wiping his mouth.

The room seemed to go unnaturally quiet. Nyota looked from Spock to their companions, finding three pairs of eyes fixed on her person. Their faces were predictably blank save for Selkek, whose lips twitched as he fought to control a smirk.

“Thee certainly expresses thine opinion boldly,” T’Pau remarked after a time. “What is thine age?”

Uhura smiled. “One can not expect a human woman to be forthcoming about her age.”

A small choking noise could be heard coming from Selkek’s side of the table.

“Come child,” T’Pau continued. “Thou can not be more than twenty five years of age.”

“I am not yet twenty four, my lady.”

T’Pau raised one eyebrow as she examined Nyota.

“You will join us for the evening meal on the morrow,” T’Pau announced after a few moments of silence.

T’Pau rose from her seat signaling the end of the meal. Nyota rose as well and remained standing as T’Pau exited the room with T’Pring in tow.

“Fascinating,” Spock murmured.

Nyota released a breath that she did not realize that she was holding.

“I think that she likes you,” Selkek commented as he came to her side.

“I would have to agree with your assessment,” Spock added.

“How can you tell?”
“She invited you back,” Selkek replied.

“And did not have one of her guards escort you from the hall at the sharp end of a lirpa,” Spock said.

Nyota snorted. “Was that a joke, Commander?”

Spock raised one dark eyebrow. “I was quite serious, Cadet.”

Nyota’s smile fell.

“Nyota, would you permit me to walk you back to the Academy?” Selkek offered. “I find myself bored with the embassy and anxious to see more of the city.”

“Actually, I was planning on going to Fisherman’s Wharf for some shopping. If you want to do a little site seeing, you are welcome to come with me.”

Selkek grinned. “Thank you, Nyota. I would be pleased to accompany you.”

“Wonderful. It’s a date!” Nyota smiled as Selkek offered her his elbow.

“What is a date?” Selkek asked as they exited the room, leaving a slightly scowling Spock behind.

Did you enjoy your social outing with the Cadet?” Spock asked Selkek as they strolled through the botanical gardens the next day.

“Yes, Nyota is an entertaining companion,” Selkek replied. “I enjoy conversing with her. She also has a keen eye for Terran fashion.”

“I can see,” Spock replied. “Would it be correct to assume that Cadet Uhura chose this new scarf for you?”

“Yes,” Selkek replied as he smoothed down the blue-stripped scarf. “She told me that it made me look ‘hot.’ I believe it had something to do with the color complimenting my eyes.”

“Do you intend to see the Cadet again?”

“We have discussed taking a hike at the Presidio next weekend should my schedule permit it.” Selkek glanced quickly at his cousin. “Does this displease you?”

“I have no opinion on the matter. Cadet Uhura is free to conduct her affairs as she chooses.”

“Hmm. As much as I would like to continue discussing the subject of Nyota Uhura, she was not the purpose for our walk this afternoon.”

“You are correct. I believe you wished to speak to me regarding T’Pring.”

“Yes. I originally thought that you might find the news I have to relate to be distressing, but perhaps, in light of recent developments, it will not be unwelcome news.”

Spock stopped their slow progress, pausing underneath the shade of a Red Adler tree.

“Please, tell me your news.”

“T’Pring has been engaged in an intimate relationship with Stonn of the house of Syun for the past
“Yes. I caught them engaged in intimate congress five months ago. When I confronted T’Pring about her behavior and her intentions towards you, she indicated that she did not desire to break the bond with you. As she knows it is your intention to pursue a lifelong career in Starfleet, she has deduced that it would be logical to continue her illicit relationship with Stonn while also securing her affiliation with the house of Sarek.”

Spock stood in silence for several minutes, starring unseeing down the paved path. The feeling of betrayal that bloomed in his chest upon first hearing of T’Pring’s infidelity quickly gave way to a feeling of relief and freedom. Spock did not want to cement his bond with T’Pring. They found one another to be equally unappealing. T’Pring made no attempt to disguise her disgust for his human heritage.

“Am I correct in assuming that this news is not completely unexpected or unwelcome?” Selkek asked as they resumed walking.

“You are correct on both accounts. Your sister has never concealed her dissatisfaction over our betrothal. However, I confess that I am at a loss for why she would want to stay in a bond that she finds so repugnant when she has procured a lover that she finds more suitable.”

“If you are surprised, cousin, then I have overestimated your intelligence,” Selkek replied, his voice tinged with amusement. “I believe the humans would say that T’Pring wants to have her cake and eat it too.”

At Spock’s blank stare, Selkek continued. ”My sister is an unabashed social climber. Her bigotry towards your human half is overcome by your illustrious Vulcan lineage. Indeed, being aligned with the son of Sarek, descendant of Surak would even overcome the stigma of having a v’tosh’katur as her brother. In cementing the marriage bond with you, she attains an elevated social status while keeping her lover.”

“Why have you told me this, Selkek? If I were to break our bond and make her infidelity known, it will bring shame upon your house.”

Selkek nodded thoughtfully as he continued to walk. “While this is true, I still felt that it was my duty as your friend and tomasu to tell you the truth so that you may make an informed decision. The shame upon my house will also be of short duration and quickly forgot. While I am confident that this did not inform my decision to share this information with you, I must confess that I derive a certain pleasure in seeing my sister humbled. Perhaps for a short time she will cease to look upon me as if I were a ravot on the bottom of her shoe. This is not an emotion that I am proud of, but I feel this way nonetheless.”

Spock and Selkek finished their walk in silence, Spock deliberating his next move regarding T’Pring and Selkek examining his emotional reaction to the conversation.

“Do you know how you shall proceed?” Selkek asked before they parted upon reaching the embassy.

“I do not know.”

“May I make a suggestion, thy’la? You now have the opportunity to be free of one who has only been a burden to your spirit and to join with one who brings you happiness. It may not be considered the Vulcan way, but I encourage you to choose the path of contentment.”
Glossary:

ravot= insect

'thy'la= friend, blood brother

v'tosh'katur= Vulcan without logic

lirpa= a Vulcan weapon with a curved blade on one end and a bludgeon on the other. Can be seen in Amok Time.

toz'ot= aunt

Ha'tha ti'lu= Good Morning

tomasu = kinsman
Nyota strolled alongside Selkek, admiring the view of San Francisco Bay, enjoying the afternoon sun and the melodious voice of her companion. That morning she had spoken with Gaila and was disheartened to find that she was still mourning the loss of Shuran. Gaila appeared listless and to have lost weight. Nyota offered to cut her stay in San Francisco short to visit her, but Gaila convinced her to stay and make the most of her budding connection with the great T’Pau.

“I am sure you will have many amusing stories to share with me when we meet again. I wouldn’t dare deprive you of new material.”

Selkek’s company was a welcome distraction from Nyota’s concern for Gaila. For the past hour of their walk through the various paths of the Presidio, Selkek regaled Nyota with amusing stories from his childhood on Vulcan. Many of the stories featured Commander Spock. She could hardly believe that the bright eyed young boy who inadvertently dyed his pet sehlat pink in an experiment gone wrong grew into the serious and foreboding Starfleet officer that she knew.

“Poor I-Chaya was pink for three months before the additives from Spock’s nutrient blend dissipated from his system,” Selkek said to a laughing Nyota. “It was another two months before I-Chaya would allow himself to be walked outside and a year complete before he would accept any food from Spock’s hand.”

“The poor dear,” Nyota laughed as she leaned against the railing. “I have to say that the Spock you describe couldn’t be more unlike the man I know.”

“Well, I have known him since he was born,” Selkek replied as he leaned next to her, his gray eyes scanning the bay before them. “He has been my closest friend for nearly as long. In fact, at times he was my only friend.”

Nyota’s laughter died away. She turned from her admiration of the bay to examine Selkek’s profile. When she first met him, his animated nature had been a bit disorienting. To see someone who looked so much like Commander Spock smile and laugh took some getting used to. Even though Sybok was Spock’s brother and also V’tosh’ka’tur, Nyota had not had a similar reaction to him. Indeed, she had been surprised when Sybok claimed such a close relation to Spock as their temperaments and looks were so opposed. Selkek seemed to embody the few qualities that she admired in the commander with a small portion of the charm that drew her to Sybok.

“Was it difficult for you? Growing up on Vulcan as v’tosh’ka’tur?”

Selkek glanced at her briefly before sighing. “I suppose that it is always difficult living in a society where you are different and where that which makes you different is viewed as a flaw.

“It is true that some v’tosh’ka’tur were banished once Vulcan chose to adopt the teachings of Surak. You must understand that the established peace was fragile and new at that time. It was logical to separate those who rejected the way of peace from the rest of society who had grown weary of bloodshed and discord. Vulcan would not be what it is today if my forefathers had done otherwise.
“However, now that the teachings of Surak have become the bedrock of Vulcan culture and society, those who may think differently do not pose the same threat. It is logical that only those who are prone to violence and discord are asked to leave.

“You see, I am not without logic. I have not rejected the ways of Surak. I simply choose to let logic guide my emotions rather than suppress and control them. So, I have been able to find a place in Vulcan society. My very presence as part of the delegation is proof of that.

“But, you are right. I was not always as accepted as I am now. Indeed, some of my kin still consider me a source of shame for my family. I am sure you have observed some of the scorn my sister T’Pring holds for me.”

Nyota nodded before placing her hand on top of his in commiseration.

“Do not be sad on my account, Nyota,” Selkek continued, favoring her with a small smile. “I choose to dwell on those who have accepted me and judge me by my deeds. Spock has been one of that number. Indeed, he himself is familiar with the plight of the outcast. While we are kinsmen by blood, this shared experience is what unites us in true friendship.”

Nyota squeezed his hand before allowing it to drop to her side. She wanted to ask Selkek why Spock would extend such kindness to him while spurning his own brother.

“Spock takes prodigious care of his friends,” she remarked after a time, resuming their stroll down the walkway.

“Yes, he does,” Selkek replied, his good cheer restored. “He recently saved a good friend from entering into an imprudent match.”

Nyota’s eyes flew to his. “How so?”

“Apparently his friend…Shuran, I believe…was on the verge of entering into a committed relationship that would have been disastrous personally and professionally.”

Nyota barely concealed her shock. That Spock had been the cause of Shuran’s sudden change of heart and her best friend’s misery was unexpected.

“And who was he to judge another couple’s intimate affairs?” Nyota asked.

Selkek paused in his progress, a frown wrinkling his brow. “I am sure that my cousin acted in a way that he deemed was in the best interests of his friend.”

“Yes, and Commander Spock is always unerring in his judgment,” Nyota replied, her voice tremulous. Nyota stopped walking and pressed her hand to her forehead and cheek.

“Nyota,” Selkek asked, his voice filled with concern. “Have I upset you in some way? Are you well?”

Uhura took a deep breath, trying to subdue the urge to cry.

“I just think I’ve had too much sun,” she managed after a time.

“Of course,” Selkek replied. “Let’s make our way back. I’ll call a flitter to take you home. Do you think you are capable of walking back to the entrance of the park?”
“Yes,” Nyota replied flatly. “I won’t make you carry me back.”

“It would be no trouble,” Selkek smiled. “You look quite light.”

Nyota could not summon the energy to laugh at Selkek’s reply. She suddenly wanted to be as far away from all Vulcans as she possibly could, her amiable companion included.

They walked to the park entrance in silence. Selkek ordered a hired flitter to convey her to campus and insisted on accompanying her for the ride.

“Please convey my regrets to the Lady T’Pau,” Nyota requested as Selkek helped her step out of the hired flitter outside of her dormitory.

“Of course,” he replied with a squeeze of her hand. “I hope that you feel better soon. Is there someone I should call for you?”

Nyota managed a slight smile. Selkek was such a kind man. If only his cousin were as considerate. “No, Selkek. I am sure that all I need is some rest and aspirin. Thank you.”

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Spock looked at the timepiece on the wall for the third time in one point five minutes. Nyota would be late. He found that he was particularly anxious to see the cadet this evening. Perhaps his heightened level of anticipation could be attributed to the fact that she had spent the entire afternoon in the company of his gregarious cousin. While Selkek’s engaging and warm nature had been a cause for scorn on Vulcan, Spock now felt something akin to envy. Selkek had such an effortless and easy way with Nyota. Spock had never seen the cadet smile and laugh as much in his company as she did with Selkek. He noted every touch of her hand to Selkek’s arm or person and every wink and grin that passed between them with increasing concern. Spock was sure that their display during dinner that evening would be even more disconcerting.

Spock looked up as the parlor door slid open admitting Selkek. Selkek walked quickly to his side and indicated for Spock to follow him. They walked to a far corner of the room, out of earshot of both T’Pau and T’Pring.

“Cousin,” Selkek whispered. “I wished to inform you that Miss. Uhura will not be joining us for dinner this evening. She took ill during our outing this afternoon and indicated her need for rest.”

“Is she very ill?” Spock asked, his voice deepening in concern.

“No, cousin. She indicated that she had a headache and nothing more serious. I,” Selkek paused and glanced around the room. “I thought that you would like to know should you wish to pass on similar regrets to T’Pau.”

Selkek stared at Spock for several moments willing him to understand his meaning. “I can handle T’Pau and T’Pring on my own, cousin. I am an experienced le-matya tamer, afterall.”

Spock opened his mouth to refute his cousin’s illogical statement before he caught Selkek’s slight grin. Spock nodded his understanding and made his way over to T’Pau where he bowed low.

“Aunt, an urgent matter has come to my attention that requires my presence. I regret missing the evening meal and shall endeavor to attend you this evening.”
Spock turned on his heel and quickly exited the room, leaving Selkek to deal with two pairs of dark accusing eyes.

“Shall we go in to the meal, my Lady? I for one am absolutely famished.”

******

Nyota was woken from her slumber by the insistent chime of her door. She rose from her place on the sitting room sofa and padded to the bathroom where she quickly checked her appearance in the mirror. Her eyes, which had been swollen from crying, appeared normal once again. She splashed some water on her face before bidding her guest to enter.

“Commander!” Nyota stood starring at the tall Vulcan whose frame filled her doorway.

“Cadet,” Spock greeted stiffly before entering the room. “I heard that you were unwell.”

“Yes, but I am feeling better.”

Spock nodded stiffly before pacing the room. Nyota watched with increasing ire as Spock examined her room.

“Would you care for a seat?” Nyota offered. Even if the commander had forgotten his manners, she would not be so discourteous.

“Thank you, no.”

Nyota sighed before taking a seat on the sofa.

After a minute more of pacing and careful examination of her room, Spock came to a stop before her, his hands behind his back in their customary position. He looked down at her, his face devoid of expression save for a strange glint in his eyes.

“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My emotions can longer be suppressed. You must allow me to convey to you the depth of my admiration and esteem.”

Nyota sat flabbergasted, her mouth slack with her astonishment. She blinked, frowned and shook her head in amazement.

“Excuse me?”

“Not long after making your acquaintance, I began to experience the first stirrings of shon-ha-lock: the Engulfment. At first, this new feeling was merely a troublesome but fascinating curiosity. However, as our acquaintance strengthened, so did my desire.

“I reasoned and debated with myself, devoting many hours to meditation an attempt to restore my mental and emotional balance. I thought to conquer these emotions by avoiding your presence, but I found that in this I was also helpless,” Spock explained as he began to slowly pace the room again, speaking as if he were giving a lecture on warp core theory.

“Every logical and rational argument as to your unsuitability to be my aduna was soon overcome by the illogical dictates of my heart. No line of logic, recitation of Starfleet regulations or of my duty to my family and my people could free me from this shaukaush.
“I am left with no recourse but to secure you as my mate. Although you are human, your intelligence is such that you will quickly learn to adapt to Vulcan customs and meet the high expectations placed upon all women aligned with the S’chn T’gai clan.”

Spock stopped his pacing and turned to face her, his dark eyes boring into hers imploringly.


Nyota rose from her seat and began to pace the room. Apparently she had not misheard. Her commander just declared his undying love for her; a love that he called illogical and unsuitable. Then he had the nerve to propose marriage. Of all the ridiculous notions! Nyota felt her ire rise. She glanced at the commander who stood watching her as silent as a statue, so still that she wondered whether or not he still breathed. She stopped her pacing and took a few deep-cleansing breaths. She would not lose her head. She would respond as the calm, rational creature that she was. Nyota turned to face him.

“I suppose in situations like this it is customary to express some sense of obligation for the feelings avowed, even if they are not returned. When such strong feelings are expressed—by a Vulcan no less—it is only natural that some obligation or gratitude should be expressed by the recipient. If I felt gratitude or affection for you, I would thank you. But, I cannot.”

Spock’s shoulders dropped slightly.

“I have never desired your affection,” Nyota continued, her voice gaining strength. “And you have certainly bestowed yours unwillingly. I am sorry to cause you pain. I realize that expressing such…illogical emotions must have been difficult for you and repugnant to your Vulcan sensibilities. However, I suspect that the pain will be of short duration as you meditate further on my inferiority.”

Spock stared at her for several long moments, his face stoic, but his eyes flashing from disbelief, to sorrow and finally to anger. He walked away from her, coming to a stop before her window. His hands, still held behind his back, tightened and flexed. Nyota watched him, her ire giving way to anxiety.

“Is this all the answer that I am to expect?” Spock asked, his voice low and deep. “May I inquire why, with so little difficulty, you chose to reject me?”

Nyota snorted, the thin thread by which she held her anger in check fraying.

“Might I inquire why you chose to tell me, with so little concern for my feelings, that you loved me against your will and against your reason? If anything warranted my quick rejection of your proposal, it is that!”

Spock turned quickly from the window to face her, his head cocked to the side. “Is this the sole reason for your refusal?”

“No. How could I ever consider dating, much less marrying, the man who is responsible for my best friend’s misery?”

Spock’s spine stiffened at these words.

“I have so many reasons to think ill of you,” Nyota continued, her voice tight. “You cannot deny
that you are the reason for their separation? That you did everything in your power to separate
Shuran from my friend!”

“Vulcans do not lie,” Spock replied with a quirk of his brow. “Nor do I wish to deny it. I took
more consideration of Shuran’s well being than of my own.”

Nyota huffed. “This is not the only charge I have against you! My opinion of you was formed
long before that when I learned of your despicable treatment of your own brother Sybok!”

Spock turned from her, his hands clenched into fists at his sides as he sought to compose himself.

“You take an active interest in that gentleman’s affairs,” he replied in a less tranquil tone.

“How could I not having heard of his misfortunes?”

“His misfortunes,” Spock replied, his back to her. “His misfortunes have been great indeed.”

“They are your fault,” Nyota cried, her anger in full bloom. “You betrayed your own brother and
colluded to have him banished from his home and his planet to live as a refugee with no name or
status. You have deprived him of his proper place and you have the gall to stand there and speak
of what you have done with such flippancy!”

“This is your opinion of me,” Spock said as he faced her once more. “By your calculation, my
crimes are numerous. However, perhaps these faults would have been overlooked if I flattered and
charmed you; if I did not give you an honest account of my deliberations on this matter and
instead told you that my feelings were rational and logical. However, I abhor deceit and I am not
ashamed of the emotions that I have experienced. They were honest and valid. It is illogical of you
to expect me to rejoice in a connection that would imperil my career and position.”

“You are mistaken, Commander. You could not have proposed to me in any manner that would
have tempted me to accept you.”

Nyota stepped towards him, her voice calm and clear.

“Almost from the first moment that I met you, I was struck by you arrogance, pride and selfish
disregard for the feelings of others. Your treatment of your brother and Gaila only solidified my
poor opinion of you. I had not known you a month before I was convinced that you were the last
man in the world, nay, the entire Federation, that I could ever love.”

“You have explained yourself adequately, Cadet,” Spock replied, his voice hollow and low. “I
now comprehend your feelings. I apologize for the importunacy. Live long and prosper.”

Nyota watched as the commander stiffly walked from her room. As soon as the door slid shut
behind him, she sat heavily on her sofa, hugging her knees to her chest as she gave way to her
tears.

**Glossary:**

*Sehlat* = a bear like creature with long fangs native to Vulcan. They are often domesticated as pets
*le-matya* = wild cat like omnivore with poisonous claws native to Vulcan
*V’tosh’ka’tur* = Vulcan without logic
Taluhk nash-veh ashau = “I love you.” Phrase I cobbled together from the VLD
Shaukaush= passions
shon-ha-lock= The Engulfment; love at first sight
aduna= wife
kun-ut so'lik= marriage proposal
S'chn T'gai= Spock’s clan name
Nyota stepped outside of her dormitory well before sunrise the next morning. She found sleep to be elusive after the events of the previous evening. Commander Spock’s confession and marriage proposal had shaken her to her core. That the man that she thought she despised felt such strong romantic feelings for her was more than a bit disorientating. To learn that he was also the cause of her best friend’s heartache was enraging. After tossing in her bed for hours on end, Nyota decided that she needed to do something to work off her anger. Since she could not punch her superior officer without being expelled, she decided that running would have to do.

She had not run for more than twenty minutes before she noticed Commander Spock standing stiffly 50 feet in front of her on the nearly deserted harbor side path, his posture erect and his hands held stiffly behind his back. He wore the same formal Vulcan attire as the evening before. Nyota took some perverse comfort in the fact that he has also been unable to sleep. Just when she decided to turn around and avoid what was bound to be an unpleasant interaction for the both of them, Spock turned and gently called her name. Nyota sighed in resignation before coming to attention and waiting for him to approach. As he neared, she noticed the rumpled state of his clothing, the heightened yellow tinge of his skin and the weariness about his eyes. Nyota felt an unexpected pang of regret that she had, however deservedly, been the cause for Spock’s unusual unkempt state.

“Cadet Uhura,” Spock began, her given name spoken with more tenderness than she would have expected given their last conversation.

“Do not be afraid that I intend to repeat to you those sentiments which you found so repugnant last evening. You laid two accusations at my feet which I now request the liberty of addressing.”

“Commander, I am not comfortable…I would rather…,” Nyota stammered, uncharacteristically at a loss for words.

“I assure you, Nyota, that I also find discussing such personal and intimate matters to be uncomfortable. However, given our previous discussion, the redressing of these accusations cannot be avoided.

“Furthermore, I believe that your opinion on the matter of my relationship with my brother is based solely on his testimony. As you are an intelligent and rational being, I submit that you owe it to yourself to hear both sides of the matter before you come to a definite conclusion. I also believe that I should have the right to speak in my own defense.”
Nyota nodded before gesturing towards a bench set back from the path and surrounded by a few trees. Spock followed her to the bench, settling down at the far side of the bench, his posture erect. They sat in silence for a few moments, Uhura watching the early morning sky as the first bands of blue orange began to stain the horizon.

“Last night, I confessed to playing a part in separating Lieutenant-Commander Shuran from your friend, Cadet Gaila. I do not apologize for my actions as they were not done capriciously or with the purpose, intended or otherwise, of harming your friend.”

Nyota bit her lip to prevent herself from speaking. She would hear him out like the rational intelligent being he proclaimed her to be.

“It was not long after the ball that I noticed that Shuran was inordinately attached to your friend and in danger of finding himself very much in love. Shuran is an affectionate being who is capable of making friends with ease and forming romantic attachments that are as passionate as they are short lived. However, after a few weeks of observation I deduced that this romantic attachment was different and that Shuran was in danger of committing himself to Cadet Gaila as her life mate.”

Nyota was unable to prevent her huff of outrage at this bit of news.

“While it was plain to me that the cadet returned some of his affections, it was also apparent that she was incapable of making the commitment to become Shuran’s bondmate. Given her past history of brief romantic entanglements and the rarity of monogamous life-long relationships among Orions, I counseled Shuran that it would be wise for him to reconsider his pursuit of Cadet Gaila.

“Once I presented him with my own observations and the illogic of his choice of bride, he reluctantly agreed with my assessment and removed himself from the planet in order to distance himself from the cadet.

“However, I now realize that I may have been in error as I was not in possession of sufficient data to make this determination. I regret advising Shuran to take actions that caused your friend pain.”

Nyota sat for a moment and considered Spock’s explanation. While it was true that Orions as a people avoided committed monogamous relationships like the plague, Gaila had been prepared to be the exception to this rule. She loved Shuran and had not taken any lovers since making his
acquaintance. However, Commander Spock would not have known this. It was only reasonable for anyone to conclude that an Orion would make a poor wife. Still, Spock should have let Shuran and Gaila see their relationship to its natural conclusion.

“You also accused me of playing a role in Sybok’s banishment from Vulcan and his expulsion from the S’chn T’gai clan,” Spock continued. “The relationship between my brother, myself and our family is...complex. I have never shared the details of our relationship with anyone. However, I feel that you are owed an honest and complete account of our dealings due, in part, to our conversation but also due to my brother’s...acquaintence...with you. I trust that what I now relate to you will not be shared with anyone else.”

Spock turned and looked her in the eye for the first time since he began his explanation. Nyota was struck by the pleading expression in his dark eyes.

“You have my word that I will keep your confidence,” Nyota replied after a time.

Spock’s shoulders relaxed minutely, his gaze sliding from hers towards the lightening horizon.

“Thank you, Nyota,” he whispered.

Uhura swallowed and dipped her head, anticipating the gravity of whatever Spock meant to relate. She had never seen Spock look so vulnerable and human. She began to question Sybok’s story once again and regret some of her words from the previous evening.

Spock sighed and bent his head to the side. “I find that what I have to share is too emotionally taxing to commit to words. I propose that we engage in a light mind meld so that I can properly convey that which I find myself incapable of speaking and so that you can be assured of the veracity of my account. You may also apply to my cousin Selkek with any questions that you might have. I will instruct him to speak candidly with you.”

Nyota looked away from the commander. She knew the mind meld to be a very intimate act among Vulcans. That Spock would wish to engage her in this way despite her pointed refusal of his proposal softened her towards him. She thought back on the times when Sybok had touched her mind. He had done so whenever they had touched, apologizing when he sensed it was unwanted, but never seeking permission beforehand. Spock, on the other hand, had never intruded upon her thoughts when they chanced to touch. Neither had Selkek. That Spock had thought to ask and to offer Selkek to verify his account reassured her.

“You are not required to do anything except allow my mind to touch yours.”

Spock lifted his right hand to the side of her face, placing his fingers delicately on her temple and cheek. His fingers were warm and smooth to the touch. Nyota found herself lost in the dark depths of eyes that she once thought to be black, but were really a deep brown.

“My mind to your mind,” Spock spoke, his voice as calm as the bay, “My thoughts to your thoughts. Our minds one and the same.”

Nyota inhaled sharply, her mind momentarily flooded with a barrage of sensation. She felt, saw and tasted the bitter blue of his sorrow, a sensation so deep she felt as if she were in danger of suffocating. Her skin tingled and burned at the spicy heat of his anger. She trembled as the heat was swept away by the cool sweet breeze of his affection, the gentle pink deepening to a blood red, her mouth flooded with the tannic and richness of a full bodied Merlot. Nyota whimpered.

“Peace,” Spock thought to her. “The experience can be somewhat overwhelming at first. You shall soon become accustomed to the feel of my mind.”

“I’m scared,” she replied with a gasp. “Please.”

Suddenly, she saw a figure clothed in white walking towards her in the swirling sea of red that filled her vision. As the figure neared, she recognized him as the commander.

“Take my hand.”

Nyota obeyed, grasping his warm hand in hers. The red receded and she found herself standing with Spock in a large courtyard filled with Terran plants. She looked around her, maintaining her grip on Spock’s hand. Despite the familiar flora, she knew they were not on Earth. She looked beyond the high stone walls of the garden and observed the cloudless red sky.

“We’re on Vulcan,” she whispered in wonder.

“We are still on Earth, Nyota, sitting on a bench by the harbor in San Francisco. What we are
experiencing now is my memory of my childhood home outside Shi’Kahr.”

Nyota looked at him in astonishment, her mind full of questions. Before she could open her mouth, the sound of feminine laughter drew her attention elsewhere. She turned to observe a small Vulcan child running full tilt towards them, his cherubic face split in a carefree smile. Close behind him was a petite human woman with brown eyes and dark brown hair escaping from her veil. She caught the small boy and lifted him up in her arms, laughing as she spun him in a circle. The boy laughed as well, his ears blushing green as the woman brought him to her chest and placed kisses atop his head.

“Is that…”

“Yes, that is my mother, Amanda Grayson, and myself at the age of three.”

Nyota smiled to herself, the intimate familial scene warming her heart. She marveled at the sight of a young Spock freely expressing his happiness.

An older Vulcan man robed in grey walked sedately behind the pair, his face severe but his eyes soft.

“Amanda, you should not encourage the child,” he scolded.

“Oh, Sarek. Soon enough my Spock-kam will be a dour and serious Vulcan like his father. Allow me to enjoy his smiles and kisses while I can,” Amanda replied as she set down the squirming child.

The boy ran to his father as soon as his small feet hit the ground, wrapping his arms around one of his father’s legs as he smiled up at him impishly. Sarek bent down and picked up the child, stroking the boy’s face with his free hand.

Amanda walked towards the pair, two fingers of her right hand extended towards them. Sarek touched the fingers of his free hand to hers in a show of affection.

“Sybok,” the little boy squealed in delight, beginning to squirm to be set down once again. Sarek complied, releasing the boy to allow him to run towards his brother.
“Spock-kam, p’saikai,” Sybok replied sedately as he walked towards the young boy. He stopped his progress and bowed towards little Spock. The boy skidded to a halt and copied his brother’s greeting while trying to mimic his brother’s comportment.

“As you may have guessed, that is my brother Sybok at twenty years of age.” Spock explained at Uhura’s look of confusion. “He was away studying at the Vulcan Science Academy at the time. Despite the difference in our ages, we were very close. I admired him and looked to him as a mentor. He was a faithful adherent to the teachings of Surak.”

“Have you brought me a present from the city?” the young Spock asked.

“As I always do, p’saikai,” Sybok replied, his face impassive but his amber eyes soft. He reached into his robes and pulled out a small box, which the young Spock eagerly opened up.

“It is a miniature kal-toh set,” Sybok explained, “so that you might practice during your summers on Terra.”

Amanda laughed, “Be careful, son. Spock might just beat you the next time you come home.”

Sybok’s amber gaze slid to Amanda. “I look forward to that day, Lady Amanda, if it ever should come.”

A gentle wind blew Uhura’s hair back from her face as the scene before them began to change. Various memories played before them, dimming and melding into one another as voices surrounded them. Nyota turned and looked towards Spock, whose lips remained set in a gentle line. Nyota turned to observe the scenes of brotherly felicity unfolding before her. In each memory, Spock gradually matured and lost the expressiveness of his youth. In contract, Sybok became less controlled and dour, openly smiling in some scenes. Nyota began to feel the change in the relationship, the shift a palpable growing unease.

The wind died down and Nyota found herself standing in a dimly lit room. Visible in a far corner was the lean figure of Spock seated before a glowing firepot, his features relaxed in meditation.

“Sybok’s apartment outside of Gol,” Spock answered her unspoken query.

Suddenly the front door slid open and a laughing Sybok stumbled into the room, a giggling
woman with dark tousled hair slung over his shoulder. Sybok deposited the laughing human woman onto a table before kissing her roughly on the mouth.

“Sybok, I think you’re drunk,” the woman giggled as Sybok focused his attention on undoing her bodice.

“You are correct,” he replied before kissing her again.

“Brother, what is the meaning of this?” Spock stood from his place in the corner, his teenage frame long and gangly.

Sybok started and pushed himself away from his companion.

“P’sai’kai! What are you doing here?”

“I informed you last week of my visit, Sybok. I arrived this morning, as scheduled, and was unable to contact you. Your landlord allowed me into the apartment once she verified my identity.”

“Of course,” Sybok replied, recovering from his shock. “Tara,” he said turning towards his companion. “We’ll have to reschedule.”

The woman slid down from the table, readjusting her attire with undue slowness as she eyed Spock appreciatively.

“You are not going to introduce me to your friend, Sybok?”

“I said we’ll have to reschedule,” Sybok sneered.

Tara huffed and finished adjusting her clothing. “Rescheduled or not, Gor will still expect payment.”

“He shall have his credits. Now leave me to my guest.”
“Brother, you have taken to consorting with prostitutes?” Spock asked once Tara had left them. “I do not understand.”

“Come brother,” Sybok said as he led his brother to the sofa. “Let us just call it an experiment of sorts to satisfy a curiosity.”

“What of your betrothal to T’Kwyn?”

“T’Kwyn and her family need not know of my activities,” Sybok said as he moved towards the kitchenette to prepare tea. “That is, unless you decide to inform them, little brother.”

“That is not my intention, brother. I am merely concerned by your apparent lapse in logic.”

“You have no cause to worry about me, Spock,” Sybok replied as he returned with the tea things. “You are yet young and still have not left the safety of your mother’s skirts. When you are out in the world, you will see the limits of logic and the folly of living ones life according to its dictates. Logic, like all belief systems, can be contorted to suit any whim.”

Spock took the offered cup from his brother’s hands.

“Sybok, such reasoning seldom leads to a beneficial result.”

“Freedom is always beneficial, p’sai’kai.”

The gentle wind picked up once more and Nyota found herself transported to a tastefully decorated parlor. Sybok stood in the center of the room, now a few years older. His hair was shaggy and his stubble-lined face was twisted into a grimace. Sarek paced in front of his son, his hands folded at his waist. A more mature Spock, now only a few years younger than his present self, stood off to the side watching the proceedings. His mother Amanda, her hair graying at the temples, looked warily between the three Vulcans.

“What do you have to say for yourself?” Sarek asked Sybok, his voice calm yet steely. “Why have you dishonored the family in this way?”
“I cannot follow in your footsteps, father,” Sybok replied. “The life of a politician and diplomat is too…restrictive.”

“If your occupation with the Diplomatic Corps was no longer fulfilling, you could have spoken with me and I would have worked to secure you a position at the Academy.”

“And live my life as an academic?” Sybok snorted. “I would find myself to be as unfulfilled teaching alongside those doddering old fools as I was in the Diplomatic Corps.”

“What of your string of debts and the reports that you have sired an illegitimate child with the niece of the Andorian Ambassador? Are these events also related to your career dissatisfaction?”

Sybok sneered. “Those are scandalous lies, father.”

“The numerous bills from your creditors on Starbase 4, Raal and Shi’Kahr suggest otherwise,” Sarek calmly replied. “Since your debts have been proven to be irrefutable fact, please answer my question regarding your alleged offspring.”

“Why should I answer, sa’mekh, when you have already decided my guilt?”

“You ought to express some remorse and responsibility for your actions, Sybok. You have acted in a way that is unbecoming of a Vulcan and of a member of the T’gai S’chn clan. Your disregard for the teachings of Surak has made my house the object of ridicule and scorn. Have you no regard for the well being of your family?”

Sybok flushed green. Nyota could not determine if it was in anger or in shame.

“T’Kwyn and her family have contacted me with their wish to break your betrothal,” Sarek continued. “As the reports of your infidelity have reached them, they now have grounds to declare divorce without your consent.”

“I am glad to be free of the whore,” Sybok spat. “She was a sanctimonious bore.”
Amanda gasped and turned from Sybok.

“Sybok, although it grieves me to do this, you leave with me with no choice.”

Sarek walked to a low sitting table on which sat a small gong. He sounded the gong once signaling the entrance of two servants carrying a bowl and pitcher who were followed by two armed guards.

“Father?” Spock questioned.

“Silence, sa-fu,” Sarek replied. “As you, Sybok son of T’Rea have brought dishonor upon the T’gai S’chn clan and have shown no remorse for your actions, I hereby banish you from this house and the clan.”

The servants stepped forward, one holding the bowl underneath Sarek’s outstretched hands. The other lifted the earthenware pitcher, pouring water over his hands and into the bowl.

“I wash myself free of you.”

The servants stepped towards Amanda and she repeated the actions of her husband, tears slipping down her cheeks.

They brought the bowl to Spock. He hesitated, looking to his father. Sarek nodded his head, indicating for his son to follow suit.

Spock stepped away from the bowl and towards Sybok.

“Brother, I implore you, please reconsider. It is not too late.”

Sybok smiled mirthlessly. “I no longer wish to live my life confined by the archaic teachings of a long deceased self-proclaimed wiseman, p’sai’kai,” Sybok replied, the appellation of brother spat from his lips. “Nor do I wish to be part of this clan and tied to its decaying traditions. Wash your hands of me.”
“Brother…”

“We are brothers no more. Father has washed his hands of me. As the ever dutiful son, it is only fitting that you do likewise,” Sybok growled

Spock recoiled as if stricken. “As you wish.”

Spock stepped towards the servants and repeated the ritual, his dark eyes fixed upon his brother as the cool water was poured over his hands. The servant holding the pitcher smashed the emptied vessel onto the ground. The guards stepped towards Sybok, their weapons pointed at him menacingly.

Nyota watched as Sybok was led from the room. Amanda crumpled to the ground, her body wracked by silent sobs. Sarek went to her side, helping her up from the ground and escorting her out.

The gentle wind returned. The vision faded once more, the picture of a young Spock starring silently at the doorway dissolving to a starlit mountainside. Sybok stood with his hands raised in front of him, a cocky smile spread over his face despite the phaser pointed at his head. Spock stood not five feet from him, his face contorted in rage, his knuckles white as he gripped the handle of the phaser.

“Step away from my mother,” Spock growled threateningly.

“Oh so angry, p’sai’kai? Your precious Amanda is unharmed, merely sleeping off our latest session.”

Nyota gasped at the implication of Sybok’s statement. Her eyes flew to Amanda, who lay still in a fetal position behind Sybok. She felt bile rise in her throat at the thought of Sybok violating his own stepmother.

Spock’s grip on her hand tightened. “My mother was not harmed in the manner that you presume, Nyota. However, her mind was greatly injured.”

“Humans are quite an impressionable lot,” Sybok continued, as if a phaser were not pointed at his head. He turned from Spock and knelt down beside Amanda, smoothing her hair back from her forehead. “It only took a few calls, a few suggestions dropped here and there to have her rushing
to my aide. I was content with the monetary payments, you see. But, poor, sweet, stupid Amanda had to see her poor little sa-fu with her own eyes; to beg him to reform. “

“Step away from my mother, Sybok. I shall not repeat myself again,” Spock threatened, his voice a near whisper. Nyota shivered at the malice disguised in his dulcet tones.

“What do you plan to do, little brother? Kill me?” Sybok laughed. “How ever shall you explain the situation to the authorities?”

“He will have a witness,” Sarek calmly stated as he stepped from behind his son. “However, I have no desire to see your blood spilt.”

Sybok’s face fell at the sight of his father before contorting in rage once more.

“You always did care more for your human whore than your own son, Sarek. You are more than willing to be the laughing stock of Vulcan for the sake of this pitiful human, yet you toss aside your own son at the first hint of gossip.”

“Your banishment from the clan was your own doing, Sybok,” Sarek replied as he stepped towards his son. “You are solely to blame for your present condition. Your destiny has always been in your own hands.”

Sybok laughed. “Such a dispassionate response, sa’mekh. One would not even know that I had kidnapped your a’duna. That I had delved into her soft mind and committed kae’at k’lasa.”

“Permit me to end him, father,” Spock snarled.

“No,” Sarek said as he turned towards Spock. “Lay aside your weapon. I will not lose another son to madness.”

Sybok roared in anger as he flew towards his father, a blade suddenly appearing in his hand. Sarek deftly stepped to the side, avoiding Sybok’s attack. He quickly disarmed his son, twisting his right arm behind his back. Spock stepped forward and hit his brother over the head with the butt of his phaser. Sybok fell unconscious to the ground.
“My son, the nerve pinch would have been sufficient to subdue him,” Sarek replied as he tied Sybok’s hands behind his back.

“Forgive me father. I felt that the situation called for something more.”

The scene dissolved as Spock knelt beside his mother and gathered her limp body against his chest. Nyota’s vision blurred as much from her own tears as from the swirling panorama. The world stilled and she found herself standing in a field covered in dark blue fog. Above them, the sky was black lit with thousands of stars. The air was thick and humid and Uhura felt her skin covered by a cool mist. She turned towards Spock, her eyes wet with tears.

“What is kae’at k'lasa?” Nyota whispered.

Spock looked down at her, his features contorted in grief. “Mind rape. Kae'at k'lasa is a violation of the mind even more catastrophic than a violation of the body. My mother suffered greatly at Sybok’s hands and required several months under a healer’s care to recover.”

“I’m so sorry,” she replied, her voice thick with her tears.

Spock cocked his head to the side and regarded her sadly before lifting his free hand to cup her cheek. Nyota sighed at the intimacy and undeserved gentleness of the act.

“You have no need to apologize, Nyota. I know not by what means Sybok has imposed himself on you, although I can speculate. Sybok is a gifted telepath. It is not illogical to presume that he has relied on his gift to cloak himself in a veil of credibility.

“As you were ignorant of all I have related to you, you were not able to detect his deception. Furthermore, you are not inclined towards such suspicion as would be required to speculate such a history.”

“I should not have been so foolish,” Nyota replied.

“Many have been deceived by Sybok,” Spock gently replied, dropping his hand from her cheek. “I did not relate these things to condemn you nor to secure your favor. However, I do hope that you will acquit me of the charge of cruelty towards my brother.
“I shall end the meld now. You may experience a moment of disorientation and emotional transference. I will only add, kudau’du.” Spock dropped his hand from hers and dissolved into the blue mist.

Nyota opened her eyes with a loud gasp. She fell heavily against the back of the bench, raising her clenched fist to her mouth as she sobbed openly. Spock sat quietly by her side until she calmed herself. He produced a handkerchief, which she gratefully accepted. After wiping her cheeks dry, she turned to look at him. Spock was as he ever was. His face was impassive as he regarded her, his posture impossibly straight, his mouth in a tight line. However, his eyes revealed a tempest of emotion that she could not interpret. Nyota tried to speak, to say something, but she found she could not.

“Will you require an escort back to campus, Cadet? Is there someone I should call to attend you?”

Uhura shook her head in the negative. She felt totally wretched and undeserving of his care. All she wanted to do was return to the privacy of her room to weep.

“Then I shall leave you,” Spock replied as he rose to his feet. “Our paths are unlikely to cross again before the start of the academic term. May you have a productive and pleasant summer break. Live long and prosper.”

Nyota watched Spock’s tall lean form walk sedately down the boardwalk until he turned a corner and was out of her sight. She rose from her seat and leaned against the railing. She looked down at Spock’s handkerchief that was damp with her tears.

“How could I be so foolish?”

Spock walked about the city for several hours more before making his way back to his apartment. It had been several months since he had allowed himself to vividly recall his brother’s final betrayal. It was an extremely painful experience, yet he could not regret having shown the memories to Nyota. He supposed that the cadet did not require the knowledge. Indeed, if his father knew that he had shared such intimate family details with another, he would be angry. However, Spock felt that she had to know the full account of his dealings with Sybok as much for his own absolution as for her safety.
Nyota could not have known what sort of man Sybok was. While their minds were locked in the meld, Spock could feel the vestiges of Sybok’s influence lurking in the corner of her mind. His stomach turned at the thought that Sybok could have easily inflicted the same abuses upon Nyota as he had upon Amanda. Now that she was aware of his true character, Nyota would be able to avoid him. Spock, knew that it was illogical to regret not doing more to expose his brother; his regret could do nothing to influence the past. Nyota was lost to him.

Spock came to an abrupt halt as he crested the staircase leading to his apartment. T’Pring stood just outside of his apartment door, her dark eyes fixed on his person. Spock suppressed a sigh of annoyance as he walked towards her. His emotional control was held by a thin thread. Spock desired meditation rather than the confrontation before him.

“T’Pring, why have you come?” Spock asked, dispensing with human niceties.

“Your absence at the evening meal was noticed, sa-kulgasu,” T’Pring replied.

“I will be sure to make my apologies to Lady T’Pau. I had business at the Academy that could not be delayed.”

“Will you not invite me inside, Spock? Or shall I be forced to engage in a private conversation in a public space?”

Spock stepped around her and entered the code for his apartment. He walked inside a few feet before turning to face her. T’Pring arched one brow in disapproval before stepping inside the apartment.

“Will you not offer me a seat and refreshment, Spock? Perhaps living among humans has robbed you of your manners?”

“Please state the nature of your business,” Spock replied, ignoring her insult.

T’Pring gave him an appraising look before turning and walking towards the window.

“It is quite interesting that your urgent business happened to coincide with the absence of Cadet Uhura,” she stated.
Spock remained still. “To assume that the events are related, T’Pring, is an astounding leap in logic.”

“Perhaps,” T’Pring replied as she walked around his living room. “However, Vulcan women have long known that instinct is sometimes a more appropriate guide than logic.”

“The hour is late and there are matters which require my attention. If your visit has a purpose, please do me the courtesy of stating it plainly.”

T’Pring stopped her circuit of his quarters. “I demand that you cease your inappropriate relationship with the human or I will report your breach of ethics to the Academy board.”

“I do not comprehend.”

T’Pring turned to face him, her dark eyes disapproving. “Cadet Uhura. I forbid you from further social contact with her.”

“Ah,” Spock replied. “May I ask what evidence you are using to support your accusation?”

“I have observed your familiarity with the cadet and I know of your own father’s predilection towards fraternization with human women.”

Spock’s posture straightened. “I do not comprehend how my father’s choice of mate is in any way related to your accusation.”

“Perhaps I should use language with which you are more familiar. I believe the Terran saying is ‘the apple does not fall far from the tree.’ If you were fully Vulcan, I would not have cause to believe that you would be tempted to engage in… recreational intimate relations prior to our marriage...”

“As you yourself have done with Stonn?” Spock interrupted, his head cocked slightly to the side.

T’Pring’s eyes widened slightly before she recovered her façade of calm. “I should have known that my brother would inform you of my activities. He has always held a peculiar fondness for
you. Is it your intention to contact my parents to arrange for the dissolution of our bond?"

“I have not determined what my course of action will be,” Spock replied as he stepped around her
to open his door. “However, until I inform you of my decision, I suggest that you cease leveling
accusations and threats. Hypocrisy is unbecoming of a Vulcan. Rom-halan, T’Pring.”

Spock watched her walk from his apartment, her chin jutted out in defiance.

**Glossary:**

*p’sai’kai=* little brother

*sa’mekh=* father

*kal-toh=* A Vulcan puzzle game composed of a jumble of rods

*sa-fu=* son

*a’duna=* wife

*kae’at k’lasa=* mind rape

*kudau’du=* God bless you.

*sa-kulgasu=* fiancé

*Rom-halan=* good day; farewell
Nyota sipped her tea slowly, letting the hot bitter brew roll over her tongue and down her throat as Lady T’Pau continued to pontificate on one matter or the other. Any calming effect the tea may have had was countered by T’Pring’s icy stare. Tomorrow morning T’Pau and her party would be leaving for Vulcan, a turn of events that Nyota greeted with relief. She was finding it more difficult to maintain her good cheer during the long evening meals at the embassy.

“Spock would not have left so early had his duty to Starfleet not called him away,” T’Pau continued. “His devotion to his clan grows stronger with each passing year. Yet, one must fulfill one’s obligations, as it is the Vulcan way. One’s word is one’s only true possession. Spock is invaluable to Starfleet and his expertise was required on Andoria to prepare for the Federation Scientific Symposium. He is to present one of his latest papers on computer lingo-dynamic theories…”

Nyota’s suppressed another eye roll as T’Pau began another long monologue praising her nephew and lamenting his early departure from the party. If not for her monotone and expressionless delivery, Nyota would have accused Lady T’Pau of boasting. Selkek caught Nyota’s eye and flashed an almost imperceptible wink. Uhura smirked and sipped her tea to hide her smile. Selkek grinned in reply before quickly sobering at T’Pring’s quick look of annoyance.

“Cadet Uhura,” T’Pau said, her loud voice causing Nyota to start. “We have found thy company to be pleasant. Thee are intelligent and comely for a human woman and shall benefit from the company of superior beings. Thee shall join us on our journey back to Vulcan and stay with us for another two months at least.”

Uhura’s eyes grew wide. “Thank you, Lady T’Pau. You have honored me with your consideration, but I must decline.”

“Why is this so?” T’Pau asked, her thin lips pinched.

“I am to visit my family in Nairobi in two days time.”

“Surely thy mother can spare thee,” T’Pau replied with a small wave of her hand.

“Perhaps, my lady, but my father cannot,” Nyota countered. “I also must report for an internship at the Nairobi Starfleet branch. They have already granted me one two-week deferment and it is unlikely that they will grant another.”

“They would make allowances for me,” T’Pau replied. “Mention mine name with thy superiors and they shall be swift to accommodate thee.”

“Your ladyship, if I delay my internship further, I would be a great inconvenience to the staff who are anticipating my arrival and input.”

“Very well,” T’Pau finally relented. “It is good that thee are mindful of thy commitments. How shall thee travel?”

“By transporter, my lady. My parents have a transporter pad at their home.”
“Your family possesses a transporter? It is good that they have thought of such things. It is unfortunate for a female to travel unattended through public transport.”

“Yes, my lady,” Uhura replied before taking another sip of her tea. She glanced at Selkek over the rim of her mug, his soft grey eyes glinted in amusement.

“IT has been very agreeable making your acquaintance, Nyota,” Selkek said as they walked back to campus. He had offered to escort her to her quarters, much to his sister’s vexation and T’Pau’s approbation. “Tonight was…shiny. In fact, all of our social interactions have been shiny.”*

Nyota laughed lightly at Selkek’s word choice. During the past three weeks of their acquaintance, the Vulcan had taken to employing as many human colloquiums as possible.

“It has been a pleasure getting to know you as well, Selkek.” Uhura replied. “I am not sure I could have survived T’Pau’s attentions without your company.”

Selkek’s lips quirked upwards. “Yes, my great aunt has developed a peculiar fascination with you. She was very displeased that you could not accompany her to Vulcan. It would seem that all of my kinsmen welcome your companionship.”

Nyota laughed nervously. “I am sure that your sister would disagree.”

“Yes,” Selkek replied with a short laugh. “She would most vehemently. My sister is most illogical in her treatment of you. She does not covet my cousin’s devotion, yet she is resentful of Spock’s affection for you.”

Nyota offered no reply to that, simply training her gaze before her as they walked in silence. She was sure that she no longer posed much of a threat to T’Pring. Spock would not have her now.

Selkek regarded her closely but refrained from speaking further on the subject. They soon arrived at Uhura’s dormitory where they said their farewells.

“I hope you will not be averse to maintaining our friendship,” Selkek said, his head cocked slightly to the side. “I should like to communicate with you periodically if that is amenable to you.”

Despite what had occurred between herself and his cousin, Selkek continued to treat Uhura with the same openness and kindness of their first meeting. Nyota wondered if he was aware of Spock’s proposal and her harsh refusal. Whether his kindness was due to ignorance or his own forgiving nature, Uhura was grateful for Selkek’s friendship.

“Of course. I should like that very much,” Uhura replied.

Something close to a smile flicked across Selkek’s features before his brow furrowed minutely.

“There is another matter on which I would like to speak,” he began.

Nyota swallowed before nodding her head to encourage him to continue.

“My kinsman Spock has asked me to answer any questions you might have regarding his estranged brother. Such matters are seldom discussed amongst my people, least of all shared with
outsiders. Spock must care for you a great deal.”

Uhura inhaled deeply as she looked down. Selkek tilted his head to the side before reaching out to touch her lightly on the cheek.

“Spock has chosen well. I look forward to calling you krei.”

Nyota looked up at Selkek and bit her lip at the happy glint in his grey eyes. A peculiar pang twisted her stomach. She was not sure if her unease was caused by regret, embarrassment or a combination of both. She opened her mouth to correct Selkek when he held up his hand to forestall her reply.

“Perhaps I am being presumptuous or, as you humans say, I am putting the cart before the horse. Nevertheless, please know that you may ask me anything and I shall answer your inquiries to the best of my ability. Although I was not witness to all of the events, I can speak to the accuracy of Spock’s account.”

Nyota nodded and gave him a weak smile.

“I must leave you now to prepare for my return to Vulcan. Live long and prosper, Nyota.”

Uhura returned the ta’al before wrapping her arms around his waist in a brief hug. Selkek tensed slightly before bringing his hands up to squeeze her shoulders.

“Peace and long life, Selkek. Have a safe journey home,” Uhura said as she released him.

She noted Selkek’s slightly flushed cheeks with a smile. Selkek returned her smile before turning and walking down the pathway. Uhura watched his retreat with mixed emotions. She was relieved to be free of her obligations to T’Pau, no matter how great the honor of her notice. However, she was somewhat crestfallen to be parted from Selkek. But even there, she felt a modicum of relief. Selkek reminded her of his cousin and her own folly.

Uhura turned and entered her dormitory, making her way to her empty room. She had a few more bags to pack before her departure to Nairobi. At the thought of returning home, a wide smile spread over Nyota’s face. She had two months of her mother’s home cooking and long talks with her father to look forward to. Then, once she had her fill of her mother’s curry and political chats, it was off for her yearly trip with her Aunt Tonya and Uncle Jomo. This year they promised to take her for a month long visit to Betazed, a prospect that Nyota found to be equal parts intriguing and disturbing. After her encounters with Sybok, she was no longer so keen on visiting a planet inhabited by telepaths. Vulcans, at least, normally required physical contact to read minds, but Betazoids had no such limitation.

Spock stepped down from the hired flitter, adjusting his thick white parka as he surveyed his surroundings. The arctic climate of Andoria never ceased to catch him off guard. Despite his familiarity with the planet from his childhood visits and conversations with Shuran, the peculiar cold bite of damp Andorian wind elicited an involuntary shiver.

“It is pleasant to see you so soon, Spock,” Shuran greeted his friend as he stepped towards him, a rather thin blue woolen wrap serving as his outerwear. “I had not expected to see you for another week at least.”

“It is agreeable to see you as well, Shuran,” Spock replied after handing his bag to an eager servant. “I trust that my early arrival was not too much of an inconvenience.”
“No, not at all,” Shuran said with a wide smile. “This means that we will have an entire week for me to show you all the local sights of interest before the symposium starts.”

“Our time would be much better served by ensuring that our papers are ready for presentation,” Spock replied as he followed his friend down the path towards his home.

“We both know that you paper was perfected two months ago, Spock. Besides, I just have to give mine a final quick edit and it will be as good as it will ever get. This is your first time visiting me and I intend for you to enjoy yourself.”

“Shuran, this is not my first visit to Andoria.”

“Yes, I know. But, this is your first time with a native Andorian at your complete disposal,” Shuran replied as he ushered Spock inside a warm foyer.

Spock and Shuran stopped to sit on a low bench and remove their boots. Servants attended them, divesting them of their coats, taking their boots to be cleaned, washing their feet and providing them with silk cashmere lined house shoes. Spock thanked his servant as he took an offered hot cloth and wiped his face, neck and hands. Another servant brought them both small blue shot glasses of a warm sweet port that they drank quickly before finally entering the house proper. Two older Andorians attired in dark grey robes stood waiting for them. The older female wore her snow-white hair up in a tight bun adorned with green gems. Spock noted the strong resemblance to his friend in her smiling features. Her mate looked to be less jovial, his expression unreadable as he tracked their progress into the house.


“Well met, S’chn T’gai Spock,” Yanas greeted, his voice a deep rumble. “We are honored to have you in our home.”

“I am honored to receive your hospitality,” Spock replied with a slight bow.

The Ambassador stepped forward, her ice blue eyes roaming over Spock’s person appraisingly.

“It is an honor to meet you Spock, son of Sarek. Welcome to Andoria and to our home. I trust that you are not too chilled?”

“My core temperature remains steady, Ambassador Lwyn,” Spock replied.

Lwyn laughed as she threaded her arm through Spock’s. “We have heard so much about you from our son. You have been a good friend to our Shuran and we are pleased to have you in our home.”

Spock was shown to his quarters where he was bid to rest and refresh himself before joining his hosts for the evening meal. He found his rooms to be sufficient for his needs. In addition to sleeping quarters and a private bathroom, there was a small but well equipped office. Spock settled into the office as soon as he was shown into the room. He was eager to check his messages for a particular report from his aide, Cadet Haines. His retreat from San Francisco following his meeting with Nyota had been swift. He left the city early the following morning and quit the planet entirely two days later. However, before his departure he tasked his summer aide with an important task.

Spock sat down before the computer console and synched up his personal PADD. There were messages from his mother, other researchers scheduled to present at the upcoming symposium, Captain Pike and administrators from the Academy. Finally, he found the message from Cadet
Haines, the letters written across the screen in bold red print. Spock opened the message, scrolling quickly through the cadet’s superfluous introduction to read her report.

Sybok had been busy since his banishment from Vulcan. Over the past ten years, his brother had managed to amass a huge debt, owing exorbitant sums to various gaming establishments, loan sharks and bookies across two quadrants. There were outstanding warrants for his arrest on Delta and Rigel for unpaid child support. Most troubling was a bounty placed on his life by the Orion syndicate.

Spock was unimpressed by Starfleet’s admissions department. Thorough background checks were standard requirements for admission to the Academy and only applicants with sterling records were granted entrance into the officer training program. Either the Academy’s standards had deteriorated substantially since his own admission or his brother had bribed or blackmailed someone in the administration. Spock made a mental note to report his suspicions to the appropriate administrator at the start of the term. For now, he knew of another authority that would find his report to be most illuminating.

“Computer. Please locate the comm address for one Vlal Ugway.”

“Oh, Ny, I can hardly imagine how horrible you must have felt,” Gaila replied as she leaned towards the viewscreen. “Poor Spock! Poor Sybok!”

Nyota snorted through her tears. “I will grant you your pity for Spock. I abused him very badly to his face. But Sybok is certainly not poor. A poor excuse for a Vulcan, perhaps, but not one deserving of your pity.”

“You’re right,” Gaila replied. “He should have his balls severed and placed on a pike for what he did. But I can’t help thinking that there must have been something in his childhood that made him what he is today. He seemed like a good guy.”

“Well, one brother had the appearance of good while the other possessed all of the actual virtues. How could I have been so foolish, Gaila?”

“How could you have known that Sybok was a villain? He had us all fooled, Nyota…well, except for McCoy. Have you told him any of this?”

“Oh goodness no,” Nyota groaned as she slumped down further into her seat. “I don’t think I could bear his smug self-righteousness. I am doing a fine job of beating myself up right now. I don’t need Len’s gruff ‘I told you so’ right now.”

“I doubt McCoy would rub your face in it. He loves you too much for that. If anything he’d try and hunt down Sybok and fight him. You are saving McCoy from getting his ass kicked by a mad Vulcan.”

Nyota laughed lightly in reply. “I suppose you are right. Len can be a bit protective.”

“Plus, he was using that psychic Vulcan hoodoo on you,” Gaila continued. “Gosh. I can’t imagine having someone just crawling around in your head like that messing you about.”

“I was barely aware that he was doing it,” Nyota sighed. “I want to believe that if I wasn’t under his influence I wouldn’t have believed all of his lies. But like you said, he had all of us fooled.”

“Ugh,” Gaila shuddered. “I did let him kiss my hand once. Maybe he tried that freaky shit on me
“Not all Vulcans are like that. Not even all v’tosh’ka’tur are like Sybok,” Nyota replied. “Vulcans are taught to avoid casual physical contact. The touching of minds is an intimate act that is not treated lightly.”

“Then it must have been a big deal for Spock to meld with you,” Gaila replied, a dreamy expression overtaking her previous look of disgust.

“I cannot begin to describe what it was like to meld with Spock,” Uhura smiled sadly before shaking her head. “I detested him so much. He seemed so cold, but underneath that cold exterior is such a beautiful spirit. He loved me, Gaila. I know that now without a doubt. I mean, my taste buds burst and my skin tingled with it. I thought I’d suffocate because it was so thick about me.”

Uhura paused and wiped at her quickly moistening eyes. “I’m sure I’ll never experience that again.”

Gaila regarded her friend thoughtfully for several long moments, her brow creased in concern. “Do you love him?”

Uhura snorted. “I don’t know. Perhaps. I just know that he is the best of men. It breaks my heart that he is out there somewhere thinking ill of me…if he even thinks about me at all.”

“Oh, Nyota,” Gaila whined. “From what you’ve told me, I am sure that he loves you still. How could he not?”

“Maybe. But I don’t deserve his consideration.”

“I wish I was there to hug you, chica,” Gaila replied, her own eyes brimming with tears.

“Oh, look at the pair of us,” Nyota replied, smiling through her tears. “Aren’t we a sight? Let’s talk about happier subjects. Tell me all about how you are doing. Are you enjoying your internship on Memory Alpha?”

Gaila’s face brightened. “Yes, I am learning so much. Their computer systems are so advanced. I am helping put the final touches on a research paper on the next generation of binary sequencing. They’re even letting me accompany the team to Andoria for the Federation Scientific Symposium.”

The two friends chatted amicably for another ten minutes before Gaila had to end the conversation in order to prepare for work. Afterwards, Nyota lay back in her bed, staring up at the ceiling and considering their conversation. She wondered if Gaila was correct about the Commander’s feelings for her. She had read him accurately before. However, Nyota could not help but feel that Gaila was wrong this time.

Just as she was about to fall asleep, her commlink chimed. Nyota groaned before crawling out of bed. Her pique vanished when the face of her Aunt Tonya filled the screen.

“Hello Ny-ny! I didn’t wake you up, did I?”

“No, Auntie. How are you?”

“Oh, I am doing fine, sweetie. Work at the firm and running after the twins is keeping me on my toes. But, the activity keeps me young. I am afraid I have some bad news sweetie.”

Uhura’s face fell.
“The business has really been picking up lately and your uncle thinks it best that we cut our annual summer trip short. So, we won’t be able to go to Betazed.”

Uhura tried to hide her disappointment. She loved spending time with her Aunt and Uncle and was sad that their time together would be cut short.

“But, take heart, Ny-ny,” her aunt continued. “We’re going to Vulcan instead. I have an old friend who lives in Shi’kar that I haven’t seen in years. We’ll be staying at her compound and getting a real taste of local life. It’s going to be spectacular.”

Uhura’s eyes widened. “Vulcan?”

“Yes, sweetie,” Aunt Tonya replied. “Trust me, you’ll love it. The weather is similar to Kenya and Mandy is a spectacular hostess.”

“Mandy?” Nyota asked, the hairs on the back of her neck rising.

“Amanda Grayson. We were roommates in college. She’s married to Ambassador Sarek, so we’ll really get the royal treatment…”

Nyota stopped listening at the mention of Ambassador Sarek, bile rising in her throat. When Aunt Tonya ended the communication, Nyota woodenly stood from her chair and flopped back on her bed. Her summer was suddenly looking a lot less appealing.

**Glossary:**

*shiny* = good, great, Slang from Firefly/Serenity a show and movie I love like fire.

*Krei* = cousin, female

*Ta’al* = Vulcan hand salute
Spock exited the lecture hall, his PADD tucked securely under one arm. His presentation had been superb, as he expected. His theories on tenth generation artificial intelligence were well received by his colleagues. What he had not expected was the deluge of thoughtful and informative questions and suggestions that had followed his presentation. The lecture was scheduled to conclude at 1200 hours, in time for the mid-day meal break.

It was now 1400 hours. Spock did not mind foregoing the afternoon meal in favor of such stimulating discourse. Vulcans did not require more than two meals per day for optimal performance. Spock had taken to consuming the mid day meal in deference to his human colleagues at the Academy. However, he had scheduled to take the midday meal with Shuran and Spock was always mindful of his commitments. He was able to send Shuran a quick text message rescheduling their rendezvous for 1415 hours. Even with the extra two-hour allotment, Spock was forced to end the discussion in favor of further subspace communications at a later date.

Just as he rounded the corner on his way to the turbolift, Spock was forced to come to a sudden stop to avoid a collision. His new companion was not as aware of the imminent danger. Lacking Spock’s acute reflexes, the Orion woman stumbled and would have collided with the ground had Spock not caught her mid fall.

“Commander Spock!” Gaila exclaimed as she quickly recovered herself and came to attention.

“Cadet Gaila,” Spock greeted her with a curt nod. “You should be more mindful of your surroundings if you insist on traversing the halls at such a high rate of speed.”

“Yes sir. Sorry sir. I am late for my next lecture…” Gaila stammered, her green cheeks flushed.

“Excuses are unproductive, Cadet.”

“Yes sir. Sorry sir,” Gaila stammered.

“As you were.”

Gaila nodded tersely before continuing toward her lecture. Spock watched the cadet’s retreat. He was not aware that she would be in attendance, as her name had not been listed among the other 450 attendees. Spock conjectured that Shuran was also unaware of her presence at the conference. He knew that his friend was still besotted with the Orion woman and that news of her presence at the conference would be most welcome. While Spock now knew that his previous assumptions regarding the depth of Gaila’s feelings for his friend had been in error, he still felt that it would be unwise for Shuran to revive their relationship.

Yet, Spock could not discount Nyota’s previous censure regarding his highhanded approach to his friends. Surely, Shuran possessed enough wisdom to carefully consider the pros and cons of pursuing a relationship with a cadet—an Orion no less—and make an informed decision. While Spock felt that he had not been in error to point out the clear disadvantages of such an alliance, he would be remiss in concealing Cadet Gaila’s presence at the conference.

Chapter 17
Nyota sat curled on a low settee in her parent’s den, a steaming mug of tea cupped in her hands, as she listened to her friend enthuse about one Lieutenant-Commander Shuran. Nyota could not prevent the broad smile that graced her face as she listened to Gaila talk about her reunion with Shuran. Nyota had not seen Gaila so happy or energetic in such a long time.

“I thought I would die after I ran into Commander Spock,” Gaila said as she launched into another recitation of her chance encounter with the Vulcan professor. “He was so handsome and strong. Did you know he picked me up off of the floor with one hand? It was like I weighed a pound. Too bad you sent that hot piece of meat packing…”

Uhura’s smile faltered. Her shift in mood did not go unnoticed by Gaila.

“Oh, I am sorry Ny-Ny! I didn’t mean to bring up that whole messy business. I just got carried away.”

“It’s alright, Gaila,” Nyota sighed as she picked absently at her blouse. “You don’t have to walk on egg shells around me. I am just happy that you and Shuran are on the mend.”

Gaila’s bright smile returned. “Well, we aren’t quite back to where we were. I had to give him a little hell for disappearing on me like he did. But, he is awfully good at groveling.” She wagged her eyebrows suggestively.

“Please, spare me the details!”

“What?” Gaila exclaimed feigning innocence. “He gives me foot massages.”

“Hmmm.”

“Very erotic foot massages,” Gaila added with a smirk. “You know there is this certain spot in the middle of the arch on the Orion foot that causes the most delicious sensations…”

“Ewww,” Nyota cried nearly dropping her mug. “I’ve given you foot massages! All those times when you complained about sore feet from breaking in a new pair of boots was just an excuse for something kinky.”

Gaila laughed deviously.

“I’m just messing with you, Ny. I’d never take advantage of you in that way. Besides, you have to press really hard on the pressure point and you just don’t have the strength.”

Gaila laughed at Nyota’s incredulous look before sobering.

“He has asked about you, you know.”

“Shuran?”

Gaila rolled her eyes. “No dumb, dumb. Spock.”

“Oh. About what?”

“The usual. About your health and what not. He has been very solicitous and almost kind to me. I think you are the reason for that.”

Uhura shifted in her seat, pulling her thin shawl tighter around her shoulders. No matter how
“So, the big dinner is tonight. Are you ready to meet the parents?”

Gaila glared at her friend, not fooled one bit by her attempt to change the subject.

“Just a little,” she replied. “But Shuran assures me that his parent’s are very eager to meet me, especially the Ambassador. But you know me, no one intimidates me.”

“Have you packed a hypospray of digestive aid just in case?”

“I am sure that the Ambassador’s table will have plenty of items suitable for the Orion palette,” Gaila replied. “Besides, I sort of developed a taste for Andorian food. I really hope the Ambassador serves dergy puffs.”

“Dergy puffs?” Nyota asked, her face scrunching up in distaste. “What on earth are those?”

“They are these pastry like concoctions popular with the Aenobian people on the southern hemisphere. Imagine a crunchy sour donut filled with a spicy anchovy hazelnut cream with a tangerine dipping sauce,” Gaila replied, her pink tongue darting over her orange stained lips in anticipation.

Uhura nearly gagged. “Nothing about that description sounds remotely appealing.”

“Chica, where is your sense of adventure? I thought you wanted to be part of the flagship of the fleet encountering new civilizations? And you can’t even handle a little Andorian pastry.”

“My sense of adventure is firmly intact, thank you,” Uhura replied with a sniff. “I’ll happily try anything once. But I know for a fact that Andorian food and I do not mix.”

Gaila laughed. “Do you remember that time we went to that Tellerite diner that opened up spring quarter?”

“Oh, goodness,” Nyota groaned.

“I’ll never forget the look on your face when they brought out that platter of candied puka grubs with a dung dipping sauce.”

“I’ll never forget the smell,” Nyota added.

“You…you took one look at that platter and ran out of that shop like a bear was on your tail!”

Gaila laughed, her cheeks flushing in her mirth while Nyota shook her head.

“And do you remember when Aunt Tonya visited us and took us to Shirley’s Soul Food Café? You ordered the chitterlings and hogshead cheese…”

“Oh merciful one,” Gaila laughed as she shook her head. “I thought that was the best thing I’d ever eaten since chocolate mousse until Auntie explained to me what parts of what animal I was happily consuming.”

Nyota’s smile broadened. “You turned purple…I still don’t understand how you managed that…before you pushed me out of the booth onto the floor and ran to the bathroom.”

“That’s still my favorite restaurant,” Gaila said once their laughter died down. “Speaking of Aunt Tonya, your big trip is right around the corner. I know I can’t wait to babysit my favorite human cousins.”
Nyota smiled. “Apparently Little Ray-ray and twins have been bugging Auntie every day about when they’ll get to see you. They never get that excited when it is just me they are coming to see.”

“That is because you are too strict with them,” Gaila replied. “Plus you aren’t green. I think Ray-ray is still fascinated by the whole green-chick thing.”

“You mean enthralled. I think he has a crush on you.”

Gaila chuckled. “I know. He asked me to marry him last summer, you know.”

“I hope you let him down easy.”

“I couldn’t break his little heart like that. He is so adorable with his lisp and peanut shaped head,” Gaila replied with a grin. “I told him to ask me again when he was thirty.”

“Well, Mom will certainly appreciate the help.”

“Are you ready for your trip to Vulcan?”

Nyota frowned. “As ready as I’ll ever be.”

“Well, I have a bit of news that might be a relief to you. Shuran informs me that he and Spock are planning to return to the Academy shortly after the conference ends. Apparently, Commander Spock has been so inspired by the conference that he can’t wait to get back to his lab to try some new experiments.”

Nyota perked up. “So he won’t be visiting his parents this summer break?”

“Nope,” Gaila replied, loudly popping the “p.” “Also, it is pretty rare for Spock to go home anyway. There was some falling out between him and his father a few years back.”

Nyota felt an odd mixture of relief and sadness. She could now look to her coming vacation with some anticipation knowing that she could avoid encountering the commander for another month at least. Yet, she wondered at the cause of the familial discord that kept Spock from his childhood home. She wondered if their estrangement was related to Sybok’s betrayal. However, Spock and his father appeared to be on one accord regarding his banishment from Vulcan. Nyota could not imagine not being welcome at her parent’s home.

How lonely Spock must be. He effectively had no brother and was not welcome at his parent’s home. He had few friends at Starfleet other than Shuran and Captain Pike. Most of the student body and a good portion of the faculty thought he was a cold, emotionless jerk. However, Nyota knew the warmth and depth of emotion that lay beneath his stone façade. She felt ashamed once again for her harsh rejection of his suit. She did not know if she would have given him a different reply knowing what she did now, but Nyota imagined that the manner of her reply would have been quite different.

Nyota stood on the front porch, her arm linked with Gaila’s as they waited for the arrival of Aunt Tonya and Uncle Jomo. Her Uncle Jomo was notoriously afraid of using the teleporter, so her father had to drive to the Nairobi spaceport to pick them up.
“I wonder if their flight was late,” her mother said as she stepped out onto the porch to join them, her hands gripping a tray laden with cool water and mango slices.

“I checked their flight status a half hour ago, Mrs. U,” Gaila replied as she picked up one of the glasses of water. “There was no mention of flight delays.”

“You know little Keisha,” Nyota replied. “She probably begged Baba to stop for camel milk ice cream as soon as they pulled out of the airport.”

“And Mr. U hates for people to eat in his flitter, especially messy children,” Gaila added. “Keisha and Kaylee are notoriously slow eaters.”

“Throw in another bathroom break and you have an hour’s delay.”

Penda Uhura sighed. “I suppose you girls are right. I just can’t wait to see my brother Jomo.”

Nyota reached over and squeezed her mother’s hand just as a familiar hum signaled the arrival of her father’s flitter. Her mother clapped her hands happily and jumped from one foot to another. Nyota laughed at her mother’s excitement before following the shorter woman off of the porch as she ran towards the landing flitter.

“Little sister,” Uncle Jomo’s voice boomed as he exited the flitter. “How plump you are getting.”

Penda poked her brother in the belly. “And how round you are, big brother.”

“The better to hug you with, Penny,” he laughed before catching the smaller woman in a big bear hug, lifting her feet off of the ground as she laughed.

Nyota watched her uncle and mother in delight before the sound of squealing children drew her attention elsewhere.

“Cousin Enie! Cousin Enie,” the twins shouted as they ran towards Nyota, their skinny little arms wrapping around her legs when they reached her.

Nyota smiled as she bent down to hug her cousins. “Keisha and Kaylee, how big you are getting. I hardly recognized you,” she cooed.

The twins giggled.

“Mommy says that soon we will be as tall as you Enie,” Kaylee replied.

“I lost two teeth, Enie,” Keisha added, sticking the tip of her pink tongue through the gap once filled by her two front teeth. “Soon I’ll have all my big-girl teeth!”

Nyota laughed as she gently pet both girls, careful not to squish the afro puff arranged neatly on the tops of their heads. “Where is your brother?”

“He fell asleep because he is a baby,” Kaylee replied. “But Keisha and I are big girls, so we stayed up the entire trip.”

Nyota looked up in time to see her Aunt Tonya step out of the flitter with the aid of her father, a groggy Raymond clutched in her arms.

“Time to wake up, little man,” Aunt Tonya said as she jostled the child. “We’re at Aunt Penda’s. Your Uncle Tobasi and Cousin Nyota are here with Gaila.”

“Gaila,” Raymond slurred as he stirred in his mother’s arms. “Where’s Gaila?”
“I’m right here, Peanut,” Gaila replied laughingly as she stepped towards the boy, giving Aunt Tonya a quick peck on the cheek.

“I got a flower for your hair.” Raymond opened his little fist to reveal a crushed lily, the white petals bruised with the indentations of his fingers.

“He refused to let it go the entire way here,” Aunt Tonya said. “He wouldn’t trust anyone with his present for Gaila.”

“It’s lovely, Peanut,” Gaila said as she took the crumpled blossom from his hand.

Raymond smiled sleepily before burrowing his face back into the crook of his mother’s neck.

Gaila and Nyota hung back as the family party repaired to the house to escape the late afternoon sun.

“See, I told you he has a crush,” Nyota teased as she took her friend by the arm. “You are going to have your hands full when he reaches 30.”

“Something tells me that in twenty-five years he won’t find me so appealing.”

Nyota laughed as they entered the house together. The next four days would prove to be very entertaining. As the sounds of shouting children and her parent’s laughter reached her ears, she wished that she could trade places with Gaila.

“You are anxious, Ny-Ny,” Aunt Tonya said, interrupting Nyota from her contemplation of the stars outside of their cabin window.

They were only three days away from Vulcan and Nyota could no longer hide her trepidation. While Gaila’s news that Spock would not be on Vulcan during her brief sojourn there, she still could not help but be fearful of her reception by Spock’s family. Of the billions of sentient beings living and working on the Vulcan, why did her aunt have to be bosom buddies with Amanda Grayson?

“I guess I am just nervous about meeting the Ambassador,” Nyota lied.

Aunt Tonya settled on the small settee next to Nyota, putting one arm around her shoulders. Nyota leaned into the embrace, taking in her aunt’s comforting lavender scent.

“Ambassador Sarek is very used to humans, Ny. He is the ambassador to Earth and married to a human, after all. Besides, I’ve told you that Amanda is really looking forward to having us stay at her home. So, will you tell me what is really worrying you?”

Nyota sat up with a dramatic sigh. “I may have had a rather big disagreement with the Ambassador’s son.”

“I see. Amanda did mention that her son was in Starfleet. Was he an instructor of yours?”

“Yes. I had a seminar with him. I’ll just say that we clashed quite a bit and our relationship did not end on the best terms.”
“Well, I doubt that some academic spat would make Amanda think any less of you. I am sure that you are worried for nothing.”

Nyota threw her aunt a smile that did not quite reach her eyes. “I am sure you are right, Auntie.”

“Good. Now let’s go find your Uncle Jomo. It’s almost time for dinner and I’ll need your help prying him away from the card tables on the entertainment deck.”

Nyota took a deep breath as she stepped out of the climate-controlled spaceport into the heat of the Vulcan afternoon. The last two days of their journey had been spent in their cabins acclimating to the higher gravity that they would experience planetside. Uhura briefly wished that she had also thought to adjust the temperature of her cabin. While she had grown up in a hot and dry climate in Kenya, the heat of Vulcan was still uncomfortable for her. Fortunately, Lady Amanda’s servant was already waiting for them in the designated spot, standing gravely by a luxury flitter.

Aunt Tonya whistled. “Mandy is certainly doing well for herself, isn’t she, Jomo?”

Her uncle smiled. “Do you regret marrying a poor professor rather than a prince, Tonya?”

“Not for a second,” Aunt Tonya replied, before placing a quick peck on Uncle Jomo’s cheek.

Nyota’s eyes darted to Lady Amanda’s servant who stood silently observing them from his place by the flitter. Nyota knew that such a public display was considered a tremendous breach of decorum. However, if the servant was offended, his placid features did not betray his feelings.

“Welcome to Shi’Kahr, Mr. and Mrs. Uhura,” the servant said as he bent his head towards them. “I am Seved, servant of Ambassador Sarek and Lady Amanda.”

Uncle Jomo raised his hand in the ta’al as he deftly replied in Vulcan, “Ne-shau.”

Seved gave Uncle Jomo a minute nod of his head. “Stariben-tu muhul na’komihn.”

“Nemaiyo,” Uncle Jomo replied uncertainly as he moved to assist Seved in loading their luggage into the flitter.

“Your uncle has been practicing with a Vulcan phrasebook for the last two months,” Aunt Tonya whispered to Nyota as she threaded her arm through hers. “All he can say is ‘hello,’ ‘thank you,’ and ‘live long and prosper.’ Jomo didn’t understand a word he said.”

Uhura giggled and quickly hid her smile behind her hand at her uncle’s curious glance. Nyota and Tonya were the linguists in the family. Her uncle was much more comfortable with equations than he was with alien tongues.

Nyota spent the brief flitter ride staring out of the window with wide eyes. Shi’Kahr was a beautiful city. White stone buildings built a millennium ago old shared the skyline with modern structures of metal and glass, their harsh angles and jutting roofs harkening back to a time when Vulcan culture was as harsh and untamed as the mountainous desert landscape. Modern skyscrapers rose in elegant spires high above the city streets, their glass walls reflecting the red earth and orange tinted sky. The streets were largely deserted, save for a few Vulcans who braved the unforgiving mid-day sun, walking sedately in flowing robes, their heads held high beneath elegant parasols.

Soon they left the city proper, trading skyscrapers for low-lying estates surrounded by farmland.
crisscrossed with clear irrigation pipes. In the distance Nyota could make out a mountain range, its white tops towering high above the red earth.

“It is a beautiful country, is it not, Enie?” Uncle Jomo asked from his seat across from her.

Nyota returned her gaze to the window, watching the harsh landscape that wasn’t so alien.

“Very.”

“We are now entering the ancestral lands of the Sch T’gai clan,” Seved informed them over the intercom. “We shall arrive at the main abode in 22.75 minutes.”

Nyota shared a quick look with her aunt.

“Just how much land does Amanda’s family own?” Uncle Jomo asked, voicing Nyota’s unasked question.

“Apparently a great deal,” Tonya murmured as she looked out of the window.

“Ponfo mirran,” Sybok shouted as he entered his apartment. He ripped off his leather overcoat and flung the offending article of clothing onto the floor.

Verna Ugway, the very wealthy and vapid Kriosian woman whom he had so carefully wooed had suddenly broken off their engagement. Her father, Lorvid Ugway had threatened to cut her off from her inheritance if she continued their relationship. Apparently, Mr. Ugway had cause to doubt Sybok’s good character. No amount of pleading or mental persuasion would change his situation. Verna was at the mercy of her father’s whims until the old man died. Twenty-five million credits had just slipped through his fingers.

Sybok punched the wall, grimacing as the plaster crumbled underneath his fist. He could not understand how his carefully laid plans could end so poorly. Lorvid Ugway was even more stupid and unsuspecting than his daughter. Sybok had no need to mentally persuade Lorvid Ugway into accepting him as a future son-in-law. A few obsequious compliments had assured that Sybok was in his good graces. Lorvid did not even think to doubt the background Sybok had crafted for himself; that is until recently. Someone must have meddled in his affairs.

Sybok stormed into his kitchenette and removed a bottle of Romulan ale from the cabinet. He hastily uncorked the bottle and took a generous swig of the sapphire blue liquid. The liquor burned down his throat.

He could think of only one person who knew of his engagement to Verna and had the knowledge and motive to expose him.

“Am I to have no good thing, p’sa’kai,” Sybok snarled as he wiped a hand across his mouth.

Sybok downed the entire contents of the bottle as he stalked back into the living room, ignoring the fire that pooled in his belly. He threw the empty bottle against the wall and sat heavily in an armchair, his brow creased as he thought of a fitting revenge. An image of his little wide-eyed cadet with raven hair and sable skin brought a cruel smile to his lips. He rose from his seat, his mind devising a new plan of action as he picked up his discarded coat and walked out of the door.
“You will regret the day that you crossed me, p'sa’kai.”

**Glossary:**

*Ta'al* = hand gesture used as a greeting by Vulcans

*Ne-shau* = Greetings

*Stariben-tu muhul na'komihn* = Vulcan for “You speak well for a human.”

*Nemaiyo* = thank you

*Shi’Kahr* = major Vulcan city

*Ponfo mirran* = Vulcan expletive

*Pi’sa’kai* = little brother

To read about chitterlings check out this [link](#).
To read about hogshead cheese, go [here](#).
Chapter 18

Nyota waited to disembark the flitter, watching as Aunt Tonya stepped down the stairs with the assistance of Uncle Jomo. The Sch T'gai house was just as impressive as their lands. Nyota looked up in awe at the graceful stone arches that framed the entrance to the estate. The walls of the four-story structure were carved from a pale red stone with several balconies breaking up the expanse. A variety of green and purple hued succulents lined the mosaic-tiled path to the front door.

"Tonya!" A happy cry drew Nyota from her inspection of the house to the figure of a middle aged human woman elegantly hurrying towards them.

"Mandy!" her Aunt Tonya cried as she released her husband's hand to run towards her friend. The pair met in a fierce hug punctuated by happy murmurs of delight.

Nyota watched the reunion with a broad smile of her own.

"Miss Uhura," a calm male voice drew her eye to the Vulcan standing at the base of the flitter steps. "May I assist you in disembarking."

"Of course, nemaiyo," Nyota replied as she took his offered arm.

Nyota stepped down from the flitter and walked towards the embracing pair. Uncle Jomo stood off to the side watching with an amused grin.

"Amanda," Aunt Tonya began once Amanda finally released her. "I'd like you to meet my family. This is my husband Jomo Uhura."

"Ne-shau," Jomo greeted with a bow.

"Pssh," Amanda replied as she waived away his formality. "Please, no bowing. Come give me a hug! It is so nice to finally meet you."

Uncle Jomo smiled broadly as he complied, stepping into the petite woman's outstretched arms.

"And this is my niece, Nyota," Tonya continued as she pushed Nyota towards the woman. "She just completed her first year at Starfleet. She is a linguist as well."

"Oh, the famous Ms. Uhura," Amanda said as she turned her broad smile towards Nyota.

Nyota's smile slipped.

"I've heard so much about you from your aunt," Amanda continued to Nyota's visible relief. "Aren't you just lovely. Come. You get a hug too."

Nyota laughed lightly as she embraced the woman, suddenly at ease.

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady Amanda," Nyota said once Amanda released her.

"It is nice to meet you as well," Amanda replied as she looped her arm through hers. "Tonya has told me that you were in one of my son's classes. It has been ages since I have seen him. How is he doing? Does he look well? He was always such a skinny thing."
Uhura blushed. "I had the pleasure of seeing your son a month ago. He looked very well. Very well indeed."

"I see," Amanda said with a mysterious smile before turning towards Tonya. "Well, welcome to D’H’riset. Let’s get you all inside where it is nice and cool. Well…relatively cool."

Amanda gave them a brief tour of the guest wing before showing them to their rooms. Their quarters were well appointed, although not lavishly decorated. Nyota found her room to be very comfortable and inviting with cool seagreen walls and a balcony that overlooked a rock garden studded with succulents. After they had freshened up from their journey, the Uhuras joined Amanda for a light lunch and a more extensive tour of the house that would be their home for the next month.

Uhura observed Lady Amanda closely during the tour. She appeared to be well recovered from her ordeal with Sybok; she was all brightness and levity. She wondered how such a warm and affectionate woman won the love of the stoic Vulcan ambassador. Then she remembered Commander Spock’s declaration of love and she no longer thought it so extraordinary. Uhura’s heart clenched at the thought of the commander and she felt something akin to regret as Amanda turned her bright smile towards her once more. Nyota briefly allowed herself to imagine what it would have been like to be led on this tour as a daughter-in-law rather than as a temporary guest. However, Nyota soon shook herself free from such thoughts. It would not do to dwell on what could never be.

"And this is my private sitting room," Lady Amanda said as she led them into a cozy rose hued parlor that overlooked the rock garden. "This is where I come when I need a break from being Vulcan."

Uncle Jomo and Aunt Tonya began examining Amanda’s rows of old paper books as Nyota was drawn to a collection of holos. There she found holos of Amanda when she was a young woman as well as holos of various people Nyota assumed to be family members. Nyota examined a picture of Amanda standing next to a serious Ambassador Sarek in what appeared to be her wedding gown. Nyota could not help but to smile at the holos of a very pregnant Amanda and of her and Sarek cradling a small infant. Nyota reached out with tentative fingers towards a few holos of Spock as a young boy before drawing back her hand at the ridiculousness of her actions. However, Nyota could not prevent herself from reaching out to pick up a holo of Spock standing beside his parents as a young man.

"Isn’t he a handsome boy," Amanda said as she came to stand beside Nyota.

Uhura started before replacing the holo on the shelf.

"Yes," she replied before wincing at her statement.

Amanda laughed lightly. "But, you must agree that that is an awful sweater."

Nyota tilted her head as she examined the dark brown shapeless garment that Spock wore.

"It is…different," Nyota offered diplomatically.

"It is monstrous," Amanda replied with a laugh. "I can say so because I am the one who knitted it. Either my son lacks an eye for fashion or he just really loves his mother."

Nyota smiled as she remembered the gown he picked out for her a few months ago. "I think it is more likely that he just loves his mother."

"Yes," Amanda replied. "I’d have to agree. He never said as much to me, but he would
demonstrate his affections in his own quiet way. He wore that sweater when he went to stand before the council of the Science Academy to hear their verdict on his application for admission. Neither he nor Sarek would tell me why he turned them down that day—I was sure he was set on attending the VSA. But, I can't say that I'm displeased by his choice. I know it is rather illogical of me, but I'm very proud of my son.”

Nyota continued to admire the holo as Amanda turned to answer a question from Jomo about her book collection.

"How little I really know him,” Nyota whispered to herself.

On the fourth day of their visit, Amanda took Nyota and her aunt into the capital to go shopping. Lady Amanda seemed to think it a rare treat indeed and planned for them to have a late lunch in the Terran District complete with girly martinis as a way to end their day. Amanda proved to be a very generous host, insisting on paying for all of their purchases. By the time they entered their last shop for the day, Aunt Tonya had purchased three traditional Vulcan gowns, three tunics for Jomo, four dresses for Kaylee and Keisha, a traditional school uniform and suit for Raymond and several pairs of shoes. Amanda purchased two reams of fine silk, three gowns, a robe for her husband Sarek and two parasols. Nyota was more restrained in her purchases. She opted to acquire one pair of faux leather boots that fit the requirements of her Starfleet uniform, two pairs of earrings, a shawl and a cropped silk jacket to match one of her little black dresses back on campus.

"I insist that you buy at least two Vulcan gowns, Nyota," Lady Amanda said as they entered the last scheduled shop for the day. "I know you think it extravagant, but I am sure they will be useful. If my husband returns early from his trip to Elba, we may host a formal dinner.”

Nyota reluctantly agreed much to the woman's delight. Nyota had to admit that shopping with Lady Amanda was a real treat. They were treated like royalty in every store that they entered. It was obvious that Amanda frequented these shops regularly and that they were well aware of her wealth. There was no trying on of clothes here. The three ladies sat and sipped herbal tea as the clerks picked out clothing for them that would then be modeled on holograms or live models.

"Oh, this gown would look lovely on you, Nyota," Aunt Tonya said as the clerk presented them with a floor length gown in deep red.

"That would look well," Amanda agreed. "This is an Eradinus original. She is my favorite designer."

Nyota looked at the dress with wide eyes. "I already own this gown," she replied.

"Really, Ny-ny? But this dress is so expensive," Tonya asked in Deltan as the store clerk watched with a critical eye.

Nyota blushed and glanced at Amanda who watched her with a knowing smile.

"It was a gift, Auntie," Nyota replied in the same tongue.

"Perhaps a different Eradinus design would be acceptable?" the clerk asked.

"Yes. By all means," Amanda replied before the clerk left them to fetch another dress.

"Who would give you such a gift, Ny?" Tonya asked.

"Auntie, really. It was no big deal…" Nyota demurred as she avoided Amanda's eye.

"Nyota, that gown costs three thousand credits..."
"Tonya, have you seen this necklace?" Amanda called in Standard as she sat peering at a selection of jewelry displayed by another store clerk. "This would look so well with the dark green gown you just purchased."

Nyota sighed in relief as Aunt Tonya's attention was drawn towards the jewelry selection. However, her relief was short lived as her eyes met those of Lady Amanda. The woman sat smiling at her mysteriously, a calculating gleam in her brown eyes.

As the days drew into weeks, Nyota found herself enjoying her time on Vulcan more and more. Lady Amanda was an excellent host. Their days were filled with a variety of interesting activities tailored to their individual interests. Amanda had taken them on a tour of the Vulcan Science Academy where the ladies were able to sit in on an advanced linguistics lecture while Uncle Jomo was given an in-depth tour of the chemistry labs. They attended the opera in Shi'K'har, much to Nyota's delight, and a performance of the Shi'K'har symphony that was more to Aunt Tonya's taste. Amanda, with the assistance of Seved, even took them on tours of the planet's more famous natural wonders. They toured Vulcan's Forge by flitter where they saw a pack of wild sehlat feeding on some unfortunate creature. They sunbathed and swam in the Voroth Sea and went for a dinner cruise after sunset. The bioluminescent whale-like creatures that swam alongside their skiff captivated Nyota. They even went for a short hike on Mount Tar'Hana, an active volcano visible from the estate. Nyota found herself having such an enjoyable trip that she almost forgot that she was vacationing at Spock's boyhood home. As she sat on the balcony of her suite nursing a glass of iced tea as she enjoyed a rare evening breeze, Nyota allowed herself to wonder what it would be like to call such a place her home.

"Are you certain you won't come with us, Nyota?" Lady Amanda asked as she stood outside of her waiting flitter the next afternoon. "I know you'd just love Professor T'Mar's lecture on 12th century Denubian syntax."

"I'm sure, Amanda. I'm still knackered from yesterday's hike. I think I'll just stay here and rest."

Lady Amanda frowned before favoring her with a resigned sigh. "Alright, dear. If you need anything at all, just ask T'Lyng. And if you get bored of sitting around the house, feel free to take the red flitter for a spin. T'Lyng has the access codes."

"Thank you, Amanda," Nyota replied as she accepted a hug. "Have fun Aunt Tonya and Uncle Jomo!"

Nyota waved to the departing flitter before turning back towards the house. She had been honest when she told Amanda that she was too tired for another lecture and round of sightseeing. While she would love to hear Professor T'Mar's lecture, she was anxious to have a moment to herself. She wanted nothing more than to go for a nice long swim where she could stretch her tired limbs. During their tour of the grounds, Amanda showed them an artificial waterfall and pool that Sarek built for her as a wedding gift. The indoor oasis featured a climate-controlled pool suitable for swimming laps and a garden of Terran flowering plants and fruit trees. It was truly an extravagant gift for a planet where water was a precious resource. Nyota supposed that the gesture was rather illogical, however, she could not disapprove of the ambassador's actions. Love was rarely logical.

After a light breakfast, Nyota borrowed Amanda's red flitter and drove out to the pool. It was a short flitter ride, the pool being located about five miles from the main house. Nyota enjoyed watching the passing landscape of irrigated fields, red sand desert and stone plains. As she pulled up to the pool, she could not help but smile at the thought of a young Spock sneaking off for a swim in his mother's private oasis. Amanda had regaled Nyota and Tonya with many stories of the commander's exploits as a headstrong and inquisitive young Vulcan. Selek had told her many of the same tales. Then she had found them to be quite incredible, but after meeting his mother and
seeing his home, they no longer seemed so extraordinary.

Nyota stepped into the enclosure and took a deep breath, the scent of roses, lavender and honeysuckle teasing her nose. She stepped to the edge of the pool and stripped down to her bathing suit before stepping into the gently lapping waters. The water was comfortably warm. She waded out towards the center of the pool until her toes no longer touched the pebbled bottom. She took a leisurely swim out towards the far wall where the artificial waterfall thundered into the pool before turning onto her back to float aimlessly. Nyota enjoyed herself for about an hour before she felt the skin of her fingers and toes begin to prune. She slowly began to make her way back. As she drifted along the edge of the pool, she allowed her eyes to slide shut.

"Nyota," a deep male voice rumbled.

Uhura's eyes shot open. Her eyes connected with a pair of pale green feet, muscled calves and thighs sprinkled with dark hair before landing on an almost indecently small pair of swimming briefs. Nyota found her gaze lingering there momentarily before making the trip up a bare torso that shimmered with a fine sheen of perspiration to take in the surprised visage of Commander Spock.

"Spock?" Nyota blinked and looked again. Perhaps she was hallucinating.

"Ms. Uhura," Spock replied, the tips of his ears turning a bright green.

Nyota gasped and promptly went under with a flurry of waving limbs and splashing water. She came up spluttering and coughing, having swallowed a good deal of water, before she went under again. Suddenly she found herself caught up in a pair of strong arms, slung over a broad shoulder and carried fireman style out of the water.

Spock deposited her onto a lounge chair and began to gently pat her back as she continued to cough.

"Do you require medical assistance, Ms. Uhura?" Spock asked as he handed her a towel.

"No, thank you. I'm fine," Nyota mumbled as she scrubbed her face.

"Perhaps it would be advisable for you to refrain from swimming without an escort until you have mastered the exercise," Spock continued.

Nyota dropped her towel and glared at him, a suitable insult on the tip of her tongue before she noticed the concerned set of his mouth.

"I know how to swim, Commander. I was merely startled. What are you doing here?"

Spock lifted one eyebrow before replying in a slow deliberate manner. "I live here, Ms. Uhura."

Nyota flushed. "Yes, I know that. I thought you were spending the remainder of the summer break at the Academy."

Spock's eyebrow twitched upwards once more.

"I intended to go swimming following my customary run around the estate," Spock replied.

Nyota lifted an eyebrow. "I meant on Vulcan."
"I desired to visit my mother and as I had sufficient time to make the trip to Vulcan and return prior to the start of classes, I took the opportunity. I just arrived," Spock explained. "May I ask what brings you to Vulcan and D'H'riset, Ms. Uhura?"

Nyota flushed, abashed by her rudeness. "I'm taking my annual summer trip with my Aunt and Uncle Uhura. Apparently, your mother and my aunt are old school friends. She invited my aunt to vacation here when our original plans fell through."

"Indeed," Spock replied, his eyes shifting from Uhura's face and back again. "Then, I welcome you to D'H'riset."

Spock stood and Uhura found herself averting her eyes before sneaking a quick peek at his figure.

"If you do not require further assistance, I will return to the house."

Nyota nodded her consent before recalling herself.

"Spock," she called as she stood from her seat.

Spock stopped his progress and turned to face her.

"Would you like a lift to the house? I drove your mother's flitter."

"Thank you, Ms. Uhura. That will not be necessary."

"It is at least five miles and you have no shoes."

"A pleasant jog," Spock replied before inclining his head and jogging from the room.

Nyota nodded and watched his retreat.

"What must he think of me?"

Spock arrived back at the compound and went directly to his rooms. He took a sonic shower, shaved and changed his clothes. The manner of his meeting with Ms. Uhura was wholly inappropriate. While he enjoyed seeing the cadet so skimpily attired and wet, his surprise at her presence had been so great that he momentarily took leave of his manners. When his mother had called him the week before to plead with him to visit, she failed to mention that she was entertaining house guests. As he replayed their previous conversation in his mind, he deduced that his mother was well aware of the significance of her houseguests, especially Ms. Uhura. While his mother's machinations were unfortunate, Spock could not help but be satisfied with their results. Nyota was here at his home.

Glossary:

Nemaiyo= Thank you

D'H'riset= the estate of Sarek and Amanda located on the outskirts of Shi'kahr

Holo= holographic photograph

Flitter= a flying car
Nyota sighed and dropped her forehead to rest against the polished stonewall of the sonic shower. She could barely recall how she made it back to the main house and into her rooms after her unexpected encounter with Spock.

"What must he think of me?" Nyota asked herself once more.

Nyota was sure that the entire situation must have appeared to be rather peculiar to Spock. He could easily think that it was too much of a coincidence that her aunt happened to be school friends with his mother and that they chose to vacation at his childhood home. Nyota knew the Commander to be a very private person. After he had shared so much with her during the mind meld following his painful proposal, Nyota thought it was too great a violation to then come to his own home and befriend his mother. Nyota had hoped that she could pass her vacation undetected by Commander Spock. Indeed, Gaila had given her every reason to think that he would be off planet for the duration of her visit. Nyota would have never agreed to come otherwise. She would have concocted some excuse about having to return to the Academy early or asked for extra assignments from her internship—anything to avoid the awkward situation she now found herself in.

Nyota stepped out of the shower and changed into one of the outfits she purchased during their last shopping trip—a simple traditional tunic of cream silk with a crimson belt. She left the crimson undershirt hanging in her closet. She found the Vulcan climate much too warm for more than one layer. She wondered how Lady Amanda ever adapted to be comfortable in the three or four layers common in Vulcan women's attire. Just as she finished pulling her hair up into an efficient bun, her door chime sounded.

"Come," Nyota answered.

Seved stepped into the room.

"Ms. Uhura, Master Spock requests your presence for the afternoon meal."

"Of course," Nyota replied. "I'll be there directly."

"Then I shall leave you to your preparations," Seved said with a bow before departing.

Nyota bit her lip as she turned back towards the mirror.

"I suppose there is no avoiding him," she told her reflection.

Spock paced the length of the informal dining room, stopping to readjust a place setting every few seconds. He was determined that their private lunch together would be perfect. He had given careful instructions to the cook as to what foods to prepare for the meal. During their sojourn on Theta Sigma, Spock observed the cadet carefully removing the avocado from her meal, her nose wrinkled in distaste as she contended with the green fruit. He instructed the cook to ensure that the dishes were mildly seasoned and that no valnood, an avocado-like vegetable native to Vulcan, was used in any of the dishes.

Seved had informed him that his mother and the Uhuras were not due to return to the compound until just before the dinner hour. While Spock was curious to know more about Tonya Uhura and
her friendship with his mother, he was grateful to have a few hours of the cadet's time to himself. While their last meeting had been painful for them both, Spock had spent much of the last three months meditating on the cadet's words to him:

I have never desired your affection and you have certainly bestowed yours unwillingly. I am sorry to cause you pain. I realize that expressing such...illogical emotions must have been difficult for you and repugnant to your Vulcan sensibilities. However, I suspect that the pain will be of short duration as you meditate further on my inferiorities.

While her accusations regarding his brother had been borne of ignorance, Spock felt that there was some truth to her charges regarding his own character. Perhaps he had been prideful and arrogant in his dealings with Nyota. Spock had been honest in his assessment of her suitability to be his bride. His own family and Vulcan society would expect much from whoever wed into the S'chn T'gai clan. Their family was ancient, wealthy and politically powerful. However, along with these expectations, there would be a great deal of criticism and scorn. As Spock had learned from his mother's experiences—and his own—being human, no matter the pedigree of one's clan, was enough to mark one as inferior.

Spock had thought that he had not inherited this illogical prejudice held by so many of his purportedly logical kinsmen. Spock spent most of his childhood proving to his classmates and elders that his human blood did not make him inferior. He graduated in the top one percentile of his class and was admitted to the Vulcan Science Academy with a flawless record. He completed his kahs'wan at the tender age of six years old. However, these achievements were not enough to prove his equality and suitability to the Vulcan people. The final indignity came when the council of the Vulcan Science Academy chose to slander his mother in the same breath with which they congratulated him for his achievements. Spock declined their offer of admission, choosing Starfleet Academy instead.

Indeed, Spock felt he had been immune to ascribing to irrational notions of Vulcan superiority. However, Nyota's stinging refusal showed him that despite his own experiences, his treatment of other species had been tainted with prejudice. His objection to Shuran's relationship with Gaila had been based less on the fact that she was a cadet—despite the numerous regulations he oft quoted to his friend—and more on the fact that Gaila was Orion. Spock had also thought that his own judgment on the matter was superior to his friend's in part—perhaps—to this same Vulcan pride.

Even his proposal to Nyota dripped with Vulcan superiority. While he knew that flattery would not have resulted in a more favorable outcome, he had certainly not helped matters by repeatedly pointing out that her very humanity made her an unsuitable mate. Three months of these ruminations resulted in Spock coming to one firm conclusion—his behavior had been illogical.

This realization had caused Spock no small amount of perturbation. However, Spock was thankful for the mental agitation brought by this discovery for it led him to repent and to mature. He had already taken great pains to make amends towards Shuran—admitting his mistake and seeking his forgiveness. The always-affable Shuran was more than eager to give it, especially since Gaila was very receptive to his overtures despite his neglect. Shuran frowned for twenty eight seconds before smiling brightly and crushing Spock in a hug. Spock bore the unwelcome embrace with equanimity even going so far as to pat Shuran lightly on the back.

Spock did not expect that Nyota's forgiveness would be so easily won. Nonetheless, he was determined to show her that her words had a profound impact upon him and that he had changed. If he could not earn her affection, he hoped that he could earn her respect.

Nyota worried her bottom lip as she followed a servant through the halls towards the balcony
where Spock awaited her. She did not know what she would say to him. He did not appear to be
angered by her presence at his home. Yet, Spock was a Vulcan. Even if he were enraged he
would not permit himself to show it. Still, inviting her to lunch was certainly a good sign.

"Miss Nyota Uhura," the servant announced as she arrived.

Nyota stepped around the servant and stopped short as Spock turned to face her. He was much
more modestly attired than before, his small swimming briefs traded in for a dark grey high-
necked tunic with matching grey slacks. Nyota looked down to find his feet encased in a pair of
sensible black synthetic leather shoes. Even in this simple attire, Nyota found him to be
uncommonly handsome. Then again, she always thought he looked well in his black instructor's
uniform. As Nyota took in his person, she thought it was all rather unfair. He could at least have
had the courtesy to develop a large zit on the middle of his forehead to level the playing field. She
admired the way the late afternoon sun reflected off of his silky black hair and gave his
complexion a dewy golden hue. Her eyes fell to his lips and she wondered how they were always
so perfectly pink before she noticed that they were also moving.

"Forgive me," Uhura said as she shook her head. "Would you mind repeating that, Commander?"

"Certainly," Spock replied. "I inquired as to whether the food selection met with your approval. I
hope that you excuse me for taking the liberty of ordering the meal."

Uhura's mouth formed an "oh" before she scanned the table. A steaming bowl of rice sat beside
what appeared to be a vegetable curry. A small platter of cut fruit sat to one side next to a basket
of flat bread similar to injera. Uhura looked up at Spock in surprise.

"My mother is fond of Terran Indian cuisine," Spock explained. "She insists that such dishes be
consumed in the traditional manner using bread to gather bites of food. Despite the Vulcan norm
of refraining from touching one's food, it is our household custom to provide such breads for my
mother and any human guests when other Vulcans are not present. As you most likely have
already deduced, other Vulcans would be most offended by the eating custom."

"I know that Vulcans do not touch food with their bare hands, however, I must admit that I do not
understand why it is considered so extremely offensive. None of the texts on Vulcan culture and
mores that I have read explain why."

Spock's gaze slid from hers to focus on the wall behind her. "As you know, Vulcans are touch
telepaths. The tips of our fingers are quite sensitive."

Nyota stared at him blankly. "Yes…but…"

"The tips of the fingers are erogenous zones," Spock quickly added.

"Oh," Uhura gasped in surprise. "Oh, that makes sense then."

Her mind immediately went back to her first date with Sybok at her favorite Ethiopian restaurant
on campus. She had been surprised by his choice of restaurant given Vulcan customs surrounding
dining. Sybok seemed to enjoy the meal with a peculiar relish, scooping up large portions of lentils
with injera and licking his fingertips clean. Her cheeks warmed at the realization that Sybok had
been self-pleasuring in public.

"Well," Nyota continued a little too loudly. "The food looks and smells delicious. Thank you,
Spock."

Spock nodded before pulling a chair back from the table.
"Miss Uhura," Spock said as he gestured to the seat.

Nyota smiled nervously before walking over to his side of the table and sitting in the offered chair.

"Thank you, Commander."

"Spock, if you please," he corrected as he moved to take his seat adjacent from her. "As we are far from Starfleet it is acceptable to relax formalities."

Nyota smiled as she recalled the first time he requested that she address him informally. "Of course, Spock."

"Thank you, Nyota."

The pair soon turned their attention to their plates. Nyota served herself a generous helping of the curry and rice. She tore off a piece of the flat spongy bread and scooped up a bite of the curry and brought it to her mouth. It was delicious. She glanced over to observe how Spock navigated the cuisine. He used a fork and knife to cut off bite sized portions of injeera and then scoop a bit of curry and rice on top with his fork.

"Is the meal to your liking, Nyota," Spock asked.

Nyota swallowed a mouthful of water. "Yes, everything is wonderful."

They continued to eat in silence. Nyota searched for a suitable topic to start some conversation. Just when she thought of some polite and mundane question to ask about his family estate, Nyota became aware of Spock's observation of her person. Her eyes met his steady gaze just as she brought a bit of bread and curry to her mouth. He did not avert his eyes as she slowly chewed. Feeling a bit cheeky, Uhura quickly licked her fingertips. She thought she noticed a subtle coloring of his cheeks as he quickly looked away. Instantly remorseful, Nyota brought her hands to her lap.

"You must forgive me for coming to your home like this, Commander," she began. "Like I said, I was under the impression that you would not be on Vulcan during the break. I would never have agreed to come with my aunt on this visit if I had known that your plans were different. I would never willingly invade your privacy."

"You have no cause to apologize, Nyota," Spock replied. "Indeed, your presence here, though unexpected, is not undesirable. You are most welcome to D'H'riset."

Nyota looked down at her plate before favoring him with a small smile. "Thank you, Spock."

They continued their meal in amicable conversation. Spock asked Nyota about her relations and their visit to Vulcan thus far. Nyota complied answering his questions cheerfully. Spock listened, watching her thoughtfully as she spoke animatedly about her cousins, her aunt and uncle's research and the activities they had participated in during their visit. Likewise, Spock answered her questions about Vulcan, D'H'riset and his mother's career prior to her entrance into interstellar politics. After the meal, they carried their conversation to the rock garden.

As the sun set, the oppressive heat of the day morphed into a pleasant warmth. They walked around the garden a few times before taking a seat on a large stone bench. They lapsed into a comfortable silence, their faces tilted up to observe the night sky. Nyota sat back, enjoying the warmth of the stone against her thighs. She could hardly believe that she was having such a pleasurable time with Spock. She turned and observed his profile in the dim light that filtered into the garden from the house. She noticed a pleasant softness there that she had never seen before. Noticing her look, Spock turned towards her and lifted one eyebrow. Nyota laughed lightly and
turned her gaze back towards the sky.

"This is nice," she said softly.

"The Vulcan night sky is visually appealing," Spock replied.

Nyota smiled and turned towards him again. "Yes, it is, but that is not what I meant."

Spock observed her quietly for several long moments. Nyota swallowed before turning towards the sky once more.

"So, I know Vulcan has no moon," she began. "But does Vulcan have any constellations?"

"Yes. There are several star formations currently visible that pre-Surak Vulcans attached particular meaning to."

"Will you show me a few?"

Spock sat quietly for a moment, his dark eyes scanning the skies. Soon Spock lifted his right arm and pointed one long elegant finger at a grouping of stars.

"Observe the bright star surrounded by a semi-circle of five dimmer stars in the south east quadrant."

Nyota followed the length of his arm and outstretched finger in search of the constellation he described. She squinted as she searched the sky in vain. The sky was full of stars and she could not readily distinguish one formation from another.

"Is that it?" Nyota asked as she pointed at one cluster of stars.

"Negative," Spock replied. "If you would permit me."

Spock rose from his seat and positioned himself behind Nyota. He crouched down until his head was level with hers, his chest pressed gently against her back as he leaned over her. He peered over her shoulder until they were cheek to cheek. Nyota quickly inhaled as Spock's warm cheek grazed hers. She resisted the urge to turn towards him, choosing to watch him from the corner of her eye instead. Spock met her gaze and held it as he raised his arm alongside her outstretched one and gently grasped his hand in hers.

"This is the correct constellation, Nyota," Spock said as he moved her arm into position, his eyes never leaving hers.

Nyota swallowed. "And, what is it called?"

"The mythological name associated with the star formation is T'ryel and her Suitors," Spock replied as his gaze left hers to view the constellation. "The stars only appear in this particular formation three months out of the year when this region of Vulcan experiences our equivalent of Spring."

"Why only in the Spring?"

"Before Surak, Spring was the traditional time of mating. Eligible males would fight to the death for the hand of the females they wished to be mated with. It was a time fraught with violence, bloodshed and savagery. T'ryel, legends have it, was the most aesthetically pleasing female in her village. She was also an accomplished warrior and hunter. Year after year males from villages throughout the province travelled to her small village to compete for her hand."
"I thought Vulcans mated for life?"

"You are correct, Nyota. We do. Year after year men competed for T'ryel's hand to no avail. You see, not only did the suitors have to fight one another to the death, they also had to best T'ryel in battle. T'ryel was an accomplished swordswoman and wily. All of her suitors died by her blade."

Nyota's eyes widened. "So the five suitors in the constellation are those bested by her?"

"No, Nyota," Spock replied as he dropped his hand from her wrist and moved resume his seat beside her. "They represent the five suitors who won her hand.

"One spring five cousins came to the village. They heard of T'ryel's beauty and wealth as well as her cunningness. They conspired together to win T'ryel's hand. As T'ryel had shown herself to be incapable of being mastered by one man, they reasoned that she was formidable enough for multiple husbands."

"So how did they best T'ryel?" Nyota asked as she leaned against his shoulder. She held her breath as she waited for his reaction.

Spock remained silent for a long moment before shifting slightly so that Nyota was tucked more comfortably against his side. Nyota released a long breath.

"The cousins fought each other as required," Spock continued, his voice a low rumble. "They used all of their skill and ability to best one another. However, they were all equally matched and the combat ended in a draw. Not one drop of blood was shed nor did any blow land true. Knowing that she was bested, T'ryel laid down her weapon and submitted to her five suitors."

"Something tells me that that is not the end of the tale," Nyota whispered.

"It is not. On the eve of her bonding ceremony, T'ryel fled into the hills and threw herself off of a cliff. The cousins pursued her to no avail. In their grief they leapt after her to their own deaths. Once a year they are reunited in the heavens for a brief time."

"What a dreadful story," Nyota replied as she turned to look up at him. "Please tell me that Vulcan parents do not tell their children that story before bed?"

"Myths and fairytales are illogical and generally deemed unsuitable for the instruction of youth," Spock replied before returning her look. "However, I suppose it is possible to derive some lessons from the myth on the superiority of cooperation and diplomacy over war."

"And the illogic of pride," Nyota replied.

"Yes, pride is quite illogical."

Nyota smirked. "Even when it is under good regulation?"

Spock's lips quirked. "That is when pride is at the height of illogic, Nyota. For one must be very prideful indeed to believe that one can control it."

"Spock-am!" Amanda's happy shout saved Nyota from the necessity of forming a reply. The pair stood from their perch and turned to watch Amanda walk towards them.

"Oh, I am so pleased to have you home, sa-fu," Amanda replied as she approached Spock and took him by the shoulders. "Let me get a good look at you. You seem to just keep getting taller and skinnier. Are you eating properly at the academy?"
"I consume sufficient nutrients for my needs."

"Hmmm. Well, you certainly will now that you are home," Amanda replied before her look of concern was replaced with a small grin. "I see you have acquainted yourself with Miss Nyota."

Spock lifted one eyebrow. "Cadet Uhura was my student at Starfleet Academy, as you are no doubt aware, mother."

"Spock was just pointing out some constellations," Nyota piped up. She was as eager as Spock to alter the course of the present conversation.

Amanda's smile only grew. "It is a lovely evening for star gazing. You know Spock, you should take her up to the patio on the east wing. There is a lovely fire pit there and you have such a clear view of the sky and Mount Tar'Hana."

"His father would take me up there when we were first married," Amanda addressed Nyota as she looped one arm through hers. "We would sit and star gaze late into the night. Sarek wasn't much for retelling myths, but he would point out each planet or star and recite a litany of facts. I could care less about the nitrogen make up of Gru'ther IV, but I listened attentively anyway. Sarek can be very romantic in his own peculiar way. I see his son is just as capable."

Nyota bit back a smile.

"Mother, are not the Uhura's with you? I should like to make their acquaintance," Spock added hastily.

"Yes, yes," Amanda airily replied. "They are changing for dinner, which is why I came out here to fetch you. I wouldn't have disturbed you two otherwise."

"Oh, I hadn't realized it was that late," Nyota gasped in genuine surprise.

Amanda patted her arm. "No matter. Sometimes time has a way of sneaking up on you." She glanced at her son significantly. "But there is no need for you to change, dear. You look lovely as usual."

Nyota smiled before darting a glance at Spock. "Well, I should go speak with my uncle."

Nyota slipped her arm out of Amanda's embrace and made her way towards the door before stopping to turn towards them once more. "By the way, thank you for a lovely afternoon, Spock."

"You are most welcome, Nyota," Spock replied with a small bow.

Nyota flashed him a final smile before walking into the house.

"Mother," Spock said once Nyota had left the gardens. "When you contacted me to request that I visit, you failed to mention that you would also be entertaining house guests. Please explain."

"It's not unusual for your father and I to entertain at the house," Amanda replied.

"That is true, mother. However, I have reason to believe that you intended for my visit to coincide with they stay of these particular house guests."

Amanda cocked her head and leveled a curious look at her son. "And why would you come to that conclusion, sa-fu? Are these house guests particularly important to you?"
Spock looked away from his mother. He reasoned that it was illogical to attempt to evade his mother's questions. She had always been inordinately curious about his relationships with females since he left Vulcan. It was no secret that Amanda Grayson did not approve of or like T'Pring, his betrothed. She had desired that Spock choose his own bride as his father had done with her. Spock was pleased to find that his mother appeared to approve of Nyota. As Spock would need the assistance of both his parents to formally sever his bond with T'Pring, Spock further reasoned that it would wise to speak plainly with his mother now.

"As you have already deduced, Miss Uhura is of particular interest to me."

Amanda's smile grew. "She's the young lady you contacted me about...when you wanted advice about gowns."

"Yes. In fact, I declared koon-ut."

Amanda gasped.

"Nyota was wise to refuse my suit. I had shown myself to be unworthy of her by my conduct. She was also deceived as to my character."

"How could she think you unworthy?" Amanda asked as she stepped toward him and cupped his right cheek.

Spock slowly removed his mother's hand from his face and held it in his.

"That is of no consequence, mother. She is no longer deceived as to my character and I have taken steps to prove myself worthy of her. While I do not approve of your use of deception to lure me home, I cannot say that I am displeased to be given this opportunity to make amends with Miss Uhura."

Amanda bit her lip as she looked up at her son. Her eyes were suspiciously wet and Spock feared that she would have a crying fit.

"Do you love her?"

Spock considered his mother before replying. "She is necessary to me."

Amanda nodded, her eyes welling up in earnest.

"I am happy for you, sa-fu."

Spock dropped his mother's hand and stepped away from her.

"It remains to be seen if Miss Uhura is similarly disposed towards me."

"Oh, Spock-am," Amanda replied, her smile back in place. "From what I have seen she very well may be."

Dinner was a pleasant affair. Nyota was surprised that Spock's new level of openness extended towards her aunt and uncle. During dinner Spock rather than Lady Amanda carried the bulk of the conversation. He had every appearance of being genuinely interested in knowing her relations better and of gaining their good favor. He easily got Uncle Jomo talking animatedly about his physics research and asked for the pleasure of reading his latest working paper. Uncle Jomo readily agreed and invited Spock to share his own observations and critiques. When the party retired to the drawing room for tea and desserts, Spock turned his attentions towards Aunt Tonya
complementing her on the publication of her latest book on comparative humanoid linguistics and, much to her amusement, conversing briefly with her in one of the obscure old Vulcan dialects she had used as the basis of her research. When Uncle Jomo mentioned his interest in archery, Spock offered to give him a tour of his father's collection of old Vulcan weaponry which included an extensive array of bows and crossbows.

Soon the party retired to their quarters for the evening. Spock took it upon himself to escort them to the guest wing, bowing slightly at the waist as he bid Nyota a good evening. As soon as Spock turned to make his way to his own quarters, Aunt Tonya took Nyota by the elbow and steered her into her room with Uncle Jomo following behind.

"Nyota, I must say that I cannot understand why you were so concerned about meeting Spock again. He was all politeness and certainly eager to please."

Nyota sat down at the foot of her bed. "I can hardly understand it myself, Aunt. I'm very surprised by his behavior."

"There is something a little stately in him, to be sure, but nothing unusual for a Vulcan. Perhaps upon a very superficial meeting someone might call him proud, but I could see nothing of it. From what you told me of his acquaintance with yourself, I did not expect him to be so very attentive."

"And I would not have expected him to be so civil-no more than civil- welcoming to us," Uncle Jomo added. "You should have seen the size of his father's archery collection, Nyota. And he promised to teach me the proper techniques for their use tomorrow afternoon."

Nyota could not help but smile at her uncle's excitement.

"Spock has been much more attentive then I could have ever expected," Nyota replied. "But I can't account for it."

Aunt Tonya cocked her head to one side and looked at her niece carefully. "Can you not?"

**Glossary:**

kahs'wan= Vulcan rite of passage into maturity for pre-teens whereby they must survive for ten days without food or water in Vulcan's Forge, a harsh desert canyon.

Koon-ut= proposal of marriage

Sa-fu= son

Spock-am= similar to "Spock, dear."
Chapter 20

Pride and Logic Chapter 20

Each passing day at D'Hriset brought Nyota a better understanding of Spock's character. His solicitous behavior did not end on that first day but continued throughout Nyota's visit. Her aunt and uncle were well pleased with him and Nyota found herself to be in complete agreement. She wondered how she had ever come to dislike Spock before Sybok's bothersome interference. While she did not make the mistake of calling Spock kind, there was a thoughtfulness about all of his actions towards her that she could not discount. By the fourth day, Nyota was fully convinced that the apparent change in Spock's demeanor was sincere and permanent.

"Perhaps he's not the only one that changed," Gaila concluded after Nyota had finished telling her of Spock's extraordinary behavior. "Maybe you have too."

Nyota sat back in her chair and observed her friend thoughtfully.

"I suppose you're right," she replied before leaning towards the viewscreen. "Four months ago I was quite determined to disapprove of him. How little I understood his nature. I am glad that we've been able to salvage some cordiality between us. Perhaps he has forgiven me and can view me as a friend."

Gaila snorted. "A friend? Chica, from what you have told me he certainly wants more than friendship from you."

Nyota opened her mouth to retort before Gaila cut her off. "No, Ny. Last time you didn't believe me when I told you that he fancied you and look where that got you."

It was Nyota's turn to laugh. "Fancied? I think your exact language was that Spock wanted to 'hit my ass like it stole something'."

"Fancied. Make hot Vulcan love to you. It's all semantics really," Gaila replied with a wave of her hand. "The point is that I think Spock's feelings have not changed."

Nyota ducked her head. "I don't dare to hope for that much, Gaila. You do not know how much my rejection and accusations hurt him. When he touched my mind, it was like someone stuck a hot poker in my side. I'll never forget it. No. It is enough that he no longer thinks ill of me."

Gaila leaned towards the screen. "And how do you feel about Spock?"

Nyota took a deep breath. "I think I love him, Gaila."

"Oh, Chica!" Gaila squealed. "I knew it! I knew it!"

Nyota gave her a watery smile. "But, he is still betrothed to that awful T'Pring. I'm still a cadet. He's still an ambassador's son."

"None of that is important. You love him and I am sure that he loves you. That's more than enough."

"Well," Nyota shrugged.

"So, what is on board for today? More garden-side stargazing? Swimming in a secluded lagoon?"
Nyota laughed. "No, nothing romantic. Spock and I are going to the Shi'Khar Museum of Ancient Art and having lunch in the city."

"Oh, just you and Spock?"

"It's nothing so sinister. Amanda and my Aunt are just a little tired from yesterday's activities and Uncle Jomo is spending the day on the archery range. Art was never Uncle's cup of tea."

"Hmmm," Gaila replied, one red eyebrow arched in skepticism. "That's all mighty convenient."

Nyota smiled. "Perhaps you're right."

"I'm always right," Gaila replied with a bright smile. "Now you have a wonderful date with Lt. Commander Hot Pants. Ray Ray and I have a hot date planned at the playground."

Nyota laughed. "Kiss my cousin for me!"

"Will do. And I expect another subspace call tomorrow morning. I want details!"

"Oh, Spock, isn't this painting lovely?"

Spock looked up from the small figurine he was examining at Uhura's bright voice. Ignoring the pointed looks of his fellow Vulcan museum patrons, Spock walked over towards the smiling woman.

"The brush technique is quite precise for a pre-Surak artwork," Spock replied diplomatically. While he would not be wont to describe anything as "lovely" he could readily appreciate the technical merit of a piece.

Nyota turned towards him once more, her smile luminescent. Spock gazed at her steadily and amended his previous assertion. He would certainly describe Nyota Uhura as lovely.

"Nyota, have you given any thought to applying for a position as a teaching assistant this coming semester?"

Nyota turned from the painting to look at him curiously. "No. I was told that only third year students were eligible for TA positions."

"Ordinarily, that is the case," Spock continued as he began walking towards another exhibit. "However, students such as yourself who possess an advanced acumen are allowed to assume such a position upon the recommendation of a professor. Due to your exemplary performance in my seminar and after a careful review of your record, I would readily provide you with such a recommendation."

Nyota smiled broadly. "Thank you, Spock."

Spock nodded in reply. "There are a number of professors within the linguistics and engineering departments whom would benefit from your assistance and from whom you could learn much in turn. Professors Swanson and Ulche'a would be excellent matches."

Spock paused as Nyota's smile faltered. "Oh. I see."

Spock stopped his progress and turned to face her fully. "I believe that you possess a skill set that would be highly beneficial to their research. Indeed, I would ask you to consider applying for the position of my assistant were it not for the potential breach of regulations that such an arrangement
would entail."

Uhura looked up sharply. "And what regulation would my serving as your TA breech, Spock?"

Spock regarded her silently for several long moments, noting the slight flush to her cheeks and the
dilation of her pupils. His hands dropped from their customary position behind his back to rest at
his sides, his fingers flexing as he stepped towards her.

"Nyota, I…"

"Cousin," the voice of Selkek rung out through the gallery. "Well met!"

Spock permitted himself to sigh before turning from the cadet to greet his cousin. While he was
pleased to see his kinsman, he was less pleased with his sense of timing.

"Well met, Selkek," Spock replied as he lifted his right hand in the Vulcan salute.

"And Miss Uhura," Selkek said as he stepped around his cousin to greet the cadet. "What a
surprise to find you on Vulcan! I am beyond pleased to meet with you both!"

Nyota smiled brightly as Selkek clasped one of her small hands in his, pressing it slightly and
transmitting some of his happiness.

"I believe it has been three Terran standard months and two weeks since we were last together."

"Yes, in May," Nyota replied with a smile. "What a lovely surprise! It is good to see you again."

Selkek made no effort to hide his pleased grin. "What brings you to Vulcan?"

Spock's lips thinned as Selkek offered Nyota his elbow and began to walk from the gallery with
the cadet. Finding his place usurped, he had no choice but to follow after the pair as Nyota filled
Selkek in on the details of her visit thus far.

"How extraordinary, that your aunt and Lady Amanda would be such old friends? The Federation
does feel rather small sometimes," Selkek looked over his shoulder at this, throwing Spock a
significant glance before returning his attention to the small brown woman on his arm. "But I
shall not complain for it has brought me into your company again."

"Nyota," Spock interrupted. "We should depart from the museum within the next five minutes if
we intend to make it to the restaurant in time for our reservation."

"Oh," Nyota replied. "Why don't you join us for lunch, Selkek?"

"That would be wonderful," Selkek replied before looking towards his cousin with a sly smile.
"That is if my cousin does not mind sharing you."

"The reservation is for two," Spock curtly replied.

Selkek's grin widened, "I'm sure that they can squeeze one more person in at your table."

Spock opened his mouth to offer a retort before the press of Nyota's small hand upon his arm
silenced him.

"Please, Spock. I am sure they could accommodate us."

Spock tamped down a small flame of irritation before he nodded his acceptance.
"Excellent!" Selkek replied with a small clap of his hands. "Then let us be on our way."

Spock followed the pair as they made their way towards the exit. He was most desirous of speaking privately with Nyota once more. Now that his cousin was aware of Miss Uhura’s residence at D'Hirset, he wondered if he would get another chance to converse privately with her before the conclusion of her visit in three days time. However, Spock's agitation was short lived when Nyota detached herself from Selkek's arm to walk by his side once more.

"Thank you," she whispered as she lightly pressed the back of his hand.

A pleasant warmth ran up his arm and seemed to diffuse over his entire body. "You are welcome, Nyota."

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"I have some wonderful news for you all," Amanda said brightly over breakfast the next morning. Nyota looked up from her plate of fruit expectantly.

"My husband Sarek will be returning home this afternoon. The conference ended early, so you all will have a chance to meet him after all!"

"Oh, that is good news," Aunt Tonya piped up. "I so look forward to meeting your husband, Amanda."

Nyota felt her stomach clench. She glanced over towards Spock to find his dark gaze settled on her. His expression was unreadable.

"And since you all will be leaving us so soon, I thought that tomorrow we could host a small dinner party in honor of your visit and the successful conclusion of Sarek's conference. I've invited a few of our colleagues and friends. It should be a lovely way to cap your visit with us."

"A dinner party? How lovely!" Uncle Jomo replied.

"Aren't you glad that you let us convince you to purchase that gown, Nyota?" Aunt Tonya added as she reached over and squeezed Nyota's hand.

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Spock found Nyota leaning against the railing of the west wing balcony after breakfast. As soon as the meal had finished, she sought refuge there in an attempt to calm her nerves. She had spent the last half hour staring at Mount T'Harna in the distance. She did not know why the prospect of meeting Sarek caused her such disquiet. Nyota had endured nearly a week of the special attentions of Lady T'Pau. Surely she could handle one ambassador.

"I have spoken with my mother regarding the arrangements for the dinner," Spock began. "The party will indeed be a small one. There will be several there who claim an acquaintance with you."

Nyota turned to look at him, one brow arched in question.

"Selkek and his sister."

Nyota turned towards Mount T'Harna once more. While she was delighted to see Selkek again so soon, she was less enthused to meet with his horrid sister. When she had last met T'Pring she had found the Vulcan's active dislike of her to be laughable. Now she knew the woman's ire to be well placed.
"I suppose you will be pleased to meet with your betrothed once again," she offered.

"Not particularly," Spock replied.

Nyota turned, leaning her back against the railing as she studied his profile. "And why is that?"

"T'Pring and I were betrothed in childhood per Vulcan custom. However, we were never well suited to one another. As we matured our active indifference towards one another transformed into an active dislike. This and recent developments have led me to conclude that it would be illogical and unwise to bind myself to her. I intend to seek a dissolution of our bond."

"This is a recent development?" Nyota asked in some disbelief. Spock had proposed to her not three months ago.

Spock looked down at her, his dark eyes willing her to understand. "It has been my intent to sever our bond these past four months."

Uhura's eyes widened. "I see."

He tilted his head. "Do you, Nyota?"

Nyota opened her mouth to reply when the door to the balcony slid open.

"Master Spock," Seved began. "The Ambassador has arrived."

Spock stiffened beside her. "Very well. Thank you, Seved."

Seved bowed and quickly exited the balcony. Nyota turned towards Spock, her eyes wide with apprehension.

"Come, let us greet my father, Nyota," Spock said as he offered his elbow.

Nyota glanced down at his offered arm and took a deep breath before threading her arm through his.
Chapter 21

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Nyota let her hand slip from its place on Spock's arm as they approached the sitting room where Ambassador Sarek awaited them. She told herself that it was silly to feel nervous about her meeting with Spock's father. The introduction could not be avoided and she knew of no reason for the ambassador to find fault with her. Nyota had spent a week suffering through the special attention of Lady T'Pau and the hostile barbs of T'Pring. She only had to spend little over a day in the ambassador's presence before she and her family would set off for Earth. However, such logic did little to quiet her nerves.

Nyota would not let herself acknowledge the true cause of her nervousness. Any hopes she may have begun to harbor regarding the silent half-Vulcan walking beside her were most likely foolish fancies. But, she could not completely dismiss the obvious signs of the growing accord between her and Spock. Even if she could not let herself hope that he would one day renew his addresses, she took comfort that he at least appeared to forgive her for the false charges she had so callously laid at his feet. That Spock could look upon her with a friendly eye was more than she could have hoped for just a few months ago.

As they entered the room Nyota was heartened to find her Uncle Jomo animatedly describing his latest research to Ambassador Sarek. The older Vulcan listened quietly, his posture erect and his face devoid of emotion. The only sign that the Ambassador took any interest in Uncle Jomo's monologue was his unwavering dark gaze and Lady Amanda's pleased smile as she looked on.

"Spock. Nyota," Lady Amanda greeted as she rose from her seat. The ambassador and Nyota's relatives rose as well.

"Sarek," Amanda continued, "may I preset Tonya and Jomo's niece, Nyota Uhura. She is a cadet at Starfleet Academy and a former pupil of our son."

"Welcome to D'H'riset, Miss Uhura," the ambassador greeted with an incline of his head. "I trust that your visit to Vulcan has been agreeable thus far."

"Yes, it has been very enjoyable. Thank you for welcoming us into your home."

"Any credit for your welcome would be due to my wife. I merely have chosen to extend that welcome as it was logical to do so."

Nyota blinked.

"Your aunt informs me that you are a student of Federation languages," Sarek continued.

"Yes, Ambassador. I study xeno-linguistics, among other things. I currently speak 83% of Federation languages with varying degrees of fluency."

"A worthy accomplishment that will serve you well in your career in the diplomatic corps. It is rare for a human to master even a third of the Federation languages."

"Thank you, Ambassador. I hope that it will prove just as useful aboard a starship."

Sarek lifted one brow in a manner that reminded Nyota of his son.

"You are not considering a career in diplomacy? Surely your skill set would be used most
efficiently there."

"I am sure that you are correct. While I respect and admire the work of the diplomatic corps and am aware of the accomplishments of ambassadors such as yourself, a starship linguist could be considered the penultimate diplomat. We are often the first point of contact between the Federation and newly discovered worlds."

The Ambassador examined Nyota, his cool black eyes assessing before he nodded his head once more.

"Well said Miss Uhura. I concede to your logic."

Lady Amanda threw Nyota a mischievous smile, her eyes sparkling with mirth.

"I anticipate conversing with you further during the evening meal," Sarek continued before turning to face the entire party.

"Please excuse me. My journey was more taxing than I anticipated."

Ambassador Sarek bowed his head before moving towards the door. Nyota frowned and glanced at Spock. Spock stood tall, his hands clasped behind his back as his father passed him without a word or glance. Spock's face remained unreadable, but Nyota felt the pain of Sarek's cut as if Spock had cried out. She made to move towards him before Amanda's voice stopped her short.

"Sarek, surely you have a moment to greet your son before you retire."

Sarek stopped his progress but did not turn from the door. A few silent moments passed before Spock spoke.

"I am sure the Ambassador would like to rest, mother. We may converse at another time."

Sarek exited the room, leaving the party to stand in awkward silence.

"Spock-am, I am sure…"

"If you would please excuse me," Spock abruptly replied before leaving the room.

Amanda shared an anxious look with the room. "I am sorry. Spock and Sarek did not part company on the best of terms. Sarek never approved of Spock's enlistment in Starfleet."

Aunt Tonya moved to her friend's side and took her hand in hers. "Oh, we all have families full of stubborn men, Amanda. There is no need to explain."

"Who's stubborn?" Uncle Jomo protested. "Surely I am not included in that number?"

Aunt Tonya laughed. "Oh, Jomo. You can be the worst offender!"

Uncle Jomo huffed.

"My mother told me not to marry an African man, but I would not listen," Aunt Tonya continued as if her husband were not in the room. "But who could blame me? How could any woman resist Jomo's charms?"

"And my dashing good looks," Uncle Jomo added.

Aunt Tonya released Amanda's hand and walked to her husband's side to place a kiss on his cheek.
"Of course, dear."

Lady Amanda smiled as the Uhura's shared another chaste kiss.

"Well, I should go see to my stubborn husband," Amanda said as she made her exit. "I'll see you all at dinner."

"And we should start packing for our return trip," Uncle Jomo announced. "We have to figure out how to make room in our luggage for all those trinkets and dresses you've both bought during our stay."

"Our trinkets? Who was it again that insisted that he just had to have a Vulcan cross bow and lyrette? And three pairs of boots?"

"And those three antique incense pots," Nyota added.

"Ok. Ok. You've made your point," Uncle Jomo cried as he raised his hands in mock surrender. "Still, we should get our packing done now so that we aren't in a rush. It is not as if Vulcan is right around the corner should we leave anything behind."

Spock took his place before the fire pot in his meditation shati. When he was particularly disquieted as a youth, Spock would retreat to this outdoor shelter deep in the wilderness surrounding his ancestral home seeking the serenity of nature and logic. As soon as he left his mother and the Uhura's that afternoon, he went to his private rooms, changed into his running briefs and sandals and departed for the five mile run through the brush and hills to this place.

As he sat before the fire, he forced his senses to dull to the feel of the warm wind against his face, to the sound of the distant calls of s'helats roaming in the brush, to the smell of the burnt earth and wooden beams beneath him, to the sight of the red hills around him. Spock breathed in the spiced smoke of the burning stones until he could feel the Vulcan earth vibrate beneath him and through his limbs. Slowly he felt his disappointment over his father's dismissal dissipate. Spock settled into this temporary serenity like a well-worn pair of boots.

Spock had not expected his father to welcome him warmly into the home, although he had hoped for the acknowledgement due even to strangers. Sarek's silence confirmed that he still did not sanction Spock's choice of Starfleet, despite the accomplishments he had made there. To Sarek, Spock's choice was a rejection of the Vulcan way—of his very heritage. However, Spock never felt himself to be more secure in his Vulcanness than during his time with Starfleet. Being daily surrounded by emotionally undisciplined humans had proven the value of the teachings of Surak. The Surakian disciplines had allowed Spock to achieve an equilibrium that had eluded him on Vulcan. He had not only succeeded in suppressing his emotions, but in achieving a distance that allowed him to experience a new level of tranquility.

However, a short time in the presence of the Cadet had managed to upset this balance with remarkable ease. With a few words and looks, Nyota Uhura managed to chip away the barrier of logic and unearth the lust and possessiveness he had struggled to subdue as a youth. The boyhood fascinations of his youth that led him to soil his bedclothes in the night were nothing compared to what he experienced for the cadet. The base unbridled Vulcan in him wanted to mark her flesh and make her heavy with child. Wanted to serve her, bury his face in her hair and laugh in joy. To his shame, Spock could barely control these urges—he had even committed the low act of composing a song in celebration of her eyes.

Rather than restoring his balance, Miss Uhura's firm rejection of his suit further disquieted him.
With the benefit of a few months' reflection, Spock came to realize that this was not solely due to Sybok's lies, but his own wounded pride. The Cadet's charges of his un-Vulcan like behavior bore the painful sting of truth: his prideful presumption of Vulcan superiority; his pride in his lineage; his disregard for the feelings of others.

Prior to his return to Vulcan, Spock sought to make peace with the reality that Nyota Uhura was lost to him. Yet, her presence here in his home and her easy and open behavior towards him gave him cause to hope again—however illogical that might be.

Spock knew that Sarek would view his pursuit of a human woman as his bondmate to be the final rejection of the Vulcan way, despite his own choice of a human wife. His father had once told him that he married his mother because it was a logical decision. Sarek was the ambassador to Earth and marriage to a human would only aid his mission and allow him to better understand Terran culture. As he was taught that Vulcans who follow Sarek cannot lie, he did not question his father's statement. Spock could not argue a similarly logical reason for his desire to bond with a human—that indeed was the essential reason. He desired Nyota Uhura. He loved her.

On the other hand, Spock was confident that Sarek would assist him in breaking his bond with T'Pring. He did not need Sarek's approval to marry Nyota, but he would need his father's assistance to dissolve his current bond. Fortunately, Spock possessed a fully logical reason to break his betrothal that his father would support.

Spock rose from his place before the fire pot and pulled out his communicator.

Nyota rose early on what was to be her last full day on Vulcan. She already found herself missing the desert planet and the agreeable people she had met there. Nyota knew that her aunt and uncle would probably still be abed. Desiring to fit as much into her last day as possible, she decided to go for a final swim and borrow Lady Amanda's flitter to tour the grounds before breakfast. She changed quickly into her bathing suit and a teal linen dress that skimmed her ankles and covered her arms. She slipped her feet into a pair of sandals, grabbed her bag and made her way from the guest wing. As she reached the top of the stairs leading to the foyer, she was met by Seved.

"Miss Uhura," the Vulcan greeted as he bowed slightly at the waist. "Lady Amanda and your family are breakfasting in the garden and request your presence."

Nyota blinked. "I suppose they wanted to get a jump on the day as well," she replied with a smile. Seved stared at her blankly.

Nyota laughed and shook her head. "Please take me to them."

Nyota passed a pleasant breakfast with Amanda and her family. When they learned of her aborted morning plans, they decided to join her and make an afternoon of it ending with a poolside lunch.

"Sarek and Spock won't be joining us," Amanda informed them as they climbed aboard her red flitter. "They have an important meeting this afternoon."

"Together? I hope it is nothing unpleasant," Aunt Tonya replied, no doubt referring to their stony silence the day before.

"Oh, I hope that it will have a very pleasant result," Amanda said with a smile before winking at Nyota. Nyota shook her head wonderingly and boarded the flitter.

They returned to the house four hours later to rest and prepare for the dinner party that evening. Nyota was surprised to see Selkek leaving the house as they arrived.
"Selkek, well met!" Lady Amanda greeted the Vulcan as he bent his head to receive a motherly kiss to his cheek.

Amanda introduced Selkek to Uncle Jomo and Aunt Tonya who looked upon the animated Vulcan with a small degree of amazement. Nyota shook her head at their astonishment before greeting her friend.

"It is agreeable to see you, Nyota," Selkek replied with a smile. "I look forward to the dinner this evening. Although I will be sad to say goodbye."

Nyota smiled. "I am sure that we'll manage to run into each other again. The dinner is not for another three hours. What brings you here so early?"

"Just a bit of business with the Ambassador," Selkek replied. 

"I hope it went well." Lady Amanda said as she tapped the side of her nose.

"Everything was handled satisfactorily," Selkek mysteriously replied.

Lady Amanda smiled. Nyota looked between the curious pair.

"I hope to have the pleasure of hearing you sing tonight," Selkek said as he turned to Uhura.

Nyota blinked. "I'd be happy to if someone would accompany me."

"Oh, I am sure that Spock would be happy to play his lyre," Selkek said.

"Yes. Selkek has told me so much about your singing," Amanda said excitedly. "It will be just the thing."

Nyota agreed to the scheme before the party said their farewells.

Dinner had been a surprisingly pleasant affair. The coldness that had once marked Sarek's interactions with Spock had thawed somewhat. The Ambassador acknowledged Spock's presence and even dared to address him once or twice. Selkek remained as cordial as ever, keeping Nyota and her family entertained. Selkek's parents, Tupak and T'Rena spent the dinner in indifferent silence, only endeavoring to speak when spoken to and to compliment Lady Amanda and Sarek on the suitability of their table. Even T'Pring chose to hold her tongue, greeting Nyota civilly and conversing with Lady Amanda during the meal. In fact, T'Pring was so attentive to Lady Amanda that she spared no notice of Nyota or her relations once the initial introductions were made and the dinner commenced. After the meal, the party retired to the drawing room for conversation and entertainments.

As soon as the party was settled, T'Pring made her way to a large harp-like instrument that stood off to the side of the piano. Selkek and Nyota shared a quick look before T'Pring began to play and sing. Her performance was technically perfect—her pitch and pronunciation of high Vulcan were spot on and her fingers moved nimbly over the strings hitting the appropriate notes. However, the performance lacked any emotion or passion and the human attendees of the impromptu concert soon found themselves bored by the long sonata. When the song finally ended, Nyota and her relatives clapped politely as the Vulcans in the room gave suitably dispassionate compliments on the technical merits of her performance.

"Nyota, I must hear you sing," Lady Amanda said as T'Pring retook her seat. "I've so been looking forward to your performance."
"Then you shall hear it," Nyota said as she rose from her seat. "Although I doubt I'll be able to hit all the notes as precisely as T'Pring."

T'Pring nodded her head at the compliment. "Humans are as a rule incapable of duplicating the vocal range to adequately perform classical Vulcan pieces. Your inability to achieve technical perfection is merely a deficiency common to your species."

"Our Nyota sings most beautifully despite any human deficiencies," Aunt Tonya replied with a tight smile.

"Truly, sister, I do not know how you can hold such a low opinion of Miss Uhura's abilities," Selkek spoke up. "You were witness to her performance at the Vulcan embassy where her skill in singing operatic pieces in high Vulcan was noted by many esteemed members of our race."

Selkek turned towards his parents and Ambassador Sarek. "She was invited to perform privately for Lady T'Pau on numerous occasions."

"As my esteemed kinswoman will herself tell you, the Lady T'Pau is a connoisseur of the arts," Sarek replied. "If Miss Uhura's skills met with her approval then logic follows that they must be prodigious indeed."

Lady Amanda suppressed a giggle at her husband's joke. Nyota could not help but smile as well as she looked upon the ambassador with astonishment.

"I shall accompany you," Spock offered as he moved to take his place at the large harp.

Nyota smoothed down her gown as she turned towards him. "Do you know 'Beyond Antares'?"*

Spock began to strum the opening chords to the Standard song. Nyota smiled as she began to sing.

*The skies are green and glowing

Where my heart is,

Where my heart is,

Where the scented lunar flower is growing,

Somewhere beyond the stars, beyond Antares.

I'll be back though it takes forever.

Forever is just a day.

Forever is just another journey.

Tomorrow I'll stop along the way,

Then let the years go fading

Where my heart is,

Where my heart is,

Where my love eternal is waiting,

Somewhere beyond the stars, beyond Antares.
When the final notes faded, Lady Amanda stood and applauded along with Aunt Tonya, Uncle Jomo and even Selkek. Nyota blushed and bowed her head in thanks.

"Oh, that was very lovely. You have such a wonderful voice," Lady Amanda said as she took both of Nyota's hands in hers.

"Indeed, your tone and delivery was very pleasing to the ear," Sarek added.

T'Rena and Tupak added a few words of agreement. T'Pring remained silent, her hands folded primly on her lap and her lips pursed.

"You must promise to sing for us once again," Lady Amanda continued as she let go of one of Nyota's hands to take one of her son's. "And Spock, your playing was excellent as usual. You must play again. You and Nyota compliment each other perfectly."

"I concur," Spock replied.

Nyota's cheeks grew hotter. She chanced a look at Spock to find his dark gaze locked on her face.

"If Nyota is agreeable, I would be pleased to play for her again."

"I am agreeable," she replied somewhat breathlessly before she tore her eyes from Spock. "That is if you will play the piano for us, Lady Amanda."

Lady Amanda looked between the pair with a pleased smile. She pressed both of their hands.

"How can I refuse with such an inducement?"

Spock escorted his mother to the piano as Uhura took her seat next to her Aunt Tonya. After Lady Amanda had been playing for a few minutes, the party fell into light conversation. T'Pring turned towards Nyota.

"I am surprised that you did not choose a Vulcan piece, seeing as you are such an appreciator of all things Vulcan."

Nyota resisted the urge to roll her eyes as she replied. "I felt a Standard song was in order. I did not wish to insult my hosts with my deficient attempt at Vulcan song. However, I will consider singing a Vulcan piece next if it will please you."

T'Pring continued as if Nyota had not spoken.

"I suppose it is only fitting that you try to learn as many Vulcan customs as possible given your fondness for Vulcan men. You appeared to be well pleased by my brother and even the Ambassador's son when last we met. I must admit that I was quite surprised to hear that you were also a favorite of Sybok."

Nyota's expression hardened. "I am sure that I don't know what you mean."

"Sybok? The Ambassador's eldest son," T'Pring continued, her voice rising slightly in volume. "I am sure that you are quite anxious to return to him. He is a cadet at Starfleet, is he not?"

Lady Amanda faltered in her playing, her face pale as she looked over towards them. Spock and the Ambassador rose from their seats but Nyota moved quickly to Amanda's side.

"How rude of me. I beg you to play but do not stay to assist you with the pages."

Nyota smiled at Lady Amanda before pressing her finger to the console screen to manually
Nyota smiled at Lady Amanda before pressing her finger to the console screen to manually advance the pages of sheet music.

"That's better," she sighed as Lady Amanda resumed playing. "Computers are lovely but some things are still better done manually."

As Lady Amanda continued her piece without incident, Nyota looked up from the screen of sheet music to meet the warm gaze of the Commander. She offered him a smile, hoping to communicate her shared appreciation of the woman who sat beside her. Spock nodded as if in understanding.

After Lady Amanda finished playing and receiving the sincere compliments of her friends, Ambassador Sarek stood and turned to his wife. He held out two fingers of his right hand towards her. Lady Amanda smiled as she walked to his side to press two fingers of her left hand to his. Sarek gazed down at his wife briefly before turning to address T'Pring and Selkek's parents.

"Tupak. T'Rena. Would you please accompany me to my office to discuss a matter of importance?"

"Of course, Ambassador," Tupak replied. His wife nodded her head in consent.

"It is regrettable that I must interrupt our evening," Sarek continued as he turned towards the Uhuras. "I do not anticipate our meeting lasting for more than twenty Standard minutes. My sa-fu Spock will see to your needs while we are detained."

Aunt Tonya and Uncle Jomo shared a look of confusion before muttering their understanding. Soon after the Ambassador and his party left the room, Seved appeared in the doorway.

"If you would follow me. The Ambassador has arranged for tea in the west garden."

Spock strode to Nyota's side and held out his elbow. "If you would allow me the pleasure."

Nyota smiled up at him, taking in his chocolate orbs and slightly quirked chartreuse-tinged lips.

"I would be delighted." She placed her hand gently on his elbow and followed his lead out of the room.

Nyota turned her head in time to catch Selkek offering his arm to his sister. T'Pring glared at him, her thin lips pinched tightly. Selkek only smiled more widely in response.

Spock stood flanked by his parents as he watched the flitter carrying the Uhuras depart from D'H'riset. Long after his father returned to the house, Spock stood watching the flitter depart over the horizon.

"You will meet again with your Miss Uhura," his mother said.

"It is highly probable that our duties at the Academy will cause ourselves to be in one another's company again, however briefly."

Amanda snorted. "I do hope you plan to cross paths with her intentionally. I dare say she is quite well disposed towards you. T'Pring is no longer an obstacle… or rather, she won't be by the time the new term starts."

Spock turned his gaze from the horizon to look down at his mother.

"I have every intention of speaking with Miss Uhura again. As to my suit, I intend to wait until a more apropos time. There is still the matter of Starfleet regulations."
Amanda snorted again. "And when have S'chn T'gai men let rules or customs get in the way of what they wanted?"

Spock quirked one eyebrow. "I do not believe that statement accurately describes the Ambassador. Logic and Vulcan custom has always been his guide."

Amanda laughed. "Come. I believe you are old enough to hear a few stories about your faultless father."

Spock's second eyebrow joined the first. "I find that I am eager yet hesitant to hear what you have to relate."

Amanda's grin broadened as she led her son back into the house.

Sybok stumbled off of the lift into the dimly lit hallway of the hotel, the scent of urine and vomit assaulting his nostrils as soon as he set foot on the dingy floor. The hotel was not fit for the mangiest Klingon, but it served Sybok's purposes well. He was usually too inebriated from chocolate liquor to notice the stained bed sheets he passed out on or the grungy lavatory where he emptied his stomach. The price was cheap, no one asked for identification and it was conveniently located near the gaming district. Sybok was especially hammered as he had lost very badly at the gaming tables, losing over five thousand credits. Luckily he did not have to pay his Tellerite bookie until tomorrow night. Even luckier, he was due on a Federation space bound transport a few hours after dawn.

As soon as Sybok stepped through the doors of his hotel room, he found himself thrust so heavily against a wall that his skull bounced off the metal surface. His indulgence in chocolate libations left him defenseless against two hulking Orions who began to viscously pummel his face and gut with their fists.

"I think he is loosened up, boys," a familiar voice called from the shadows.

One of the Orions forced Sybok to his knees as he roughly jerked his head back.

Sybok's eyes widened in fear as the man stepped into the dim lamp light.

"Harry," he spluttered over bloodly lips. "I can explain."

"That's Mr. Mudd to you," the corpulent human replied as he sat down in a chair produced by one of his guards. Harry Mudd leaned forward, staring closely at Sybok as he twirled the end of his moustache.

"You are quite the difficult man to track down, Sybok. I've looked in over twenty star systems for your oily green hide. Figures that I should have started with the seediest backwaters first," Mudd sneered before reclining back in his chair. "Your latest payment is eight months overdue, Sybok. One would think you had no intention of honoring your debts."

"I just had to go and collect the credits I owed you," Sybok replied. "I wouldn't dream of not paying you."

"Then you have my half-million credits?" Mudd asked as he toyed with a dagger he pulled from his pocket.

"No. But I promise I'll have them in two weeks."

"Two weeks. Last time it was two days and then you skipped out of the system," Mudd roared, as
he jammed the dagger into the arm of his chair.

At Sybok’s wince, Mudd resumed his seat breathing deeply through his nostrils to calm himself.

"You see, I am a patient man," he continued in soft tones. "But time costs money, Mr. Sybok. I'll give you your two weeks and you bring me 1.5 million credits."

"1.5 million! But I only owe you a third of that," Sybok growled.

"Compound interest, Sybok. You're Vulcan. Do the math."

"I can't get you that kind of money. That's insane."

Mudd lunged forward, grabbing his dagger out of the arm of his chair to press to Sybok’s throat. Sybok whimpered in pain as Mudd cut a thin green line across his flesh.

"That is not what I want to hear, Mr. Sybok!"

Mudd stood abruptly, taking the dagger from Sybok’s neck and wiping the blade clean of emerald blood against Sybok's cheek.

One of the Orions grabbed Sybok by the neck and hoisted him up against the wall.

"I'll have my money," Mudd declared as he pocketed his weapon and moved towards the door. "They pay well for Vulcan slaves on Orion. Some of the nobles of certain tastes prefer their slaves to be durable. With such a pretty face I am sure that you'll at least fetch 750 thousand credits. My men will enjoy taking the rest out of your sorry hide before we stitch you up and take you to market."

The large Orion who held him by the neck leaned in and licked the drying blood off of Sybok's cheek.

"No! You'll have your money, Mudd. Two weeks. Give me two weeks," Sybok cried.

Harvey stopped in the doorway. "You already said you couldn't come up with the money. Why should I allow you to waste more of my time?"

"My family. They are very rich. My father is Sarek of Vulcan. My aunt is Lady T'Pau. I promise you I can get your money."

Mudd laughed out loud. "You mean to tell me that all of this time I've been dealing with a gorram royal?"

Mudd laughed again before taking off his feathered cap and bowing lowly. "Forgive me your highness. I did not know!"

"I swear. Two weeks and you'll have your money!"

Mudd rose from his bow, all humor erased from his face. He nodded at one of his guards.

"Two weeks," Mudd replied as one of the Orions pressed a hypospray against Sybok's neck. "Two weeks before I use the tracker I just put into your blood stream to track you down."

The Orion released his grip on Sybok's neck and he fell to the floor coughing.

Mudd crouched down to look him in the eye.
"Count yourself fortunate that I find your latest excuse to be so amusing. Do not disappoint me again, your highness."

Mudd rose and kicked Sybok hard in the gut before following his men out of the hotel room. Sybok rolled on the dirty carpet in agony, coughing up blood and bile before he passed out.

**Glossary**

S'chn T'gai: Spock's family name

Sa-fu: Vulcan for son

*"Beyond Antares" by Gene Coons*
Chapter 22

Pride and Logic Chapter 22

Leonard McCoy paused briefly outside the entrance to Nyota's dormitory, checking his reflection in the door and blowing into the palm of his hand to check his breath. Although he knew Nyota wouldn't care about such things-and they were not dating-Len was still cognizant of the fact that he was about to spend the night with one of the most beautiful women in Starfleet on his arm. He had to look the part.

He hadn't seen his friend in over three months and his intensive internship on Starbase 8 had left him with little time for subspace chats over the comm. So, he and the missus were due for an extended catch up session before the new term got underway. A night of dinner and swing dancing awaited them in Los Angeles-Len wanted to be sure that none of his friends or associates would be present to witness his skill on the dance floor. Kirk had teased him maliciously last year for his flawless execution of the waltz at the new term formal. If Jim called him twinkle toes one more time, McCoy would flatten him.

Len stepped off of the lift onto Nyota's floor and felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end. Cadets in civilian attire ambled through the halls, talking loudly and laughing with friends. Loud music filtered into the corridor as doors slid open only to be silenced when they shut again. Everything appeared to be normal for a Friday night before the start of classes, yet Len couldn't shake the feeling that something was off.

"You're imagining things, ol'boy," he muttered to himself as he made his way to Nyota's room.

He pressed his hand to the buzzer on her door and waited. After thirty seconds with no answer, Len pressed the buzzer again. After a third time with no answer, his wariness returned.

"I hope you're decent, honey, because I'm coming in," Len yelled at the door, more for his benefit than hers.

McCoy quickly punched in the access code Nyota gave him last year and stepped into the dark room.

"Lights, 80 percent," he ordered.

The lights flickered on, revealing a room in chaos. Books, papers and PADDS littered the floor; pictures hung askew on the walls; chairs were overturned and shattered glass littered the rug.

"Good, Lord," Len muttered as he made his way through the mess towards Nyota's bedroom door.

The door to Nyota's sleeping quarters stood ajar, the door pushed off its track. Len shoved the door open completely and gasped at what he saw. Nyota's unconscious body lay splayed on the bedroom floor.

"Darlin' no."

Len rushed towards her, his medical scanner in hand, when he suddenly received a hard kick to his back, sending him hurtling to the floor by Nyota's side. McCoy quickly rolled to his feet. He barely saw his attacker before his head snapped back from a firm punch to his jaw. Two blows to his gut quickly followed, causing McCoy to double over in pain. A sickening crunch filled the air
as a foot connected with McCoy's head, sending the cadet flying backwards into the wall. McCoy slumped down the wall, blood spilling from his broken nose and his vision swimming.

"How empty were your threats from last year," Sybok mocked as he stooped to pick Nyota up from the floor. "You didn't even manage to land a single blow."

"You sick bastard," McCoy spluttered as he fought to stay conscious. "Leave Nyota alone."

Sybok laughed. "I don't think so. I've come a long way for the pretty cadet. I think I'll keep her."

Sybok pulled a small rectangular device from his pocket as he balanced Nyota on one shoulder.

"Would you be so kind to inform my darling brother that if he wishes to see his whore alive, he'll follow the instructions I'll send him to the letter."

Sybok pushed a button on the device and dematerialized, taking Nyota with him.

"Damn green blooded..." McCoy managed to curse before the blackness overtook him.

Spock walked down the dimly lit path towards the Admiral McDowell Medical Building. He received an emergency summons to the hospital shortly after three in the morning. The nurse who paged him gave him little information about why his presence was required. As far as he knew, he was not the emergency contact for anyone on campus. Spock could only think of one other possible reason for his summons, but he would not allow himself to dwell on the thought that some accident had befallen Cadet Uhura. He had no evidence to support such a conclusion and he found the idea of her injured or ill to be inordinately upsetting.

Spock entered the medical center and strode directly to the reception station.

"I am Lieutenant Commander Spock. I was summoned at 0330 hours for an unspecified purpose."

The Andorian ensign behind the desk nodded her head before quickly typing his name into her computer console.

"Yes, you were summoned to attend to one Cadet Leonard McCoy. You will find him on floor 14 in room 208 B."

Spock nodded curtly before making his way to the turbolifts. Spock was not well acquainted with Cadet McCoy. He knew him to be a particular friend of Cadet Uhura. However, he could not understand why McCoy would call for him. Spock stepped off of the lift and onto the 14th floor, bypassing the nurse's station as he made his way directly to room 208B.

"I already told you I don't want any more of those damn sedatives," McCoy growled at a stern faced nurse.

"But Cadet, your injuries are extensive and Doctor Andrews recommends that you get plenty of sleep."

"Well I'm a doctor too, Skippy, and I know a broken nose and a cracked rib ain't going to kill me and I sure as hell don't need those damn elephant tranqs. So, why don't you take your junior-physician toy kit and go play doctor with some other sap! Besides, I have to stay lucid to talk to Commander Pointy Ears here."

Spock rose one eyebrow at the cadet's colorful diatribe. Although his method was crude, the cadet's invective had the desired result of sending the nurse scurrying from the room.
"Cadet McCoy, I am sure that you were appraised of Starfleet protocol when you enlisted. However, I shall make the effort to remind you that the proper etiquette for addressing a superior officer..."

"Look you green-blooded hobgoblin," McCoy shouted over him,"I don't have time for your damn etiquette lessons..."

"Cadet McCoy, your continued disrespect..."

"Will you just shut up and listen! Nyota's been kidnapped!"

Spock stilled, his rebuke of the cadet's behavior dying on his tongue. A peculiar numbness overcame him as he processed what the cadet had said.

"Would you please repeat that," he managed after a moment that seemed to stretch impossibly long. "I believe that I misheard."

McCoy's face reddened.

"Nyota's been kidnapped. Your damn brother kicked my ass and took off with her earlier tonight. I told campus police as soon as I came to, but those dimwits don't know where to start. They can't find any trace of her."

Spock felt his numbness quickly give way to rage. He barely heard the rest of McCoy's explanation as his blood rushed loudly in his ears. The primitive Vulcan passion that he had struggled to subdue for the past several months nearly consumed him; the urge to claim his life-mate pushed aside by his lust for her attacker's blood. He had never felt an emotion so potent and wild. Part of him glared in this new sensation—pushed him to run from the medical center to hunt down his brother and claim his mate. Spock was grateful that the logical part of him still maintained control. He knew that giving into this irrational impulse would not help him rescue Nyota. Spock shut his eyes as he willed his heart rate to return to normal and the green haze of his vision to clear. He stepped closer to McCoy's bio-bed, his hands gripped tightly behind his back.

"Tell me all that has transpired."

Spock listened closely as McCoy related the events of that morning in detail. He was already formulating a course of action.

"Have the cadet's parents been informed of her abduction?" Spock asked.

"Yes. I believe the campus police already called them. Goodness, they must be worried sick..."

"Very well," Spock replied, cutting off McCoy's explanation. "You have been very informative."

Spock turned to leave the room when McCoy called out after him.

"Good God, man! How can you be so damn calm? Your bastard brother kidnapped one of your students. She could be dead or badly injured. Don't you care at all?"

Spock blinked. "Over emoting will not ensure the cadet's safe return. Now, if you will excuse me..."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa," McCoy yelled as he slid off of the bio-bed. "Where are you going?"

"I intend to retrieve the cadet."
"She has a name!"

"I am aware of Ms. Uhura's name. Your emotional outburst is only delaying my attempt to rescue her."

"Our attempt," McCoy added.

Spock lifted one eyebrow as he cocked his head to the side. "You will be of little assistance to me in your current physical state."

McCoy reddened. "Well the miracles of modern medicine will ensure that I'll be right as rain in an hour or two. Besides, I owe that Vulcan an ass whooping."

"The results of your last encounter with my brother would suggest that said 'ass whooping' is highly unlikely to occur."

McCoy harrumphed.

"Well, you may need my medical expertise," McCoy persisted. "Hell, Nyota is like a sister to me. I can't just sit here and do nothing knowing that bastard has her."

"Very well," Spock replied. "You may accompany me. Meet me at the Jameson Spaceport in four hours."

"Great!" Spock and McCoy turned to see Kirk leaning in the doorway.

"Where are we going?"

Nyota slowly regained consciousness. Her head ached terribly and her limbs felt heavy and unresponsive. Had she really drank that much with Len last night?

Nyota opened her eyes and looked around in confusion. She was not in her dorm room bed. In fact, she was pretty sure she was no longer in San Francisco. Memories of the previous night suddenly returned to her. She had never gone out with Len. She had just stepped out of the shower, her body covered in a bath robe, when she spied Sybok reclining on her bed.

"What a welcome sight to greet a visitor," Sybok drawled, his amber eyes roaming over her body.

"What are you doing here, Sybok?" Nyota growled as she began to edge towards the door.

"One would think you were not happy to see an old friend," Sybok laughed before pulling a phaser out of his jacket pocket. "Not so fast, kitten. It would be a shame if I had to shoot you or burn such lovely brown skin."

Nyota stopped her slow retreat. "What do you want, Sybok?"

She watched as the Vulcan slowly got to his feet, keeping his phaser trained on her.

"I just thought I'd take you on a little trip. A vacation, if you will," Sybok said with a smirk as he stepped towards her.

"I'm not going anywhere with you."

Sybok laughed. "This phaser says otherwise."

Sybok reached towards her with his free hand. Nyota ducked, quickly dropping to all fours and
sweeping Sybok's legs from underneath him with a low kick. Sybok fell hard to the ground, the phaser bouncing out of his grasp and skittering across the floor. Nyota scrambled to her feet and ran towards the open door when Sybok's right hand whipped out and grasped her roughly by the ankle. She screamed as she fell to the floor. Sybok dragged her towards him, as she kicked wildly with her free leg. Nyota managed to land a blow to his jaw, sending Sybok's neck snapping back. Sybok slowly turned his gaze towards her, his tongue darting out to lick the emerald blood from his split lip.

"I can see why my brother is so enamored of you," Sybok said as he pined Nyota's limbs to the ground. He climbed over her, pressing his legs firmly against her sides.

"You have such fire," he drawled as his eyes roamed over her partially clothed form, the top of her robe having come undone in their struggle. "I doubt my milksap of a brother was Vulcan enough to appreciate your charms."

Nyota's smiled cruelly to cover her embarrassment. "And I suppose you would know what to do?"

"Most assuredly," Sybok replied. "Would you like a demonstration."

Nyota began to feel lightheaded, her body taking on the strange languidness she now recognized as Sybok exerting his telepathic abilities to manipulate her will. Nyota's limbs relaxed and her body sank into the carpet. Sybok's body followed suit as he pressed against her. She made no protest as his lips pressed against hers, his hot tongue invading her mouth. Nyota wanted to vomit, but she found her will to resist him whithering under the force of his mental influence. Soon she found herself meeting his enthusiastic kisses with equal fervor. Sybok soon quit her mouth to pepper kisses along her jaw and down her neck, his lips smiling smugly against her skin as he elicited a moan from her lips.

"I wonder if my saint of a brother would still want his little human if he knew how easily you bent to my will?" Sybok laughed as he pulled at the tie of her robe.

Uhura found her ire rising as Sybok's hands left her flesh, the fog of his influence clearing to reveal a single minded rage.

"His little cadet lifting her bottom like a beast in heat," Sybok said as he slid his hands down her torso.

Sybok's taunting abruptly ended as Nyota's knee connected hard with his groin. Sybok cursed as he rolled from atop her. Nyota clamored to her feet and headed for the door when she felt a sharp pinch to her neck and her world went black.

Nyota swung her legs off of the spartan metal cot, her bare feet settling on the cold iron floor. She shivered. She was still dressed in the bathrobe she had worn when she was abducted. Sybok hadn't thought to provide her with a change of clothes or even a pair of shoes. Nyota looked around her cell for anything that she could use to her advantage. Her prison consisted of three bare metal walls, a toilet in one corner and a small metal sing in the other—both seemed to seamlessly fit into the corners of the room. The forth wall was a force-field that crackled and spluttered. Nyota tiptoed close to the transparent barrier to get a better look at the rest of the ship. The energy from the force-field prickled at her face, hands and legs and caused her to rise into even more rebellious curls around her head. Nyota squinted as she peered out into the dimly lit hall. She could make out very little of her surroundings and had no idea if she was on a small freighter or a much larger starship.

Nyota returned to her metal cot, drawing her knees toward her chin in order to conserve warmth.
Hopefully Len would have realized she had been taken and alerted the authorities by now. However, he would have no way of knowing who had taken her or where. The calm to which she had so fiercely held onto since she regained consciousness quickly fled her. She began to shake as question after question assaulted her: How would she be rescued? What did Sybok plan to do with her? Why had he taken her in the first place?

An image of Spock pacing the length of her quarters as he proposed entered her mind. Spock. Sybok had taken her to get to Spock. A small hope lit within her chest. He would come for her, surely.

Spock entered the Jameson Spaceport at exactly 8:00 hours. He was impressed to find Cadets McCoy and Kirk already waiting for him, their casual attire from that morning exchanged for their uniforms and service holsters. As soon as Spock had left the medical building he went to his offices to place a series of urgent calls. It was a particularly trying four hours as he haggled with Starfleet brass, a few ambassadors—his father included—and Mr. Ugway. Yet, his negotiations were ultimately successful. He had a shuttle at his disposal and the full cooperation of Starfleet.

While these negotiations were burdensome, Spock found the most taxing aspect of the morning to be the pre-recorded subspace communication he had received from Sybok. Sybok had demanded that he procure 2.5 million credits in pressed platinum for the safe return of the cadet along with the assurance that neither Starfleet or the Federation would be involved in the transaction. They were to meet on a small uninhabited moon orbiting a planet 500 lightyears from Earth. He had ended the transmission with a video of Nyota lying unconscious and partially clothed in a holding cell. Spock felt his breath quicken as his possessiveness and bloodlust returned in full force. When the screen returned to an image of Sybok threatening to harm Nyota should he deviate from the plan, Spock smashed the console with a loud roar.

Spock had little time to meditate in an attempt to regain mastery over his emotions. He feared that no amount of meditation would allow him to return to his equilibrium. Only a limited number of options remained if his fears were true: he could seek the treatment of healers, he could physically join with his bondmate or he could fight to the death. He had no time to seek out a healer. His bond with T'Pring had been dissolved and he had neither the time nor the inclination to seek her out had their bond remained intact. That only left him with his present course of action. He stopped before McCoy and Kirk, nodding his head to each in greeting.

"Cadets, if you would follow me."

Spock led the men to the private shuttle hanger where they passed row after row of luxury personal spacecrafts.

"Damn, they said you were rich, Commander, but I didn't expect you to be so...so rich," Kirk said.

"I do not own a personal spacecraft," Spock replied. "I merely called in a favor."

They turned a corner and approached a sleek silver ship. Commander Shuran stood waiting for them at the foot of the entry ramp, a large crate supported by anti-gravity boards by his side.

"Do you have the platinum?"

"2.5 million exactly," Shuran replied. "I sincerely hope that you don't intend to pay the bastard."

"Sybok will receive all that is due to him," Spock stated, his voice hard.
Shuran's mouth thinned into a firm line as he nodded in understanding.

"I will support whatever action you choose to take, my friend."

"Right," Kirk said as he looked between the pair of officers. "Let's get this show on the road."

Spock started blankly at the cadet, but McCoy could sense the ire underneath the Vulcan's blank visage.

"Um, Jim, in case you've forgotten, we're just coming along as guests to this rodeo."

"The doctor is inelegant but correct," Spock added. "You both are to follow my every command. While this is not an official Starfleet operation, the penalties for insubordination remain the same."

Spock strode up the ramp to board the ship with Shuran following closely behind.

McCoy looked to Kirk before clapping him soundly on the back.

"Jim boy, just try not to get us killed or, worse yet, court-martialed."
Chapter 23

Pride and Logic Chapter 23

Nyota lay curled on her side facing the bulkhead of her cell. Several hours had passed since she regained consciousness. She had not seen nor heard from Sybok since he had attacked her in her dorm room. She supposed that his absence was a small blessing given their last encounter. Nyota shuddered at the memory of his hands against her skin, his fingers unnaturally soft and hot as he pawed at her thighs. Did he intend to finish what he had begun in her dorm room? Perhaps he intended to do something far worse, the *kae'at k'lasa*. However, Nyota supposed that Sybok had been violating her mind since their first meeting, manipulating her to trust him, turning her against Spock, even willing her body to desire him.

Nyota scrambled up from her cot and bent over the metal toilet in the corner of the room, emptying the contents of her stomach. She slumped to the floor, wiping her mouth with the back of her hand as her body began to shake. The sound of approaching footsteps caused her to hold back a sob. She hoisted herself off of the floor and pulled her robe tight against her body when Sybok stepped into view.

"I hope that the accommodations are to your liking, Miss Uhura. We have a long ride to our destination. However, if you find your cot too uncomfortable, you are welcome to share my bed in the captain's quarters. That is, if you are willing to play nice."

"Take me back," Nyota growled. "If you turn back now, I may not press charges against you for kidnap and sexual assault."

Sybok laughed.

"No, hu'a. I think I'll keep you just a bit longer."

Nyota shook her head in disbelief.

"What do you want from me, Sybok? If it is money, I can assure you that my family has none to give for ransom. Starfleet won't pay a ransom for any of their officers, much less for a cadet. I am not valuable."

"Oh, for shame," Sybok replied with a cluck of his tongue. "Everyone has value, hu'a. And you are worth quite a lot to someone; my little brother in particular."

Uhura frowned. "I don't understand. What has Spock ever done to you for you to hate him so?"

"He was born," Sybok replied.

"That's illogical!"

"Don't lecture me on logic," Sybok shouted, stepping closer to the containment barrier. "Was it logical for my father to take a mere human to wife in place of my mother, the daughter of queens? For him to dote upon her and her half-breed spawn when they only brought shame upon our family name? My mother had not been dead two years when he brought home his human and got it with child."

"But your brother loved you," Nyota replied. "Even when Sarek banished you he stood by your side."
"What do you know of it?" Sybok sneered. His eyes narrowed as he paced closer. "Perhaps my brother values you more than I assumed. Did he meld with you, human? Perhaps your thoughts are already as one."

Nyota stepped back, newly frightened by the steel in Sybok's voice.

"No, you are wrong."

"I see that I asked for too little," Sybok continued, shrugging out of his coat and tossing it to the floor. "No matter. Perhaps this is the better revenge."

Sybok pressed his hand to the cell's sensor, shutting off the force field to the cell.

"It nearly broke Spock when I shared my thoughts with Amanda. How devastated will he be when I have his bondmate? He'll feel your distress and pain, every touch, every bite…when you break and beg for more."

"No, you've got it wrong," Nyota pleaded as he stepped into her cell. "We are not bonded. He proposed and I turned him down. He doesn't want me. He wouldn't care."

"Even if you were telling the truth, my brother would certainly care. Besides, who says your only value is in revenge. Before we were so rudely interrupted, I believe we were about to become intimately acquainted."

Nyota's fear was pushed back by her anger.

"As I recall, you had to use telepathy to force me. I suppose you have to resort to cheap tricks to get girls into your bed. Your brother is twice the Vulcan you'll ever be."

Sybok snarled and lunged for Nyota, who quickly ducked out of his reach. She ran for the open cell door just as Sybok's hand whipped out and grasped the back of her robe. Nyota stumbled backwards into Sybok but quickly recovered. Her fingers quickly undid the loose knot holding her robe shut. As soon as the robe gave free, Nyota slammed her head backwards, striking Sybok in the jaw. Free of her robe and Sybok's hold, Nyota ran out of the cell and slammed her hand down on the sensor for the cell door. Sybok recovered from the blow to his chin just in time to slam against the reactivated force-field barrier.

Nyota fell against the bulkhead, her chest heaving from exertion and the back of her head throbbing. She sneered at the sight of Sybok flinging himself against the force-field.

"I hope you enjoy the accommodations."

Spock stood hunched over the ship's scanner, peering into the blue portal for any sign of an unregistered spacecraft in the vicinity. They were three hours into their twelve hour journey to the rendezvous point Sybok had indicated. Spock hoped that they would be able to overtake Sybok's ship before then. Every moment that Nyota remained at the mercy of his brother was a trial. Spock could feel his control eroding by the minute. He was certain that if he were now in the company of his brother, there was little that could stop him from killing Sybok with his bare hands.

"Spock. Are you unwell?" Shuran asked from his place at the helm.

"I am in optimal health."

Shuran's antennae swiveled.
"You are not well, my friend. Your heart rate and respiration have increased significantly over the past hour."

"I said that I am in optimal health, lieutenant."

"Perhaps you should allow Cadet McCoy to examine you as a precaution…"

"I do not require medical assistance," Spock bit out.

Shuran sat back in his seat, startled, as Kirk and McCoy looked on in wonder.

Spock stood from his seat.

"I require meditation. Cadet Kirk, you will take my place at the scanner. McCoy, you will continue to monitor all communication frequencies. Mr. Shuran, you have the helm. I shall return in 2.5 hours. Alert me if you encounter anything of significance."

Spock quickly left the bridge, the eyes of his companions following his retreat.

As soon as Spock reached his quarters he slumped against the wall and stared at his shaking hands. He had to maintain his control. He would not be able to successfully rescue Nyota if he were to give way to the fever.

Spock walked further into the room, his steps heavy. He fell to his knees and folded his limbs into the proper position. Slowly, he attempted to clear his mind and enter the first level of meditation. His mind's eye was filled with a green haze—a fog of hatred, lust, need, possessiveness and fear that churned with in him, slowly choking off his logic and reason. Spock sat for thirty minutes attempting to sink beneath the haze to no avail. Shaking, he soon gave up the effort and resorted to pacing his quarters.

Nyota held up the black tunic, her stomach rolling from the distinct smell of Sybok's cologne. Lowering the garment, Nyota breathed deeply to calm herself. She had two choices: wear Sybok's garments or continue to walk around the ship naked. Nyota shrugged on the tunic and matching pants. She cinched the accompanying leather belt as tightly as she could, but the pants still rode low on her wide hips. She spotted a pair of boots in a corner and quickly put those on as well.

Once she was dressed, Nyota left Sybok's quarters and made her way to the bridge of the small transport vessel. Sitting at the helm, she observed the control panel with trepidation. Nyota had only piloted a small shuttle craft in classroom simulations. Her hands trembled as they hovered over the panel. She quickly pulled them into her lap, unsure of how to proceed.

"Computer, what is our current location?"

"Federation space," the computer began. "Allurian sector. Closest inhabited M class planet Rigel IV. Current coordinates…"

"Computer, how long would it take to return to San Francisco planet Earth at our current speed?"

"Fifteen hours, fourteen minutes and thirty-seven seconds."

Nyota bit her lip.

"Computer, set the most direct course to Earth."

"Calculating….course laid in."
Nyota smiled. She looked to the control panel once more. She may not know how to properly pilot a ship, but she sure as hell knew her way around a communications board.

Spock leaned against the bulkhead of his quarters, his forehead pressed against the cool metallic surface. His breath came out in harsh gasps as his body broke out in a cold sweat. An hour and a half had passed since he sequestered himself in his quarters and he was no closer to regaining his control than before. For the past thirty minutes he had resorted to reciting the core teachings of Surak to chase away the visions of Nyota broken and helpless.

"Bridge to Commander Spock," the clear voice of Cadet Kirk rang out over the ship's intercom. "Bridge to Commander Spock."

Spock stumbled over to the communications console.

"Spock here."

"Commander, we've picked up a distress call from a class 5 mid range transport vessel. The signature correlates to a ship reported to Federation authorities as stolen three weeks ago."

Spock stilled.

"Cadet, please play the distress call over ship-wide speakers. I am in route to the bridge."

"Yes, sir."

Spock left his quarters and headed directly to the bridge, listening to the distress call as he walked.

"This is Cadet Nyota Uhura of Starfleet Academy."

Spock stopped his progress at the sound of Uhura's voice filtering through the ship speakers. He leaned heavily against the bulkhead, his eyes sliding shut as a tremor ran through his body.

"I have been abducted by Sybok, son of Ambassador Sarek, formerly of Vulcan. I have disabled my kidnapper and commandeered his ship. I request immediate assistance from any Federation vessel in the surrounding vicinity. My current coordinates and flight plan are attached."

"I repeat, I am…."

Spock turned and faced the bulkhead, clenching his hands into fists as he willed the tremors to leave his body. Nyota was safe, for now. He resumed his trek to the bridge.

Shuran turned towards the door as Spock entered, a large smile stretched over his blue face.

"Cadet Uhura is a formidable woman. She will make an excellent officer."

Spock nodded tersely in response before resuming his seat at the helm.

"Have the coordinates for the cadet's location been plotted and laid in?"

"Done and done, sir," Kirk replied, his face stern.

"How long before we arrive at her last known location?"

"Four hours and twenty minutes at our current speed," McCoy answered.

"Very well. Increase speed to warp six."
Shuran's antennae swiveled.

"Commander, travel above warp four is not considered safe for this sector. It is heavily trafficked."

"Duly noted. Increase speed to warp six."

Shuran left his station and came to a stop beside Spock's chair.

"I must protest, Spock," he began, his voice barely above a whisper. "While I can understand your desire to assist Cadet Uhura, you must choose the prudent course of action. She is safe for the time being and you will be of no use to her if our ship is damaged or destroyed on our way to rescue her. What if we miscalculate and collide with an asteroid or passing freighter?"

"The probability of such an event occurring is at an acceptable level."

Shuran lowered his voice even further.

"Spock, I am speaking now as your friend. I can sense that you are not well and that perhaps your decisions are not the most rational…"

"It is imperative that we intercept Nyota's vessel as quickly as possible. We are unaware of the manner in which she subdued Sybok or how long he will remain so. Furthermore, she used an open frequency to place her distress call indicating that she must be either in a highly emotional state or physically injured. Nyota is a highly capable communications student. In her first communications practicum she would have learned the importance of using designated Starfleet frequencies in this sector in order to reduce the likelihood of alerting scavengers and other hostile parties to the vulnerable state of your ship.

"Once more, the likelihood that undesirable parties heard her distress call is high. There have been reports of Orion activity in this sector. Not only would the prospect of acquiring a Starfleet cadet be tempting for a slaver, but Sybok's past indiscretions have led to a sizeable bounty on his head."

"You're telling me that damn Orion slavers are after your brother?" McCoy exclaimed, abandoning all pretense of not eavesdropping.

Spock turned in his chair.

"My brother has led a reckless and criminal lifestyle. It is imperative that we get to Nyota before any of Sybok's enemies do."

Shuran sighed before turning and resuming his seat. "Well, warp six it is."

As the others focused on the controls and scanners, Kirk sat examining Spock. At first Kirk assumed that Spock's zeal for their current mission was due to the Vulcan's misplaced sense of duty. Sybok was his brother and he had abducted one of his students, it would only be natural for Spock to feel some obligation to rescue Uhura and apprehend his brother. However, that theory had been dashed to pieces at Spock's use of Uhura's first name. Kirk began to suspect that this mission was very personal to Spock for an entirely different reason.

Nyota lurched in her seat as another photon torpedo exploded against the ship's shields.

"Sheilds: twenty one percent," the computer announced.

"BaQa'," Nyota cursed.
If she took another direct hit she would lose her shields completely. As Nyota began to employ another evasive maneuver, she couldn't help but second-guess her decision to evade the Orion cruiser.

When she first received the hail in reply to her distress call, she released an audible sigh of relief. However, her hope curdled into dread when the smirking visage of the Orion pirate filled her view screen. The smug Captain Thalack gave her two options: surrender her vessel or be destroyed. Knowing that surrender would certainly include enhanced interrogation followed by a short life as a slave girl, Nyota decided to take her chances with destruction.

Another torpedo blast rocked the ship, tossing Nyota from her seat and onto the floor.

"Shields ten percent."

Nyota shook the fog from her head as she pulled herself back into her seat.

"Computer, are there any M class planets or moons in the vicinity?"

"Please specify 'vicinity'."

Nyota growled.

"Within 50,000 kilometers."

"Calculating…"

Nyota pulled back on the controls, swerving to dodge another photon torpedo.

"Valus Beta. A M class planetoid. Uninhabited. Fauna of note includes…"

"Plot a direct course for Valus Beta."

No sooner had Nyota said the command than her vessel was hit. Nyota was thrown from her chair once more. She landed hard, the side of her head striking the console on her way down. Nyota lay stunned on the floor as the lights on the bridge flickered off and the orange emergency lighting kicked in.

"Shields offline. Auxiliary power only…"

Nyota could barely comprehend the computer's announcements as she struggled to retain lucidity. Black spots marred her vision and the side of her head ached.

"Uhura," Thalack's gravelly voice filled the ship. "Your vessel is disabled. Stand down and prepare for boarding."

Nyota moaned as she attempted to rise from the floor to answer the hail. Suddenly she found herself pushed forcefully back to the floor.

"Do not trouble yourself," Sybok said as he leaned over her, his amber eyes hard. "You are more effort than I anticipated. I begin to understand my brother's fascination with you."

He ran a finger down her cheek and smiled cruelly at her weak flinch. He rose to his feet and faced the view screen.

"Thalack, old friend, the pretty cadet is in no condition to negotiate. I fear you'll have to deal directly with me."
"Sybok, you bastard spawn of a heka beast," Thalack spat. "Stand down or I'll happily end you."

Sybok laughed. "Old friend, we both know that you are too savvy for such a thing. Besides, I do not scare as easily as the human female."

"Do not test me, Sybok. Quite a few parties will be very pleased to see the universe cleansed of your filth."

"Such harsh words," Sybok chuckled. "I know that you barely have the intelligence of an amoeba, but even you know that I am much more valuable alive than dead. Would you really destroy a ten million credit prize?"

Thalack sneered. "The fact remains that your ship is disabled. Prepare to be boarded. My men will ensure that your capture is a painful one."

Sybok's smile faltered. "Well, all I can say, old friend, is catch me if you can."

With that, Sybok's fingers flew over the control panel, sending off a barrage of laser fire as he attempted to put the ship into warp. As the ship was hit a final time and the cabin began to fill with smoke, Nyota slipped peacefully into unconsciousness.

Glossary

kae'at k'lasa= mind rape

hu'a= seductress

BaQa'= a Klingon invective indicating surprise. I wanted Nyota to shout "Crap in a hat!" in Klingon as that is my favorite curse. It sounds corny, but think about it. If someone took a dump in your hat that would really suck.
Chapter 24

Pride and Logic Chapter 24

Shuran's antennae swiveled as he peered into the scanner, his lips contorted in a frown. Spock sat in the captain's chair behind him, his shaking hands gripping the armrests of the chair. It had been at least thirty-five minutes since they received the last coordinates relayed by the distress beacon aboard Cadet Uhura's vessel. Shuran's scans of the area did not fill him with hope. He feared for the safety of the young cadet and for the emotional state of his normally stoic friend.

"Report, Lt. Shuran."

Shuran took a deep breath before turning around in his seat to face his friend. He was met with the sight of Spock's back, his shoulders rounded and tense.

"Scans of the area show a high level of photon radiation indicating that a barrage of photon torpedo fire has been exchanged within the area within the last three hours," Shuran began. "Scans have also picked up small traces of ship debris, indicating that one or both vessels were damaged in the exchange."

Spock listened to Shuran's report with a growing disquiet. The level of debris present was not sufficient to indicate that a ship had been destroyed. However, Spock's deteriorating emotional control left him vulnerable to fits of illogic. Anxiety and fear now warred with the pon farr induced bloodlust that had threatened to overtake him for the past three days. Spock hands gripped the armrest of the captain's chair with enough force to crack the polycarbonate frame. It was imperative that he recover Nyota within the next three days before he was completely lost to the plak tow. He harbored no illusions that Nyota would be willing to bond with him and free him from the ravages of plak tow. Spock simply could not countenance the notion that he would be rendered unable to ensure her safety, whether due to the blood fever or his death.

"I'm also picking up a faint photon trail," Kirk added. "Perhaps it was left behind by a leak in the damaged craft's weapons systems. If we follow it, perhaps it will lead us to Uhura."

Spock nodded, "A logical hypothesis. Continue, Cadet Kirk."

"The trail extends in the general direction of Rigel IV," Kirk replied. "An M class planet 20,000 kilometers from our location."

"It is possible that a heavily damaged craft could travel that distance before a complete systems failure," Shuran noted.

Spock rose from his seat and walked towards the view screen. "Set a course for Rigel IV, Cadet Kirk. Mr. Shuran, maintain observation of the photon trail. Cadet McCoy, go to the medical bay and prepare a field triage kit."

McCoy cast a worried glance at Kirk before rising from his station to follow Commander Spock's command. Kirk sat grim-faced as he quickly set the plot.

"15.8 minutes until we reach Rigel IV."

Uhura woke coughing, her lungs burning. She opened her eyes, but she could see little through the plumes of grey smoke that hung thick in the air. The cabin was dark save for the blinking
yellow emergency lights that lined the floor.

Before Uhura lost consciousness, the ship had been alive with claxons, crisply delivered computer warnings of impending shield failure, and Sybok's mocking voice. Now the ship sat silent save for her coughs and the steady hissing of coolant being released from a burst pipe. Uhura rolled over onto her side, her eyes adjusting to the smoke and dim light. She saw no sign of Sybok or their Orion pursuers. Still, she knew herself to be in danger. She had to get away from the ship before Sybok returned or the Orion boarded the ship. Even if the Orions left them for dead and Sybok had fled without her, she knew staying on the crashed ship was not an option. The heavy smoke filling the bridge told her that a fire must have started somewhere on the ship and the ship's fire suppression systems were too damaged to respond.

Uhura rolled onto her belly and began to crawl towards the bridge doors, using the emergency lights set in the floor to guide her way. Her right knee and wrist throbbed with the effort of pulling her weight, but she dared not stop. When she reached the door, she put her palms flat against the doors. Finding the metal doors sufficiently cool, she took a deep breath, shut her eyes against the smoke and stood. She groped blindly for the manual door release. Just as her lungs began to burn, her fingers grasped the cool metal lever. She pulled down the lever and dropped to her hands and knees, inhaling a lungful of air.

The doors slid open to reveal a darkened hallway with flickering orange emergency lights obscured by plumes of blue-black smoke. Uhura resumed her crawl, this time making her way towards the emergency escape pods. She hoped that they remained undamaged. She wondered briefly whether Sybok had made his way there earlier when he left her to die on the bridge.

Uhura was surprised to find both escape pods intact. Even the blue escape hatch remained unopened, its blue light blinking steadily in the gloom of the hall. Uhura climbed into one of the pods and began gathering supplies. She found a standard issue sub-artic grade parka that was at least three sizes too large. Uhura quickly pulled on the coat and used the drawstring devices at the wrists and bottom of the coat allowed for some customization. Nyota gathered warming packets to slip into her stolen boots, a pair of heavy gloves, a water purification probe, emergency rations, canteen, camp stove and a knapsack. Most useful of all was the portable emergency beacon. Should she evade Sybok and the Orions, she would have no way off this moon without it.

Uhura packed the supplies she gathered into her pack, donned the gloves and climbed out of the escape pod into the cold and snow of Rigel IV. Their ship had crashed in a clearing in the valley between two snow-capped mountains. About a foot of snow covered the ground. To the east was a dense pine forest that gently sloped upwards over the side of one mountain. Further to the west was a pasture bordered by a slow moving river and more forest beyond. Nyota spied a set of tracks leading towards the forest to her east. Nyota stood contemplating which way to turn when the sound of the emergency door sliding open drew her attention.

She whirled around to find Sybok standing in the open doorway, a phaser in his hand. A gash on his forehead slowly oozed green blood, but he seemed otherwise unharmed. He too had donned cold weather gear and a backpack of supplies.

"So good to see you awake, Nyota," he said as he leapt down from the ship. "And how good of you to pack. The going will be so much easier without my having to cart you through the snow."

"Why don't you just leave me here? I'll only slow you down and make it that much easier for Thalack to capture you."

"Let's just say that you're insurance," Sybok replied. "Move."

Sybok motioned with the barrel of the phaser towards the forest to the east. Uhura glared at him
before complying. Sybok pressed the phaser hard against her back.

"Do not get any clever ideas, Nyota. If you attempt to flee, I will shoot you."

Spock walked swiftly down the corridors toward the cargo bay of the ship, Shuran, McCoy and Kirk following closely behind. Spock and Kirk both donned sub-arctic grade coats, gloves and pants while Shuran merely donned a thin thermal jacket. The Andorian did not need much protection against the cold of Rigel IV, but a Vulcan and a human would succumb to hypothermia within minutes if exposed to the elements unaided. McCoy followed them, scowling fiercely.

"I still think you all could use a medic out in the field. Who knows what condition Ny might be in."

"We have already discussed this, Cadet McCoy," Spock replied without breaking his stride. "You are not sufficiently healed from your injuries to be an asset in the field. Your presence aboard this ship is of greater value to the mission. You will monitor our frequencies and attend to the communicator. Should we require assistance, you will beam us aboard ship."

"You can't expect me to sit here and do nothing while that hobgoblin has Nyota! If you think I'll just sit here while she's in danger..."

Spock stopped so abruptly that McCoy nearly collided with him. "You have your orders, Cadet," Spock replied with gritted teeth. "If you cannot comply with those orders, you are welcome to spend the remainder of this mission in the brig."

McCoy stepped back from the commander, his color heightening to an alarming shade of tomato red. Kirk looked between the pair nervously as Shuran stepped in between them.

"Cadet McCoy, as you are the only member of our party skilled in medicine, your skills will no doubt be invaluable here preparing the medical bay in case Nyota is in need of it. Kirk and I are soldiers not surgeons." Shuran gave McCoy his most winning smile and a firm pat on the shoulder.

McCoy considered this for a moment, his anger visibly receding. Finally, he threw up his hands and backed away from Shuran.

"Well, ya'll just make damned sure you bring Nyota back alive," McCoy grumbled.

"I intend to."

Spock turned and strode purposefully away from the group towards four sleek silver hoverbikes parked at the top of the loading ramp. Kirk threw a bewildered look at Shuran and McCoy before jogging to catch up with Spock.

Kirk let out a long whistle when he saw the hoverbikes. Shuran activated the bikes with a few quick strokes of his fingers against the keypad on his wristband. The hoverbikes hummed to life, rising to float a foot above the ground, their engines near silent save for a gentle purr audible only to the Andorian's sensitive hearing.

"How'd you get these beauties?" Kirk asked as he drew a hand admiringly over the seat of one bike.

"One of the perks of being an ambassador's son," Shuran replied as he carefully put on his helmet, guiding his antennae into place. "We get all the newest toys."

Spock threw one long leg over the seat of one hoverbike, adjusted the visor of his helmet and
activated the helmet's computer.

"Set scans for a ten mile radius," Spock ordered the computer as he turned his bike and began the short descent down the loading ramp towards the opening bay doors. "Set alerts for Orion, Vulcan and human bio-signatures."


McCoy watched the trio shoot out of the cargo bay into the waning light of Rigel IV.

"Hold on just a bit longer, darling," McCoy whispered to the closing shuttle bay doors. "The cavalry's coming."

Uhura stumbled over a tree root for the fourth time that evening. Sybok merely hefted her to her feet with one arm before urging her forward. They had been hiking up the mountainside for hours, further and further into the dense forest in hopes of avoiding the Orions who Sybok was convinced still pursued them. As the hours drew on, Sybok grew more agitated. He stopped their progress frequently, bidding her to drop down to hide in the brush convinced he had heard a twig snap under the crunch of a boot.

When Uhura fell once more, Sybok cursed.

"I know you to be too graceful to be this clumsy. Do you think me a fool? Your attempts to slow us down will not work."

"We've been running for hours with no breaks, Sybok. I'm hungry and thirsty. I can barely feel my feet much less run," Nyota complained as she struggled to her feet and leaned against a tree. "Can we not rest for just a moment? I don't fancy becoming an Orion slave any more than you do, but I at least need some nutrients to keep running."

Sybok considered her request for a moment, his eyes scanning the area as he did so.

"Fine. You may reach into your pack and retrieve one protein bar. Be quick about it."

Uhura removed her backpack and knelt down in the snow. She kept both eyes on Sybok who stood nervously over her, pointing his phaser at her head. Slowly she reached into the pack and felt around the contents of the bag. Her fingers brushed the cool metal of a dermal regenerator, the synthetic cloth cover of an extra warming packet, and a few plastic wrappers housing protein bars. Finally, her fingers brushed against the oblong casing of the emergency beacon. She quickly activated the beacon before removing a protein bar from the bag.

"Move," Sybok ordered once Uhura regained her feet. "We press on until nightfall."

Uhura walked forward, tearing open the protein packet with her teeth. Although the protein bar was chewy and unappetizing, Nyota ate the bar with relish. She had not lied to Sybok completely—she was almost faint with hunger. Now she held some hope of rescue. Yes, the beacon might alert the Orions to their location, but it might also alert someone else.

Spock hugged the sides of the hoverbike with his thighs as he skillfully maneuvered around boulders and snow drifts. Scans had indicated that Nyota's vessel crashed some three kilometers from their current location and that an Orion scouting vessel was located some 500 meters from the crash site. Their plan was to scout the crash site, determine as much as they could about the condition and whereabouts of Nyota, and neutralize the Orion threat.

Spock slowed as he spied what looked like two small vessels about two kilometers in the distance.
"Gentlemen, I believe we have found the cadet's vessel," Spock informed Shuran and Kirk through the helmet's communicator. "It would be prudent to proceed with caution."

"Indeed," Shuran replied as he pulled up next to Spock. "I am detecting five humanoids at the crash site and another two aboard the Orion vessel."

"Are any of these humanoids Vulcan or human?"

"Negative," Kirk answered. "Their life signs are consistent with Orions, sir."

"Noted," Spock brought his bike to a halt behind a large boulder and dismounted. The other two men did the same.

"We will proceed on foot from this point on," Spock explained as he unholstered his phaser. "Lieutenant-Commander Shuran and Cadet Kirk, you both shall proceed to the Orion vessel. Use non-lethal force to subdue the Orions on board the vessel. I shall proceed to Cadet Uhura's vessel and do the same."

"Wait a goddamn second," McCoy's voice cut in through the headset. "You're gonna take on five possibly armed Orions by yourself? Are you trying to get yourself killed?"

Spock raised one slender gloved finger to the side of his helmet and disconnected the audio in from the ship.

"He does have a point," Kirk began.

"Men, you have your orders." Spock nodded briefly to each of them before running towards the crash site.

Kirk and Shuran soon followed, matching Spock's crouching lope across the snow, their phasers raised as the bent low. As they neared the site, Spock veered to the right toward the crashed ship while Shuran and Kirk split up, each approaching the Orion vessel from a different side.

Spock slowed his gait considerably as he neared the crash site. He had to tamp down the quick flare of panic that shot through him upon seeing the smoking remains of the vessel. While he calculated that the probability that Nyota escaped the vessel alive was high, he was less sure that she did so unharmed. Spock spied one Orion standing guard beside an open shuttle bay door as two other Orions carried supplies and parts scavenged from the heavily damaged vessel to an anti-gravity sled. Spock flattened himself against the side of the ship as he slowly made his way towards the Orion standing guard. Spock observed the Orions adding to the pile of ship parts on the anti-gravity sled and estimated that he had approximately thirty seconds to incapacitate the guard without immediately alerting his companions. Spock set his phaser to stun and crept to within touching distance of the Orion.

"You appear to have an eight legged creature on your shoulder." Spock announced as he tapped the guard on the right shoulder.

Alarmed, the guard spun around, phaser raised. However, before he could shout for help or shoot, Spock rendered him unconscious with a quick press of his fingers to his neck. Spock caught the guard before he hit the ground and dragged him to the side of the ship. Just as Spock finished binding the Orion's hands and ankles, he heard the other Orions making their way down the ramp. A brief exchange of phaser fire ensued. One of the Orion's was able to graze Spock's shoulder with a phaser blast before he too was stunned. The commotion attracted the two remaining Orions. Spock managed to stun one Orion before he was charged and tackled from behind. Spock fell to the ground, his phaser skittering across the snow far out of his reach. The Orion turned him onto
his back and delivered two good punches to Spock's face. Spock tasted the copper tang of blood in his mouth. He felt his vision go black.

With a roar, he flung the Orion aside. The Orion hit the side of the ship with a sickening crunch. Spock leapt to his feet and rounded on the Orion, snarling. The Orion managed to land another blow to Spock's jaw before Spock caught hold of his arm in a crushing grip. The Orion howled as Spock brought his other fist crashing down on the Orion's forearm, breaking it. The Orion cradled his broken arm to his chest and pulled out a dagger with his good hand. Spock knocked the blade aside and grasped the Orion by the neck with one hand. Spock tightened his grip on the Orion's neck, relishing the gurgles that escaped from his lips.

In the back of his mind, a part of Spock recoiled at the sight of the Orion struggling to breathe. However a darker, louder part of his psyche thrilled over the sensation of the Orion's slowing heartbeat, triumphed over the panic and pleas for mercy transmitted through the press of his fingers into the Orion's green flesh.

"Spock!" Shuran's voice was barely audible over the rush of blood in Spock's ears. "Spock, do not do this."

Spock ignored him and slowly lifted the Orion into the air. Spock smiled at the sight of the Orion's kicking feet and squeezed harder.

"Spock! Please, ne ki'ne, we must find Nyota!"

Spock dropped the now unconscious Orion and backed away from his inert body. Kirk ran over to the Orion's side and pulled out the medical scanner from the field triage kit.

"He's alive," Kirk called out. "Just barely."

Shuran walked over to Spock who stood facing the ship, his eyes shut and his hands clenched at his sides.

"Spock..."

"If you intend to reprimand me for the use of unnecessary force, you need not concern yourself. Once our current mission is complete, I intend to request a leave of absence so that I may sojourn to Vulcan to seek the assistance of healers. Should you submit a report recommending further censure, I will not pose a defense."

Shuran shook his head. "Well, I was just going to ask if you were okay. But I know the answer to that question. You have not been yourself lately and I know you better than to pry. The Orion is fine, just a bit battered. I won't be submitting any reports."

Spock sighed and turned towards his friend. "Th'i-oxalra."

Shuan nodded. "Think nothing of it. Now, how do we find your cadet?"

Spock lifted one eyebrow at Shuran before moving towards the Orion guard whom he first stunned. Spock placed the fingers of his right hand on the Orion's temple and shut his eyes tight in concentration. Meanwhile, Shuran bound the hands of the Orion slaver lying at Kirk's feet.

"What's he doing?" Kirk asked Shuran. "Is that what I think it is?"

"A mind meld," Shuran replied as he worked. "He is endeavoring to discover what the Orions know about Nyota's location."
After a few moments, Spock opened his eyes and focused on Shuran.

"Nyota and Sybok have been tracked to the forest to the east. Four heavily armed Orions are currently tracking them," Spock stood and dropped his eyes to the ground. "They have orders to retrieve Sybok dead or alive. As for Nyota, they prefer to apprehend her unscathed, but she is deemed expendable."

"What's going on there?" McCoy's voice cut through the communicators on their helmets.

"We're fine, Bones," Kirk replied before stepping away from Spock and Shuran to fill him in on the details.

"Shuran, please gather these three men and transport them to their ship. They should remain unconscious for the next four hours. I will pursue the cadet."

Shuran leapt to his feet. "You can't think that I'd let you pursue these men on your own," he argued. "Especially not in your condition. I'm coming with you."

"Sybok and the Orions have had at least two hours to travel prior to our arrival. Nyota could be captured or dead by now. It is imperative that I pursue them as soon as possible. Furthermore, these men will not long survive in this climate exposed to the elements. They must be relocated to safety."

Shuran stared at his friend for a moment before nodding his acquiescence. He lifted his arm and quickly punched a few commands into the control pad on his wrist.

"Kirk and I will be right behind you."

The three hoverbikes silently sped towards them, stopping and idling two meters from where they stood. Spock nodded to Shuran before mounting his bike and speeding off towards the forest.

"Where's he going?" Kirk asked.

"To retrieve the cadet," Shuran replied before jogging over to the anti-gravity cart loaded with salvaged ship parts. "We have work to do before we join him. Be a lad and give me a hand unloading this cart."

Kirk watched the form of Commander Spock disappear into the forest before turning to join Shuran at his task.

**Glossary**

*ne ki'ne:* shield partner, the person a warrior could trust most in a battle; a trusted friend and skilled warrior

*Th'i-oxalra:* thank you, "I appreciate it."
Pride and Logic Chapter 25

Nyota paused in her hike up the rise, leaning one gloved hand against a tree trunk for balance as she flexed her cold stiffened toes. She winced at the sharp needlepoints of pain that shot up her leg. The warming packets she slipped into her boots before leaving the ship had long gone cold. Nyota feared that frostbite was not far behind, though she feared much more than losing a few toes to the cold.

"Move," Sybok ordered with a jab of his phaser to her side.

Nyota glared at him. "I don't know why you keep pointing that thing at me. I can barely walk much less run away. Besides, where would I run?"

"I've learned well not to underestimate you," Sybok replied. "Now move! I don't like repeating..."

Sybok stiffened and turned wildly in a circle.

"Something's coming."

"I don't hear any..." Nyota stopped when she heard it too. Something or someone was moving towards them, its footfalls heavy in the snow.

A towering fur covered creature crashed through the trees. It pulled itself to a stop, its great clawed paws stomping upon the ground as it sniffed the air.

Nyota and Sybok stood frozen as the creature turned its large head to and fro scenting the air, its small beady eyes blinking feebly in the late afternoon light. Nyota realized that the creature was near blind, perhaps relying on movement and scent to track its prey. Nyota was torn between fleeing and staying put in hopes that the creature would go on its way.

Her hopes were shattered when the creature turned its head in their direction, its four large nostrils widening as it took a deep breath.

"Qwe-baqsh," Nyota cursed.

The creature opened its mouth and let out a deafening howl, revealing three rows of sharp yellow teeth. Nyota turned and ran.

Uhura heard Sybok swear as he shot off two phaser blasts at the creature as he ran beside her. His efforts only served to further enrage the creature, whose roar grew in volume. The weariness that had turned her legs to lead was a distant memory as Nyota ran for her life. Low hanging branches whipped at her face as she ran weaving around tree trunks and leaping over rocks.

Nyota dared to look behind her and found the creature a mere five meters behind and closing fast. Nyota picked up speed, willing her legs to propel her through the snow and further into the forest. Her foot caught on a tree root and she fell heavily to the ground, the wind knocked out of her lungs. Nyota quickly scrambled to her feet and suddenly found herself lifted high into the air. The creature had sunk its claws into her backpack. Nyota screamed as the tips of the claws pierced through her coat and into the flesh of her back.
Nyota barely heard the volley of phaser fire that rang out all around her over the sound of her own screams. The creature roared as phaser blasts assaulted it from all sides. It flung Nyota from its grasp as it turned to meet its assailants. Nyota flew through the air, her limbs limp as a rag doll. Air rushed from her lungs as she landed hard on the snow.

Nyota lay in the snow gasping for breath. Each lungful of air brought with it a round of searing pain. She tried not to panic as rivulets of blood began to form in the snow around her. She shut her eyes. Pain meant that she was not yet in shock. Nyota did a quick mobility check. She could flex her toes, stiff as they were from the cold. She could move her fingers, arms and head. She could bend her knees. With considerable effort, she willed her body to turn over so that she could assess the situation around her. She immediately regretted the move as pressure was now placed on her wounded back. She could not help but cry out again, her vision swimming with tears.

Through her distress, she did not notice that all had gone quiet around her until a warm hand caught her by the chin. Nyota tried to scramble away from the touch by instinct. A deep guttural voice whispered oddly comforting words in Kolari.

"Calm yourself, woman, lest you cause yourself further injury."

Nyota focused on the broad green face of the Orion who held her chin.

"Please," Nyota whispered in Kolari, "Don't hurt me."

"I will not do you any harm. Thalack would be displeased if we damaged his prize."

The Orion released her chin and began to fish around in a small pack strapped to his thick waist. He brought out a long silver tube and pressed it to her neck. She felt a short sharp pain.

"No..." Nyota slurred as her limbs became too heavy to move.

Spock maneuvered his hoverbike through the forest as quickly as he dared, swerving around tree trunks as he tracked Sybok and Nyota’s progress.

"Spock," Shuran's voice rang out through his helmet speakers. "Cadet Kirk and I are on our way to rendezvous. Do you have an update on Cadet Uhura's whereabouts?"

"My scans have picked up one human, one Vulcan and eight Orion bio-signatures clustered together at 145 degrees north and 68 degrees west. I am continuing my pursuit."

"Spock," Shuran replied, "Kirk and I will be at your location in three minutes. It is prudent to wait for us."

"There is no time for delay."

Shuran grunted in reply before continuing in Andorian.

"I know that you have strong feelings for Cadet Uhura that have clouded your logic, but you must listen to me. If you rush in there without back up, you'll be killed. You will be of no use to her dead."

Spock replied in Vulcan. "My heart is flame. My eyes are flame. My mind is flame. I must recover she who is mine."*

Shuran’s confused reply was cut off when Spock deactivated his communicator. A small logical part of his brain knew Shuran's warnings to be wise, but his growing fever drowned his sense of
Spock slowed his bike as he entered a small clearing. Burn marks on trees and rocks surrounding the clearing suggested phaser fire had been exchanged. Spock dismounted and removed his helmet with shaking hands. He breathed in deeply and shuddered at the intensity of a familiar scent, Nyota, followed by the sickly sweet odor of burning flesh and the tang of iron based blood. Nyota was injured. Spock dropped his helmet and walked further into the clearing looking for any sign of Uhura. He found the remnants of a rucksack, its contents strewn about the field: a thermal blanket, food rations, warming packets, water canisters, and a crushed emergency beacon. Droplets of dark red blood were sprinkled amongst the debris. Uhura's blood. The carcass of a large fur covered creature lay slumped against a fallen tree. Phaser burns dotted its white fur and blue black blood seeped from its slackened jaw.

Spock's eyes fell to the beast's large front paws. The curved yellow claws were coated in dark red blood. One great paw clutched shreds of black fabric. Spock retrieved a strip of fabric, brought it to his nose with shaking hands, and inhaled. Nyota. He sank to his knees and wailed.

Kirk leapt off his bike as they came to the last coordinates of Spock's hoverbike. Shuran had already dismounted and was sprinting towards Spock. Kirk followed, his eyes surveying the clearing as he ran. He took note of the phaser burns on the tree trunks, the splatters of blood on the snow and the downed beast. Spock kneeled next to the beast, his head held in his hands as he moaned mournfully. Shuran stood a few feet away from him, his hands held out towards Spock placatingly. He had removed his helmet and was speaking in low tones to the distraught Vulcan.

"Spock, my friend. Listen to reason. Uhura is not dead. Had the beast killed or mortally wounded her, would not her body be here in the clearing? There would be much more blood on the creature's claws and on the ground..."

"What's going on out there?" Bones' sharp voice cut through Kirk's helmet.

"I'm not sure," Kirk replied. "Something weird. I think something happened to Uhura."

"What do you mean? What happened to Ny?"

"There's blood in the snow, Bones. But not a lot. I'm sure she's alive, but she's hurt."

Bones muttered a curse. "You guys had better catch up with her fast. Ya'll only got an hour or two left of daylight and then you're all gonna be popsicles. You think its cold now. When the sun sets the temperature drops by at least 60 degrees. If Ny is losing blood, she could very well die from hypothermia before then."

"We're trying our best, Bones. But Spock is freaking out right now and slowing us down."

"Hell, I am surprised he's still able to walk. His vitals are off the charts."

"Are you saying he's sick?"

"I've been monitoring his vitals since ya'll left the ship. He was acting a little erratically then so I snuck in a quick scan. I'm not an expert in Vulcan physiology, but his hormone levels and heart rate have been all over the place the last few hours. I'd call him back to the ship, but I know he won't listen."

"I'll see what I can do to get us moving," Kirk walked over to Shuran who was still trying to reason with Spock, his brow knit with worry.

Spock remained crouched in the snow gripping a piece of blood soaked fabric. Kirk gasped at the
expression of enraged grief that twisted his features. Kirk wanted to look away, convinced that it
was somehow wrong to see the ever composed Commander break down.

"Au-pistau-veh, kosu te-vor."

"What's he saying, Shuran?"

"They have killed her," Shuran translated, swallowing thickly. "She is dead...she who was mine."

Kirk’s mouth dropped open. "She who is mine? Uhura and Spock are together?"

Shuran turned towards him. "No. Commander Spock would never break regulations or endanger
Uhura's career. But she was...is important to him."

Kirk looked between Spock and Shuran for a few moments, his mind attempting to process this
new and unexpected information. He supposed that it explained a lot-the commander's odd
behavior and why he took it upon himself to rescue Uhura rather than relying on Starfleet. Kirk
had assumed that the vigilante nature of the mission had been borne out of some sense of Vulcan
privacy and an unwillingness to air his family's dirty laundry in public. Perhaps that was why
Ambassador Sarek had been unusually accommodating in securing the ship and clearances needed
for this mission. However, for Spock, this was deeply personal. Kirk blew out a huge puff of air,
stealing himself as he decided upon a course of action.

"The things I do for love," he murmured before stomping over to Spock.

"Listen, you pointy eared green blooded bastard. Uhura is not dead. But if your pansy ass keeps
sitting here weeping in the snow, she'll be dead before sunset."

Spock stilled his rocking movements and leveled Kirk with a deadly glare. "You will not speak of
her."

"I'll speak of her, alright," Kirk continued, his voice dropping conspiratorially as he stepped into
Spock's personal space. "I never could understand why Uhura wouldn't take me up on my offer to
show her a good time. To think she was holding out for the likes of you. She must like her men
cowardly and weak. Oh, excuse me; you're not a man are you?"

"Kroyah!" Spock shouted as he lurched to his feet, his face green with rage.

Shuran stepped towards them, his antennae waving anxiously. "Cadet, I don't think this is a wise
course of action."

Kirk continued as if Shuran had not spoken. "A real man wouldn't let some punk just take off with
his woman and get away with it. A real Vulcan wouldn't lay down and cry while his mate was in
danger. Does Uhura know what she's getting, Spock? A carcass full of memory banks who
should be squatting on a mushroom instead of passing himself off as a man?" **

Kirk jabbed him in the chest with one glove clad finger. "But what can you expect from a
simpering devil eared freak whose father was a computer and whose mother was an
encyclopedia?" **

Spock's lips curled back in a snarl before he backhanded Kirk across the face. Kirk was sent
sprawling in the snow, his helmet cracking from the blow and his ears ringing. Kirk started to
rethink his brilliant plan when his helmet was ripped from his head and he met the wild eyed stare
of Spock. Spock grabbed him by the throat and lifted him into the air. Kirk began to splutter and
kick as pressure began to be applied to his windpipe. Kirk flailed in Spock's grip, his fingers
grasping futilely at Spock's hands.
"Spock!" Shuran shouted. "Release him! Would you not rather be choking he who took Nyota?"

Spock stared at Kirk, his eyes blinking lazily as his grip on Kirk's throat eased.

"Brother," Shuran pleaded. "Nyota needs you, now. You must go to her without delay. Look deep to your logic and you will see that I am right."

Spock hesitated, his dark gaze wavering from Kirk's flushed features to his friend.

"We must get to her soon."

Spock dropped Kirk and staggered a few feet away. Kirk rolled in the snow, coughing and gasping in turns. He watched through watering eyes as Spock bent over double taking deep calming breaths.

"Cadet, are you alright?" Shuran stood over him, concern making his forehead ridges even more prominent.

Kirk nodded as Shuran lifted him from the snow with little effort despite his reed thin frame.

"Good, good," Shuran said as he gave Kirk two strong slaps on the back.

"Gentlemen, we must move on," Spock called to them as he strode purposefully towards his hoverbike. His tone had regained much of its usual detachedness as if he had not nearly strangled Kirk moments before. Kirk smirked before donning his helmet and following them to the hoverbikes.

Uhura woke from her drug induced sleep, her body wracked with shivers. She was propped against a rock, her hands free but her feet tied together. Her torn parka had been removed and replaced with a thermal blanket fortified with a warming agent that did little to ward off the deepening cold. Uhura struggled to sit up, her movements impaired by thick bandages wound tightly around her torso. At least they had tended to her wounds. Little good it would do her if she froze to death.

The sky was banded in deep hues of purple and orange as the sun began to set. A large fire blazed a few meters away from her. Sybok sat between two guards, his feet similarly bound and his hands tied behind him. A gash on his head slowly oozed green blood. He was positioned much closer to the fire, no doubt considered the more valuable prize. The Orions had decided to make camp rather than attempt to return to their ship. Uhura found it curious that they would risk exposure to the elements rather than a beam out.

Two guards stood a few feet from her, their heads bent close to one another as they conversed. Their voices were harsh, but low, their lips curled back in distaste. One of the Orions looked over his shoulder frequently, keeping an eye on their commander. Uhura quickly dropped her gaze as he turned towards her. Something had occurred and these two foot soldiers were not pleased.

Uhura listened to their low conversation, her eyes trained on the ground as she feigned disinterest. Something happened to their colleagues aboard ship. They were unable to make contact with their leader or any of their party and would have to camp until sunrise. They were nervous because of the dropping temperature and the unknown wildlife. What if something more formidable than the snow beast lurked in the woods?

Uhura stopped listening. Unable to concentrate on their conversation as her eyes began to droop. Nyota shook her head weakly in an effort to shake off the lethargy. If she fell asleep, she was as
good as dead. But, she was so tired. Tired of running and tired of fighting. Uhura supposed that
dying here was better than dying in slavery at some Orion brothel. She had listened well to Gaila's
stories about her life before she had been liberated. Nyota welcomed death over that fate.

Her eyes began to water as she thought about Gaila, her mother and father that she would never
see again. Her precious little cousins. Len and her friends at the academy. Even James Kirk. Her
tears fell in earnest as she thought about her hopes for the Enterprise and to see the stars. Of the
first and last time she touched Spock's mind and her awe that such a creature would love her so
fiercely. She wept at the realization that she would die without ever telling him how her feelings
had changed. Nyota wanted to surrender to the comforting black. It was warm there. Before her
eyes finally slipped shut, she imagined Spock screaming her name.

The next hour was a blur for Spock. He recalled their frenzied pursuit of Sybok and the Orions.
Weaving around tree trunks and over hills until they were within twenty meters of their prey. The
sun was low in the sky, the deepening dusk shielding their arrival. They abandoned their
hoverbikes, valuing stealth over speed, as they ambushed the Orion camp. Phaser fire rang
through the air. Shouts and curses disturbed the quiet.

Amidst the chaos, Spock saw her. Uhura lay slumped against a rock, her head lolling against her
chest, seemingly forgotten by her captors. Spock moved towards her, heedless of the fighting
around him. A large Orion stepped into his path, a barbed dagger clutched in one of his gloved
hands. With a snarl he swung the dagger towards Spock's face. Spock dodged the blade with ease
before shooting the Orion in the chest with a phaser blast. He made to continue on his way when
he noticed that Uhura was no longer slumped against the boulder. He stopped and searched
frantically around the camp when he spied Sybok running into the forest, Uhura draped over one
shoulder.

Spock ran after him, dodging phaser blasts and leaping over rocks. He shouted after him, ordering
him to stop, but Sybok only increased his speed. When Spock caught up with him minutes later,
the sun had fully set and darkness blanketed them. Sybok stood with his back to a slow moving
river, its waters mostly frozen. He held an unconscious Nyota tight against his body, his fingers
pressed firmly against her temple and cheek.

"I wouldn't venture any closer, pi'sa'kai," Sybok called out, his amber eyes glinting dangerously in
the dim moonlight. "That is unless you want your precious Nyota's mind wiped clean. It would be
very simple to make her forget you. Forget how to speak, or walk, or even breathe."

"Release her!" Spock shouted, his breath misting in the cold air.

Sybok smiled cruelly. "You know, the human female mind is so malleable, so easily impregnated
by someone with a true talent. It only took a few brief touches to plant seeds of mistrust in Nyota's
mind. Granted, it wasn't very hard to turn her against you. You were not very gallant towards your
Nyota upon your first meeting."

"Do not speak her name," Spock ground out before taking a step towards him.

"Careful," Sybok smirked. "You're killing her."

Nyota twitched, her face contorting in pain. She let out a weak moan that drove Spock to his
knees. He dropped his phaser into the snow.

Sybok laughed outright. "Isn't this fun? If only Sarek could see his precious half-breed son driven
to his knees over a human woman!"
"Release she who is mine or I will kill you." Spock warned in Vulcan.

Sybok’s eyes grew wide. "Is it your time, p'i'sa'kai? How perfect. Now you too can experience the pain of plak tow without your mate."

"I am not your brother," Spock growled through clenched teeth, his body shaking with rage. "It was your choice to set your bondmate aside."

"You and father stole her from me!" Sybok screamed. "My mate! My birthright! My rightful place as a prince of Vulcan."

"You tossed that aside when you chose the path of illogic over the Vulcan way."

"The Vulcan way," Sybok sneered. "Was it logical to set aside my mother, a Vulcan princess descended from kings and queens, for a human whore with no name?"

"You resented my mother for her humanity, for her weakness, yet it is you who has again chosen to hide behind a human woman," Spock spat as he got to his feet. "You are a coward born of a coward who abandoned her betrothed and her son. The clan is better without your polluted blood. Fight me like a true Vulcan unless you are afraid that this half-breed will break you."

Sybok’s sneer turned into a grimace as his skin flushed green with rage. "I will kill you slowly, brother, so that you may witness your woman's death."

Sybok dropped Nyota as he lunged for Spock. The two grappled in the snow, tearing at each other’s clothes and flesh with teeth and nails, pummeling each other with clenched fists. Spock’s blood roared in his ears. He forgot about Nyota, lying crumpled in the snow. He forgot about Kirk and Shuran. His nostrils were full of the scent of his enemy's blood. His tongue coated in the warm coppery liquid. He no longer fought his brother or a being with a name. He fought to kill, to kill or to die. His entire being burned with the fever.

Soon Sybok's superior strength afforded him the upper hand. He managed to pin Spock to the ground, his knees and thighs trapping his body and his bare hands wrapped around Spock's neck. Sybok tightened his hold upon his neck, choking him and assaulting his mind. Spock would have screamed at the pain of his brother's invasion if he could draw breath. Spock tried to buck and twist out of his grip to no avail, his fingers clawing uselessly at Sybok's hands.

Sybok grinned down at his brother as he felt his slowing heartbeat.

"I lied brother. I won't allow you to watch your pretty cadet expire. But I promise you that I will make her death a painful one."

Sybok continued to taunt him, taking little notice of Spock's hands frantically scrambling in the snow around him. Just as his vision began to darken around the edges, his right hand gripped a rock. Spock summoned the last of his strength to bash the rock against Sybok's left temple. The blow knocked Sybok from atop him, releasing his neck from Sybok's crushing hold.

Spock spared a moment to draw in a breath before pouncing upon a disoriented Sybok. Spock roared as he pummeled his brother's head repeatedly with the rock. The sound of his brother's skull crushing beneath his hands only seemed to spur him on. Shuran's shout of dismay broke him from his trance. Spock's hands stilled. They were covered in his brother's rapidly cooling green blood. Spock allowed the rock to slip from his hand into the snow beside his brother's ruin of a head. The blood fever broke abruptly, leaving Spock with the harsh reality of what he had done. Spock stumbled back from his brother's corpse, dread pooling in his stomach. He had killed his brother.
Spock tore his gaze from his brother's bloody corpse at the sound of Cadet Kirk's frantic calls to the ship. Nyota lay limply in Kirk's arms. Despair pushed against the dread. Nyota. Had he caused her death as well? Spock rose to his feet and took a step towards her when he was enveloped in golden light.

Notes:
*Spock's reply to Shuran is taken from the script of the Star Trek TOS episode "Amok Time" when Spock experiences pon farr. He says it when describing his symptoms to T'Pau.

**Some of Kirk's insults are taken from the script of the TOS season three episode "This Side of Paradise" where Kirk similarly employs some lame insults to provoke Spock to anger in order to release his mind from the control of alien spores.

pon farr= The Vulcan drive to mate that occurs every seven years. During pon farr, adult Vulcans undergo a neurochemical imbalance, that takes on a form of madness (culminating in the plak tow). A Vulcan could die within eight days if their pon farr isn't satiated. Pon farr can be cured by mating, a battle to the death or possibly intense meditation. In the TOS episode "Amok Time", Spock undergoes pon farr which is alleviated by "killing" Kirk in a battle.

kroyah= stop immediately
plak tow= blood fever, final stage of pon farr.
pi'sa'kai= little brother
Kolari= a language spoken by Orions

Chapter End Notes

Now AO3 is finally caught up with my story! I am putting the final touches on chapter 26 now!
McCoy sank heavily onto the padded chair next to Nyota’s biobed, his red rimmed eyes glancing at the readouts on the computer one last time before he allowed himself to rest. Nyota was stable. She was safe. His eyes dropped from the screen above the bed to travel over her still form. She lay in perfect repose, her hair fanned out across the hard standard issue pillow under her head, all tension released from her face. Color was just beginning to return to her lips, a deep brownish pink replacing the dark blue of hours before. A grey thermal blanket covered the rest of her body, tucked just beneath her chin. McCoy noted the steady rise and fall of her chest with more relief than the readouts that reported her condition.

He could not recall ever being as scared as he was when Jim materialized on the transporter pad clutching a bloodied and half frozen Nyota in his arms. Nyota’s ordeal had put her through the ringer. Her pulse had been thready and her breathing shallow when he managed to lay her on the biobed in the small medical bay of the ship. Her core temperature was dangerously low as her body fought to survive the onslaught of hypothermia coupled with dehydration and blood loss. She had three cracked ribs, a fractured wrist, deep lacerations on her back from what looked like claws, frostbite on her toes, and swelling at the base of her skull. Once he had her stabilized, he gave her sedatives to allow her to rest and an intravenous drip for hydration.

McCoy cupped Uhura's face, rubbing one large thumb across the apple of her cheek.

"I'm so sorry you were put through this, honey. I tried to stop him Ny, I did," McCoy swallowed thickly at the memory of finding Nyota unconscious in her wrecked dorm room. "But you won't have to worry about that rat bastard again. He won't be coming back from where he's gone."

McCoy sat back in his chair and passed one hand wearily over his face. While he had worked frantically to stabilize Nyota’s core temperature, he had taken little notice of the state Spock had been in until he had to force him out of the small med bay. The Vulcan's hands and torso had been covered in dark green blood, a large brownish green bruise blooming on the right side of his face, a cut above his left eye oozing blood.

"Good God man! What happened to you?"

Spock's posture stiffened at McCoy's outburst, his hands moving from his sides to rest at the small of his back.

"I am in adequate physical condition, Cadet," Spock intoned. "The majority of the blood on my person does not belong to me. May I inquire about the status of Cadet Uhura?"

McCoy gaped at Spock. There was only one other person that could have produced that color blood. Well, good on him.

"She’ll need a lot of attention before she’s out of danger. But that doesn’t mean I can't treat you as well," McCoy barked as he swiftly ran a tricorder over Spock's person.
"Well, I don't see any major damage. I assume most of this is Sybok's?"

"Affirmative," Spock replied. "Now as to my query concerning the condition of..."

"So I guess I'll have to treat that bastard next," McCoy had groused. "I did swear an oath..."

"Sybok will not require medical assistance. He is deceased."

McCoy's tirade stopped abruptly. "Deceased?"

"I killed him," Spock stated matter of factly. "I intend to turn myself in to the authorities and submit myself to the appropriate Starfleet tribunal in due time. Now, as to the condition of Ms. Uhura."

McCoy had been able to convince Spock to leave the med bay and get himself cleaned up after his assurance that Nyota would recover. The exchange had unnerved him: the detached manner of his confession, his insistence on attending to Uhura, his indifference to the blood coating his hands or the steady stream dripping from his forehead. Now that things were quiet again--Nyota stable and sleeping, the ship enroute to Earth--McCoy retrieved the tricorder he had used to scan Spock. He uploaded his most recent scans to compare to those he had taken several hours earlier. The latest scans revealed hormone levels, heart and respiration rates, and white blood cell counts all at levels near Vulcan ideal. His previous scans revealed dangerously high testosterone and adrenaline levels and wildly erratic heart and respiration rates with white blood cell counts at dangerous lows. Whatever had plagued Spock when they had set out on this rescue attempt had passed.

"Cadet McCoy."

Spock's voice startled McCoy out of his contemplation of the scans before him. Len leapt to his feet, stashing his PADD face down on his vacated seat. Spock stood in the doorway dressed in a clean black instructor's uniform. His hands and face were clean of any blood or abrasions, leading McCoy to believe that he had patched himself up with a dermal regenerator. However, his face still bore a fading bruise, a mottled brownish green stain on his left cheek stretching from temple to chin. McCoy spotted similar bruising around his neck. Not for the first time, McCoy wondered what really happened planetside. Spock may have killed Sybok, but not before he got in a few good licks.

"How can I be of assistance, Commander?"

"I have come to inquire about the condition of Ms. Uhura," Spock stated as he moved closer to Uhura's bedside. He stared down at her sleeping form, clasping his hands tightly behind his back. McCoy suddenly felt out of place in his own med bay. McCoy cleared his throat.

"She's going to be fine, Commander. She's stable now and resting. I've repaired the wounds to her back, treated her frostbite with a dermal regenerator, set her wrist and bound her ribs. What she needs now is rest and hydration, both of which she's getting."

"And what were the results of your neural scans?"

McCoy frowned. "I didn't perform any neural scan. Her head injury wasn't severe enough to warrant any scans. Besides, I don't have any previous readings to compare them to."

Spock looked up from his study of Uhura's face. "I have reason to believe that Sybok performed mind melds on Ms. Uhura without her consent with the purpose of altering her memories, psyche
or brain function."

"Are you telling me that you think he mind raped her?"

"There is the possibility. If that is the case, Ms. Uhura will need to be treated by a Vulcan healer as soon as possible."

"Damn," McCoy cursed. "Well, in case you haven't noticed we're at least 24 hours from Earth and light years from Vulcan. Plus I don't have any Vulcan healers stashed onboard."

Spock cocked his head to the side and arched a brow. "I am well aware of our situation, Doctor. I am offering my telepathic services in lieu of a Vulcan healer."

"No way," McCoy stated angrily as he walked around the biobed to face him, one finger pointing at Spock. "Ny's had her fill of Vulcans rooting around her head on a scavenger hunt. She hasn't given you consent to perform your Vulcan voodoo and I am not about to let you either."

Spock sighed. "Cadet McCoy, I assure you that I do not intend to perform voodoo on Ms. Uhura. I simply propose to perform a light mind meld to assess the extent of Sybok's mental intrusion and attempt to mitigate any harm."

"Furthermore, I am acquainted with the workings of her mind due to a previous consensual meld. I have data with which to compare my new findings, data that you admittedly lack."

McCoy huffed at that bit of news but did not interject.

"I know that in addition to being Ms. Uhura's doctor, you are also a close friend. I hold Ms. Uhura in high regard as well. I would never intentionally bring her to harm."

McCoy threw up his hands. "That's one thing I don't understand about this whole thing. What exactly are your intentions toward Nyota? You nearly killed yourself trying to track her down. I was monitoring your condition, Spock. You were hours away from spiraling into complete organ failure. Heck, you killed a man with your bare hands like some damn animal a few hours ago. Why should I let you anywhere near Nyota's mind?"

"I have no intentions towards Ms. Uhura apart from ensuring her happiness and well being," Spock replied, his gaze returning to Nyota's still form. "As you have indicated, I have gone to extreme measures to ensure her safety. However, I am no longer experiencing the hormonal fluctuations that lead me to act in an erratic manner. It is imperative to Cadet Uhura's ongoing mental stability that I conduct the meld. If Sybok has damaged her mind, Ms. Uhura will require immediate treatment to mitigate the damage."

McCoy stared at him for several long moments, trying to understand the conundrum before him. He took in the commander’s stiff posture. Spock was always perfectly upright and formal in his bearing, the epitome of Vulcan rectitude. But recent experiences had taught McCoy to look beyond the calm facade. Spock was nearly vibrating with an anxious energy, his limbs coiled tight as if he was ready to spring or shatter at a word. McCoy released a weary sigh as he finally put the pieces together.

“Well, I'll be damned. You love her."

Spock blinked slowly. "Love is a human emotion, Doctor. I hold Ms. Uhura in high esteem. Her well being is of utmost importance to me."

McCoy arched one eyebrow in reply. "I take it that that is as close to an admission of love as I can get from a Vulcan. Does she know?"
Spock nearly sighed. "Cadet Uhura is unaware of my present regard for her and I have no plans to enlighten her."

McCoy wearily wiped his face with one broad hand. How did things get so darn complicated?

"Ok. Do it. What do you need from me?"

Spock's shoulders dropped slightly in relief. "I simply require a few moments free of distraction."

"Fine. Just be careful."

Spock nodded before pulling a chair close to Uhura's bedside. "Cadet, I must reiterate that we are not to be disturbed during the meld. Please restrain yourself from interfering if I or Ms. Uhura appear to be in mild distress."

Spock waited for McCoy's curt nod of agreement before gently placing the fingers of his right hand on Nyota's temple and cheek. McCoy watched anxiously, looking between their faces for some indication of pain or distress. Barely two minutes passed before Spock dropped his finger's from Uhura's face and sat back in his chair.

"Well?" McCoy asked.

"Ms. Uhura has not sustained any damage. It would appear that Sybok did not commit kae'at k'lasa."

"Well, that's a relief."

"Indeed," Spock replied as he stood and straightened his uniform. "When do you expect the Cadet to regain consciousness?"

"I gave her something to help her sleep for the next eighteen hours at least. She's been through a lot and sleep's the best thing for her."

"We should arrive at Starfleet shortly afterwards. I trust you will contact medical and inform them of Ms. Uhura's condition so they will be prepared to receive her."

"Of course."

Spock nodded tersely. "Cadet, there is another matter I would like to discuss with you. It is an issue of some delicacy."

McCoy folded his arms across his chest and leaned against the neighboring biobed. "Something tells me that I'm not gonna like what you have to say."

"I trust that you can be discreet about the events that have transpired over the past few days. While I feel it will be unavoidable to speak with Starfleet police about what has transpired, I would prefer that Cadet Uhura remain ignorant as to the extent of my involvement in her recovery."

McCoy sighed. "Are you asking me to lie to Ny? Cuz I'm telling ya, I won't do it."

"I am not asking you to tell Ms. Uhura an untruth. I merely ask that you refrain from mentioning my direct involvement."

McCoy scoffed. "Now that sounds an awful lot like lying to me. How do you suppose that I keep your involvement mum? You sprang for the ransom. You sprang for the ship. You tracked Uhura down. You beat a man to death with your bare hands. How do I leave those little details out?"
"I never disclosed the origin of the ransom or the ship, Cadet. Mr. Shuran also possesses the diplomatic connections and credits necessary to acquire both. My involvement will no doubt be a matter of record. If Ms. Uhura should desire to know the official details of what has transpired, she may find the information by submitting a request for information form to Starfleet. As to the unofficial story, Ms. Uhura can be informed of Lieutenant-Commander Shuran's involvement and that of Cadet Kirk and yourself."

"I don't know about all this. Why wouldn't you want Uhura to know about all that you've done?"

Spock turned from McCoy to observe Uhura's sleeping form, his hands clasped tightly behind his back.

"I do not desire her gratitude. Nor do I deserve it. I would not have her believe she is indebted to me when the trauma she has endured is my doing."

McCoy shook his head. "You are not responsible for Sybok's actions, Spock. He made his own choices."

"I acknowledge that it is illogical for me to claim responsibility," Spock replied, one hand breaking free from the tight grasp behind his back to clench at his side. "Yet I feel responsible nonetheless."

McCoy observed the Vulcan in silence for several long moments. He begrudgingly conceded to the logic of Spock's request. He did not like it, but he could understand it.

"Alright, I won't volunteer any information about your involvement, but if Uhura asks me directly, I won't lie to her."

"Thank you, Cadet McCoy."

"Yeah, yeah. Don't thank me yet. I suppose you already got Kirk and Shuran to agree to this," he waved his hands around dramatically, "thing?"

"Yes. Both gentlemen have agreed to keeping my confidence. Cadet Kirk expressed similar reservations to your own."

“Well,” McCoy said as he gave Uhura’s vitals one last look “there’s not much we can do here. Why don’t we replicate some grub? We haven’t eaten all day and I don’t want anyone fainting on my watch.”

“Arriving, Starfleet Academy Takei Transport Center.”

Nyota gathered her bags as the shuttle pulled into port. She quickly punched out a text message to her mother on her communicator. Penda Uhura had always insisted that her children alert her immediately once they arrived safely at their destination after a visit home. Her mother had been especially insistent this morning when she left Nairobi.

“You must promise me, Enie. I want you to message me as soon as you land at the Academy. Not an hour later when you’ve unpacked your things or gotten a bite to eat. You let me know right
Nyota had not even bothered to argue the illogic of her request. If something were to happen to her enroute to the Academy, there was little her mother could do from Nairobi. But, Nyota knew that her mother’s request had little to do with ensuring her safety and everything to do with giving her mother some peace of mind. Nyota had merely nodded, ensuring her compliance with a final kiss upon her mother's cheek before boarding the shuttle.

Nyota had spent the last three weeks sinking into her mother's relieved caresses, smiling indulgently at her father's constant inquiries as to her state of mind, enjoying her brother Kamau's affectionate teasing, and declining her Uncle Jomo's nearly hourly invitations to talk if she needed it. But, Aunt Tonya remained the same, never pressing her to talk or embracing her out of turn. Her Aunt Tonya simply was, and for that Nyota was grateful. The Uhura home had been transformed into a warm bubble of comfort and affection and Nyota soaked it in like a lizard lounging in the sun. During her week of hell, Nyota had doubted she would ever again taste her mother’s breadfruit porridge or hear her Uncle Jomo's booming laughter. Her family sought to comfort her and she welcomed that comfort.

However, after two weeks, Nyota had begun to long again for the challenge of the Academy, for Len's gruff affection and Gaila's inappropriate stories about her evenings with Shuran. Nyota was ready to resume her life, to go back to normal, or her new normal. Nyota could only abide being treated as if she were made of glass for so long. Her parents had argued with her that she needed more time to heal before returning to the Academy. Her physical injuries had long healed. Even the scars on her back had disappeared, the wounds now light brown stripes that regained more color everyday. As for her psychological and emotional health, well, those scars would take more than a dermal regenerator to fade. Nyota doubted if they would ever truly disappear. But, Nyota decided that if the pressures of the Academy caused her to shatter, she would shatter, but Sybok would not be allowed to steal more of her life.

Nyota had a goal that she was determined to achieve: earning a plum placement aboard the Enterprise. The Enterprise would be the newest and most advanced starship in the armada and Nyota Uhura was going to be one of its crewmen, exploring deep space and meeting new sentient lifeforms. She had already missed most of the first quarter. Luckily, she had acquired enough credits last year to graduate on-time. Also, a few of her classes were seminars that spanned two quarters. She hoped to be able to catch up in a few weeks. Her professors were overwhelmingly accommodating, granting her plenty of extra time to turn in mid-term assignments. The administration no doubt had a hand in that. Apparently having a cadet kidnapped off campus from a supposedly secure dormitory was bad for recruitment.

During her convalescence, Nyota received a few calls from an attorney eager to represent her in a lawsuit against Starfleet Academy. She wondered how Samuel Cogley had even heard of her ordeal. She certainly hadn’t told her story to the media or anyone other than her nearest kin and Gaila. And she very much doubted that Kirk, Len or Shuran had talked to anyone. Starfleet seemed very concerned with keeping everything under wraps and her friends hadn’t seemed too enthusiastic to talk about what happened to her. Nyota had refused to sue the Academy.

She just wanted her life to go back to normal. Besides, she was pretty sure that suing the Academy would not help her achieve her goal of earning a placement aboard the Enterprise.

“Nyota!” Gaila's happy shout drew Uhura from her thoughts.

Uhura stepped down from the shuttle to be greeted by a merrily bouncing Gaila and a reserved McCoy holding a bouquet of black eyed susans, her favorite flower. Uhura smiled at her two closest friends, shrugging her bag higher on her shoulder as she quickly stepped out of the way of other passengers disembarking. Gaila met her with a fierce hug and a kiss to the cheek. Uhura
laughed as she dropped her bags to better embrace her friend.

“Its so good to see you, chica,” Gaila said once she finally let her go.

“I’m glad to be seen,” Nyota replied. “Its good to be back on campus.”

Gaila stared at her a moment, her blue eyes wet with unshed tears, before gathering Uhura into a second hug.

“I was so scared, Ny,” Gaila whispered as she clung to her friend.

“I know, Gaila, I know,” Uhura replied as she rubbed her friend’s back. “But that’s all over. I’m back and that bastard won’t be bothering me again.”

Gaila nodded as she stepped out of the embrace, quickly dashing away the tears that began to stream down her cheeks.

"Hey, Beautiful," McCoy greeted as he handed Uhura the bouquet. "Nairobi looks good on you."

Uhura quickly passed the flowers to Gaila and launched herself into McCoy's arms. She hugged him fiercely, locking her arms around his neck and pressing her face into his shoulder. McCoy returned the embrace, lifting her off her feet as he rubbed her back.

"Thank you for finding me," Nyota whispered.

She had thanked McCoy already when she woke for the first time in a sterile Starfleet hospital room, when he saw her off on her way to Kenya, and at the end of each of their calls. Everytime McCoy would shrug off her thanks or grunt a reply before changing the subject. But this time, Len simply held her and pressed a kiss to the top of her head. When they finally let each other go, Len's eyes were suspiciously glassy.

"I'll never understand why you two aren't dating," Gaila said as she looked between the two of them. "I mean you're already disgustingly cute."

"Well Nyota's my star and that's good enough for me," McCoy replied as he bent down to retrieve her bags. "Let's get you settled into your new dorm room. I'm sure you'd like to rest before dinner."

Gaila looped her arm through Nyota's. "I hope you don't mind, Ny. We've made reservations at Shirley's Cafe. Shuran, Jim, Hikaru and all the gang will be there. They couldn't wait to see you."

Nyota fell in step with Gaila as they headed to campus. She was glad to be assigned a new dorm room in a new building. She did not think she could sleep soundly in the room where it all began much less enter the building without having a slight panic attack. She could hardly get to sleep now without taking a sleep aid.

"That sounds fine, Gaila. It would be good to see the boys again and I love Shirley's," Nyota finally replied.

She worried her bottom lip as she pondered how to pose the next question as casually as possible. There was one person she was most anxious to see, the one person she hadn't seen or heard from save for a terse message expressing his satisfaction that she was well.

"Do you think Commander Spock might be there?"

McCoy and Gaila spared each other a nervous glance over the top of Nyota's head that they hoped
she did not notice. However, Nyota grew tense during their prolonged silence, a familiar ache growing in her chest.

"I'm sorry, chica," Gaila finally answered. "Commander Spock took a leave of absence from the academy. Shuran says he's gone to Vulcan. Some sort of spiritual retreat. He's not expected back until next term."

Nyota released the breath that she had been holding, the disappointment settling in her stomach like lead.

Nyota gave a wobbly smile. "Of course."

The strength of her disappointment startled her. Spock's absence shouldn't have been a surprise. She had sent two electronic messages to his academy address soon after she arrived in Nairobi. Both had gone unanswered. Uhura could understand why Spock might be reluctant to contact her and why he needed a sabbatical. This whole ordeal no doubt stirred up a lot of unpleasant memories for him and subjected his family to public scrutiny. Well, Starfleet had been predictably quiet about what had occurred, but Starfleet brass now knew the entire sordid history. For notoriously private Vulcans, such a scandal would be distressing.

Part of her could not help but wonder if Spock secretly blamed her for what happened or at least for his brother's death. But she quickly squashed such a ridiculous notion. None of this was her fault. She was the victim here. Nyota thought it more likely that Spock blamed himself and stayed away from her out of guilt. If he had made Sybok's criminal history known to Starfleet authorities, they would have never accepted him to the academy. Yet Nyota did not blame Spock. She could not. Sybok was responsible for his own actions.

Nyota remained quiet during the remainder of their walk to the dorm. Gaila chirped merrily the entire time, her speech marked with a forced cheerfulness. McCoy seemed lost in his own unpleasant thoughts, his face fixed in a scowl that was unusual even for him. Nyota wondered at it. Perhaps McCoy blamed Spock somehow. He had never been a big fan of Spock's. Nyota reached for his free hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. Len looked down at her, his scowl melting into a rueful smile as he squeezed back. They would be okay. She would be okay.

Glossary

*kae'at k'lasa*: mind rape

Samuel Cogley: A human attorney who represented Captain Kirk in the TOS episode “Court Martial” in Kirk’s court martial for the murder of fellow officer Lt-Cmndr Finney. Samuel Cogley was known for his dramatic theatrical courtroom style. He was also a Luddite, never using a computer but preferring paper books. (As an attorney, this seems particularly unbelievable to me as I would never have survived law school or be able to work without LexisNexis or Westlaw.)

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the very long wait. Some of your arms must really be aching after hanging off that cliff since July! About 3 more chapters to go! Yaay! I can see the end! Thanks for your patience and reading and commenting on this story. I really appreciate it and your comments make my day!
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

This chapter is hot off the presses. I was so excited to post it that I might have missed a few typos. I hope you enjoy this chapter! Thanks so much for reading!

Pride and Logic Chapter 27

The second quarter was coming to an end and registration for the next term opened a few hours ago. As usual, Nyota perused the course list as soon as it was made available. Most of her classes had already been selected—the requisite courses for her specializations in xeno-linguistics and communications programming. She only had room in her schedule for one or two elective courses and Nyota wanted to choose wisely.

Unlike the previous year, she did not scour the course catalog for the most interesting seminar but for a particular professor: Commander Spock. Uhura was not surprised to find his name absent from the list of instructors. He was originally scheduled to teach four courses this term, three of these were reassigned to less interesting professors. Commander Spock's course in comparative Romulan and Vulcan syntax was cancelled outright.

Uhura may not have been surprised by Commander Spock's continued absence from the Academy, but she was disappointed all the same. She longed to see him, although she did not know what she would say to him should they meet again. Would it be appropriate to offer her condolences for the death of his brother? Although she knew there was no love lost between them, Uhura expected that Sybok’s death would still be a cause for mourning. Uhura knew that Spock felt deeply and, although his anger could burn hot and long, his loyalty and affections were just as potent and enduring. Perhaps that is why Spock's absence and continued silence had caused Uhura so much disquiet. Nyota had sent him two more messages since her return to the Academy. Unlike their predecessors, they remained unanswered. Uhura had begun to force herself to come to terms with the fact that Commander Spock no longer held her in any particular regard. As much as this pained her, Uhura could not bring herself to cease thinking of him. She merely wanted to know that he was well.

Uhura would be loathe to call herself love sick. She did not think of the commander excessively during the day, finding something familiar in the way a random cadet walked, seizing on some snippet of a passing conversation that inspired a sense of deja vu, or catching a scent on the air, a cross between clean linen and musk that made her remember moments spent gazing at alien constellations, her head at ease on his shoulder. She did not check her comm every hour hoping for a message from him, however terse. Uhura knew herself to be too sensible to give way to such notions, or she hoped herself to be so at the very least.

Nyota seemed most vulnerable to maudlin recollections of the quiet Vulcan in those moments when she hovered between sleep and wakefulness. Spock came to her then as an ephemera, a
pleasant dream she could not recall but whose presence lingered as she pulled herself out of bed and into her running clothes. Every morning she would try to seize on some detail of the dream as she made her way across campus and onto the running paths that bordered the bay. Months of such efforts were fruitless. She could recall his voice, but not his words nor the language he spoke. She could recall his presence, the familiar brush of his mind against hers. It was quite dissimilar from the one time he shared his thoughts with her. Then she had felt as if she would drown in him, be swept away by the tide of his emotions but for the anchor of her hand clasped in his. This touch was more tentative, gentle and earnest in its intent to soothe and comfort. Though the details of the dream slipped through her fingers, the peace lingered.

So, Uhura found herself sitting in front of a blank monitor contemplating calling Amanda Grayson. Nyota was not overly concerned that her call would be an imposition. She knew that it would be an acceptable time to call someone in ShiKahr; it would be just after most Vulcans left from work and before they would sit down for the evening meal. And Nyota felt herself to be on very good terms with Lady Amanda. Amanda had sent a lovely bouquet of fire lilies to her home in Nairobi while she was recovering along with a warm holo message wishing Nyota a speedy recovery. After a few minutes more of nervous dithering, Uhura concluded that calling Amanda Grayson to inquire after the well being of her family would be more than acceptable.

"Computer. Call the home of one Lady Amanda and Ambassador Sarek, D'H’riset, ShiKahr Vulcan."

Nyota sat up in her seat and smoothed back her hair as the computer connected her call. A few seconds passed before her monitor was filled with the unsmiling face of Seved, one of Lady Amanda's servants.

"Ms. Uhura, well met," Seved greeted with a small incline of his head.

"Greetings, Seved. I trust that you are well," Nyota replied with a nervous smile.

"I am in optimal physical condition, Ms. Uhura. Would you like to converse with the Lady Amanda?"

"Yes, please."

Seved nodded his head. "One moment."

Seved walked out of the sight of the view screen, no doubt to inform Lady Amanda of her call. Uhura examined the now empty parlour with its red earthen tones and floor to ceiling windows overlooking a sand garden. Uhura felt herself uncoil at the memory of sitting in that very parlour with the windows flung open so that they could enjoy a rare cool evening breeze. Barely a minute passed before Lady Amanda sat down before the viewscreen, her mouth curved in a wide toothy smile.

"Oh, Nyota! How wonderful," she enthused. "What a pleasant surprise! You are looking very well, indeed! How are you dear?"

Uhura smiled in return, the last vestiges of her nervousness evaporating in the warmth of Lady Amanda's greeting.

"I am doing well. Classes are wrapping up nicely and my life is blessedly mundane."

Lady Amanda's smile dimmed.

"I understand, dear. Sometimes boring can be a blessing in disguise. I am so happy that you are well."
"Thank you again for the beautiful flowers and the note."

Lady Amanda waved her hands. "They were no trouble, dear. I am glad that you enjoyed them. Now, what can I do for you, Nyota?"

Nyota looked down at her lap and took a deep breath. "This may be a bit presumptuous. And if so, I apologize."

“Go on dear,” Amanda prompted, smiling encouragingly. “I am sure you’ll have nothing to apologize for.

Uhura looked up from her lap and returned Amanda’s smile with a small one of her own. “Well, I’m calling because I’m worried about Spock. I’ve sent him a few messages and I haven’t received any reply. It’s been a few months now and I am just concerned. I have been told he is on some spiritual retreat. And I suppose that is why he hasn’t returned my messages. But, I just had to know. Is he well?"

"Honey, I am sorry. I don’t have much more information myself,” Amanda replied. “You see, he has gone to study with the priests at Gol. No one can contact him, as pilgrims to Gol are kept in strict isolation. Sarek and I have not heard from him these two months at least."

Nyota blinked back her disappointment. "I see."

Lady Amanda pursed her lips as she considered Uhura. After a moment, she sighed and leaned towards the screen. "Sarek would be very upset with me for doing this, but there is more that you should know."

"Please, I’d be obliged for any news you could give."

"Gol is not just a temple," Amanda explained. "Gol is home to priests who help Vulcans achieve kolinahr."

Uhura thought quickly over all she knew on Vulcan culture and beliefs. She remembered one spirited debate in Spock’s seminar on the merits of kolinahr. Kolinahr was the highest level of Surakian practice. It was the purging of all emotion and the attainment of a psyche ruled by pure logic. It was a state to which many aspired but few achieved. Uhura sat back in her seat with a defeated sigh.

"The purging of all emotion? Why would Spock want that?"

"Spock was in quite a state when he returned home. To most humans he would have seemed like his normal self, but I could tell he was much disturbed. All followers of Surak strive to regulate their emotions, but if one cannot, it is preferable to be incapable of emotion rather than be an undisciplined v'tosh ka'tur. I tried to persuade him to try another path or meet with a healer, but he was adamant that kolinahr was his only salvation."

Nyota shut her eyes and took a calming breath.

"I am truly sorry," Nyota finally replied. "Spock has...he had such a beautiful heart."

Amanda nodded her head in agreement. "It is my hope that kolinahr won't rob him of that completely. Logic cannot wipe out love. It can only bury it."

The two looked at each other, weighing and appreciating the other’s loss.
"I am sorry too," Lady Amanda said. “I had such hopes.”

Nyota looked away quickly and wiped at her cheeks. The call soon ended. Nyota could not decide if she was glad to have definitive knowledge that Spock’s affections for her were at an end or if she was sorry that she had placed the call and invited this fresh pain.

After sitting several moments in dejected silence, Uhura rose from her seat and made her way to the bathroom. She went about the motions of wrapping her hair, stripping off her cadet uniform and showering. She forewent the quick and efficient sonic shower for real hot water. She lathered mechanically and stood under the spray, noting the sound of the water hitting her plastic shower cap, feeling her muscles loosen under the near scalding water. She brushed her teeth and scrubbed her face clean, donned her comfortable pajamas with the long sleeves and climbed into bed.

Colbert’s pub was packed with cadets celebrating the end of the second quarter and saying their farewells before winter break. Uhura sat with her back against the wall in their usual booth, nursing a lager. Kirk and McCoy sat next to her, nursing drinks of their own. All three were decked out in their formal uniforms, shiny new medals pinned to their chests.

It had been a small ceremony. Starfleet had not wanted to draw unwanted media attention to the ceremony and renew the scandal. However, they did not want the valor of Uhura and her rescuers to go unrecognized. Nyota, Lieutenant-Commander Shuran, McCoy and Kirk stood before a panel of Academy administrators and mid-level Starfleet brass as their accomplishments were read. They each had been awarded commendations for valor and conduct becoming an officer. After the ceremony, had congratulated the three cadets, and with a press of Nyota’s hand, made his excuses. The three cadets stood on the steps of the auditorium watching Shuran’s retreat, when Uhura turned to her companions and announced her need for a strong drink.

Scotty, Hikaru and Gaila soon joined them at the pub. The trio was dressed in civilian attire and in high spirits.

“So, let me see ’em,” Scotty ordered as he slid into the booth, one hand gripping a large tumbler of scotch the other gesturing for Kirk to hand the medal over.

Kirk took another gulp of his ale before undoing the medal on his chest and handing it over for Scotty’s inspection.

“It’s nothing special,” Kirk remarked as Scotty passed the medal around the table.

“Looks pretty special to me,” Hikaru replied. “I mean, they called you to a super secret ceremony. What’s the deal with that anyway? I thought brass loved handing out commendations in front of the entire Academy. You know, demonstrating exemplary service and what not.”

“I wasn’t even invited,” Gaila interjected, “and I’m almost family.”

“Maybe Starfleet has the good sense not to air their dirty laundry,” McCoy growled as he plucked the medal from Scotty’s fingers and returned it to Kirk.

“Maybe,” Hikaru took a sip of his beer. “Doesn’t look good for recruitment.”

Nyota wished she had stopped by her room and changed out of her dress reds. The last thing she
wanted to talk about was the ceremony or what happened to her. She was surprised that she made it through the short ceremony with her smile firmly fixed in place. She didn’t think she deserved a medal for fighting for her life. She had been determined to survive and her survival was reward enough.

Nyota urged McCoy and Sulu out of their seats so that she could get out of the booth. She shrugged out of her uniform jacket before carefully draping it over the back of the bench, popped open a few buttons of her blouse and ran her fingers through her hair, undoing her simple french braid.

“Enough of this talk of medals. I came here to drink and dance. I’ve got my drink. How about a dance, Kirk?”

Sulu snorted, nearly choking on his drink. “Well, this is a new development.”

“I figure I owe the hero a turn on the dance floor,” Nyota replied with a grin before turning to Kirk. “What do you say, Kirk?”

Kirk considered her for a moment, his bright blue eyes raking over her figure, before reaching for Scotty’s tumbler of scotch and downing it in one go. His eyes watered as he slammed the tumbler back on the table.

“Och, that wasn’t cheap,” Scotty fumed. “You’re paying for the next round.”

“What, no hero’s discount?” Kirk smirked before grabbing Uhura’s hand and pulling her onto the dance floor.

Uhura and Kirk melted into the crowd of gyrating bodies as a throbbing bass heavy song blared over the speakers. Uhura wanted nothing more than to get lost in the music, to bend and twirl her limbs, roll and dip her hips until her frustrations were forgotten. Kirk was a surprisingly good dancer. He clutched her hips as he dipped and rolled with Uhura, his movements easy and fluid.

“Not bad, farmboy,” Uhura laughed.

Kirk grinned in reply. “I told you I did more than sleep with farm animals.”

Uhura smiled at the memory of their first conversation at the Riverside Bar two years ago. She had been put off by his swagger and easy smile that had oozed entitlement. With his bright blue eyes and square jaw, he thought he was God’s gift to women. As if one crooked smile and well worn pick up line would have her on her knees. That night had established the pattern of their relationship. Him doggedly pursuing. Her soundly rejecting. Kirk had seldom seen fit to show her that he was more than good looks and blunt charm until recently.

Uhura smiled up at him. “Well, I’ve come to realize that I was wrong about few things.”

Kirk’s smile dimmed.

The music switched to a slow song and Kirk turned as if he was heading back to the booth. Uhura grabbed his hand.

“Hey, one more?”

Kirk seemed to hesitate for a moment before allowing Uhura to pull him close. Nyota draped her arms around his neck.
She looked up at him and smiled shyly. “Is this okay?”

Kirk replied by settling his hands low on her waist. They swayed in silence for a few minutes, Uhura’s head coming to rest on his chest.

“You know you don’t owe me anything,” Kirk finally said, his voice barely audible over the music.

Uhura lifted her head and looked up at him, her head cocked to the side. “What do you mean?”

“I mean you don’t owe me anything, Uhura. You don’t have to be nice to me and you don’t have to go around calling me a hero.”

Uhura smiled and shook her head. “But I want to be nice to you. You’ve been a real friend to me, Jim. And call me Nyota. I think you’ve earned...”

Kirk laughed darkly. “You, know. I thought Spock was crazy for not wanting you to know. But, damn, if this isn’t worse than your dislike.”

“So Spock?” Uhura stopped dancing, as Kirk’s hands dropped from her hips. “What does Spock have to do with it?”

“We’ve got you so convinced that we’re big damn heroes,” Kirk hissed. “When really we were just along for the ride.”

Kirk’s angry reply drew the attention of a few of their neighbors. He seemed to notice and pulled Uhura closer to him. Kirk bent his head to speak directly in her ear.

“I know I promised him, but this ain’t right. You want to know who the hero is? Spock. He went ham on a whole mess of Orions to get to you. He was crazed and relentless. And when he thought you were dead he damn near laid down in the snow to die.”

Uhura stepped back from him, her eyes wide. “What are you saying?”

Kirk looked over her shoulder towards their booth and a concerned looking McCoy.

“Why don’t you ask your boy Len? I need some air.”

Kirk turned and pushed his way through the crowd. Nyota stood rooted to the spot. Spock had come for her. She suddenly felt light headed. McCoy was at her side in a moment, his hand at the small of her back a steadying presence.

“Darling, you look fit to pass out.”

“I’m well,” Uhura replied. “I’ve just had a bit of a shock.”

“Well, come back to the booth and I’ll get you a glass of water.”

Len began to urge her towards the table but Uhura held him back.

“What’s wrong, Ny?”

“I need you to tell me the truth about what happened. Why was Spock there and why didn’t you tell me he came for me?”
Len stood mutely for a moment before swearing loudly.

“Well, I guess that answers the question of why Jim flew out of here like his tail was on fire. I’d thought he’d be better about holding his tongue.”

Uhura felt her shock give way to anger.

“This is not about James Kirk,” Uhura snarled. “This is about me and why my ‘friends’ saw fit to lie to me about the most traumatic event of my life.”

“Nyota, you gotta know that it wasn’t my intention to lie to you.”

“But you did,” Uhura replied as she stalked back to the booth to grab her jacket and hat. “You are going to tell me everything tonight!”

Scotty, Hikaru and Gaila looked at her wonderingly as she snatched her things from the table.

“Your face looks like thunder,” Hikaru commented as he handed over her hat. “What happened out there?”

Uhura ignored his question as she shrugged on her jacket. She fixed Gaila with a hard stare.

“Did you know?”

“Know about what?” Gaila replied as she looked between Uhura and McCoy.

“She didn’t know much, Ny,” Len cut in. “Let’s go somewhere more private and I’ll tell you everything.”

Uhura nodded curtly and headed for the door. Gaila pushed her way out of the booth to follow but was stopped by McCoy.

“Let me talk to her first, Gaila. I’m sure she’ll need you later, but there are a few things she needs to hear from me. Alone.”

Gaila regarded him warily for a moment. “Fine. I’ll wait for her at home. But tell her everything, Len. She deserves to know.”

McCoy nodded curtly before pulling out his wallet and slapping a handful of credits on the table.

“That should cover all our drinks,” Len said as he grabbed his hat.

“What is all this about?” Scotty asked.

“Something complicated and long overdue,” Len grumbled as he turned to follow Uhura. “For Pete’s sake, I’m a doctor, not a therapist.”

------------------------------------------------------

Uhura stormed out of the bar. She was confident that Len was not far behind. Spock had come for her. She was determined to know everything. She thought about going back to the dorms, but she couldn’t wait. She had to know everything now. A small park was located just two blocks uphill from the bar. It boasted a few trees, three or four benches, and a pretty view of the bay. The park was blessedly empty when she arrived. Uhura walked over to the stone wall lining the scenic overlook and leaned against it waiting for McCoy to catch up.
“Tell me everything, Len. No more secrets.”

“You might want to sit down for this, darling.” McCoy replied.

Nyota glared at him before sitting heavily on a park bench, her arms crossed and her eyebrow cocked. McCoy dragged one hand heavily over his face before beginning.

“Spock was involved in everything, from start to finish. When I woke up in the hospital after Sybok whipped my ass, he was the first person I called. Starfleet police didn’t look like they knew their ass from a hole in the ground, but Spock was on top of everything.”

As Uhura listened to McCoy’s tale, her anger slowly melted into shock, admiration and concern. Spock had been instrumental in her rescue. He had gathered a ransom of several million credits, secured a spaceship and tracked her ship across solar systems to get to her. He had killed his own brother with his bare hands to save her.

"I swear, Ny, I would have told you everything but he made me swear to leave his involvement out of it."

Uhura took a deep breath in an attempt to keep at bay the tears that threatened to fall. She had cried too often these past few months for her taste.

She looked up at McCoy. "Did he give a reason for this secrecy?"

"He didn't want you to feel any obligation towards him," McCoy replied.

Uhura put her head in her hands. McCoy sat heavily on the bench beside her.

"I think he's in love with you, darling. Damn Vulcan's too honorable to even have the appearance of purchasing your affections. But I don't understand why he was even worried. You can hardly stand the man. I can see you warming up to tolerate him, but love him..."

McCoy stopped short at Uhura's sudden burst of laughter. He watched her as she clutched her sides in an attempt to stifle her mirth. He couldn't help but to join in. He had not heard her laughter since before the incident.

"It's mighty nice to see you smile, darling. But I can't help but wonder what is so amusing."

Uhura leaned against him, her previous ire forgotten. "I have to laugh, Len, or I would cry. You're right. Commander Spock could not earn my love. My heart is already his. I have loved him these past six months at least. This revelation only serves to prove to me two things. That Spock is the very best of men and that I am the most unfortunate woman in the Federation."

Len shook his head in disbelief. "Love? Commander Spock? Are talking about the same uptight Vulcan?"

Uhura smiled ruefully. "We are. Our affections for one another could not be more ill timed."

McCoy looked at her in confusion. "I think I am missing several parts of this story. But how about you explain why this timing is so tragic."

"These past few months I have been convinced that although I loved him, he held no particular regard for me. His very absence from the Academy only confirmed this. And Spock was convinced that I cared nothing for him. He rescued me, swore you and Kirk to secrecy and then went off to Vulcan to undertake kolinahr."
"What's *kolinahr*?"

"It's when Vulcan's purge all emotions. Many humans incorrectly believe that Vulcans have no emotions. Believe me, they do. They are just good at regulating them. But *kolinahr* renders them truly incapable of feeling any emotion."

Uhura stood up and walked over to the low wall bordering the park. She leaned against it and looked down the tall hill at the bay below. McCoy followed her and leaned next to her.

“So, Spock’s completely incapable of loving you.”

Uhura nodded. “That sums it up.”

The pair stood leaning against one another and noting the brightly lit sailboats that navigated the bay until Uhura began to feel chilled. McCoy walked her back to her dorm, respecting Uhura’s unspoken wish for silence. They parted ways at the door to her building, Len pressing a kiss to Nyota’s forehead. Uhura wanted to do nothing more but curl up in her bed and sleep forever.

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Uhura stepped off the elevator on her floor and made her way to her suite. Nyota stopped, her mouth hanging open in shock. Two burly Vulcan men stood at attention on either side of her door. Uhura looked at the men in confusion before drawing herself up to her full height.

“Who are you and why are you here?”

Uhura’s nostrils flared in indignation. She pulled out her communicator and pressed her finger lightly to the distress button. “Yes, I am. Now you have ten seconds to tell me who you are and what the hell are you doing outside my suite before this place is crawling with Starfleet police.”

The guard who addressed her did not even do her the dignity of arching an eyebrow in response.

“The Lady T’Pau awaits you inside your domicile.”

Uhura quickly put her communicator away. As she looked between the two guards in confusion.

“Lady T’Pau?”

“Yes, Ms. Uhura,” the other guard replied before gesturing to her door. “I suggest that you do not keep her ladyship waiting.”

Uhura huffed before walking into her suite. Gaila met her at the door, her blue eyes wide and her face grey.

“Ny,” she whispered. “She just barged in here demanding to speak with you. I barely had time to hide my toys.”

Uhura rolled her eyes before petting Gaila on the arm and moving into the sitting room. Lady T’Pau stood in the middle of the room leaning on her tall walking staff and assessing the decor with barely concealed disapproval. The diminutive woman in black somehow loomed over the room.

“Lady T’Pau,” Uhura called as she dropped into a stiff curtsey. “To what do I owe the honor?”
Lady T’Pau turned towards her, her grey eyes flicking over Nyota’s person.

“It is good that thee has seen fit to return to thine abode at a near respectable hour. I observed an adequate patch of wilderness just outside of the building. Thee shall attend me.”

Without waiting for a reply, Lady T’Pau walked past Uhura and out of the front door. All Uhura could do was roll her eyes and follow.
Nyota followed Lady T’Pau out into the hallway and filed into the elevator along with her and her two imposing guards. Nyota struggled to control her emotions. While anyone would be honored and overwhelmed by a visit from the great Lady T’Pau, Uhura only felt angered. A late night visit, to her domicile, unannounced, with huge guards greeting her and being commanded to attend her ladyship. Nyota had no idea why Lady T’Pau decided to grace her with her presence, but she had a feeling that nothing good would come of the visit. After the trying events of the day, Nyota wanted nothing more than to strip off her uniform and fall into bed. Perhaps she would wake up in the morning to discover that the last six months had been an elaborate bad dream brought on by indigestion.

Lady T’Pau led the party to the courtyard nestled between Uhura’s building and the next. It was surrounded by tall trees that lent the public space some semblance of privacy. It was empty save for two cadets necking on one of the benches. One look at Lady T’Pau’s huge guards was enough to send them scurrying. After the couple left, the guards took up post at either entrance to the courtyard ensuring that their lady would remain undisturbed.

Nyota stood at attention as Lady T’Pau made a slow circuit around the small fountain at the center of the courtyard. Nyota saw the tactic for what it was: an effort to further intimidate her by keeping her waiting. Finally, Lady T’Pau turned towards her and fixed her with her most quelling stare.

“T’Pau must know the reason for my presence here this evening.”

“I assure you, I do not know why you have visited me,” Uhura replied. “If you would care to enlighten me, I would be obliged.”

“It is unseemly for thee to play coy,” Lady T’Pau replied. “Let us speak plainly. I demand that thee put an end to the scandalous reports that thee are betrothed to my nephew. I know these reports to be mere lies no doubt constructed to discredit our clan, but I traveled hither immediately upon hearing this falsehood to impress my sentiments upon thee.”

“Pardon me for saying, but I find it completely illogical that you should trouble yourself to come all this way because of a few rumors,” Nyota replied. “Would not a subspace call prove just as effective in achieving your goal? That the great Lady T’Pau would be seen visiting me would only lend credence to these supposed rumors.”

Lady T’Pau’s eyes widened slightly, a sign of indignation that would go unnoticed by most humans.

“’Supposed’ rumors? No doubt thee and thine ilk are responsible for their promulgation. Do thee deny it?”

Uhura sighed. “This is the first that I’ve heard of these infamous tales.”
Lady T'Pau nodded. “Will thee also deny the foundation of these claims?”

“Lady T’Pau, I am under no obligation to answer any of your questions.”

“This is not to be borne,” she replied pointing her walking stick at Uhura. "Thee shall answer me. Has my nephew made thee an offer of marriage?”

“Your Ladyship insists that it is impossible, so it must be so,” Uhura replied with an arch of her brow.

Lady T’Pau gripped her tall walking stick and leaned towards Uhura, her small black eyes narrowed as she examined her.

“It should be impossible while Spock remains in full possession of his logic. Perhaps in a moment of weakness, thy arts and allurements drew him in. How else could he cast aside his duty to his clan and to Vulcan for a human woman?”

Uhura laughed at the irony of that statement. “If I have used such allurements, I would hardly confess it.”

Lady T’Pau straightened, drawing herself to her full height.

“Miss Uhura, perhaps thee are not fully aware of who I am? I am not accustomed to such treatment as this. I am the head of the S’chn T’gai clan and am owed knowledge of all of Spock’s affairs.”

Uhura rubbed her forehead tiredly. "That may be, but you are not due any knowledge of my affairs as you are no relation of mine.”

Lady T’Pau narrowed her eyes. "Let me be rightly understood. This alliance which thee have the presumption to aspire can never be achieved. Mine nephew is betrothed to T’Pring. What answer has thee now?”

Uhura shook her head in genuine confusion. "Only that if Spock is betrothed to T’Pring then you can have no fear that he would be engaged to me."

Lady T’Pau turned and resumed pacing around the small fountain. "Their union is of a peculiar nature to non-Vulcans. They were bound together in childhood at the age of seven. Their union was the particular wish of their parents and their respective clans. From his infancy the most worthy Vulcan bloodline was sought to be united to the S’chn T’gai clan. His advantageous bonding would undo some of the pollution brought on by his father’s illogic. It was no easy task to find an acceptable clan willing to bond their daughter with a half-breed. But the S’chn T’gai name proved to be an adequate inducement.

"To think that centuries of Vulcan tradition and decades of planning could be imperiled by an upstart human girl of no importance and little distinction. It is most illogical. Are thee deaf to the objections of his family and the opinions of the highest echelons of Vulcan society? Have thee no regard for his betrothal to T’Pring?"

"I am sorry for your great disappointment Lady T’Pau," Nyota replied. She worked hard to swallow back some of her anger. As much as she wanted to curse Lady T’Pau for her impertinence and speciesism, she was a Starfleet cadet in uniform talking with a dignitary. “Your family worked hard to remedy the... taint of humanity in your bloodline. But, the
completion of your plans was dependent on others. If Spock is no longer honor bound to T'Pring or inclined to bond with her, why is he not free to make another choice? And if he has chosen me, why might I not accept him if I am so inclined? There are no Federation or Starfleet regulations preventing us from exercising our free will."

Lady T'Pau stopped her circuit around the fountain at this, leaning upon her walking stick before replying in her most commanding tone.

"Honor, decorum and interest forbid it. Yes, interest Miss Uhura. Should thee pursue this illogical union, thee will shame him and cause Spock to be a pariah in Vulcan society. Thine names will never be mentioned by any of us nor will thee be welcome on Vulcan. Thee will bring dishonor to his clan. Neither will thee escape censure, Miss Uhura. Thy career in Starfleet will flounder. Thee will never advance higher than an ensign on a sub par starship. Thy aspirations will be wasted."

Uhura paused at this, considering Lady T'Pau's warning. "These are heavy misfortunes indeed," Uhura finally answered. "However, Lady Amanda has managed to bear them all with aplomb. I am sure that the wife of S'chn T'gai Spock will find similar if not greater satisfaction in her marriage and will have no cause to repine."

"Insolent, headstrong girl!" Lady T'Pau replied, her voice just now rising in volume. "Is this how thee repay me for the attention I showed thee last spring? If thee were a logical being, thee would have no wish to quit the sphere to which thee were born."

Uhura's nostrils flared at this, her stance falling out of attention. "I am a free citizen of the Federation and soon to be a Starfleet officer. I am an adult of my species who is free to make her own choices regarding marriage. Spock is also an adult, a free citizen of the Federation and a Starfleet officer. In this we are equals."

"Yet, what of thy family?" Lady T'Pau challenged, her dark eyes challenging. "Thy parents and relations? Professors and scientists of middling renown descended from goat herders and farmers who scratched a meager living out of the sand."

"If Spock does not object to uniting himself to the daughter of middling scientists and goat herders, what objection can you have?"

Lady T'Pau rapped her walking stick on the stone walkway. "Answer me plainly and true. Are thee engaged to mine nephew?"

Uhura looked Lady T'Pau in the eye. "No, I am not."

Lady T'Pau nodded. "Will thee pledge never to enter into an engagement with mine nephew?"

Uhura lifted her chin. "No, I will not!"

"Illogical human woman," Lady T'Pau replied. "I had hoped to converse with someone of some understanding based on our prior acquaintance."

"I am sorry to leave you unsatisfied, Lady T'Pau. You desire your nephew to marry T'Pring. But I have no influence over Spock's decision. My refusing his suit will not ensure that he bonds with T'Pring. I will not be worked upon by such faulty logic as this. I am determined to make my own decisions based on what will ensure my own happiness and well being without regard to the opinions of people wholly unrelated to me."

"Now, it is very late in the evening and you have imposed yourself upon me long enough. You will not find the answers you seek from me. I bid you goodnight and safe travel to Vulcan."
Uhura turned and made her way towards the exit of the courtyard.

“Kroykah!” Lady T’Pau shouted with a firm rap of her walking stick. "Not so fast, Miss Uhura. I am not finished with thee!"

One of the guards stepped into Uhura’s path, blocking her exit. She took a deep calming breath before turning to face Lady T’Pau.

“I am also aware of thy scandalous assignation with Sybok. Yes, I know it all. It is no surprise that a V’tosh ka’tur would easily fall prey to thy allurements. After that patched up affair, how can thee presume to align thyself with mine nephew?”

Uhura reared back as if she had been slapped. When she managed to regain the ability to speak, her words came out in a hiss.

“How dare you? If you were as knowledgeable as you claim, you would not deign to mention his name in my presence. There was no ’assignation,’ but your nephew Sybok did kidnap and assault me. You call Spock’s humanity a taint, but it was not the half Vulcan who nearly killed me.

“If I were to marry Spock, I can promise you it would not be in order to acquire his family name or any notoriety in Vulcan society. I would marry him because I loved him and he has shown himself to be the very best of men, human or Vulcan.”

Uhura turned her face away, her cheeks warm with embarrassment at her confession. She took a deep breath and felt her anger drain away until all she felt was weariness. Nyota turned back to Lady T’Pau who stood speechless.

"We can have nothing further to say to one another. You have insulted me in every possible way and I will not allow myself to endure further mistreatment at your hands."

Uhura turned and stared the guard down until he stepped out of her way. If Lady T’Pau said anything else, Uhura was deaf to her words. She only wanted to return to her rooms and to put this awful day behind her. During the short elevator ride to her floor, Uhura allowed herself the luxury of a few tears that were quickly wiped away with a few well phrased Klingon curses. She began stripping out of her uniform as soon as she hit the door to her rooms. Gaila, who had been pacing the length of the common room, stopped abruptly upon her entrance.

“What was all that about?”

“Oh, just one of the most respected leaders in the entire Federation warning me to stay away from her nephew,” Uhura replied as she made her way to the bedroom.

Gaila spluttered. “What? You’ve got to be kidding me?” She flopped down inelegantly on her bed as Uhura hung up her uniform.

“Goodness knows, I wish I were kidding,” Uhura mumbled.

Gaila’s eyes widened. “Oh my goodness! This is just like one of those old Terran soap operas. You’ve got to tell me everything.”

Uhura pulled a sleep shirt over her head and turned towards her friend. “Perhaps I’ll tell you tomorrow. All I want to do now is wash my face and fall into bed.”
Gaila followed Uhura to the bathroom, bouncing on her heels.

“You better tell me everything! It’s not every day when two huge hot Vulcans show up at your door.”

Uhura stopped in the doorway of the bathroom, holding out one hand to stop Gaila’s progress. “Oh, and I am still mad at you, missy! Don’t think I forgot what happened earlier tonight. I can’t believe you kept Spock’s involvement from me?”

Gaila had the good sense to look ashamed. “I’m sorry, chica. I should have told you that Spock got the ship. But, I only found out when Shuran slipped up and mentioned it…”

“Wait. That’s all you knew?”

"Knew about what?"

Gaila squeaked as Uhura pulled her into a tight hug.

"I’ll tell you later," Nyota explained as she released her friend and stepped into the bathroom.

Spock felt the coarse red sand shift beneath him as he slowly rose to his feet. The sand was still warm despite the sun having set several hours ago. He stepped from beneath the sanctuary of the canopy that had protected him from the harsh sun during his daylong meditation. Spock raised the hood of his white robes over his head and tilted his face towards the sky. The night sky above him was blanketed in stars. Here in the desert of Gol, the stars shone particularly bright. Spock noted T’ryel and her suitors among the constellations, five stars encircling one bright light. Spock felt himself to be as prideful as T’ryel and the ill fated cousins.

Four months ago he had come to Gol awash in conflicting emotions beyond his control. Spock felt rage towards his brother, untempered by the guilt and despair brought on by Sybok’s death at his own hands. He felt a deep seated shame at the wildness of his actions and emotions while under the grip of pon farr, yet he savored the unbridled freedom that had seared through his veins like liquor. He wanted to return to Earth and claim she who he considered his mate, whom he had won in kal’i’fee. He wanted to run from her, to put as many light years between him and her rejection, between her and his wildness, between her and his poor decisions.

Spock had found that no amount of private meditation could acquit him of the guilt he bore regarding Uhura’s kidnapping and assault. If his pride and desire for privacy has not driven him to remain silent about Sybok’s checkered past, he would have never been thrown into her acquaintance. Uhura would not have been kidnapped or assaulted mentally and physically. Sybok would still be alive or would have met his end at the hands of one of his unsavory associates rather than his own kin.

In his moments of illogic, Spock had fancied that his brother’s cool jade blood still coated his hands. In his dreams, the cloying scent of copper that invaded his nostrils turned to iron as the jade covering his hands morphed into crimson. He’d wake sweating in the middle of the night, struggling to regain mastery of his emotions with each gasped breath.

His sojourn among the priests at Gol had done much to quell these strong and conflicting
emotions. Slowly, he began to feel more like himself and found peace in the order and certainty brought by pure logic. Slowly he was able to experience nights of dreamless sleep, the image of Nyota’s broken corpse laying beneath him in the snow fading from his mind.

Yet, no matter how he labored, he could not achieve kolinhar. The emotions that troubled him at the start of his journey had not been banished. They merely lay dormant beneath a new found calm. A sleeping viper poised to his heel strike when he was unaware.

Spock harbored no disappointment at his failure to achieve kolinhar. He had regained mastery of his emotions and a true understanding of the concept of kadith. What is is. He had made an error in his choice to remain silent when Sybok joined the Academy. He held Nyota Uhura in high esteem, yet she was not similarly inclined towards him. His error regarding Sybok placed her in grave danger. His brother was dead by his hand. These things he could do nothing to change. Regret was illogical and unproductive. Kadith.

Spock made his way through the windswept red dunes towards the main temple, a simple domed stone structure that rose several stories above the desert, the torch light making the stone glow a fiery red. An acolyte waited at the foot of the long stairway to escort Spock to the ritual baths that would mark the beginning and end of his journey.

Spock stepped into the chambers and quickly stripped out of his meditation robes. He folded the beige garment and neatly placed it in the basket by the door. He did the same with his undergarments and sandals. They would be collected and sanitized for use by the next pilgrim. Perhaps they would be more successful in their pursuit of pure logic. The clothes he had worn when he arrived at Gol were folded neatly on a table by the bathing chamber; his tunic, breeches and undergarments washed and pressed, his shoes scrubbed clean. He would take nothing with him from Gol save for his hard won peace.

He stepped into the bathing area and smeared his hair and skin with a pungent oil. He used a stiff bristled brush and stone scraper to remove the oil, wiping the instruments clean in a wide mouth stone bowl as he worked. As he removed the sand, oil and sweat, he almost felt a lightening. An illogical notion, to be sure, but one that he appreciated nonetheless. He toweled off, quickly redressed and gathered the few belongings he had brought with him: his communicator, a small canteen, and a few grooming implements.

As Spock’s flitter pulled away from Gol, he did not look back to watch the light of the temple recede from view. Instead, he opened his communicator and quickly scrolled through the messages he had missed over the past few months. A few messages from Nyota caught his eye. He stopped and opened her most recent message sent over two months ago. It was brief, only three lines of text. Yet they held a world of meaning.

Commander Spock,
I hope that you are well.
Nyota Uhura

Spock’s reply was immediate and just as terse.

Cadet Uhura,
I regret the delay in my response to your missive. I am indeed well. May you also be well.
Commander Spock
Glossary:

**Kroykah**: stop

**kal'i'fee**: challenge, battle

**Kadith**: Vulcan philosophical concept meaning "What is is."

**kolinhar**: the state of pure logic in which all emotions are purged

Chapter End Notes

This story is finally drawing to an end, just one more chapter and a possible epilogue. Thank you for reading and sharing your comments! I've loved reading them over the years. Special thanks to those who have been reading since the beginning, when I started this story back in 2009 expecting it to be short, silly and fun. Ha! It has been a fun ride for me, I hope it has been for you too.
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

More revelations and a long awaited reunion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Pride and Logic 29

Spock picked up his pace, elongating his strides as he made his circuit around the grounds of N'Hir'iset. The morning sun was still chasing away the chill of the night that hung in the dry desert air. While it was still cold by most Vulcan's standards, Spock found the early morning climate invigorating. Even during the peak of summer, early morning runs were too cold to be comfortable, the shock of frigid air to his lungs serving both to chase away the last vestiges of sleep and stiffen his muscles.

The sentimental human part of him treasured his morning runs. Spock breathed deeply and evenly as he ran. He admired how the sunrise bathed the red sands in bronze while calculating the distance between N'Hir'iset and the sun taking into account the time of the year, Vulcan's orbit around its sun, and N'Hir'iset's distance from the equator. He felt the press of his bare toes in the warming sand as his strides rolled heel to toe. Spock mused how some of the tiny grains that shifted under his feet might have once been part of nearby Mt. Tarhana that rose high above the landscape. He busied his mind with calculations of the amount of time and velocity of the wind necessary for such erosion.

Spock found that his time on Vulcan had been oddly restoring. However, he was ready to return to Earth, to resume his duties with Starfleet. One of the many messages that awaited him after his sojourn at Gol was an invitation from Captain Pike to serve as his chief science officer and first officer aboard the Wangari Maathai on a six month research expedition to the Laurentian system. After a brief time of deliberation and adjusting his teaching schedule at the Academy, Spock accepted the assignment. Immersing himself in research and the relative quiet of space would be a welcome respite that would also offer valuable opportunities for advancement. He ignored the small part of his conscious that questioned if logic was his true reason for accepting the assignment and not an irrational need to escape. It would be substantially easier to avoid the emotional disquiet brought on by encounters with Cadet Uhura were they separated by an entire star system. However, kolinahr and lightyears of distance had already proven inadequate to rid his mind of thoughts of her. Would an entire star system truly prove to be more effective?

As Spock made his return trip to the house, he saw his mother's pool and garden coming into view, her red flitter parked outside. His mother took advantage of the relatively cool mornings to swim and attend to her plants. Spock slowed his pace and approached the enclosure. A few laps in the pool would be a more than suitable end to his morning exercises. He also desired the opportunity to spend time with his mother outside of his father's influence. Sarek rarely came to the pool and gardens finding the humidity disagreeable and wishing to provide his wife with a private space of her own.

A week had passed since Spock's return from Gol. He had not discussed his reasoning for attempting kolinahr nor his failure, despite his mother's gentle questioning and probing through
attempting to Reilly nor his failure, despite her gentle questioning and probing through their familial bond. Although Spock knew that his mother supported him in his decision, he could still sense her underlying hurt at his choice to purge all emotion. He understood that his mother's pain was not from a mistaken belief that he wished to reject his humanity and, by extension, herself. Rather, she grieved the severance of the bridge emotion provided between them. Her relief at his failure, although she tried to shield him from it, was palpable.

Spock entered the enclosure and called for his mother through the bond. He found her bent over a bed of black-eyed Susans. The delicate Terran flowers could only survive in the controlled environment of the water gardens.

"Good morning, Spock," Lady Amanda greeted as she stood upright, brushing the dirt from her hands onto her khaki shorts. She pushed the brim of her large sun hat off of her forehead. "How was your run?"

"Most agreeable," Spock replied before looking past her to the flowers she had been attending. "These are a recent addition to your garden."

Amanda looked behind her and smiled. "Yes. I planted them while you were away." She paused and glanced quickly at her son. "Nyota mentioned that they were her favorite flower. I thought they would make a pleasant addition. They are sun loving plants, so I thought they'd do well here."

Spock knelt and carefully ran one finger over the yellow petals of the flower. The flower was rather unassuming, thin yellow petals surrounding a small black head suspended on a long green stem. He thought of Nyota and was pleased that the thought of her did not stir up any undue emotions.

"They are rather simple yet elegant," Spock replied. "It is understandable why Ms. Uhura would regard them with appreciation."

"Yes. I can see that," Amanda replied as she resumed tending her plants, carefully cutting off fading blossoms. "She's not easily impressed by status or position. Nyota is hardy and a bit wild under her elegant exterior."

Amanda paused in her cutting, her garden shears held at the base of one browning flower. "Lady T'Pau certainly found out that Nyota was not to be intimidated." Amanda quickly cut off the blossom, stowed the shears into her work belt, and straightened to face him once more.

Spock cocked his head slightly as he regarded his mother who nearly vibrated with excitement. He prodded their familial bond and sensed her hesitancy to continue underneath her overwhelming desire to disclose the information she guarded.

"There is something you wish to share with me, mother. However, you have been sworn to keep someone's confidence. I will return to the house so as not to tempt you."

Spock was hit with a wave of exasperation as he turned to leave the garden. Just as he reached the door, his exit was halted by his mother's undignified shout.

"Lady T'Pau visited Nyota at Starfleet Academy to warn her away from you but Nyota told her to sit on it!"

Spock turned towards his mother before replying in his driest tone. "It is highly unlikely that Cadet Uhura told Lady T'Pau to 'sit on it.'"

Amanda rolled her eyes. "Of course Nyota would never say something so coarse to your aunt. I am sure that she put it much more elegantly."
"Mother," Spock began.  

"Sarek asked me not to tell you about Lady T'Pau's visit. You had already left for Gol and he was so sure that your aunt's worries were unfounded. But, here you are and I think you deserve to know."

Amanda bid Spock follow her to a bench that overlooked the pool. He sat beside her dutifully, waiting for her to begin her explanation.  

"You had been gone to Gol for sometime when Lady T'Pau visited. It was most irregular. Normally your aunt announces her intention to visit well in advance of her arrival. But, one night she just showed up at our door after the evening meal. She had her guards and a small group of attendants, of course. She demanded to speak with Sarek in private about his son. But Sarek insisted that anything she wished to discuss about his son could be said in front of his bondmate."

"Lady T'Pau then demanded that Sarek forbid you from proposing to Nyota. Of course, she had no idea about the true nature of your relationship with Nyota...neither does your father by the way."

"The nature of my relationship with Ms. Uhura is the same as that between any Starfleet instructor and cadet."

Amanda rolled her eyes at that. "Of course, son. As I was saying. Lady T'Pau went on to list every reason why Nyota would be a poor bondmate, including her humanity and humble background. It was with some effort that I kept my tongue."

"What was father's response to this demand?"

"Well, your father replied that it was not illogical for you to take a human bond mate who was affiliated with Starfleet given your own human heritage and occupation with Starfleet. And since your bond with T'Pring was dissolved and you are of age, you are free to bond with the person of your choosing."

"Indeed," Spock replied with one raised eyebrow. He had to admit that he was surprised by his father's support.

"Yes, I was quite proud of you father," Amanda replied, smiling sweetly. "But Lady T'Pau would hear none of it. She insisted that Nyota would be an unsuitable bondmate because she lacked decorum and respect for your elders. Lady T'Pau told us that she had just recently returned from Earth where she had confronted Nyota on campus demanding that she refuse you should you propose. But, Nyota staunchly refused to make any such promise."

Spock sat up straighter at this bit of news. "Lady T'Pau spoke with Nyota...in person?"

"Yes. And she refused to be cowed by Lady T'Pau."

Spock stood from his seat. "I believe that I will have to return to Earth sooner than I intended, mother."

Amanda smiled widely. "Yes, I believe that you should. There is a transport that leaves for Earth this evening. If you would be so good as to give my regards to Tonya Uhura. She mentioned that her niece was spending the next few weeks visiting them in Chicago"

Spock narrowed his eyes at his mother. "I suspect that you have 'set me up,' mother."
Nyota balanced a sleepy Raymond on one hip as she punched in the code for the front door of Aunt Tonya’s Chicago condo. Nyota was returning from a fun but tiring day with her little cousins. She took Raymond and the twins to the Lincoln Park Zoo to visit the new tiger cubs followed by a long afternoon at the North Avenue Beach building sand castles and wading in Lake Michigan. Raymond’s face still bore residue from their special dinner; empanadas at Lito’s Empanadas in Lincoln Park followed by chocolate cupcakes and milk at Molly’s Cupcakes. Despite the sugary dessert, Raymond was more than ready for bed, as were Keisha and Kaylee.

“Awww, look at my little munchkins,” Aunt Tonya cooed as she greeted them in the foyer. She took Raymond from Nyota’s arms and kissed his forehead.

“I hope they were not too much trouble. Three little ones are a lot to look after on your own.”

“We are big girls now, “Keisha piped up, her hands on her hips in indignation.

Nyota smiled as she pet Keisha on the head. “You are right. Keisha and Kaylee were models of proper decorum. Truly aunt, they were no trouble at all.”

“Well, since you girls are so big, I want you to go clean up in the sonic shower. We can’t have you smelling like Lake Michigan all night. Then its off to bed.”

The twins grimaced before complying with their mother’s instructions, stopping to thank their cousin Ny-ny before they headed to the bathroom.

“I’ll wash Raymond up,” Aunt Tonya explained as she made to follow the girls up stairs. “Your uncle is out on the patio wrestling with the grill. Why don’t you keep him company while I get them sorted?”

Nyota rolled her eyes. “Why does uncle insist on building a real fire?”

“Some nonsense about keeping the traditions of his forefathers,” Aunt Tonya smirked before disappearing upstairs.

Nyota laughed as she walked to the kitchen to unpack her grocery bag. She added her bags of cherries and strawberries to the stasis unit next to a large bowl of fruit salad. The Uhura’s were having a few friends over for dessert and drinks. Hopefully Nyota was successful in wearing out her young cousins so they could enjoy a night relatively free of child interruptions.

Uhura couldn’t help poking a finger into the frosting of the coconut cake sitting on the counter. Aunt Tonya’s baking was legendary and Uhura looked forward to gaining a few pounds during her three week visit.

Nyota licked her finger clean as she walked through the the sliding glass doors out onto the patio. She took a moment to enjoy the sun sitting low over Lake Michigan before walking over to her Uncle Jomo who stood wrestling with a bundle of fire wood by the grill.

“Need a hand, uncle?”

“Oh, hello,” Uncle Jomo greeted as he ripped open the package of replicated wood. “I’ve got this. Just have to get this fire going before everyone gets here.”

“Well, give a shout if you change your mind,” Uhura replied. “I learned a thing or two about starting fires in Survival Training 101.”
Nyota shook her head fondly as she retreated to the railing lining the edge of the patio and settled into one of the padded chairs that faced the lake. Her uncle was rather stubborn sometimes and held on to a few outdated notions about gender roles. While he fully shared in caring for his children, cleaning the home and preparing meals, he somehow felt that grilling was the proper province of men. She knew her uncle would fumble with the fire for another ten minutes before swallowing his pride and asking for help.

Nyota relaxed into her chair with a sigh and looked out over the lake. She watched the joggers and cyclists making their way along the lakeshore path. It was turning out to be a comfortable June evening. The sun had yet to set, but the temperature had already dropped to a comfortable 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Uhura closed her eyes and enjoyed the breeze over the lake, smiling at the occasional muffled expletive uttered by her uncle as he fumbled with the logs. Uhura’s musings were interrupted by doorbell.

“Oh great, they’re early,” Uncle Jomo groaned before frantically lighting matches.

“I’ll answer the door. I am sure Auntie has her hands full with Raymond and the girls.” Uhura rose from her seat and quickly walked to the door, smoothing down her sundress as she went.

“Enter,” she called as she stepped into the foyer.

The door slid back with a hiss to reveal Commander Spock. Uhura stood dumbfounded.

“Commander Spock! What a surprise,” Uhura finally managed as she stepped aside to allow Spock to enter. “Please come in.”

Spock stepped fully into the foyer, the door closing softly behind him. He stood looking down at Uhura, his face blank of expression save for the warmth of his brown eyes.

“I hope that my unannounced visit is not an inconvenience.”

“No, not at all,” Nyota replied, taking a moment to drink in his appearance. He was unchanged from the last time she had seen him. He was still achingly handsome, his posture ramrod straight, his shoulders broad, his hair glossy and neat.

“It is good to see you. You look well.”

The corners of Spock’s mouth twitched upwards briefly. “You also appear to be in peak physical condition. I am gratified to see you as well.”

Nyota ducked her head and smiled.

“Ny, who is at the door?” Aunt Tonya asked as she made her way down the steps. “Oh! Spock! What a surprise.”

Aunt Tonya ran down the last few steps, her mouth curved in a warm smile. “You are very welcome.”

“Auntie,” Spock greeted with a short bow. “I trust that my visit is not an inconvenience.”

“Of course not! Oh, did you just get in town?” Aunt Tonya asked, gesturing to his overnight bag. “Let me take that for you.”
“Thank you,” Spock handed Aunt Tonya his small overnight bag. “I arrived in Chicago not fifteen minutes ago.”

“Goodness, come into the kitchen. You must be thirsty,” Aunt Tonya replied as she ushered him towards the kitchen. Nyota followed, her eyes still wide in wonder.

“Did you just come in from San Francisco?” Aunt Tonya asked as she retrieved a glass from the cabinet.

“No, I arrived from Vulcan.”

“Vulcan!” Aunt Tonya exclaimed. “And you came straight here? You must be tired from your journey. Have you arranged a place to stay yet? You must stay here. Nyota is in the guest room, but we have an extra bed in my study. Oh, if only you called ahead, I would have had everything prepared for you. No matter. I’ll let Jomo know you’re staying with us.”

Aunt Tonya left the kitchen in a flurry as she went to fetch her husband.

Nyota smiled nervously at Spock. “I apologize for my aunt. She loves to play hostess.”

Nyota went to the stasis unit and retrieved a pitcher of cold lemon water. She poured a glass for Spock before pouring one for herself.

Spock sipped the cool liquid, his eyes studying her intently over the rim of his glass. Nyota looked away from him, pressing the glass to her forehead as she stepped away. He was here. In her aunt’s kitchen in Chicago. Uhura had to suppress a nervous giggle.

Spock set down his half empty glass and moved towards her, his dark eyes intent. “I apologize if I have caused you and your family undo stress. It was my intent to acquire accommodations following my visit here. I can still do so.”

“Oh no. You have to stay here now. Otherwise you’ll offend Aunt Tonya,” Nyota replied. "You are her Mandy’s son and thus practically family. It is not any trouble at all.”

“Spock!” Uncle Jomo called as he entered the kitchen. He approached the Vulcan as if he were going to give his signature bear hug but soon remembered himself. He stopped and gave a poor version of the Vulcan salute instead.

“Welcome, Spock. Tonya tells me that you are to stay with us. You are just in time for dessert, too. Have you eaten dinner yet? We still have some of my famous black bean burgers from dinner tonight if you’re hungry.”

Spock glanced at Nyota before turning back to Jomo. “Thank you, but I have already eaten the evening meal. Thank you for your hospitality.”

Uncle Jomo waived his thanks away. “No problem. You are always welcome here. Besides, you can earn your keep by helping me get this blasted fire going.”

“I am pleased to serve,” Spock replied before taking his drink and following Uncle Jomo to the patio.

Aunt Tonya watched the two men depart before turning towards Nyota with a gleeful look.

“Ny, what can he mean by coming here straight from Vulcan! Mandy didn’t tell me anything about a visit from her son. He must be here to see you!”

Tonya clapped her hands and bounced on the balls of her feet. “I knew it. I knew it. I told Jomo
the boy was in love with you last summer. Now he travels light years to see you. Did you know he was coming?"

“No aunt, I didn’t know he was coming,” Nyota sat down heavily on a stool by the counter. “I haven’t spoken to him in months. I was sure he had forgotten all about me. What can he mean by this?” Nyota dropped her head into her hands and groaned.

“Oh, Nyota. Whatever this means, I can assure you that he has not forgotten you. I truly doubt he came all this way to help your uncle with the grill.”

Nyota couldn’t help the smile that overtook her face. “No, I suppose he did not.”

Aunt Tonya caressed Nyota’s cheek fondly. “Well, I say you are inducement enough to travel over two star systems. I’ll make sure you two have a moment to talk tonight. I expect you both have much to say to one another.”

Nyota caught her aunt’s hand in her own and kissed it. She had not told her aunt of Spock’s instrumental role in her rescue. Nor had she shared with her aunt the mental anguish she had endured these past several months. Nyota had longed to speak with him; to thank him for saving her life, to comfort him.

“Thank you, Aunt Tonya.”

“Come on, lets rescue your young man from your uncle.”

Aunt Tonya pulled Nyota out onto the balcony where Uncle Jomo stood admiring a brightly burning wood fire.

“Tonya, I think this is the best fire we’ve ever had. Do we have something besides pineapples and marshmallows to grill? We can’t waste it!”

Aunt Tonya laughed as she walked over to kiss her husband’s cheek. “One summer you grilled weeds from my flower bed so as not to waste the fire! I am sure we can find something in the fridge. If not, Spock can teach you how to build an equally excellent fire another time.”

Spock bowed slightly. “I would be most willing to impart the basic principles, Dr. Uhura.”

“See? Now Jomo, why don’t we see what else we have to grill up tonight. Ny, show Spock where he’ll be sleeping.”

Nyota ducked her head and bid Spock to follow her up the stairs. They stopped to retrieve his overnight bag from the living room before climbing the stairs. The butterflies returned to Nyota’s stomach as Spock followed her closely. She could feel the heat of him upon her back as they crested the second floor.

"That's Aunt and Uncle's bedroom at the end of the hall," Nyota pointed out. "And the bathroom is the door on the left. My cousin Ray's room and the twins. Keisha and Kaylee."

As Nyota and Spock neared the door to the twin’s room, they heard giggles and whispers.

"They are supposed to be asleep and not spying," Nyota said loud enough to be heard.

The door burst open and Keisha and Kaylee bounded out, bouncing on their toes in their sleep shorts and tank tops. Their bouncing and giggling stopped abruptly as they took in their cousin’s companion.
"Aren't you two supposed to be sleeping?" Nyota asked, her face stern.

"It is still light out," Kaylee whined, as she tore her gaze from Spock. "It's too early for sleep."

"It is 8:30 PM and you two have had a very long and eventful day," Nyota replied as she attempted to steer her cousins back to their room.

"Who is he?" Keisha asked as she squirmed around Nyota. She grinned up at Spock. "He is very pretty. Is he your boyfriend?"

Nyota flushed, her mouth working soundlessly to form a reply. Spock glanced at her, his eyes soft with amusement, before turning his attention to Keisha.

"I am Spock, a colleague of your cousin Nyota from Starfleet."

Keisha's eyes grew round.

"Are you a starship captain?"

"No. I am a commander and I have served as a science officer aboard a starship."

"Did you ever fight any Klingons?" Kaylee asked, suddenly very interested in the conversation.

"Kaylee, don't be silly," Keisha interjected. "Science officers don't battle Klingons. They are too busy studying anomalies in their lab."

"Ms. Kaylee's inquiry is not ill founded," Spock replied, kneeling down to be closer to the girls' height. "While I have never personally fought Klingons, a science officer has many responsibilities outside of the science lab. I am also a bridge officer and cross trained to pilot the ship, operate the communications and navigation systems, and to engage in both offensive and defensive battle scenarios."

Kaylee’s eyes lit up and she stepped closer to Spock. "Have you engaged in any battle scenarios?"

"Unfortunately, I have engaged in several scenarios involving Romulan and Orion ships, as well as rogue Federation actors."

"Do you mean pirates?" Keisha asked, coming to stand next to her sister.

"Girls, that's enough," Nyota intervened. "I want you two back in your bed in ten seconds or I am telling your mother."

Kaylee stuck out her bottom lip before turning to retreat to her bed. Keisha stayed put, her hands firmly planted on her hips as she appraised her cousin and her strange friend.

"Keisha. I'm serious..."

"Tell us a story first!" Keisha demanded.

"Keisha, you are being rude!"

"We want Spock to tell us a story," Kaylee piped in, having overheard Keisha's demand. "A story about space pirates!"

Nyota rubbed her forehead. She knew better than to negotiate with the twins. It was better to acquiesce to the first simple request. "Okay. A short one. Then bed. But only if Spock wants to."
The twins turned to look at Spock, their brown eyes wide. He looked to Nyota, who simply shrugged and mouthed her apologies.

“Very well. I shall relate a short story as payment for my room and board.”

The twins cheered and Keisha launched herself into Spock’s arms without warning. Nyota gasped.

“Keisha! Spock, I am sorry. The twins haven’t learned much about Vulcans.”

Spock rose from his previous crouching position, Keisha seated easily in his arms, her arms looped around his neck.

“It is no matter, Nyota. My shields are firmly in place. Let us return the children to their beds.”


Nyota led the group into the twins’ room and helped Kaylee climb into her bed. Nyota turned to see Spock doing the same, lowering Keisha to her bed and pulling the sheets up to her chin.

“Now the story, Spock,” Keisha demanded. “Please,” she quickly added after a stern look from her cousin.

“Very well,” Spock replied as he sat on the end of Keisha’s bed. Nyota sat on Kaylee’s and prepared to listen.

“The account which I am about to relate is a true,” Spock began. “However, the names of the parties involved and certain details have been altered as the facts of the event are classified.”

The twins gasped in unison. Nyota simply arched a brow at Spock, who blinked back at her innocently.

“Two years, three months, and fourteen days after I graduated from Starfleet Academy, I served as the Science Officer aboard the Nichols on a six month mission to study a spatial anomaly 1,034.5 kilometers outside of the Telluvian asteroid belt in the Beta quadrant. Many Federation civilians do not know that this region of the Beta quadrant contains asteroids rich in quisthian phosphates, a very valuable component in the manufacture of Tellarite drill bits used in the mining of latinum.

Keisha yawned loudly at this point and Nyota noticed Kaylee’s eyelids begin to flutter.

“The Nichols was tasked with documenting the spatial anomaly to determine if it would pose any hazards to commercial quisthian phosphate mining. We were most concerned with measuring the level of radiation emitted by the anomaly and its long term health impact on the Tellarite nervous system as Tellar had successfully petitioned for exclusive quisthian phosphate mining rights in the Telluvian asteroid belt.”

Spock continued his tale of the Nichols research and Tellar mining technologies seemingly oblivious to the twins’ slow slip into slumber. By the time Spock got to the part in the story where they discovered that a dissident Tellarite group had illegally begun mining on one of the asteroids--the promised pirates--Keisha had begun snoring loudly.

“I think you’ve successfully put them to sleep,” Nyota laughed quietly. “The promise of pirates was not enough to overcome their aversion to the minutia of extraterrestrial geology.”

Spock stood and adjusted his clothing. “Yes. I deduced that relating one of my more exciting encounters with space pirates would prove counterproductive to our goal of coaxing Ms. Keisha
and Kaylee to sleep.”

Nyota smiled as she followed him out of the room. “Well played, Commander. Now let me show you to your room.”

Nyota led Spock up two short flight of stairs past the media room and guest suite on the third floor to her aunt’s study, a converted attic with wide windows that overlooked the city on one side and Lake Michigan on the other.

“Here it is,” Nyota said as they stepped into the room.

Spock stopped next to her just inside the room, his warm eyes fixed on her. Nyota felt her nervousness return. Spock seemed to fill the small room. He was here with her in Chicago. The one man she had worked so hard not to think about. The one man she longed to see. To talk to. After months of silence, he was here in her space and she did not know what to say to him. Nyota shook herself and stepped further into the room, putting her duties as hostess on like a shield.

“Through this door is a small bathroom with a sonic shower so you’ll have a private bathroom. If you push this button, a queen size bed folds out from behind the bookcase. It is already laid out with fresh linens.”

Nyota pushed the button beside the bookcase to demonstrate. The faux-wood bookcase flipped around to reveal a fold down bed. Nyota pressed the button again and put the bed away.

“The climate controls are voice activated and specific to this room, so you can make it as comfortable as you like. There is a comm on my aunt’s desk that you are welcome to use. If you need anything, you can ask Aunt Tonya.”

“I am sure that I will want for nothing,” Spock replied, stepping into the room. He watched Nyota as she stood in the center of the room wringing her hands and looking everywhere but at him.

“Well,” Nyota said as she spared a quick glance at him. “Get settled. I need to check to see if my Aunt needs my help.”

Nyota brushed past him to exit the room.

“Nyota, please,” Spock called.

Nyota stopped and gripped the door frame, fixing her face with a calm smile before turning to face him. “Yes, Spock?”

“Would you be amenable to taking a walk with me this evening? There is much that I would like to discuss with you. In private.”

Nyota released a breath that she did not realize she had held. “I would like that. Perhaps we can walk along the lakefront path?”

Spock stared at her a moment, his face softening slightly. “Please, lead the way.”

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Notes: I had this written for a few weeks and intended to include their
conversation and the end of the story. I realized today that I had written quite a lot 
and that I could save their conversation and the conclusion for Chapter 30. I hope to 
have the conclusion posted in the beginning of January as I have the next week off of 
work. Thanks so much for reading and being patient with my slow progress! Happy 
New Year!
Chapter 30 and Epilogue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Pride and Logic Chapter 30

By the time Spock and Nyota returned from the brief tour of the house and putting the twins back to bed, the first party guests had already arrived. The air was abuzz with conversation and laughter as Nyota led Spock out onto the patio where everyone had gathered. Uncle Jomo was entertaining a group by the grill, regaling them with stories that they no doubt had already heard numerous times while he dutifully tended to the peach halves and fruit kebabs caramelizing over the flame. Aunt Tonya was the first to spot them and broke away from a group of friends sipping sangria by the railing.

“I thought you two might have gotten lost,” Aunt Tonya greeted them. “Would you both like to join us for a little wine and dessert or do you two need to make a graceful escape?”

One of Spock’s eyebrows inched towards his hairline at Aunt Tonya’s smirking comment. Nyota felt her own cheeks warm and made to reply before a high pitched yelp interrupted her.

“Is that Miss Nyota? All grown up?” A copper skinned woman with black tightly curled hair generously streaked with silver made her way towards them, glass of sangria clutched in one manicured hand while the other tugged along a more sedate woman of similar age and darker coloring.

Nyota leaned in towards her aunt and whispered, “We could use a graceful yet hasty escape.”

“Tia Maya,” Nyota turned and opened her arms to receive the expected hug and kiss from her honorary aunt.

“Oh, Nyota, you have grown up to be such a beautiful woman! Isn’t she beautiful, Lupe?”

“Muy bella,” Lupe Torres replied, leaning in to give Nyota a hug of her own. “We haven’t seen you since you were knee high, mija.”

“I know. I think I was not yet finished primary school,” Nyota smiled as she stepped back. “It has
been a long time. It’s so good to see you both.”

“And who is your handsome young man?” Maya asked, examining Spock approvingly.

Nyota glanced quickly at Spock who stood watching her intently.

“This is Commander Spock,” Aunt Tonya cut in. “Commander, meet Dr. Maya and Lupe Torres, two of my oldest friends and colleagues.”

“I am gratified to make your acquaintance,” Spock replied as he inclined his head towards the couple.

Aunt Tonya smiled. “Commander Spock is Nyota’s professor at Starfleet Academy. He actually just arrived to speak with Nyota about some official Starfleet business. Isn’t that right, Nyota?”

Nyota blinked rapidly. “Yes...yes. I was just coming down to make my regrets so that we could go and speak privately. Isn’t that right Commander?”

Spock glanced quickly from Nyota to Doctor Torres. “Yes. I came to speak with Cadet Uhura about some pressing business.”

Dr. Torres chuckled. “My, it must be serious if you had to come all the way from San Francisco to speak with her. This couldn’t have been done over the comm?”

Nyota felt her face warm. She dared not correct her. Spock had come from Vulcan and not San Francisco. Her head swam again as she considered the fact.

“The nature of the business that I need to discuss with Cadet Uhura is best handled in person,” Spock replied as he placed one hand on the small of her back. He continued, ignoring Nyota’s answering shiver. “I do apologize for the need to deprive you of Cadet Uhura’s company this evening.” Spock bowed slightly at the waist, pressing his free hand to the upper left side of his chest in a gesture of apology.

“Oh, why, but of course,” Dr. Torres stammered before turning to Nyota. “Mija, you must promise us that you will come for brunch before you leave Chicago.”
“I promise. How does this Saturday sound?”

Nyota had to make her excuses to three more honorary aunts and uncles and a few other family friends making their way into her aunt’s house. Spock managed to keep his hand pressed into the small of her back as they wound their way through arriving guests and out the front door. Nyota marveled at the slight intimacy of it. As if recognizing the import of the gesture, Spock dropped his hand as they stepped onto the sidewalk in front of the house. Uhura immediately missed the heat and weight of his touch.

The weight of Spock’s sudden appearance in Chicago hit her again as they slowly made their way over the footbridge spanning Lake Shore Drive. There were so many things that she wanted to say to him, so many questions that she wanted to ask him. Well, there was one question she wanted to ask him. Why? Why did he commandeer a private ship to chase her down? Why did he fill a case full of latinum bars for her ransom? Why did he fight off a contingent of Orion pirates? Why did he kill his own brother with his bare hands? As Nyota led them off of the path and towards the bulwarks bordering Lake Michigan, she realized that none of those questions mattered.

Nyota turned towards Spock, her back facing the water as she looked up into his face. His eyes were warm as he regarded her expectantly.

“Thank you,” Nyota whispered. “Thank you for coming for me.”

Spock broke his gaze, looking at some point on the water behind her. He squared his shoulders and clasped his hands behind his back.

“I do not understand.”

“For rescuing me. Len told me everything.”

Spock’s mouth tightened. “I regret that this information has caused you disquiet. I had thought that Cadet McCoy was one to be trusted.”

Nyota reached out and touched his arm. “You mustn’t blame, Len. He tried to keep it from me, but I forced him to tell me everything he knew. I am glad that he told me. Otherwise I would have never known what you did for me. What it cost you to save me. The Orions, the ransom, the ship....your brother.”
Spock covered her hand with his, stopping her explanation. “I never took into account the costs financial or otherwise. I confess that I only thought of you.”

Nyota gazed up at him speechless, her eyes widening and her mouth forming a silent "oh." She fancied that she could read many unspoken promises in his warm gaze: that no cost would be too high; that he would traverse the known universe for her. Nyota shivered and stepped away from him, an uncharacteristic fear gripping her. Hadn't she mourned the loss of his affections during their long separation? Yet, here he was before her, looking at her with such open want, and she was at a loss for words.

"I...I don't know how I could ever repay you," Nyota began after a moment's silence. "You saved my life."

"You do not owe me anything. I did not want you to know of my involvement precisely for this reason. Your predicament was entirely due to my inaction. I do not deserve your gratitude.”

Uhura turned to him in disbelief. “How can you possibly believe that? All of this was Sybok’s doing. Not yours. For goodness sake, you almost died!”

Spock’s dark eyes flicked briefly over her person before focusing on some distant point above her head. “I assure you that my blame is not misplaced. It was my reticence to disclose my family's history with Sybok to Starfleet authorities that led to your exposure to Sybok's machinations. If I had acted sooner, no harm would have come to you. Sybok targeted you to exact his revenge upon me.”

“Look at me, Spock,” Nyota demanded. "Sybok made his own choices. How could you have known what his plans were? You killed your own brother to rescue me."

Spock refused to look down at her. "That was an unfortunate act of violence which occurred only due to my..."

"I was so afraid that day," Nyota began in a rush causing Spock to finally meet her gaze. “I hoped against hope that someone would come for me. That someone would notice my distress beacon or hear my distress call. I was running on adrenaline, too focused on surviving to give way to the hopelessness that gnawed at my heels. Not even being attacked by that creature made me give up. It wasn’t until I was tied up in that Orion camp shivering from the cold and blood loss that I really gave into despair.” Uhura slid her hand from his forearm to grasp his hand. “Do you want to
know what my last thoughts were before I lost consciousness?"

"Nyota, please."

"My last thoughts were of you. I was sure that I was about to die and my last coherent thought was that you were out there somewhere thinking ill of me."

"Nyota,“ Spock’s voice dropped to a rough whisper. “I have always held you in the highest esteem. When I discovered that you had been kidnapped I felt such rage, such helplessness. You can not know how it has distressed me to be the cause of your pain.”

Uhura offered him a shaky smile. “Since you insist on shouldering the blame for what happened, know that I forgive you. And no matter what you say, I reserve the right to consider you my knight in shining armor.”

Spock turned the hand she held over until their palms were pressed together and intertwined his fingers with hers. He gently broadcast his affection and regard for her through the tentative link formed by their joined hands. A broad smile slowly formed across Nyota’s face at the feel of it, a liquid warmth that started in her chest and gently flowed through her torso and limbs. Nyota closed her eyes and focused on pushing back some of her happiness and affection. Spock’s grip on her hand tightened.

"Please, I must know if your feelings remain unchanged since last we spoke. My affections remain constant,” Spock implored, his voice low.

Uhura rolled her eyes and let out a nervous laugh. "My feelings...my feelings are very much changed. I don't know if I am ready for marriage, but I would very much like to explore the possibility."

Spock lifted his free hand to caress her cheek as the corners of his mouth tipped upwards into a near smile. Nyota leaned into the touch, nuzzling his palm before turning her head and pressing her lips to his skin. A low rumble sounded in Spock’s chest causing Nyota to lift her head in surprise.

“Did you just purr, Commander?” Nyota asked, her mouth open in wonder.

“Nyota, would you permit me to kiss you now?”
Uhura giggled. “Mister, don’t try to change the subject by asking for some sugar! You just purred, admit it!”

Spock’s lips flattened into a thin line as he tried to appear serious as he dropped her hand to snake one arm around her waist and pull her towards him.

“Vulcans do not purr,” Spock replied with one arched brow.

“Uh huh,” Nyota huffed in reply as she looped her arms around his neck. “I’ll take that kiss now.”

Spock obliged, bending his head to gently press his lips to hers. The kiss started out as the gentlest of pecks, as if Spock was still unsure of his reception. Nyota soon alleviated any of his lingering doubts by deepening the kiss, sucking gently of his bottom lip as her fingers slipped into the silky black hair at the nape of his neck. The low rumbling in Spock’s chest resumed as his tongue sought hers. Uhura soon felt drunk from his kisses, a giddy lightness filling her chest and causing her to giggle against his lips. Her mouth was soon freed to laugh openly as Spock’s lips pressed feather light kisses across jaw and behind her ear. Uhura distantly realized that the overwhelming joy she now felt was not all her own. She shut her eyes against the tears that threatened to spill down her cheeks as Spock pressed his nose into her neck and inhaled. When they eventually parted, Nyota pressed her cheek to his chest and tightened her hold on him.

“That was amazing,” she sighed and she sought to steady herself. After a few moments when she felt more like herself, she lifted her head and looked up at him with an impish smile. “You totally do purr.”

Spock looked down at her, his face the definition of Vulcan imperiousness. “As I stated earlier, Vulcans do not purr.”

Nyota stepped back from him, resting her hands on his chest as she smiled up at him. “It’s alright, Spock. I like it.”

Spock let out a slight huff, his eyes sparkling with amusement as he regarded her. Uhura laughed and wrapped her right arm around his waist, tucking herself into his side as she urged him to continue their walk along the lakeshore path. Spock obliged, curling his arm around her shoulders and basking in their new found closeness.
They walked for several minutes in silence ignoring the curious looks of passersby unaccustomed to seeing a Vulcan sharing an affectionate embrace with a human.

“What made you come seek me out?” Uhura asked him after a time. “When your mother told me you had gone to Gol, I never imagined that it would be possible for us to be...” Uhura paused searching for the words. “Like this.”

“Following the events of your recovery, I was in a state of severe emotional turmoil. I will not go into detail about my state of mind. It is sufficient to say that I concluded that the most expedient way to regain mastery of my emotions was to undergo kolinhar. However, I was unable to achieve kolinhar after several weeks of deep meditation. It was impossible for me to suppress my need for you.”

Nyota’s breath caught at the admission.

“However, I was satisfied at having regained an acceptable level of control. I was myself again and able to accept all that had transpired. I returned to the home of my parents, intending to spend the rest of my sabbatical in their company. My mother then informed me of your singular encounter with Lady T’Pau and I immediately sought you out.”

Uhura laughed. “Yes. Lady T’Pau paid me a personal visit to frighten me away from you. For some reason, she was sure that we were engaged or would soon be. Perhaps she was wiser than I gave her credit for. She left our meeting most dissatisfied.”

“My mother was very impressed with you.” Spock continued. “I find myself grateful for Lady T’Pau’s interference. It enabled me to hope.”

“Isn’t hope an illogical human emotion?” Nyota teased.

Spock gifted her with the smallest of smiles. “I am half-human, after all.”

They walked on. After a time, Uhura looked up at him, her lips quirked mischievously. “Perhaps I should send your aunt a thank you card.”

Spock simply replied with a raised brow.
“It is a customary human expression of gratitude,” Nyota explained. “If not for your aunt’s visit, we would still be miserable and convinced that the other wanted nothing to do with us. Maybe I should send her flowers as well.”

Spock nodded his head. “Flowers are an illogical gift. A small potted plant would be a more thoughtful token.”

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Epilogue:

Aunt Tonya and Uncle Jomo were ecstatic the next morning over breakfast when the couple informed them of their new status. Aunt Tonya had assumed that their conversation had ended satisfactorily when the couple had returned to the house in the wee hours of the morning, Nyota sleepy and content as Spock nearly carried her up the stairs to her room. Aunt Tonya had gently shut the door to her bedroom as she spied them cresting the stairs. Uncle Jomo had refused to let her wait up for them in the foyer arguing that Nyota was an adult and Spock was a fine boy.

Spock and Uhura decided to inform his mother together. Nyota was not surprised that her Aunt Tonya had already messaged Amanda not long after herself being informed of the good news. Spock bore his mother’s expressions of delight with patience and promised to bring his new girlfriend for a visit home at the next opportunity.

Gaila shrieked when Nyota told her the news over the com, declaring that it was about time and quickly pressing Nyota for details of Spock’s sexual prowess. She was distraught to learn that they had not yet had sexual intercourse and were taking things slowly. Gaila scoffed, grumbling that things could not go any slower. She was quite put out to learn that Nyota had no intention of sharing such details with Gaila when she did sleep with Spock in the future. However, she was somewhat mollified to learn that Vulcans purred and dutifully promised to take that knowledge with her to her grave. Relations between the best friends were fully restored when Nyota allowed Gaila to pick out her outfit for her first date with Spock. (Uhura felt safe giving Gaila free reign as the clothing selection was limited.)

At the end of a week spent together in Chicago, Uhura and Spock prepared to return to Starfleet Academy. Spock contemplated rescinding his acceptance of the assignment of the six month research expedition on the Wangari Maathai, but Uhura argued vehemently that the assignment was too good to pass up and that their relationship should not impede their careers. Spock had been reluctant to agree until he recalled the availability of winter break internships on the ship. If Uhura could secure a communications internship, they would only be parted for one quarter. Spock assisted Uhura in submitting her application and amending her course schedule to
accommodate. Uhura was displeased to have to take the two-quarter Advanced Communications Programming course during the spring and summer quarters, eliminating the opportunity to take an off planet summer internship. However, she was mollified by the news that Spock would remain planetside and at the academy with her and that they could both look forward to a brief summer vacation on a planet with lots of sand, beaches, and single cabin resort islands.

The End

Chapter End Notes

This story is finally done! Thanks to everyone who has stuck with this from the beginning! It was hard writing this chapter since I just didn't know how to end it! I'm still not that satisfied with the ending. I hope that it doesn't disappoint. I've posted the ending here first since I haven't re-read it extensively for mistakes yet. So A03 folks get the first crack at the ending!

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