Perchance to Dream

by sharehenstar

Summary

Vulcans do not dream, but that does not mean they are unfeeling, despite all their claims to the contrary. Spock finds that choosing not to feel is a little more difficult where his captain is concerned, especially when it manifests itself in the form of a recurring nightmare…Or, four times Spock has a nightmare when Jim isn't there, and one time Jim has a nightmare when Spock isn't...[K/S, Kirk/Spock]

Notes

Disclaimer: I own nothing in this marvelous universe.

Author's Note: Hi, all! This is my first foray into the Star Trek fandom (for which I solely blame J. J. Abrams and my boyfriend). I hope Spock wasn't OOC, or Jim, and I've done my best to keep them in character, so please enjoy!

"Speech"

Personal Thoughts/Memories/Dreams (Italics)
Perchance to Dream

Spock wakes, gasping for air, the first time he has the nightmare. His body, normally so cold in the depths of space, is sheened with sweat.

"Lights, 100 percent," he gasps, shaking as he tries to sit up.

Even as lights flood his room, his elbows give way underneath him and he collapses backwards onto his mattress, still gasping, and futilely trying to get his breath back.

He lies there, shaking, for what is an indeterminate amount of time, listening intently for the sounds of slumber that normally issue from Jim's room: the slight whuffle of his breathing, the restless shuffling and shifting of sheets as he tries to get comfortable. Without truly being aware of it, those sounds have come to mean reassurance and safety to Spock.

There is nothing tonight.

It takes Spock awhile not to outright panic (or, as much as a half-Vulcan can panic) and remember why.

Jim is in the medical bay, struck low by a virus that has attacked his frankly deplorable immune system. They picked it up on the last watery world they visited and it has done its rounds with the human and humanoid complement of the crew. Spock himself has had to visit the good doctor for a few days, as he, too, has been subjected to it.

Jim has been there for over a week already, which most likely explains this sudden intrusion into his normally peaceful, dreamless sleep.

Had they still been together, Spock might have sought out Nyota, but as they are not...

With a barely audible, incredibly human sigh, Spock slides his feet onto the floor and sits up. Pushing himself gingerly upright, he pads silently around his quarters, pulling on his Starfleet issued uniform. Over it all, he pulls the sweater knitted for him by his mother.

At the continuing silence from Jim's quarters, Spock sets his jaw. Without a sound, he hits the controls for his door and slips out into the silent, nearly empty corridors.

He has vague thoughts about heading down to the labs to continue the research they've started on a sample of the planet's water, but suspects Mr. Sulu might not appreciate his experiment continued without him.

Therefore, it really isn't surprising that all his...he wouldn't call it wandering... leads him down to the sickbay, where the quiet thrum of the engines immediately starts to soothe him.

No one is with Jim when he slips into the Captain's semi-private room—startling when one considers Dr. McCoy's sehlat like tendencies when it comes to the Captain and the Captain's health—but that simply means he will not have to put up with the doctor's needling about how "illogical" his actions are regarding Jim.

Spock already knows that.

Releasing a soundless exhale, he slides into the chair that Dr. McCoy has (unwittingly) left there
(or so Spock thinks).

Jim's skin should prove a marked contrast to the white sheets—all tan and sun-bright—but days spent in the sick bay battling the ever-encroaching virus and fever have leached all color from his skin.

The sight does nothing to calm chaos of thought, emotion, and feeling swirling in endless eddies throughout his brain. Indeed, it is far too similar to the medically-induced coma McCoy had put him into moments after injecting the serum he'd created from Khan's blood into the younger man's bloodstream.

Spock will never forget the memory of his Captain's body convulsing, then flat-lining—*twice*—as it fought to accept something it should, by all logic, reject.

…And that is something he has no desire to think about at the moment. Irrational, illogical…but even as he sets his jaw and sinks into a meditative state (with a great deal more difficulty than he likes), his hand slides out of his lap and his fingertips just barely brush against Jim's.

*End Night One*
Spock’s second nightmare occurs during the long, dark night of a newly discovered ice planet, at a most inopportune moment. Jim's behavior (as well as his own) begins to make him wonder...

Spock wakes, throat seizing on a silent cry, the second time he has the nightmare. The sweat he breaks out into is cold, and he is cold, in spite of the warm human body curled against him.

Nyota and he have long since terminated their romantic relationship (a year, almost to the day), but that does not mean he no longer cares for her well-being, and she has reacted badly to the subzero temperatures of Gemini VI.

It does not make him feel any less discomfited, though, in spite of Dr. McCoy on her other side, doing his damnedest to keep her warm.

Especially with the all too apparent absence of one special human in particular.

Spock's breath shudders through his lungs as he finally inhales, and the shaky exhale he releases has McCoy frowning over Nyota's head at him.

However, before the good doctor can remark on it, a soft voice laced with amusement intrudes on the quiet, "Well, don't you three look as comfortable as a pile of puppies."

Spock immediately twists to face the ice cave's entrance, utterly unable to conceal the relief that infuses his expression, "Jim!"

Jim's brow furrows in confusion as he steps into the cave where the away team has sheltered for the past several hours, followed by Ensigns Mancini, Brown, and Fa. "Present," he replies, bemused.

There is an unmistakable growl from the doctor beside Spock, "An' where the hell have you been, dammit?!"

Jim rolls his eyes, all but plopping down beside Spock, "It was a little walk, Bones. Better than freezing my ass off, certainly." He shifts, and winces, "Quite literally."

"You should not have gone alone, Captain," Spock's voice is soft, and he startles himself by speaking at all.

Jim's eyes gentle as their gaze turns to him, and Spock feels an irrational burning sensation at the tips of his ears, "Sorry, I'll ask you to come next time. Besides, Uhura needed you here."

Rather more serious now, Jim leans across Spock's reclining body to look at Nyota, conscientiously not touching him (which is a little surprising, considering his Captain's usual propensity for touch), "How is she, Bones?"
Dr. McCoy scowls outright, "A far sight better than you are at the moment, ya stubborn mule. Wear yer damn gloves, idiot!"

"I can't."

Had he not needed to keep Nyota warm, the doctor would have been apoplectic, "An' why the hell not?!!"

"Because Spock has them."

Jerked out of a ratcheting swirl of emotions by that unexpected declaration, the Vulcan immediately glances down at his side where, sure enough, a pair of gloves sits, stiff with cold.

Despite all efforts to the contrary, heat flushes his cheeks green, "I did not realize..."

Jim grins. Dr. McCoy huffs, but there is rather less ire when he speaks, "Fine. Romeo. But where the hell's yer backup pair?"

Ensign Fa clears her throat softly. Reeling still from the nightmare and the actions of Jim himself, Spock jerks upright into a seated position, nearly crashing foreheads with said Captain, as she comes to kneel in front of them. "Here you are, Captain," she is holding out a pair of gloves, "I thank you for the use of them."

A very distinct groan emits from the doctor and he flops his free arm over his eyes, "I give up! Just don't come cryin' to me when yer fingers freeze off!"

"You worry too much, Bones. It can't be good for your blood pressure."

Dr. McCoy scowls, peering balefully out from underneath his arm, "My blood pressure's just fine, thank you!"

"'Course it is, Bones," Jim replies with a roguish grin, before turning to Ms. Fa, "Those are for you to keep, Ensign. We've another couple hours, yet, before Enterprise can beam us up. She going to make it that long, Bones?"

Sighing, McCoy adjusts his grip on Nyota, "I'm not going to lie to ya, it'll be a near thing-"

Even before Spock sees Jim's jaw set, he knows what the Captain has in mind, "Jim...!"

With very little thought on the matter, he swiftly grabs both of Jim's hands in his own, just as the Captain goes to stand up.

A tremor wracks the icy digits, and Spock jerks as a sudden wall slams up between their minds, interrupting what should have been an uninhibited flow of emotion.

"Sorry, Spock," Jim gasps out, "I wasn't...expecting you to do that. I...I don't think...you'll be overwhelmed now."

Spock can do nothing but stare at his Captain. He did not realize Jim knew how to shield, he even has a guess as to where he learned it and from whom.

That does not make it any less unnerving.

His Captain has always felt very deeply, and until now, he has never felt the need to conceal it from Spock. Indeed, he is very free with his touches—more so even, perhaps, than he is with his thoughts (although, to a touch telepath, they are one in the same).
That he feels the need to shield now, when before he had not such inhibitions, does not sit well with his First Officer.

The shuttering of his face is unintentional, but from the quiet curse that issues from Jim's lips, it is apparent the younger man has seen it and, most likely, has read far too deeply into it. Gingerly, the Captain works his hands out of Spock's grasp, "...Fuck, Spock, don't...don't take this the wrong way. It's just that I...that is, we...are, er..."

Somehow, Jim's stumbling and stuttering has the desired (if unintended) effect of easing the clench that has taken up residence in Spock's side. He takes a deep breath, and hesitantly releases Jim's hands back to their owner, "Captain...it is illogical to pursue further attempts at communication without gloves. If your fingers fall off, you will be unable to use the communicator."

Startled, pleased, Jim barks out a laugh, "He didn't mean it literally, Spock."

Spock does not push against the shields in Jim's mind when the Captain—intentionally, this time—brushes their fingers together as he accepts the gloves.

He also does not let Jim know he has, for all intents and purposes, just kissed him.

Somewhere, in a very private corner of his mind, he wonders if it isn't fear staying his hand instead of Vulcan propriety

_end Night Two_
Miles to Go Before I Sleep

Chapter Summary

The nightmare does not get any less horrific with repetition...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Miles to Go Before I Sleep

Spock doesn’t wake the third time he has the nightmare; at least, not right away. He would have preferred it; struggles, actually, to open his eyes. His body, however, is far too heavy, while his mind is in tatters. Therefore, he is not in any shape—physically or mentally—to accomplish anything other than falling more deeply into the dream:

*The sensation is no longer unfamiliar—this pricking awareness jangling through his nerves. He just wishes, for once, that his instincts were wrong.*

*Unfortunately, they are never wrong when it concerns his Captain's welfare.*

"Engineering to Bridge. Mr. Spock…"

Spock suddenly understands the Terran phrase, 'lump in the throat.' He presses the comm button.

"Mr. Scott…?"

*The Chief Engineer's heavy response comes through clearly, "Sir…you'd better get down here…" an audible swallow emits from the interface, "…Better hurry."*

Suddenly, running cannot get him down to Engineering fast enough.

IOIOIOIOIOI

*It is an odd sensation, realizing your entire world has ended, before you ever really found it. An unconscionable wrench in his side, a vicious twist of his heart—even though, logically, he knows his heart remains firmly encased in his rib cage—wring his mind into knots.*

*He finds himself wondering, pointlessly, if this is how Sarek felt when he lost Amanda, and if so, how his father ever managed to endure it.*

A constant, glass-sharp ache pervades the back of his mind, the paper-thin bond there fraying before it even has a chance to fully form.

*In hindsight, he really should have expected it, that something more tied him to Jim than simply their working relationship. That this friendship—because it is friendship—has indeed defined him in unimaginable ways.*

"I…want you to know why I couldn't let you die," his Captain's words are labored, drawn out, as
the human struggles for breath, "...why I went back for you..."

They have had this conversation so many times—it is illogical that they should have it again. Now. When Spock's entire world is falling apart in front of him.

But now...he finally understands, if only he can force the reason past the obstruction in his throat, "...Because you are my friend."

"Friend," for all its richness and depth in the Vulcan language, barely even begins to cover what Jim is to Spock. With very little surprise, he feels liquid heat slip down his cheek.

It has always been this way with Jim—no one else, not even Nyota, can make him lose his vaunted Vulcan composure so fast ...

Only now does he understand that he chose this—chose Jim—long ago, the very moment he stepped back aboard the Enterprise after Nero's defeat.

Between their palms, the glass is much too cold and much too thick. Still, he presses harder against the barrier, willing this sudden knowledge to reach Jim through his shaking fingers.

When their bond snaps, shatters into a thousand tiny, fragmented pieces, Spock shoots awake with a strangled cry.

IOIOIOIOIOI

Medical implements and tricorders alike clatter to the ground. An abrupt, stinging yank in his right arm and a splash of hot liquid splatters green across the sheets in front of him. Above him, a high, electronic squeal grates on his sensitive hearing, followed in quick succession by a string of southern-bred curse words. They are bookended by a well-known epithet, "...Damn, green-blooded hobgoblin!"

*Doctor McCoy.* He is in sickbay.

That cannot mean anything good.

Lurching to his feet, Spock abruptly staggers off the biobed, his mind fixated on one destination, and one destination only: the Bridge, for surely if he is anywhere, Jim will be there.

"Are ya outta yer cotton-pickin' mind?" the holler comes from behind him, steeped in an accented drawl that seldom emerges with such force.

Discarding the inclination to remark on the impossibility of a mind picking cotton, Spock clumsily sidesteps the doctor's grasp. He nearly careens into the bedside implements' table in his haste to avoid it, before righting himself and heading determinedly for the door, despite the weave in his step, "I must speak with the Captain."

McCoy scrambles after him, lunging to grab his arm, "Th' hell ya will! Get yer green ass back 'ere!"

Spock ducks his grasp once more—and nearly topples headfirst into the door, only catching himself at the last second by grabbing its frame.

Just as McCoy looses a second string of southern-drawled expletives, the door to the medical bay snaps open and Jim, eyes wild, barrels into the infirmary.

His Captain very nearly collides with him, and meets his gaze for only a second, pupils blown
impossibly wide, before his palms abruptly press against Spock's face.

Even as Spock relaxes, McCoy jumps, "Christ's sake, Jim!"

The other human gives no indication that he hears his best friend, using his body to gently urge Spock back towards his abandoned biobed. The blue eyes are considerably less wild, but a great deal brighter, as they lock on to the Vulcan's brown ones.

Spock finds his tongue loosed without his conscious permission, "Jim…"

More emotion is contained within that one word than Spock would normally comfortably show, but somewhere in his on-the-fritz brain, it tells him that this response is okay—indeed, right—when speaking with Jim.

Surprise briefly flickers across his Captain's countenance, before those blue eyes soften, "Shh, Spock," Jim's fingertips graze Spock's cheekbones, brush his ears, stroking repeatedly over the skin there. "Shh, sweetheart—it's all right. It's all right, sweetheart. You're gonna be okay."

In the background there is a clatter; Spock notices McCoy gaping at his Captain.

Jim apparently has not seen it, nor does he appear to be listening: Spock tugs and taps at their bond, but any feedback is strangely muted, covered over or surrounded by shields.

Surely it should not be like that. So he tries again, accompanying his actions by a much larger mental push, containing all the contrary emotions at war inside him, "Ashayam."

Jim's eyes shoot wide open and he reels back a whole pace and a half. "Spock…?" it's a sputter.

Puzzled, the Vulcan frowns, but does not receive the chance to seek any sort of clarification: a pinch to his neck renders him immobile, then sends him staggering forward, eyes glazed over, as Jim rushes to catch him.

"Bones!" his Captain's worried cry accompanies the darkness that rushes into his vision, followed by the feel of arms clutching him to a warm chest.

Before everything goes blank and black, their CMO's irritated huff penetrates his thoughts, "Damn it all if you don't love that pointy-eared hobgoblin, Jim Kirk!"

End Night Three

Chapter End Notes

Ashayam = Beloved (hopefully, that's the correct definition!)
Long, Sleepless Watches

Chapter Summary

The fourth time, Spock doesn't intend to fall asleep at all...

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Long, Sleepless Watches

Spock has no intention of sleeping the fourth time he has the nightmare. He returns to his personal quarters the first night after McCoy releases him from Sickbay, fully intending to meditate on a most troubling matter:

Jim is avoiding him, and he doesn't know why.

He does not remember much of his time in Sickbay, save for the last couple of days (and nothing remarkable about them, except for the entirely disconcerting absence of his Captain), but whatever has happened, it is clearly something he needs to fix.

At least, he intends to meditate on it, but injuries, both physical and mental, cannot simply be brushed off, not even by Vulcans.

He falls asleep halfway through his meditation and the dream is particularly vicious that evening—for all his mental shields are in tatters and his telepathic centers burnt out, Vulcan memories are eidetic and they truly do not forget anything. His subconscious is convinced (however illogically) that he has done something to drive Jim away, and that manifests itself in his dream.

When he wakes the fourth time, it is with a snap and an unrestrained gasp, echoes of a broken bond screaming in the back of his mind.

He doesn't bother with the lights this time, doesn't bother to wipe the sweat from his brow. Staggering to his feet from his meditation mat, ignoring the numbness of his limbs, he stumbles towards the door which connects his quarters to Jim's, and slams his palm against the pad.

"Spock!"

His Captain's cry is half-muffled against Spock's forehead as the Vulcan tumble headfirst into their shared bathroom and collides with said human's chest.

The door hisses shut behind them and Jim's arms lock sloppily in place around Spock's back.

Spock squeezes his eyes shut, trembling and practically choking in the effort to wrestle his freewheeling emotions back into submission.

"Spock…?" Jim's response is quieter this time, the concern in his voice not any less intense for the warmth of his breath puffing against Spock's cheek. "C'mon, let's sit you down a minute."
Spock finds himself led with great care over to the waste vestibule, which Jim overturns with little ceremony and seats him on.

When the human's warmth tries to shimmy out of his grasp, Spock grabs for him.

"Whoa, Spock!" Jim laughs uncertainly as he is dragged forward, gingerly patting the arms that have wound tightly around his waist. "Ease up a little, I'm not going anywhere."

Spock ignores him, resting his forehead against the man's stomach. Miraculously, Jim falls silent, resting his hands lightly on the Vulcan's shoulders, but Spock can sense the tension thrumming through him. He does not have enough control yet to probe any deeper than that.

Jim's fingers shake as they slip into Spock's hair, tentatively stroking back the ruffled black strands into some semblance of their normally near-perfect state. The human lets out an unsteady breath, "Seriously, Spock, I really won't go anywhere. I just-"

The Vulcan interrupts him, "You were not there."

"Well, yeah. 'Course. I was sleep—wait, what?" For Spock began shaking his head halfway through.

His grip around the human tightens, "You were not there," he insists, fingers digging into Jim's hips in an attempt to make him stay, determined they will not move until they sort this entire situation out. "A year ago…you were in Sickbay for over a week and a half, Jim, and—"

"You know I had that nasty virus, Spock—"

"—And on Gemini VI, you irrationally chose to expose yourself to the elements, and that could have rendered you—"

"Hey, whoa, whoa! Uhura needed that help, Spock, I couldn't just—!"

"—Then, three days ago, you were not there when I woke up after the incident on Platonius, and—"

Spock winces against Jim's sudden, fierce grip on his shoulders.

"That…after that…I'm sorry, Spock. Surely Bones told you that I had to be on the Bridge, and then I had to help Scotty beam down Alexander—"

"Jim," at Spock's terse interruption, the human falls silent. "You were not there afterwards, either."

This time, Jim does not even try to refute him.

Spock's voice quiets, "You were not there, Jim. For two point three days, once I regained my senses, I kept expecting to see you…and I never did. I know it is illogical to expect something like that from you, for all that we are friends, but I was given to believe—"

"Spock," the Vulcan immediately stops talking when his Captain's voice cracks. Barely concealing a wince, Jim forges ahead, words thick, "It's not…it's not illogical. I…you're closer to me than anyone in the universe, Spock. You know this. I've told you this, but I…I'm not…"

Spock's brows furrow in a not-frown as he pulls far enough away to glance up at Jim, "Captain…?"
Jim exhales heavily through his nose, his body unexpectedly shifting until Spock finds himself balanced precariously on the edge of his makeshift seat and all but drowning in the human's sleep-musky scent as he is crushed to the other man's chest. Had he been a full human, his ribs would likely have long-since bruised and his lungs would have had trouble inflating.

As it is, his breath still hitches—not from lack of air, but from close proximity to a Captain whose mental shields are rapidly weakening. "Captain-!" Spock begins in slight alarm, attempting to pull away.

His backwards momentum is halted by Jim's solid grasp around his waist and back. An expression more grimace than grin flits across the human's features, "Thought you wanted them gone," muttered against one of the Vulcan's pointed ears.

Spock barely represses the shiver trying to skitter down his spine, but falls silent. He cannot deny the Captain's remark, after all.

A breathy sigh buffets Spock's cheek and he notices that, although Jim's shoulders are not quite as rigid as they had been only moments prior, his friend's body nonetheless remains strung out tensely against his own.

(He also recognizes this is the closest they have ever been and works desperately to fight the primal urge to claim what his subconscious mind is already convinced is his.)

"Jim..." Spock ventures at last, voice soft and uncertain, "I merely wish to understand...have I done something to offend you? 97.891 percent of past away missions that I have spent in the Sickbay, you have been there every day. Of the times you weren't, 97.674 percent have been because you were in Sickbay yourself, and 2.326 percent have been because you were on the Bridge."

Spock feels the body he is pressed against heat up slightly. It takes him approximately 3.259 seconds to realize why, as flickers of emotion reach him through their skin on skin contact.

"97.891 percent? You're sure?"

The human has tensed again, and Spock almost-frowns, pulling back enough to tilt his head to the side and regard his friend quizzically, "Affirmative, Captain."

He stiffens in ill-concealed shock as Jim buries a groan in his neck, "I am in so much damn trouble."

Trying in vain to ignore his body's response to that groan, Spock struggles to figure out what is passing through this singularly unusual human's mind, "As such, I find this last visit to be rather an outlier. Please clarify, Jim...whatever I have done, I wish to make amends. I have found it most... gratifying when you are there."

An amused huff puffs against his shoulder, "Gratifying, huh?"

Spock stills and goes quiet when Jim suddenly shifts to press their foreheads together, "Guess I owe you an explanation, then," murmured.

Jim has pressed so close Spock can feel his lashes brushing his cheek. His entire vision fills with blue, and the Vulcan irrationally finds himself with no desire to pull away, when most beings would have found themselves tossed halfway across the room by now.
Jim exhales again, and his fingers slide down Spock's shoulders, catching the other being's own in an entirely unintentional Vulcan kiss; then they tug, "C'mon."

A full-body shudder runs down Spock's spine from the tip of his ears to his toes as Jim's (barely-shielded) mind brushes against his own.

The Vulcan's response causes Jim to halt and stare at him askance, before the human realizes exactly what happened. Color flushes Jim's cheeks all the way to the tips of his ears. Without a word, he glances away…and tugs again.

As a dazed Spock allows himself to be pulled gently in the direction of Jim's room, he wonders whether the burst of hope pressing against his own (admittedly shaky) shields belongs to him, or to his Captain.

*End Night Four (Part I)*

Chapter End Notes

So, "Part I" means there is more to this particular night, please stay tuned!
Life Measured By Coffee Spoons

Chapter Summary

Fortunately, the nightmare does not come a fifth time, but there is a mind meld...

Chapter Notes

Jim's character has always struck me as a very passionate individual—both in the new Star Trek films, and in the originals (the series, as well). That is my defense for how I portray his character in this chapter (and will in the chapter following). Please enjoy!

Life Measured by Coffee Spoons

There is no fifth nightmare. Not for Spock. Not tonight.

Jim has welcomed him into his room and simply feeling the human's presence hovering at his elbow, clouded though it is by his Captain's mental shields, is enough to allay his irrational fears, at least for the moment.

If only his presence did the same for Jim.

Logically, it should work: Jim exhibits a distinct willingness to talk, and after their exchange in the bathroom, Spock rather thinks he will deny his Captain very little.

The true problem occurs once they are ensconced within Jim's quarters. His friend has led him over to the bed and, with another tug, invites him to sit.

Still more than half-dazed, Spock does so, sinking into the mattress. Now that they are more or less eye to eye, Jim's shoulders tense again and he looks unaccountably nervous, shifting from foot to foot.

Unable to resist the urge to reach out again, Spock touches two fingers to Jim's wrist in a chaste, deliberate echo of his friend's not-so-accidental Vulcan kiss.

"Should you prefer, Jim, I am not averse to sharing your thoughts," Spock informs him softly.

Jim's nerves buzz against Spock's consciousness, but he sets his shoulders, blows out a breath, and nods.

Gently, Spock squeezes his wrist, before releasing it and raising his hand to the human's face. Hesitantly, he brushes Jim's hair out of his eyes and rests his fingertips against his friend's meld points, "My mind to your mind..." murmured.

IOIOIOIOIOI

-Someone's there. He knows it—senses it, as if through water, murky and depthless. Ever since
Tarsus IV, he's been freakishly aware of his surroundings (and his food intake, but that is another matter), and the fact that it does not sound—or feel—like Bones has him on edge.

Nor can he open his eyes, or shift, or move in any way, his body alarmingly weak and heavy. He’d have panicked—too powerless, too exhausted, too much like the first few weeks after Khan—but even that has been taken from him. He has no strength to even struggle out from underneath what feels like a 200 pound lead blanket pinning him to the biobed.

Immediately, he is slammed by a wave of worry as fingertips brush his own, barely held in check by logical arguments rapidly increasing in desperation.

His entire being relaxes.

**Spock.** It has to be Spock. Only it can’t be Spock, because his XO would never feel something as illogically human as **panic** over a **virus** …for all that it is an unknown virus, with no definite cure. He’s-

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- Jealous. Definitely jealous. He has not felt this way since Ruth, since she chose that son of a *** and that school halfway across the planet (well, North America) from him. Not that Ruth even remotely matters anymore, not when Uhura is *** curls up against Spock, tucked in a shaking ball to ward off the subzero chill of Gemini VI with Bones and his First Officer on either side of her.

God, how pathetic is he that he envies Uhura the ability to seek whatever she needs from Spock with no hesitation? Especially when her body is fast headed towards hypothermic shock.

Shit, he should have ordered her back to the ship long before this. Her Swahili heritage has not aided her on this away mission, and he’s not sure if she’s "…going to make it that long, Bones?"

Honestly, Uhura’s the best communications officer in the ‘Fleet; hell, she's one of his closest friends, and to lose her—

"—Not gonna lie to ya, it'll be a near thing…"

**Fuck.** This is **stupid**. His communications officer is near- **dead** from the cold, and his petty feelings are ridiculously unimportant right now.

Spock’s hands grabbing his own are not.

"Jim-!

Oh, sh—oh, fu- **damn**!

He manages to haul his shields up over his mind just in time to avoid transferring what **assuredly** would damage his friendships with Spock and Uhura both. He’s—

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- Barely managing to hold it together. He’s had to ask for repetition of information from both Sulu and Uhura five times apiece, and Chekov’s great, but he’s not Spock. Not a word has come from Bones, and all day he’s been the recipient of knowing, worried looks from everyone—including the Bridge’s Yeoman and Uhura. Which really sucks, because he **thought** she and Spock weren’t an item any more (Bones seems to have a thing for her), but now he isn’t so sure.
That utterly anxious expression adorning her face can't be for him, certainly.

Not that he blames her. Spock's in Sickbay, which has royally screwed over his schedule (and, he's sure, hers): he hasn't slept in 48 hours, and barely a bite of meat has passed his lips since they left Platonius. Barely a bite of anything, actually, and he's—

IOIOIOIOIOI

-So far beyond 'on edge' at this point that it isn't even funny. Something's wrong with Spock, something's been wrong with Spock, ever since they left Platonius. It's some fucking residue left over from the Platonians' childlike play with the Vulcan's telepathy, or some damn side-effect from their forced mind-control.

Because no way in hell would his logical, stoic First Officer (who he's kinda-sorta-maybe-definitely in love with) call him the Vulcan equivalent of 'beloved' if he were in his right mind.

"Bones, what the fuck-!"

His indignant cry cuts off as his CMO holds up a hand, "Relax, idiot, he's fine."

He stews a few minutes, chewing on his bottom lip, "'Fine,' has variable definitions," muttered, as he clutches his unresponsive XO to his chest.

Bones merely raises an eyebrow, "I'll remember that the next time you're in Sickbay." Shaking his head, the doctor gestures to the abandoned biobed, "Put 'im here, Jim. Damn elf has caused enough excitement for one day."

Reluctantly, he relinquishes his grip on his First Officer, carefully situating the Vulcan on the empty mattress. Lingering uncertainly over his XO's hands, he finally grips his arms tightly to his chest.

After a moment, Bones glances up from his readings and frowns, "Yer a mess, Jim."

Startled by the slightly hysterical laugh that emits from his own lips, he runs a shaking hand through his hair, "Tell me something I don't know."

Placing his tricorder to the side, Bones reaches a hand out, startling a flinch as he lightly grips his chin and tilts his face towards him. The doctor's frown becomes nearly severe, "When's the last time you slept, Jim?"

His lips tighten and, inadvertently, he turns his gaze to Spock. Bones figures out the answer only seconds later and groans, "Aw, hell...ya mean to tell me you haven't slept since -!"

He looks away, "Does it matter, Bones? Either way I'm not getting any rest."

An irritated huff, and his best friend cocks his head, fisting his hands against his hips, "Damn it all if you don't love that pointy-eared hobgoblin, Jim Kirk!"

A spike of anxiety causes his palms to sweat and his stomach to churn. As his cheeks heat, he clenches his own fists in Spock's sheets in an attempt to quell their shaking, determinedly not meeting Bones's exasperated gaze.

He senses his best friend shift behind him, "Jim...?"

Fear. Fear has snuck into his CMO's steady voice and his shoulders tense in response.
He attempts an unconcerned shrug, sliding his eyes away from Bones and Spock alike, "'S not like anything will come of it, Bones. You don't need to tell me that."

When he finally turns to face him, the older man is gaping at him, "Are you fuckin' out of yer head, Jim? Did you not hear what yer damn XO just called ya?"

His hands clench tightly around his elbows as he turns his face even further away, knowing how damned pathetic he looks, "He's doped up on pain meds, Bones. He doesn't—didn't—know what he said."

Bones sputters, "But you sure as hell do!"

He has no response for that (because of course he does), and at the obstinate set of his jaw, his utterly infuriating CMO harrumphs—loudly, 'Yep, you've gone stupid. Listen, kid, I ain't gonna watch you and Commander Condescending here pussyfoot around each other for the next three and a half years. My pancreas ain't gonna survive that. So do us all a favor and tell him, Jim. Ya got nothin' to worry about, trust me."

He has plenty to worry about, not the least of which is Uhura's reaction to his proposition of her boyfriend (if, in fact, he is her boyfriend), but he's tired—so tired—of fighting this, that he—

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-Jerks from a sound sleep, disoriented and battling an irrational panic.

**Spock.** Something's wrong with Spock. It's the same urgency, the same terror that sent him careening out of his Captain's chair on the Bridge and careering into Sickbay, long before Uhura ever received the summons from Bones.

Unable to even process the movement, he stumbles and staggers through his darkened quarters, stubbing toes, bashing elbows, and cursing quietly, but never stopping, because he absolutely must reach Spock. He has to reach Spock, or—

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"Jim!"

The spike of anxiety in Spock's voice causes Jim's eyes to fly open, but the Vulcan cannot bring himself to feel ashamed. With his Captain on his knees in front of him, and hot liquid wending its way down the human's cheeks, it is only logical that Spock expresses more than a passing concern for his friend's mental state.

A shuddery breath blows out against Spock's fingertips and Jim slumps down, shaking, to lean his shoulder against the other male's knee.

He groans, "God. Remind me again why I thought this would help?"

Spock remains quiet, curling his hand around Jim's shoulder and shifting to cradle the human against his hip. Vaguely, he is aware his palm has begun rubbing gently up and down Jim's arm.

With a mixed sigh and groan, Jim buries his face against Spock's thigh. "You must think I'm totally illogical and stupid," muttered against the fabric of the Vulcan's sleep clothes.

"On the contrary, Jim," Spock murmurs, squeezing the warm shoulder under his palm, "I merely wonder why you believe yourself incapable and unworthy of such."
"You sensed that?!” Fear heightens the pitch of Jim's voice and Spock barely manages to catch the human by the arms as his friend violently shoves himself back.

Attempting to shrug off the Vulcan's hands only results in Spock's grip tightening and Jim preventing him from voicing his reply: "Emotional transference," the human mutters, still fighting the Vulcan's grip, "God, how could I have forgotten that? Fuck. Why the hell are you still here? Shouldn't you be-"

…As it turns out, the most effective way to shut Jim up is to literally shut him up—sealing their lips together with such force that it startles a sound from the back of his throat that Spock honestly would not mind hearing again, and with great frequency.

Jim is more than a little dazed when he releases him: "…Good answer," he manages, breathlessly. (And no, that is not amusement. Vulcans do not experience it.)

_end Night Four (Part II)_

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