

A Brief Encounter

A Spock Prime & Uhura Prime story

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Author's note

The action in this story take place immediately after the events in the original Star Trek series episode: *Amok Time* and before the episode: *Mirror, Mirror*. You may also wish to become familiar with the episodes: *Who Mourns Adonis* and *The Changeling* as I also refer to events in those episodes, as well.

Chapter 1

It was not his imagination; the bridge *had* grown silent the moment he and Kirk stepped out of the turbolift.

Unaffected, Spock moved directly to the science station. Pressing a few buttons, he brought up the scientific status report he had been working on before his illness.

“Mr. Chekov lay in a course for the Pollux system. Mr. Sulu, prepare to initiate warp three, if you please,” said Kirk.

The helmsman and the navigator gave their ayes.

“Captain,” said the communications chief, “I have a message from Vulcan Space Central; they say that they have a delivery to make before we leave orbit.”

“Very well, Lieutenant; inform Mr. Kyle in the transporter room. As soon as we have it; let’s get the hell out of here.” The faster they got away from the planet Vulcan the better. The thought of T’Pau finding out that he wasn’t really dead filled him with a certain level of apprehension. He was happy that he wasn’t lying on some cold slab in the ship’s morgue, but neither did he wish to stick around to see the leader of the Vulcan council’s reaction. Tired, he dragged his hand across his forehead; the fight with Spock coupled with being “dead” had left him sluggish and drained. Satisfied that the crew had things well in hand, he stood, intending to lie down for a while. “I’ll be in my quarters if I’m needed. You have the bridge, Mr. Spock.”

After the turbo lift doors whooshed to a close, you could have heard a pin drop. Chekov glanced at Sulu, Sulu glanced at Scotty, Scotty glanced at Uhura and Uhura glanced at Spock. Spock knew exactly what was on all of their minds but was not compelled to answer. He merely remained in his chair and monitored the activities around the bridge from afar.

Uhura’s board beeped. Placing her eyepiece back in, she spoke to Lieutenant Kyle. “Mr. Kyle confirms that the delivery has been beamed aboard, Mr. Spock.”

“Very well, Lieutenant; proceed to the Pollux system, Mr. Sulu.”

Aye, sir.”

“Mr. Spock, Mr. Kyle wishes to know if you would like the delivery in your quarters or in the storage room on the crew deck.”

“My delivery?” he asked, swiveling his seat around to face her while raising an eyebrow.

“Yes, sir; he says that it is a fairly large shipping container.”

“Inform Mr. Kyle that the storage compartment on deck five is sufficient.”

“Aye, sir.”

“Sir,” said Sulu, ready to confirm their course, speed and destination, “Estimated time for arrival in the Pollux system, forty-eight hours.”

“Thank you, Mr. Sulu.” He turned once more to Lieutenant Uhura. “Did Lieutenant Kyle say who the delivery was from?”

“No sir; shall I find out?”

“Negative, it can wait.”

For the next few hours the bridge hummed along at it’s usual pace. After the beta shift arrived, Kirk was not far behind. To Spock’s eyes, he hardly looked any better but he knew that the Captain would not let his fatigue stop him from performing his duty.

“Report, Mr. Spock.”

“All systems and crew functioning within normal parameters, sir.”

“Good,” replied Kirk, “You are relieved, Mr. Spock; have a good night.”

Spock had wished to converse with the Captain further about that mornings incident; however, it was pretty plain to him that the Captain had come to the bridge after his shift to avoid just such a conversation. Spock hesitated, but Kirk merely waved him out the door. “I’ll see you in the morning.”

“Very well, Captain.”

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Christine and Uhura sat together in the officer's mess. Deep in contemplation, Christine picked at her dinner.

"You might as well get it off your chest," said Uhura.

"I know; I just feel so—"

"Blindsided? Girlfriend, been there, done that, wrote the instruction manual. That is why you don't see me running after these men around here for that very reason. They all have secrets that I simply do not have the time or inclination to sort out. I have my Starfleet issued blanket to keep me warm."

"But engaged; I never saw that coming in a million years."

"I know; Mr. Spock married; I never saw that one either; Mrs. Spock is very beautiful, though."

"I'm not actually certain that he is married. When the Captain and the doctor beamed back up to the ship, I got the distinct impression that the Captain's supposed heat exhaustion was a ruse for something else. I don't know all the particulars, but I don't think that an actual marriage took place."

"And knowing Mr. Spock as we do, we will never know. The guy isn't exactly the talkative sort." Uhura then laughed. "Just look at us both, gossiping like a couple of high school girls. What do you say to turning our minds to something better? Do you still want to see the play tonight in the ships theater?"

"I don't think so; I'm not really in the mood for a comedy tonight and the thought of a *romantic* comedy is turning my stomach." She pushed her plate away. "And I'm not in the mood for blue protein nibs, either. What I wouldn't do for some of my mother's fried chicken, mashed potatoes and buttermilk biscuits right now, smothered in gravy."

"I know what you mean; I have been dreaming about real peach cobbler with actual ice cream on top for days now. I can not believe I have been aboard this vessel for so long without something good to eat; it will be two years next Monday and with three to go."

Christine placed her elbows on the table and rested her chin on the top of her hands. “I guess I could put in another shift in the sick bay; Doctor McCoy is a little backed up in the lab after being down on the planet all morning.”

“So, you’re sure about the play?”

“I’m sure; you have a good time. See you tomorrow.”

After Christine left, Uhura retrieved a second cup of coffee from the food dispenser and settled back in her chair to peruse her book. She still had an hour or so before the play started and didn’t feel like returning to her quarters.

“May I join you, Lieutenant?”

Uhura looked up at the familiar voice and blinked. Spock had never joined her before. She glanced around the officer’s mess. She had not noticed that other than herself and Spock, it was empty.

“Please do.” She held out her hand to indicate the chair that Christine had just vacated.

She watched as Spock carefully spread his napkin on his lap. He then rotated his plate. Apparently he had not used up all of his meal rations like the humans all did at the start of the month for he had actual food on his plate. She eyed the roasted potatoes and braised carrots, hungrily.

“You’re really not going to do that to me, are you?”

“Do what,” he asked looking up.

“You are reminding me that I’m a greedy human for using up my meal rations so quickly; Christine and I were just talking about real food before you came in.”

“You are welcome to share my dinner.”

She laughed. “I wouldn’t dream of it. Besides, I was only teasing.”

He raised both eyebrows before tucking into his food and she returned to her data tablet to read her book.

“Might I inquire as to your reading material?”

“I’m reading *Cold Comfort Farm*. Have you ever heard of it?”

“I read it long ago as an experiment on human comical writing. I found it... perplexing.”

“Well, it’s my favorite book; I just got to the part with the wedding.” As soon as she said it, she wished it unsaid. “I mean, I am nearing the end.” Uhura set aside the tablet and took a deep sip from her coffee cup, only to flinch when she burned her tongue.

“I note your anxiety. You are displaying the human characteristic of discomfort and embarrassment. I assure you that it is unnecessary.”

“I didn’t mean—that is to say—I wasn’t—.” She looked away; she was only making it worse.

“I can only assume that your uneasiness stems from this mornings activities.”

“I want to assure you that I wasn’t prying. Your personal business is, after all your personal business.”

“And yet, you can not deny that the entire ship is curious about the events that transpired.”

Uhura glanced up at the clock. “Wow, would you look at the time; I don’t want to be late for tonight’s play.” She made to stand but Spock’s voice stopped her cold.

“The play does not begin for another hour and fifteen minutes; I would appreciate if for that interval you would remain here with me. I would like the opportunity to explain myself and my situation.”

“To me? Why on Earth do you want to tell it to me?”

“As communication’s chief it is your duty to relay news about the ship. My intention was to explain about myself and about T’Pring in the hopes that you would—”

“Would what? Gossip!”

“Gossip refers to a salacious act; that was not my intention. The human expression of “putting the word out” is more suitable in the situation. I detect a certain level of discomfort when I enter the room which I can only attribute to curiosity. If my crewmates were to know that I am no longer bonded to T’Pring and that I am as it were a single man, we can all be as we once were.”

“Wait a minute, so you’re saying that your wife has, what, divorced you?”

“In the Vulcan way, yes.”

His casual manner shocked her.

“And you have no... regrets.”

“Regret is a human emotion. Let us just say that I have nothing to lament. T’Pring and I hardly knew each other and even now she is bound to another.”

“My, my; you Vulcan’s certainly do work fast.”

“So you will aid me in this.”

“Wouldn’t it be easier just to make some sort of general announcement over the comm system. You could say something like, ‘look everybody, I know what you’re all thinking but it’s not true. I’m back on the market, ladies!’”

He tilted his head at her attempted jest.

“Ok, I was only making a little joke.”

“Yes, very little. I had deduced long ago that you were a teasing woman. I have endeavored to ignore it.”

“And you say you want my help, yet you keep making comments like that; you’re not exactly going about it the right way if you do, in fact, need my help.

“What do you suggest I do to pass along my information?”

“Actions speak louder than words, Mr. Spock. It wouldn’t hurt if you were just a little more open. Make more of an effort to get out of your cabin; mingle; ask a female out to the observation deck or down to a planet on shore leave once in a while. Soon, everyone will see for themselves that you’re not exactly acting like a married man; they’ll figure it out on their own.”

“And when do you believe I should start this undertaking?”

“There is no time like the present.” She stood once more. “Now, if you will excuse me, Mr. Spock, I want to get back to my quarters to change before the play.”

He stood. “Do you go to the play on your own this evening?”

“Well, yes; Christine was to come with me but she had work to do.”

“Might I accompany you, then?”

Uhura laughed. “Oh, no you don’t, buster; you won’t be dragging me in the middle of this and having the crew thinking that I am some sort of a home wrecker. You’ll have to pick someone else to help get you out of this mess.”

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The next morning was Lieutenant’s Palmer’s duty shift and Uhura had the day off. Coincidentally, it was Spock’s day off, too. He was walking down the corridor just as Uhura was exciting the officer’s mess.

“Good Morning, Miss Uhura. I trust you had an interesting evening.”

“A very good evening,” she said, matching his steps. “Scotty made a great Leonato in the play last night; you should have come.”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but did you not rebuff my attempts to accompany you?”

“You are a free individual; I never said that you couldn’t come to the play, I said that you couldn’t come with me. You take everything so literally.”

“I am a Vulcan.”

“And don’t I know it. So,” she sighed, taking note of his unusual casual attire, “Where are you off to on your day off?”

“To the storage facility to ascertain the nature of my delivery; where are you headed?”

“The same; I want to get some warmer clothing out of storage; the Pollux system has a few planets on the cold side and I want to be prepared.”

They walked the final few yards in silence, with Spock turning to his right and Uhura turned to her left when they entered the room.

“Lights,” commanded Spock upon entrance and the area lit up. “The container in his personal storage bay was about two meter’s square. It bore the markings of his family’s house on the side. He assumed that it must be from his parents, or rather, from his mother.

Keying in the family combination to release the lid, he removed the top and peered down inside. The contents stopped him cold. And that was how she found him standing perfectly still like a silent sentinel; her coat draped over one arm.

“You seem... not quite yourself. What is it, Mr. Spock?”

He looked up and caught her eye. “Wedding gifts.”

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It was a strange sensation, he thought, to hear a woman’s laughter filling his quarters.

“Oh my, what on Earth is this?” She held out a gaudy royal blue robe studded with golden rivets and tassels.

“It is called a pelal; a robe intended for my wedding night.”

“Your mother got you this?”

“No, my mother’s taste leans to the more conservative; that, no doubt is from one of my aunts.”

Uhura read the tag. “It says, “V’Yar.”

“My father’s aunt.”

Uhura laughed again and Spock looked at her with disapproval.

“Ok, I’ll stop laughing, but you have to admit, it is rather ugly. So this goes into the *keep* pile, I take it.”

He raised his eyebrow yet again.

“See, there, you admit it; you think it’s ugly, too.” She held up the pelal again and addressed the garment. “Sorry Auntie V’Yar, but it is the *discard* pile for you.”

Spock spoke from inside the container, “I did not call any of my aunts, Auntie.”

“I’m sure you didn’t,” she mumbled under her breathe.”

He, of course heard her, and glanced up but said nothing.

“This is pretty fun, Mr. Spock. I like the Vulcan notion of keeping the wedding gifts; it seems all so civilized.”

“I take it, then, that this is not the Earth custom.”

“Oh no; it is very bad form to keep wedding gifts when there has been no wedding... no matter how much one his tempted.”

She held up a nude statuette of a Vulcan male and made a face.

“What is this? And please don’t tell me that it’s some sort of Vulcan fertility symbol.”

“You are close. It is Surak. His nakedness symbolizes his commitment to his tasks; that nothing, even though his clothes were burned from his body, would prevent him from his duty. There should be a pair.”

Uhura opened a matching box. “Found it!” She regarded the female figure with long white hair. “She’s lovely; who is she?”

“She is Selaya, the pure; she symbolizes the commitment that a female has to the male who was chosen for her.”

“So, she was Surak’s mate?”

“No, Seleya was a Katric who took her own life to free herself from Shule, Surak’s brother. Shule coveted Seleya for himself and he imprisoned her in the caves of the Katrics. The Katrics were a race of Vulcan’s from the north who had great telepathic abilities. Surak, although he esteemed his brother, esteemed Seleya more. And Surak, even though he was no warrior like his brother, went to great lengths to free her, but never could. During this time, Shule, in a fit of madness, bent Seleya to his will, he... took her for himself. Her body bruised and broken, she threw herself into the fires of the mountain. If she could not be free to have Surak, she would have no other. Surak tried to rescue her from the flames.”

“That’s a--”

“Please do not say that it is a beautiful love story.”

“I wasn’t actually; I was going to say that it’s kind of twisted.”

Spock’s mouth quirked.

“The Vulcan’s of the past *were* rather cruel and violent; Surak enlightened us.”

“All because of Seleya.”

“All because of Seleya.”

They stared at each other in companionable silence for a moment before Spock spoke.

“Your help this morning has been invaluable, Miss Uhura. I believe I can sort through the rest of these wedding gifts on my own.”

“No; let me help you finish. How else are you going to determine what needs to be done with Uncle Skov’s—” looking at the tag, she held up another gaudy Vulcan artifact; it was a heavily gilded and chunky sort of chalice.

“That is the *Cup of Enlightenment*.”

“No, don’t tell me, this is a cup for you and your mate to drink from on your wedding night.”

“How did you guess,” he asked with the beginnings of a small smile.”

“I am beginning to detect a theme.”

Chapter 2

“I saw your face; you *were* offended!”

“Offense is a human emotion; where there is no emotion there can be no offense.”

“Tell it to someone who will believe you, Mr. Spock. I for one, do not. You flinched; don’t try to deny it. I sit next to you every single day and I’ve noticed things about you that others have never noticed before. And believe me, there was an expression on your face at that very moment. Insult plus flinch equals offense!”

“By my calculations, insult plus no emotion equals zero; therefore, your conclusion is flawed.”

“Then I’ll stick to my supposedly flawed conclusions until my dying day.”

Seeing that they were getting nowhere with the current discussion, Spock changed to another.

“Your work today on the bypass circuit was exemplary.”

“My, my; two compliments in one day. You really know how to flatter a girl. You’d better watch it, Mr. Spock; someone just might report you to the Vulcan Anti-Emotion Squad.”

“Flattery is unnecessary where true skill is involved. Flattery is illogical.”

Uhura rolled her eyes. That statement just cried out for some sort of sarcastic response but she somehow held her tongue.

The doors to the recreation room opened and Christine entered, waved in the direction of their table, but she did not approach. Instead, Christine joined Lieutenant Kyle in a game of Kal-Toh. Uhura bit her lip while giving Spock a fleeting glance before she looked away.

“I took your advice, Lieutenant.”

Relieved, Uhura’s head snapped back.

“Oh, good; I admit, I’m glad you brought it up. I was curious as to how things now stand.”

“Miss Chapel and I, I believe, understand each other and have reached an accord. I explained my nature as a Vulcan and hopefully she understood what I was communicating. It is hoped that she will direct her attentions in a more favorable direction.”

“These things do happen,” Uhura said, sipping her tea. “You know, we’re all on a ship, in close quarters; a bit of familiarity is bound to happen. Besides, she’s always had a sweet spot for Kyle and Kyle has had a crush on her for ages.” She nodded in their direction. “They do look rather cute together. Just think of all those blonde, blue-eyed babies.”

It was now Spock’s turn to roll his eyes.

“I will never understand, Miss Uhura, the human female’s proclivity to first talk of friendship, and then leap to matrimony and babies in the next sentence.”

“And I will never understand the Vulcan belief that they can never be offended.” Uhura purposely took a long slow sip from her cup, a Cheshire Cat-like grin blossoming over the rim. She did her best to suppress her laughter, but when he raised a single eyebrow slowly in her direction she could no longer resist. “You *do* look like Pan.”

“I do not.”

“Do, too!”

“I do not.”

“Do!”

Uhura thought he resembled a petulant school boy as he angled his body away from her, while crossing his arms. And he sat there in silence for a good ten minutes as she calmly sipped her tea and read her book. He was so silent and still that she almost forgot that he was there. Almost... until he quietly spoke again.

“Not.”

Chapter 3

Apollo's "grip" had caused some minor structural damage to the hull of the Enterprise and Starbase 16 was the closest planet that had both repair and shore facilities. After both Scotty and the Captain consulted the dock yard, they were informed that the *Enterprise* would be out of commission for at least a week.

It also, unfortunately, coincided with an outbreak of Scalosian Flu. More than half the crew, including the Captain came down with it, leaving the doctor with no other option but to quarantine the ship. Of the 428 or so souls on board, 135 miraculously escaped exposure. They were immediately ordered down to the planet where the scant shore facilities were instantly overrun.

Spock, usually adverse to shore leave in general, wished only to remain, a request which the good doctor both grumpily and happily denied. Being the last one off the ship had its drawbacks, too and unfortunately for him he was the only one left without a place to stay.

"Are you certain that there is nothing available?"

"I've checked, Commander; the only place open is the cold storage facility, but that is being reserved for the delegation from Snowdonia; they must remain partially frozen at all times."

Spock had just turned his head to think of another alternative when he saw Lieutenant Uhura struggling with a quantity of luggage. He moved to offer her his assistance.

"Are these all yours, Lieutenant?"

"Oh! Mr. Spock; hardly. Only this case is mine; the other three bags belong to Lieutenant Palmer."

"And Lieutenant Palmer leaves you to struggle on your own?"

"Of course not! Palmer forgot her bathing suit and beamed back up to get it and got stuck on board shortly after the quarantine was imposed. Doctor McCoy will not let her off the ship. I've had the Scalosian flu before and it is not pretty. Have you ever had it, sir?"

Doctor McCoy, when mentioning the catalog of diseases he desired to see thrust upon the first officer, never failed to point out that he, as a Vulcan, was probably immune. Just once Spock would have liked to oblige the doctor by coming down with something horrible and putrid if only for the satisfaction of proving the doctor wrong.

“*Regrettably*, I have not,” he said, crossing his arms at his chest.

Uhura thought that she saw something akin to mischievousness flash across his face, but said nothing; he would only deny it in the end.

“So, where are you staying, Mr. Spock? Here in the hotel or in one of the bungalows down by the lake.”

“At the present moment that is still somewhat up in the air. The entire resort is at capacity. Beaming back aboard the Enterprise might be preferable to sleeping out of doors.”

She smiled, reaching out to touch his forearm. “Then it looks like you’re in luck, Mr. Spock; you may have Lieutenant Palmer’s room.”

He looked down at her hand resting on his sleeve. “That seems a logical alternative.”

Uhura had to laugh then. A human would have first asked if they were an imposition; Spock was obviously not going to use his human half that day.

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The hotel’s hover-limo drove them to a secluded area on the other side of the resort’s grounds. It was a private bungalow on a crystal clear forest lake with lush green foliage all around.

“Gorgeous,” she exclaimed upon exiting the craft. “Will you look at that water; I can’t wait to get my feet wet.” On the opposite side of the vehicle, Spock tipped the driver one credit and collected their bags while Uhura continued to exclaim. “And will you look at that, there’s a fire pit.” She hugged herself; she was now even more excited. “We’ll light it tonight and invite all of our friends down for a barbecue.”

“A bar-be-cue?”

She gestured with her hands. “A barbecue is sort of an impromptu—.”

“I know what a barbecue is, Lieutenant; I was merely questioning the necessity of such an activity.”

She made a defiant stance by placing her hands on her hips. “Oh come on, Mr. Spock, we have to throw a party tonight! We are the only two senior officers on the planet and we have a private cottage with a private beach all to ourselves and everyone else is stuck up in that crowded, boring hotel; it’s the least we could do.”

“I have heard that a barbecue often requires large quantities of grilled meat. I would find the odor quite distasteful.”

“So we’ll grill vegetables, then,” she said as she stepped towards him, weaving both her arms around his. “Please... pretty please.” She teased him by batting her eyelashes playfully.

He looked down at the position of her body and her arms. Then he glanced away and thought about it for a long moment.

“As I have never participated in a barbecue before, what do you require of me?”

Knowing that she now had him, she grinned and tugged, propelling them both toward the bungalow door.

“First, lets get settled, and then we will have to find some sort of market. Let me see, we’ll need beer for one... and lots of food. I tell you what, I will take care of the food and the preparation and you take care of the alcohol and issuing the invitations. Deal?”

Spock had no idea what he was getting himself involved in, but he nodded.

She released her hold on him to key in the door code. Stepping in, she immediately started to look around excitedly.

He entered after her, turning right to look into a small open-plan kitchen and left to look into a small parlor. Satisfied with what he saw, he then set the bags down on the floor and instantly took out his computer tablet and sat down on a stool at the counter.

“No you don’t, Buster, put that away,” she said, turning from her study of the adjoining rooms. “Hasn’t anyone ever told you that all work and no play makes Mr. Spock a very dull boy.”

He did not look up from the screen. “I have never been nor never shall be a boy.”

“It’s only a saying, Mr. Spock. Now put that down and bring the bags over here and let’s decide on who gets which room.”

One room was large, containing an en-suite bath with a jetted tub and a huge closet, while the other was somewhat smaller and less fully-featured.

Following her back into the larger room, he said, “I will take the other.” He sat her bag down on the king-sized bed.

Uhura, while moving to open her bag, rolled her eyes, clearly telling him with her incredulous expression: *as if!*

Seeing the look on her face, Spock raised an eyebrow.

“One can only assume that if Lieutenant Palmer were here, you both would have had some sort of verbal altercation to see who received the larger room.”

“No matter what you choose to believe, human females are very civilized, Mr. Spock; we would have flipped an old-style coin for it... or fought in some sort of alien elimination match...scantly clad.”

She unzipped her bag then and took out a long sheer black night gown to hang up in the closet.

Spock cleared his throat and quickly exited, silently chastising himself for lingering too long in a human female’s room.

Chapter 4

Uhura watched as Chekov, on his way from the inside to the outside navigated that very direct path in a very indirect manner. Finally reaching the door, he stared down at the knob as if trying to determine what it was and what he should do with it. It was decided for him when Spock, carrying an empty platter, came in.

“Spiciba, Mischter Schpock,” said Chekov, slurring his words.

“You are very welcome, Mr. Chekov. Do you require further assistance?”

“Da.” Chekov pointed straight ahead to indicate the direction he wished to go.

Spock gave him a gentle push over the threshold, where he collapsed onto the nearest chaise lounge... by way of the potted plant and only after he had circled a cluster of several people standing at the far end of the deck.

“Correct me if I am wrong, Miss Uhura, but Mr. Chekov *is* a navigator, is he not?”

While she was busy laughing, he sat the empty platter on the counter.

“I have determined that of the thirty people we invited, fifty-four were good enough to graciously accept our invitation.”

She laughed even harder; the more the merrier she thought.

“Your grilled eggplant is very popular.”

“Wait until they try my marinated Tellerite Tofu,” she replied, busily skewering the pea green squares onto wooden skewers for grilling.

“Let me do that for you, Miss Uhura. You have been on your feet for three point six hours without a rest interval. And you have not eaten.”

He moved in her direction where she edged him out of her way with her hip.

“Not a chance, Buster; this kitchen isn’t big enough for the both of us.”

Spock glanced around. The kitchen was quite adequate in accommodating twice their number quite comfortably.

Seeing him performing the calculations of square footage in his head, she felt that she needed to explain.

“It’s an expression, Mr. Spock. It means that I’m in charge and you have to do *what* I tell you to do *when* I tell you to do it. Now, fill that platter with the last of the eggplant and get back on grill duty. I’ll bring out the tofu when they’re ready.

“Certainly, *Captain*,” he replied sarcastically before complying.

Back outside, he listened to the loud techno music while the smoke from the grill blew into his face. He moved his head away from it, just in time to observe Ensigns Miller and Grady apparently searching for each others tonsils... with their tongues. When he turned to look another way it was only to see several of his shipmates, of both sexes, gyrating suggestively to the steady thumping beat. He soon thought it best to focus his attention back to the grill, where he poked at a skewer of cubed Andorian squash to determine when it would be ready to be turned.

“Ah, ah, ah!” warned Uhura, exiting from door with the platter of tofu in her hand, “Not yet; the grill’s not hot enough.”

“Squash can be eaten raw, Miss Uhura; I do so all the time.” He poked at it again earning himself a slap to the back of the hand.

“I assure you, Mr. Spock, that even though Vulcans may enjoy eating their squash raw, I can assure you that the vast majority of humans do not.”

Setting aside the tongs, he tried to take the heavily-laden platter away from her only to engage in a gentle tug of war.

“I’ve got this, Mr. Spock. I don’t want to put them on the grill just yet; I don’t want them to burn.”

“The grill is not hot enough for squash, but it is too hot for tofu? Illogical.”

Uhura huffed impatiently. “Why don’t you go mingle and get out from under foot?”

“I prefer to assist you with the cooking; after all, I did agree to host this gathering with you ... and at your enthusiastic and vociferous insistence.”

Uhura would have said something smart-alecky to that comment if she had not heard Chekov snickering loudly behind her.

“Ha! You two be sounding like old married couple; just like my Ma and Pa!”

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Spock, was sitting outside on the verandah eating his breakfast. He reached out with his long leg and kicked Chekov lightly with his booted foot. The Ensign, partially sprawled out on the ground and partially on the deck with his face planted in the dirt, did not stir.

“Spock, will you stop kicking Chekov. Let him sleep it off—don’t wake him!”

“I assure you I was not endeavoring to wake him; I was merely ascertaining if he was still alive.”

She laughed quietly. “He did drink an awful lot last night. I hope you know that his excess drinking was all your fault.”

“How is his inebriation my fault?”

“I said beer, Mr. Spock, beer; not Andorian Ale; and whether Vulcans care to know it or not, there is a vast difference between the two.”

“It was the only beverage of that kind I was able to procure on such short notice.”

“And what about the Saurian Brandy and the Mexican Tequila?”

“I have often heard humans speak of those particular spirits in glowing terms. I thought it best to provide several alternatives for everyone’s enjoyment.”

“Yes, while all night you calmly sipped on Vulcan tea. Everyone is going to have such horrible hangovers today. They will probably blame me, but I am going to merely point in your direction and set them straight.”

He looked at her askance as she wiped her mouth on her linen napkin.

Spoke continued to stare, and just as she began to feel the twinges of awkwardness, he reached out slowly with his thumb and wiped away something from the corner of her mouth.

“Jam,” he said evenly, returning to his toast with his knife and fork.

Embarrassed, she grabbed at her napkin again thinking that she had done a poor job.

“Not to worry, I have removed it.”

Momentarily unsettled and not quite knowing why, she pushed her plate away and stood.

“Well, I’m off.”

Spock stood up from the breakfast table like a shot.

“Off? Where are you going?”

“To relax down by the shore. Whhhhy?” she asked, drawing out the word for emphasis.

“I thought that... would you be amenable to me accompanying you on your outing?”

“And why on Earth, or in this case, Star Base 16, would you want to do that? I’m only going to be lying about in a lounge chair all day soaking up the sun while sipping from several very large glasses of how ever many Mai Tai’s the cabana boy can bring me from the hotel bar.”

“That sounds agreeable; the part without consuming the alcohol, I should say.”

“Uh... well, ok. Let me run back to my room to grab my things.”

He turned to look down at the ground.

“What are we going to do about Mr. Chekov?”

“What do you mean by “we”? Chekov is a big boy, Mr. Spock, and no matter what *he* chooses to believe while in a drunken stupor, we are not *his* mother and father.”

Chapter 5

“One thousand, one-hundred and eighty–seven. One thousand, one-hundred and eighty–eight.”

She looked up from her book and giggled.

“I am sure you’re just exaggerating.”

“One thousand, one-hundred and eighty–nine.”

“You are getting really annoying with that.”

“One thousand, one-hundred and *ninety*.”

“Besides, I am very tired and light-headed for some reason.”

He paused.

“Three Mai-Tais, two rum and colas, and something called a Margarita have been known to cause just such an effect.”

“I’m not listening,” she sing-songed.

“I remind you, that you were the one who said that we would *share* equally in this undertaking.”

She placed her fingertips over her eyes in a dramatic fashion and whined.

“It’s hot and I’m also starting to get a headache.”

“A most convenient excuse.”

She threw down her book.

“Sheesh! Such a cry baby; move over!”

Standing unsteadily, she watched in delight as Spock gripped the sides of the row boat as if *that* would keep it from rocking.

“Miss Uhura, if you would—” he reached out suddenly, placing his hand on her hip when it looked as if she might fall. He immediately drew back when

she quickly righted herself. “If you would just keep your balance, the chances of your capsizing this marine craft will be reduced by thirty-three point four percent.”

“I thought you wanted help with the rowing, Spock; so I’m helping!”

“As long as your help does not end with us both getting wet.”

She slid in next to him and pushed him over to the opposite seat where he sat under the canopy that shaded her only moments before. Uhura grabbed both the oars and started to row them towards the shore. He simply stared at her.

After feeling his eyes on her after five pulls of the oars, she spoke.

“Why are you looking at me that way? I’m giving you the break you so desperately said you needed.”

“I am only looking at you because you are something of a puzzle to me at this moment.”

She smirked bemusedly.

“First, I’m a tease, then I am of no help whatsoever, and now I’m a puzzle; make up your mind!”

“I will gladly enlighten you.”

“Please do.”

“Until this moment you have never called me Spock.”

She stopped rowing.

“I call you Spock all the time!”

“No, you do not.”

“I do too!”

“*No*, you do not!”

“I *do*, too!”

“You have only ever addressed me as: Sir, Commander, or Mr. Spock. You have also recently taken to calling me: Buster, which, I might add, is most disturbing.”

“I call you *Buster* because I like you, *Buster!*”

“I am amenable to you, too; do you wish me to address you as Buster, as well.”

“No, I most certainly do not!”

“Then you must explain your reasoning.”

She rolled her eyes as if it were the most obvious thing in the world.

“It’s a goof.”

“A goof? Explain.”

She sighed impatiently. If Spock wasn’t supposed to be so smart she just might have believed that she was talking to a second grader just then.

“It’s a nickname—like how the Captain calls Doctor McCoy, *Bones*—it’s a term of endearment.”

He had to think about that for a long moment.

“Correct me if I am wrong, but I was under the impression that terms of endearments were usually reserved for relatives and friends.”

“We are friends!” she stated emphatically.

“Are we?” he asked, raising both brows and looking skeptical.

“Why do you say that?” she asked incredulously.

“I distinctly remember you telling me once that Captain Kirk was my only friend.”

She searched her brain for the memory; then she scoffed.

“That was only when I *first* knew you! You were so... uptight back then...well, more so than you are now.” She looked off into the distance for the moment, carefully considering her words for she had more to say. “And do you really think I would let just anybody sleep in the room right next to mine? I’m... comfortable around you. And you always seem to look out for me. And, most importantly, I trust you, Spock. Trust me, we’re friends.”

Each reflected in silent contemplation for several minutes as Uhura continued to row, each thinking along the very same lines: they *were* friends. Spock studied the slightly green calluses on his hands for a moment before getting up from his seat to sit next to her. He took one of the oars.

“Let me help you with that... my friend.”

Uhura smiled, nudged him affectionately with her right shoulder and then said the words for him before he had a chance.

“One thousand, one-hundred and *ninety-one*.”

And Spock very nearly shared a smile with her as he thought to himself that for the second time in his life, he was happy.

Chapter 6

“I’ll never forget the look on your face,” she laughed. “You looked positively scandalized.”

“The production of *Hair* loses something in the translation when it is performed by Tellerites whose bodies are already covered in hair.”

Uhura just giggled even more and shook her head. The evening before they had attended a play together and now she and Spock were sitting in the middle of an outdoor café, taking an afternoon break from her perusal of the shops and his dutiful carrying of all her purchases.

She regarded him for a long moment, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of revealing something personal to him about herself. But then, she did tell him that she trusted him.

“Can you keep a secret, Spock? I mean the kind of secret that involves a painful death if you ever reveal it to anyone.”

“Miss Uhura, I am First Officer of the Enterprise. I possess an A1 security rating from Starfleet Command; I am the son of Sarek, who was the son of Skon, and we are a Vulcan family dedicated to the teachings of Surak. I also possess—”

“Ok, ok, I get it; you can keep a secret. But can you keep a *secret-secret*?”

“Wasn’t that what I just said?”

She rolled her eyes before forging on.

“Back during my Academy days, I was in a production of *Hair*. It was an off, off, way off Broadway production down in some tacky theater near Fisherman’s Wharf.”

Uhura didn’t miss his slight reaction to her revelation; she saw his eyes actually spark with new interest.

“I take it, then, that you disrobed at the proper juncture.”

She smiled bashfully, lowering her eyes. She could not believe that she was actually admitting such a personal thing and to him, of all people.

“Yes. I was as naked as the day I was born.”

“Fascinating,” he replied, lifting his customary eyebrow. “That would have been something I would have liked to have seen.”

It was her turn to be scandalized. Although her expression was one of *pretend* outrage, he quickly corrected himself anyway.

“I meant that I would have liked to have seen the performance, Miss Uhura.” He then lifted his cup and sipped his tea, contemplating the complexity and the mystery that was Lieutenant Uhura. “I had no idea that you were a Thespian.”

“A Thespian?” she chuckled. “Hardly! But I do enjoy acting when I get the chance. Everyone thinks I just like to sing, but I like all types of performance. I dance a little, as well.” She took a sip of her coffee and looked at Spock with mischievous eyes. “Ok, Spock, spill. I told you my deepest, darkest, secret and now it’s time for you to tell me yours.”

“I am a Vulcan.”

“A most convenient excuse,” she said, throwing his own words of two days ago back into his face. “This is what friends do, Spock; they tell each other things. It strengthens the bond; although, I am sure that my idea of bonding is very different from yours.”

He folded his arms across his chest.

“I have no, as you say, deepest, darkest, secrets.”

“Oh no, Buster, that is not how the game is played. I show you mine and you show me yours. You have to give me something to hold over your head; something I can use to get back at you for when you do something stupid.”

“Stupid? I say again, I am a Vulcan.”

“I don’t mean “stupid” literally, Spock,” she sighed.

He sat quietly and considered for a moment. He was rather more private than secretive. He truly didn't have any, as she called them: secret-secrets. She already knew about T'Pring and he didn't think that the fact that he had a black sheep brother was all that interesting. He did have one thing that gently pricked at him on occasion and he briefly wondered if that would satisfy her notions of sharing secrets.

"I do not have a secret, per se; but I do have one very troubling regret."

She immediately sensed something different in his tone this time. A hint of the playfulness that was there only a moment ago was gone, replaced with a very serious expression of self-recrimination.

"If it's something personal, Spock, I would not wish for you to—"

"After reflection, I find that it is something that I would like to share with you, that is, if you are agreeable to hearing something that is tantamount to a confession of a failing on my part."

She very much doubted if he did have a true failing, and at any other time it would have been an opportunity for jest, however, all thoughts of teasing him at that moment had fled.

"I hope you know that you can always tell me anything, Spock." She reached across the narrow span of the café table to touch his forearm; an arm that he quickly moved to his lap.

"I regret that I have never told my mother that I hold her in the highest esteem."

He hoped that she knew what he was trying to convey without having to say the actual words.

"Do you mean love, Spock? Do you mean to say that you have never told your mother that you love her?"

He automatically reached for his tea, only to touch the handle to spin the cup upon the saucer for a second or two, before resting his hand down beside it.

"Yes, that is the very concept that I was hoping to convey, Miss Uhura."

“Oh Spock,” she said sympathetically, laying her own hand on the top of the table merely inches from his own. “I’m sure she knows that you love her.”

His eyes focused off into the middle distance and he tilted his head to the side in an endearing gesture which Uhura likened to an apprehensive child, unsure of his place in the big, wide, scary world.

He sighed deeply. “I have always thought that it could not be easy for my mother, married to a Vulcan, raising a Vulcan child, surrounded by nothing but Vulcans: an Earth woman living on a planet where love and emotion are in bad taste.”

“But, she loved your father enough to give up her own life, making a sacrifice to be able to share in his.”

“And yet, to never hear any words of comfort from him. Am I correct in assuming that for humans, for one to know of the other’s love, one must first hear the words; at least, that is how I have always supposed it to be.”

“Surely your father knew something of what she required; he must have shown his regard for her in other ways. Saying the words of love is not the only way that human’s sense the feeling. Do not misunderstand, words of love are always nice to hear, but we can also see love reflected in the eyes, in a smile; love can be expressed by a direct action, or simply by the smallest, gentlest, touch.”

Uhura watched as Spock’s eyes now turned to his hand resting upon the table, the same hand that he started to slide forward towards hers ever so slightly.

“Your words leave me much to ponder, Miss Uhura,” he said, his voice deeper and more affected than she had ever heard from him before.

Slowly, her eyes lifted from his hand and found his eyes already there, waiting, willing, and fully open to her own. To Uhura his eyes seemed to be making a simple request. She watched the fleeting emotions play across them for a moment, wondering what it was that he wished of her, until it hit her: he was seeking permission; requesting a simple liberty that she had rarely granted to anyone, a liberty that he would never dare take without her leave to do so.

“It’s Nyota,” she whispered.

“Nyota,” he breathed.

And just as he pushed his fingers gently forward to make the connection that would finally bring their hands together, a loud and obnoxious voice rang out and their quiet moment was entirely and irrevocably lost.

“What do you two be doing here with the long, grave, serious faces? Vell, no verries; Chekov is now here to be saving the day!”

Chapter 7

“She is unwell.”

“What do you mean by unwell.”

“Her health had steadily deteriorated since yesterday afternoon. The doctor from the hotel’s medical facility has diagnosed a Rigellian Rotavirus. Unfortunately, he has never treated a human before so he lacked the skill to treat the affliction.”

“How in the hell did she get a Rigellian Rotavirus? We’re at least ten light years away from the Rigel system!”

“There were two Rigellians sitting next to us at a play the other evening.”

“I don’t believe it!”

“Doctor, I assure you, they were Rigellian.”

“Not that, Spock; I don’t believe that *you* actually went to a play.”

Spock sighed impatiently.

“What can you do for Lieutenant Uhura, Doctor?”

“Do? What do you think I can do? I can’t come down to the planet; I’m up to my neck in vomiting and fever as it is. You’ll have to be the one to take care of her.”

Apart from the routine first aid training that all Starfleet cadets receive, Spock had very little experience tending to an actual sick individual, let alone a human, and a human female at that.

“I do not think that it would be wise, Doctor. I am ill-equipped and ill-prepared for such an undertaking.”

“Well, there’s a first time for everything. This ought to be interesting; wait until I tell Jim.”

Even though he was speaking through his communicator, Spock could almost see the Doctor smirking at him just by the sheer flippancy in his tone.

“This is no time for levity, Doctor McCoy. Lieutenant Uhura’s health is cause for great concern.

“Ok, ok. So, tell me, what have you done for her so far?”

“She has consumed nothing more than tea and juice in the last 24 hours. She refuses all solid food, even the Plomeek broth I prepared for breakfast this morning.”

“Are you out of your Vulcan mind? Human’s don’t want that wretched Plomeek stuff...well, a rational one anyway.”

“With what do you suggest I nourish her, Doctor?”

“Homemade chicken soup is best, and before you get all riled up about a couple of dead chickens, just have it sent down from the hotel restaurant. Keep giving her plenty of liquids; she’s going to be sicker than sick for the next day or two. And this part is very important, Spock, if she suddenly gets the chills you must keep her warm, that’s the key... warmth. Pile her bed high with every blanket in the house if she wants them. I’ll mix up one of my patented snake oils and beam it down to you. You will have to inject her with the hypospray every four hours for the next two days and that ought to nip this thing in the bud before she gets too uncomfortable. Understood?”

Spock had already recognized that there was no other logical choice. “Understood,” he replied.

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“Spooooocckkkk,” the hoarse, raspy voice called out from the other room. “Spooooocckkkk!”

“I am here, Nyota; I am here” he said, coming into her room with a refilled pitcher of water and a plate of crackers. Setting them down on the nightstand, he stood at the side of her bed with his hands behind his back, looking down at her.

“I thought you’d left me; I thought you had abandoned me to die down here all alone.’

“Like I told you before, you are not alone. You are here on Star Base 16. You are ill and in your bed. You sent me to retrieve more water and crackers?”

She did not seem to hear him.

“First Doctor McCoy left me, then you and the Captain left me, then Scotty jumped through next, and I was all alone with only the Guardian.”

“You are not alone, Nyota; it is just the fever talking.”

“No, no; you are mistaken; you were all gone, you all left me down here alone. Why did you all leave me, Spock? I had to call you to make you come back.”

“Yes, I came back when you called my name.”

She sat up, grabbed his arm and pulled him down to sit on the edge of the bed.

“Don’t leave me all alone, Spock. Please don’t leave me to die on this planet by myself with only the Guardian to talk to.”

“No, I will not leave you to die on the planet.”

She was just about to lay her head back down when it looked as if she needed him to reassure her once more.

“Do you promise?”

“I promise.”

Her head made it to the pillow once more.

“Cross your heart, hope to die, stick a needle in your eye?”

“I’m sorry, what?”

Her head left the pillow again, her eyes, wild. “CROSS YOUR HEART, HOPE TO DIE, STICK A NEEDLE IN YOUR EYE?”

“Yes, I-I uh, cross my heart hope to die,” he finished lamely.

“STICK A NEEDLE—! STICK A NEEDLE—!”

“Yes, Nyota, yes; stick a needle in my eye!”

The eyes which he now rolled.

Humans.

He watched as she now closed *her eyes*, smiled in satisfaction, and dropped her head back down onto the pillow. She then reached out with her right hand and placed her palm in the middle of his chest.

“Cross your heart, hope to die...” Her voice began to fade as she seemed to be drifting off to sleep again, but then her eyes suddenly flew open. She looked panicked. “No heart, no heart; you don’t have a heartbeat! You promised me that you would cross your heart, but you don’t have a heart! You’re going to die and leave me all alone.”

“Nyota, I do have a heart. Here, feel my heart.” He took her hand and gently slid it from the middle of his chest, down his torso, until it rested on his side. “See, my heart is here, Nyota.”

His hand rested on top of hers for a long moment, and together they felt its steady rhythm pulsating beneath their joined fingers. The beating seemed to calm her for she settled back down and closed her eyes once more.

“Your heart beats; you are not dead. I am not alone. I can feel your heart.”

“Because your hand is resting over my heart.”

“You gave me your heart.”

“Yes, your hand is on my heart.”

“Your heart, give me your heart.”

“Yes,”

“Mine.”

“Yes.”

“My heart.”

“Yes, Nyota.”

“My heart.”

“Yes.”

“My heart is your heart.”

“You are very tired, Nyota.”

“Tired; so tired”

“Yes, Nyota; you are very tired. Go to sleep.”

“Don’t leave me,” she whimpered quietly, her eyes still closed.

“I will not leave you.”

“Never?”

“I will not leave you.”

“Never leave... my heart.”

“No, I will never leave.”

“Never leave my heart.

“No, I’ll never leave your heart.”

Spock watched as she smiled one last contented smile before she finally drifted off into a peaceful sleep.

Chapter 8

He had purposely put himself into a light meditative state, so when he heard her calling out to him weakly around midnight, he knew immediately that her illness must have progressed to the chills stage. Belting his black silk pelal over his bare torso, he quickly responded to her cries for aid.

“Nyota, I am here. What is it that you require?”

“Blanket,” she said. He could hear her lips trembling and her teeth chattering through the darkness. “Cold, Spock, so cold.”

“Very well, I will return shortly. Stopping in the main room, he addressed the computer. “Computer, adjust environmental controls to 33 degrees Celsius.”

“ACKNOWLEDGED: TEMPERATURE ADJUSTED TO 33 DEGREES CELSIUS.”

He retrieved one blanket from the hall closet, only to recall McCoy’s suggestion that she would most likely want them all; he secured all three.”

However, after tucking all the blankets around her securely and observing her for twenty additional minutes, her shivering had increased by sixty-seven percent.

Removing the blanket and quilt from his own bed he added those as well. After five more minutes of watching her continued shivering, he was only able to adjust the temperature in the room as high as 40 degrees Celsius before the computer indicted that that was the highest setting it was programmed to function.

Hotels, he thought, rolling his eyes.

He was now presented with a conundrum: she must be kept warm; the doctor had told him as much. After all, her comfort and recovery were vital; she was his fellow officer, she was important to the ship and to him, he eventually admitted to himself. So, there was only one logical course that remained open to him: he must use his own body heat to keep her warm.

He pulled his meditation robe around himself more securely and then sat down gingerly on the very edge of the bed, regarding her thoughtfully for a few moments. He suspected that she wasn't quiet lucid even though her fever had broken hours before. But he needed to explain himself to her, to justify his actions. The absolute worse thing in the world that could happen was the thought of her assuming that he was taking advantage.

"Nyota," he started, only to think better of this informal form of address. "Lieutenant Uhura." Yes, much more professional, he thought.

"May I be permitted to—" He stopped to think again. What would he say? *May I be permitted to, what, share your bed?*

He pictured McCoy's smug, insufferable face at that moment, smirking at him, taunting him with words and expressions that hinted of his cowardice: *'Stop being such a Vulcan, Spock, and get it there and handle things. She's a woman, not a Moogottu!'* Then McCoy would likely finish with a *flippant* remark, such as: *'If you're scared, say you're scared.'*

He cleared his throat and began again.

"Miss Uhura, it is impossible to exceed the heating capacity of the environment control for this room. I do this only to make you more comfortable. It is the only course available, therefore it is logical."

Her eyes were closed and she said nothing, the chattering of her teeth her only answer. He pulled back a corner of the blankets and paused. What was it that Jim would say in situations such as these? In for a penny, in for a pound? Curious metaphor and curiously unhelpful at such a moment as this.

He slipped his body in between the covers completely, and waited, wondering what his next course of action should be. Would it be better if he heated stones inside the fire pit and placed them in the bed next to her instead? Where would he find these stones at this hour of the night? Or, should he move closer and wrap her in his arms?

It was decided for him.

Uhura, seeming to sense a new source of heat, rolled off of her back and over onto her right side. They were now laying face to face, her warm, steady breathing tickling his nose.

In the very next moment, her body began to draw up into a fetal position, only to pause when her legs encountered an obstacle: his legs, warm, bare, and inviting to her cold toes. Before he had realized what was happening, her two little feet had found a way to establish themselves securely between his larger ones.

He began calculating the stress and load factors of the Enterprise's engines at maximum warp.

But she wasn't finished. By inches, by turns, and by several long agonizing and excruciating minutes, her body drew nearer and nearer. An arm, once tucked around her own body, had now become tucked in underneath his.

You are Spock, son of Sarek.

A knee had somehow worked its way forward and had parted his thighs until their legs were intertwined.

You are a Vulcan committed to the teachings of Surak.

And it was all he could do to keep his breathing steady when her head somehow found a home in that warm, downy place at the top of his chest.

You are in control of your emotions.

Yet, the complete undoing of all his carefully perfected Vulcan equilibrium came when the fingers of her hand had slipped through the folds of his robe and sought out the beating of his heart at his side and she whispered her sweet words once again.

"Mine," she said, "mine."

He had never allowed a female such intimate access to his person.* This was so very wrong, and yet, why did it feel so very right? He had felt her pull on him from the very beginning of their acquaintance; he had always allowed her close, had enjoyed her gentle teasing. He would allow this current level of contact to continue. She had said it herself: They were friends, she trusted him. He would never take advantage of her innocent explorations now. She needed him, needed his warmth. And he would give it to her; he would probably give her anything she asked right now; she was that special. Their friendship had only strengthened in this last week. But

what were they now? More than friends? Very good friends? And one day, perhaps, one day soon, they could, *possibly* explore something more.

Perhaps.

Having reasoned it all out and having found it logical, he gave up his struggle for control and simply allowed himself to finally drift off to sleep.

~~***~~

**Note: I know you are all thinking that he allowed Leila Kalomi in, but that was only under the influence of the spores, so she doesn't count.*

Chapter 9

She did not want to leave this warm, comforting place.

Home.

Yet, upon further study, it wasn't exactly *like* her home.

She stood in the middle of a parched, sienna colored desert, with the suns relentless rays beating down upon her, brighter and hotter than she had ever felt before. No, she thought upon further perusal, this was not the high arid plains of Tanzania; this wasn't Africa; this wasn't even Earth. This new place, though warm, was unfamiliar... foreign... *alien*.

She turned sharply at the sound of a female's faint voice upon the wind and she saw her. Approximately twenty meters away there stood a small wisp of a woman with a long, diaphanous, royal blue veil billowing out behind her.

The woman had delicate, pretty human features, the kind that spoke of a cheerful disposition even before one was able to even speak to her. The woman was beckoning for Uhura to come forward, to follow, only to disappear into the next puff of red-brown sand upon the horizon.

Behind her, she heard that faraway voice again, however, when she turned, Uhura found that no one was there.

"Nyota," said the voice upon the wind once more, "Won't you come into the garden? We await you there."

Uhura had taken a few steps forward in the direction of that voice when she heard the other sounds: Water, as if flowing gently over stones; chimes, blowing softly in the breeze; and laughter... a female's light, tinkling giggle and the deep, unmistakable sound of a male's throaty chuckle of mirth.

As she drew nearer she saw that she had arrived at a structure of sorts; a large stone edifice, hugging the contours of the hilly valley, a dwelling similar in color and composition to the enormous, jagged boulders that towered and jutted skyward and outward at odd angles all around her.

"There you are, sleepyhead!"

Again, Nyota turned and found herself now standing in the middle of a garden. How she got there she did not know. And these were no earthly plantations; no red roses or white potted begonias that one would find in her mother's garden back on Earth. This was an alien garden, full of strange, spindly plants in subdued colors and subtle textures with few petals and even fewer leaves.

The woman now appeared again, only this time, holding out both of her arms and gesturing with her fingers. "Come here, Nyota, let me see you."

Uhura, on her guard took a step back. No matter how friendly the woman seemed, she had been a Starfleet officer for far too long not to approach things with caution.

"No!" she said sharply, only to regret her harsh tone at so gentle-looking a woman. "I'm sorry... I just—I don't know who you are."

"Oh Nyota," the woman chided, "Of course you know who I am."

Rationally, the face was unfamiliar and yet, irrationally, this woman did seem like someone she ought to know.

"We were all wondering when you would awaken to join us; as you can see we waited breakfast for you. I have made porridge."

She offered up the brusque words before thinking.

"I don't like porridge!"

"Not like porridge?" the woman said, smiling. "He always liked my porridge; I thought you would as well; something else then, perhaps. What's your favorite thing to have for breakfast?"

Uhura furrowed her brow at this odd woman and this odd conversation about a "he", but answered anyways. "I've always liked pancakes."

"Pancakes it is then, my daughter."

"Daughter?" she whispered more to herself than to the strange woman. "Why do you call me daughter?"

“Because you belong with us now, don’t you think? Your father and I are very glad to have you here.”

“My father? My *father* lives in Tanzania... with *my* mother.”

The woman only laughed as she gestured to a cloth-covered table overflowing with a variety of foods... real earth food—not a blue Starfleet protein nib in sight. She briefly wondered if this was some sort of alien possession of her mind; placing temptations before a person was a common tactic to obtain classified information.

“Come, my daughter, sit. I can see that you are hungry.”

From behind her, Uhura heard a familiar, deep voice laugh softly. “Nyota is always hungry, are you not, my dear one.”

Dear one? Uhura spun around in surprise at the voice over her shoulder. It was Spock... and he was smiling down at her; actually smiling.

“Spock?” she questioned incredulously.

“Yes, Nyota.”

“Spock?”

“Yes, Nyota.”

“Spock, is that really you?”

He threw back his head and laughed as if she had said something extremely amusing.

“Yes, Nyota. It is I; who else would I be?”

“But you’re—” she very nearly said: *acting strangely*, but stopped herself. Perhaps this strange woman possessed his mind, too. “Why are we here, Mr. Spock?”

“We have been here for nearly a week.”

She was now even more confused. She had not remembered arriving on this strange planet... a planet that she was beginning to think could possibly be the planet Vulcan.

“A week? Where is the Enterprise?” she asked, tersely.

“The Enterprise?” he questioned, a smile still fixed on his face. “The Enterprise is orbiting the planet,”

“This planet; the planet Vulcan?”

She felt, rather than saw his smile fade away.

“No, the Enterprise is orbiting Star Base 16.”

“Who is this woman?” she asked, trying to make a pointing gesture to indicate the human female, but her arms felt weak and heavy and she was much too tired to lift them.

“To which *woman* are you referring?”

“What do you mean: which woman? Spock, she is standing right here in front of us! Don’t you see her?”

“I only see you.”

“Will you stop joking with me? This isn’t funny!”

“Nyota, I believe that it is time for you to awaken. I believe that you are dreaming.”

“Dreaming. Dreaming?”

Her eyes snapped open then and without moving her head, she let her eyes roam all around to get her bearings first. She was in her bedroom of the rented bungalow on Star Base 16. She turned her head to the right just then and there was Spock sitting on the edge of her bed holding a tray with a bowl of something steaming, gray, and disgusting.

“Oh my, goodness; what in the world is that?” she asked, regaining her faculties quite rapidly when faced with something so unappealing.

“This is your breakfast. I have made porridge.”

“Porridge? I hate porridge!”

“I know you hate porridge, but you must eat it; Doctor McCoy’s orders.”

She didn’t stop to ask him how he knew she hated porridge; she only wanted to hear about the doctor.

“Doctor McCoy is here? Where?”

“Doctor McCoy is still on board the Enterprise, however, he left strict instructions with me for your care. You are to stay in bed for the remainder of the day. Also, since you have not had sufficient nutrition for the last two days, you must consume everything that I have prepared for you.”

Uhura glanced at the tray again, disappointment clearly etched on her face.

“But she was just getting ready to serve pancakes with real butter and real maple syrup,” Uhura whined, clearly upset with the change of menu and venue.

“Who was preparing to serve pancakes?”

“I have never met her before and I didn’t get her name, and Spock, I know that this is going to sound extremely silly, but, I think it was your mother.”

~~***~~

All during dinner that evening it had been a series of surreptitious glances and overly polite and stilted conversation. The air at the table was charged with... *something* and Uhura applied herself to figuring out just what that *something* was.

Spock had not been very forthcoming where his mother’s appearance in her dreams was concerned. In fact, as soon as she mentioned it, he had left the tray on the nightstand and excused himself to his own room, claiming that now that she was well again, he had neglected his need to meditate. He had stayed away from her for most of the day.

Left on her own for the rest of the morning and afternoon, she could not help but turn her mind to how such a transference of so personal a nature could happen. She already knew that Spock was a touch telepath, but she had to wonder at that. If she had somehow become privy to his thought patterns, how could she do so without actually being touched.

By dinner time she thought she might have pieced some of it together, yet, she couldn't be absolutely certain what exactly she thought it was. The only thing left to do was to get him to discuss it, if she could.

She glanced up from her bowl of chicken noodle soup to regard him for a moment. If she didn't know any better she thought that his demeanor appeared rather embarrassed, almost as if he sensed where her thoughts ran and was just waiting for the other shoe to drop.

His eyes were focused solely on his plate of stir-fried vegetables and that alone. To get them at least talking, she cast about for a topic of conversation that wouldn't be too disturbing to him to start off with. She looked around the room and settled on the various flowers, plants, and get well soon cards.

"I didn't realize that I had received so many gifts while I was sick. I will have a lot of thank you notes to send out as soon as we return to the Enterprise tomorrow."

"Yes, your admirers were all quite concerned when they learned of your illness; Mr. Chekov being the most insistent that you knew that the large, red flowers were from him."

He poked at a carrot listlessly with his fork, only to give up the thought of eating to set it aside and lay both hands on either sides of his plate.

"Oh yes, they are lovely." She reached out and fingered a soft, red petal. "I don't know what they are called, though."

Spock finally lifted his eyes. "Eldeberon Marsh flowers; I find them aesthetically pleasing, as well."

"You should hear what Chekov wrote in his card; listen to this." She pulled the card out from her robe's pocket: "*Roses are Red, Violets are blue, in Russia it is not being the custom to give flowers to the sick or injured, but I am sending these with very special wishes of good health to you.*" She

laughed lightly before adding, “I really need to work with him on his English and iambic pentameter, don’t you think?”

“Indeed.”

She folded away the card and stuffed it back into her pocket. She shivered.

“You are cold. Shall I retrieve a blanket?”

“No, no; I’m fine; just shaking off the last of this virus; I am nearly back to 100 percent.”

He nodded slowly, but said nothing.

“And you don’t have to worry about me shirking my responsibilities. I will be fit for duty tomorrow morning, sir.” She saluted him teasingly.

“You are an excellent officer, Lieutenant Uhura; your not attending to your numerous responsibilities has never been a concern of mine.”

She instantly recognized her opening.

“But seriously, Spock, I wanted to thank you—for all you did while I was sick.” She paused and watched him as his facial expression distorted minutely, only to be schooled back into impassivity seconds later. Watching him for a second longer, she slowly reached across the table with her right hand to touch his left hand that rested at the side of his plate. “I guess I will never know all you did for me, will I, Spock?”

Looking down at the hand that was touching his, he did not pull away; he spoke. “Miss Uhura—”

“I can only assume that you fed me, helped me to drink, helped me into bathroom, cooled my brow—”

“Miss Uhura, I—”

“—and if my ramblings from this morning are any indication of my irrational state, you found yourself in quite a predicament at times I shouldn’t wonder. A certain amount of... *touching* had to be involved with your care of me and that could not have been very easy for you, was it?”

“There are some things—.”

She cut him off to get a direct answer to her question.

“Was it?”

His eyes turned away from her again; that admission seemed to pain him.

“No, Nyota.”

“You initiated a mind meld with me, didn’t you?”

He started to shake his head even before he answered.

“No.”

“No?”

“I did not initiate a mind meld.”

“But you did *something* to me last night.” She made her voice as gentle as possible. “What was it?”

“It was not intentional.”

“What was not intentional?”

“You were cold.”

“And.”

“My guard was down. You were cold.”

“You said that already.”

“The environmental controls were insufficient for your comfort—I used my body heat to—you were cold. We slept... our bodies touched——”

She sat back in her seat with a thud and just stared at him, unmoving, unblinking.

He had no words of logic to offer her in the presence of her unwavering stare. It was several minutes before she could bring herself to speak again.

“That could not have been pleasant for you, Mr. Spock.”

“It was not... unpleasant.”

Uhura’s eyes grew large.

“At the time it seemed the only logical course. However, I now see that it was unforgivable. I apologize.”

She thought about this for a long moment. She knew she wasn’t angry with him, just very surprised by an act that was so out of character for him. His only concern had been for her well being alone. She hadn’t the words to sufficiently express how grateful she was to him for basically saving her life.

“I could have died without your help and your care, Spock.”

The absence of anger from her voice made him look into her eyes. “Rigellian Rotoviruses are rarely fatal, Nyota.”

“Yes, but all the same, I could have died.”

“I would not have let it be so. I would have regretted the loss of your friendship.”

A pregnant pause hung in the air for several long seconds before she spoke.

“You will always have it.”

She reached out again, this time she reached up and stroked his cheek.

“Thank you,” he said.

“No, thank you, Spock.”

He placed his left hand over the hand that covered his cheek and squeezed, sending Swahili words of joy through their slight telepathic bond.

Nafurahi. Mimi ni ridhika. Nimefurahi.

I rejoice. I am pleased. I am happy.

Spock then reached out with his right hand. He wanted to touch her, he wanted to connect to her thoughts at that moment.

She merely looked her agreement.

And just as his fingers began to close in on the last inch or so away from the contact point at the top of her cheek, there came a great, loud, pounding upon the door.

“Lieutenant Uhura, Mr. Spock, where are you? You must be letting me in? I bring fine Russian Vodka and I have come to keep you both in good company so you are not being bored!”

Chapter 10

“Good Morning, Mr. Spock.”

“Good morning, Lieutenant Uhura. I trust you slept well.”

“Very well, thank you, sir. And you?”

“Very well, indeed. I take it, then, that you have received a clean bill of health from Doctor McCoy.”

“Yes, sir. He suggested that I stay off the bridge for one more day, but I assured him that I am very well again.”

“Your absence from the bridge for the last two days has been keenly felt.”

“Thank you, sir. I look forward to returning to duty.”

Spock nodded succinctly as he indicated to her that she should lead the way. And they fell in step easily together as they walked from the mess hall down the officer’s quarter’s deck. They had not seen each other since returning to the Enterprise after shore leave and that had been three days previous.

Uhura wasn’t quite sure where their friendship now stood. The last time they had been alone, something was about to happen, she was sure, but then Chekov had happened and their evening had quickly become all about long-winded conversations about Russia, Vodka, and past and future missions. And after that: nothing... for three entire days.

Reaching the turbolift area, they waited for it to arrive at their deck. Neither of them said a thing until Uhura recollected a benign subject that she could bring up.

“I will have the monthly communication’s summary report ready for your signature by this afternoon, Commander.”

“Very good, Lieutenant.” Again, both were quiet before he recalled something benign that he could bring up with her as well. “Lieutenant Palmer believes that the spatial anomalies indicator light on the communications board requires adjusting.”

“I will be sure to run a diagnostic first thing this morning, sir.”

He nodded, his eyes lingering on her for a moment longer than was usual. And he was just about to say something more when the turbolift arrived containing none other than Ensign Pavel Chekov.

“Good morning! Good morning!” Chekov said, brightly.

“Good morning,” they both chorused back to the Ensign as she stepped into the turbolift and stood to the left of Chekov while Spock stood on Chekov’s right.

Chekov beamed happily to see his friend back on her feet again.

“Nice to see you looking so vell again, Uhura.”

“Thank you, Pavel. Doctor McCoy was just being overly cautious, as usual, by keeping me out of commission for the last few days; but I’m glad to be back to work now.”

“You must be coming to the recreation room tonight! Ve have been missing the music and the singing and the joking and the laughing. Happy times when you are there; very, very boring times when you are away!”

“Aw!” she smiled, reaching out to pat his cheek affectionately. “You charmer, you!”

“So,” he began, nodding enthusiastically, “You vill be coming tonight, yes?”

She did not get the opportunity to answer.

At that very moment something inside of the Vulcan snapped and Spock, with a definite look of impatience and irritation on his face, leaned forward to tower menacingly over the shorter man. And when he spoke, there was an explicit tightness and commanding quality in his tone.

“I regret to inform you, Ensign Chekov, that Lieutenant Uhura has another pressing matter that must be attended to this evening. I am certain that she will be pleased to share her company with you at some other more convenient time.”

Spock leaned back and simply trained his eyes on the red turbolift door, letting out a well-satisfied puff of breath in the process.

Both Uhura's and Chekov's brows furrowed in confusion. Uhura knew very well that she had no previous commitments and Chekov knowing very well that Uhura always came to the rec room in the evenings. Neither of them had a chance to respond before the turbolift arrived at the bridge.

Still taken aback at Spock's uncharacteristic abruptness, Chekov stumbled off the lift first and out onto the bridge, glancing back to see just how closely the Vulcan would follow.

Uhura did not move. She couldn't; so shocked she was that she just stared up at Spock as if he had grown three heads.

Several other members of the bridge staff, sensing something out of the ordinary, swiveled in their chairs to regard the stoic Vulcan and the chief communication's officer on the turbolift staring at each other as if in some sort of tense stand-off.

This entire scene lasted all of twenty or so seconds before the turbolift, receiving another summons from below, closed its doors, and spirited the two senior officers away.

The only thing about Spock that moved at first was his eyes and he looked down at Uhura for a long moment before he suddenly reached out with his right hand and pressed the ALL STOP button.

Uhura found his actions since entering the lift exceeding strange and she couldn't help but be a little miffed at his presumption. Yet, there was something very compelling, seductive even in the way he was regarding at her: there was seriousness, determination, and resolution reflected in his eyes. And she knew in that very moment that Spock was going to do something bold, impetuous, and spontaneous... and she was going to let him.

In one broad, sure step he was across the turbolift, and his large, strong hands were gently cradling the sides of her face; his voice was urgent, insisting.

“I am going to kiss you, Miss Uhura.”

“I know, I know,” she said breathlessly while nodding rapidly as one single tear escaped from her eye.

“Do you have any objection?”

Her respiration increased as she began to slowly shake her head.

“No, I have no objection; I--.”

No sooner than the words were spoken, feverish lips pressed together in a coupling of pure, unadulterated passion. His blood was so on fire that he momentarily wondered if these were possibly some lingering vestiges of his recent blood fever.

He dragged his lips from her mouth only to come to rest at her temple, by way of her cheek, her chin, and her neck and she made absolutely no effort to pull away.

“This is most uncharacteristic of me, I assure you, Miss Uhura; it will pass momentarily.”

There came a muffled laugh from the back of her throat as she replied. “Do you hear me complaining, Mr. Spock?”

Her fingers, gripping the sleeves of his uniform tightly, released themselves and made their way upwards, her perfectly manicured nails establishing themselves in the soft black, precisely trimmed hairs at the base of his neck.

He pulled his lips away from her temple then. And leaning back, he reached out with a long finger and trailed it down the length of her face, removing the wetness from her cheek in the process, before letting his finger come to rest on her chin where he elevated it slightly. He captured her eyes with his.

“I feel I must apologize, Miss Uhura. Vulcan males, at times, can be overcome with urges that can not be helped. I was consumed with something—a yearning so strong and for a moment I was certain that I wished to kill Mr. Chekov.”

She had to laugh again at so honest an admission.

“Spock, please; whatever you do, *do not* kill Mr. Chekov. I am very fond of my young friend.”

He now fully embraced her.

“I promise you, I will not kill him, if he stays out of my way for the foreseeable future.”

“And just how long is this foreseeable future of yours?”

He saw uncertainty in her eyes and quickly pressed his lips to hers once more as an offer of reassurance before drawing back.

“Today.” He kissed her quickly once more. “Tomorrow...” another kiss, “And all the days after that.”

His lips lingered for a long moment before making himself stop. “I have wished to do this for several days now,” he said, resting his forehead against hers.

“What stopped you?” she asked, pulling back.

“Barbecues, Rigellian Rotoviruses, Ensign Chekov’s most indefatigable presence...”

She smiled and nodded, but remained in his arms, running her fingers through his short hair, putting it back into its usual, perfect order.

“I need to make several requests of you, Miss Uhura.”

“It’s *still* Nyota, Spock; and only Nyota for you. Now tell me; tell me what you need.”

“In light of this new state of affairs between us, when we are on duty together, I need you to remain professional and to continue performing your duties admirably.”

Uhura had to laugh at that. “I *think* I can do that. Anything else?”

“Will you permit me to visit you in your quarters this evening? I wish to explore this—these mysterious feelings inside of myself further. May I? Do you desire it?”

She smiled fully. “You better believe it, Buster.”

They quickly shared another lingering kiss once more before *she* purposely stepped out of his grasp and released the ALL STOP button herself.

“Professionalism, Mr. Spock; professionalism.” She lifted one eyebrow herself before she directed the turbolift’s computer to set it in motion once again. “Bridge!”

However, before the turbolift doors had the chance to open, Spock used the back of his fingers to reach out to stroke her cheek a final time before the start of their shift. And she gave him one last fleeting glance as the turbolift slowed and the doors swished open.

His hands rapidly found their way behind his back as he nodded to the Lieutenant to proceed out onto the bridge deck first where they each moved towards their respective stations just like any ordinary day.

They both chose to ignore all the curious stares.

Uhura was just securing her earpiece in her ear when Captain Kirk arrived on the next lift and stepped out, huffing and puffing with impatience while walking directly to Spock’s station.

“Are you well, Captain?” asked Spock, sedately, “I grew quite concerned when I noticed that you were one point forty-three minutes late for the start of the morning shift.”

“Late, Mr. Spock,” he bellowed, “Late? I’m late because somebody’s been holding up the turbolift this morning!”

“Indeed,” Spock replied, lifting both eyebrows while nodding in his usual, taciturn manner. “Perhaps I should issue a memorandum, urging the Enterprise’s crew to cease and desist with such a bothersome practice.”

Spock said nothing more before turning back to his console and Kirk eventually wandered off, knowing that sympathy for his momentary irritation was something that his Vulcan friend would never provide.

Uhura permitted herself one small, guilty smile before taking her queue from Spock and turning back to her station as well.

Happy in the knowledge that something wonderful was about to happen in her life, she busied herself with the morning diagnostic, while humming cheerfully in blissful anticipation.

And it was not thirty minutes later when she first heard the distress call coming from the Mallurian system; a distress call that would change the course of her life forever.

And the change had a name: it was called NOMAD.

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“So, what brings you here so bright and early this morning, Spock?” asked Doctor McCoy, smilingly, ready to start his busy day by exercising his wit on his favorite target. “You sick or something? You come to watch me shake my beads and rattles?”

As usual, the doctor’s jabs were ignored.

“I have merely come to inquire about Lieutenant Uhura. How does her recovery progress?”

“She’s just fine and dandy, almost back to her old self again, if I do say so myself; fine and dandy for someone who had had all knowledge erased. But, she learns very quickly and she’s made it up to the first year college level so far. Nurse Chapel discovered the other week that she has an aptitude for mathematics, so I’ve got her working on the advanced calculus tapes this morning.”

“Then it is safe to assume that you anticipate no lasting damage.”

“Now hold on, nobody said anything about no lasting damage. There is not brain damage, only the erasing of all knowledge and a few other odd bits and pieces that may or may not fall back into place.”

“Explain the nature of these odd bits and pieces as you call them.”

“Oh, she remembers who she is, alright, and she also knows that we are her colleagues and such. But then, there's these things called short-term and long-term memory and that’s a very tricky business. You see, like I said, only knowledge was erased, like her education. Her personal memories are

another story. As I am sure you know, human memories are formed most efficiently when said human has the opportunity to recall and to reflect. The longer you hold onto a memory and think about it, the easier it is for it to become ingrained. What NOMAD did was to interfere with that process. Her most recent memories have been effectively wiped out as she has not had the opportunity to think on them. She may get them back or not; I don't know. And her having that Rigellian Rotavirus in this last week has probably compounded the short-term memory loss a bit.”

“What time frame are we talking about, Doctor? How far back do her short-term memories go?” He held his breath.

“I don't know; every human is different. Could be an entire month lost, could be only a week or a day.”

“I see.”

At this un-looked-for complication, something inside of Spock's chest constricted and he was suddenly gripped with an emotional feeling so powerful that it was all he could do to remain in control.

That emotion was fear.

Could it be possible that she would not remember what they came to mean to each other in the last weeks? Had she forgotten what they had shared? Was she lost to him forever?

“Hey, you all right?” said McCoy, reaching for his medical scanner out of habit. “You look a bit green around the gills. Then again—.”

At a moment such as this, Spock only wanted to be spared from the doctor's humor.

“Doctor McCoy,” replied Spock, shortly, while moving towards the door. “Would you please tell Lieutenant Uhura that I asked after her and that it is my hope that she recovers in due course.”

“Why don't you tell her yourself?”

“I do not wish to be a strain on her recovery.”

“Stop being so ridiculous, Spock,” he growled as he pushed him towards the ward. “Go in and see her, you fool. Everybody has been to see her several times already with the exception of you. She’s beginning to think that you are avoiding her for some reason.”

McCoy had gotten him into the ward, and he called out to Uhura to get her attention.

“Look who I found wandering the decks,” said McCoy as he slapped Spock on the back, giving him a final nudge as he left the room.

Spock had hesitated at the door. He was wrestling with an even stranger emotion: dread. Yet, he had to be sure; he had to know.

Uhura smiled.

“Howdy, stranger.”

Hands tightly clinched behind his back, he nodded. “Lieutenant.”

“I was beginning to think that it was my breath or something.”

“I’m sorry.”

“You haven’t been to see me; I was wondering if my breath was bad or something. You know, keeping you away.”

“Your breath is always most pleasing, Miss Uhura. Why should that prevent me from seeking out your company?”

“Never mind,” she smiled, while she shook her head in dismay. “I don’t bite either... or at least, I don’t remember being a biter.”

Spock merely tilted his head and furrowed his brow. He was having trouble understanding.

“I was only teasing. That means that you are welcome to come a little closer.”

He took two steps in and stopped. Uhura rolled her eyes, grimaced, and patted an empty area on the edge of her bed.

Spock paused for a moment longer, debating within himself if he should do as she asked. And yet, he had to know, he needed to know if she remembered anything of their last week together. He eventually moved forward and lowered himself down onto the bed, taking his time to sit gingerly on the edge.

“Doctor McCoy claims that you are making a remarkable recovery.”

“Oh, does he now? What I’d like to know is if torture is a part of that process.”

“Torture?”

“Yes, torture. He’s practically cramming all this Calculus down my throat.”

“You have always had an aptitude for mathematics. When you calculate the frequency determinations on your monthly reports, you are never in error.”

“Oh really? That’s funny; for I recall once, about two years ago, you told me that I made an error on that very same report. Here I am a girl who has had her brain erased and I recall a small fact that even a Vulcan genius doesn’t remember. I’ve got you now!”

“Got me? Pardon me; but I do not understand your meaning.”

“I’ve got something to hold over your head, to tease you with, mercilessly, for the next fifty years... or in your case, the next one-hundred and fifty.”

Spock’s heart’s skipped a beat. She had just alluded to the conversation that they had had only a week ago; a small flicker of hope rekindled.

Slowly, he let his fingers reach out and softly brush the back of her hand as it laid atop the blanket.

“Nyota,” he exhaled quietly.

Uhura looked down at his hand touching her hand for a moment. She suddenly felt some odd sensations coursing through her body and there was something disquieting to her about the contact. It wasn’t exactly an unpleasant feeling, it was just an unusual one and before she even realized what she was doing, she actually flinched.

Spock, sensing her worried, hesitant, and confused state withdrew his hand. It was as if he was being stabbed in the heart.

“Hey, since when did you start calling me Nyota? I mean, I *guess* I don’t mind, it’s only that you have never--.”

He stood up abruptly. “Yes, of course, an error on my part. Forgive me for being so informal. I will not let it happen again and will endeavor to always keep a professional manner with you from here on out.”

Uhura wasn’t exactly sure what was happening, but she was certain that she had offended him in some way. “Mr. Spock—”

Another stab.

He could not meet her eyes.

“Now, if you will excuse me, Lieutenant, I must return to the bridge. I will inform the Captain of your progress, if you wish. Additionally, if you require further assistance with your Calculus lessons, might I suggest Ensign Chekov; his command of the subject is unmatched on board the Enterprise.”

“With the exception of you, don’t you mean?” she teased.

“You and the Ensign have a certain rapport that would lend itself well to harmonious study. My company would, no doubt, be quite unsatisfactory. You will do much better having... a friend teach you.”

“Perhaps, one day, you will be my friend, as well; but I guess with all your duties and responsibilities you only have time for the Doctor and Captain Kirk.”

He blinked. “As you say, Lieutenant.”

She smiled at him. “Thank you for visiting me, Mr. Spock.”

He nodded once and pivoted.

“Wait a minute, wait a minute; I just have to know, what happened to Mrs. Spock?”

He could not bring himself to turn around.

“There is no Mrs, Spock, Miss Uhura.”

“Are you sure? It seemed quite clear to me for a moment. I... I seemed to recall a wedding... or something.” At the sound of hesitancy in her voice, he finally turned and saw that she was obviously experiencing a certain level of discomfort in conjuring the recollection.

“Wait a minute, it will come to me.” She pressed firmly at her temple with her hand; there was a sharp stab of pain that caused her to wince.

“Please, do not injure yourself further, Miss Uhura, by trying to recall something that is of little importance. I assure you, there is no Mrs. Spock.”

She finally let herself relax and then she laughed.

“Well, I guess you would know that better than me.”

“Yes,” he whispered, barely audible.

“Well, there is sure to be a Mrs. Spock one day; a handsome man such as yourself--you’re bound to get married someday.”

He took a small step forward.

“And you, one day for you also... perhaps?”

She laughed heartily at that.

“Who me? Never! If I do know one thing about myself, I have the word spinster tattooed somewhere on this body. And besides, I only have need of a Starfleet issued blanket to keep this body warm.”

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“So,” said Doctor McCoy, when Spock returned to the outer office, “How did you find our favorite lady?”

“I found her... I found her... remarkably unchanged from how I found her in previous weeks.”

“See! I told you; back to her old self again!”

“Yes, Doctor; back to her old self again.”

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Interior. Day. Cut to shot of Spock walking the lonely corridors of the Enterprise. Several crew-members pass by, some running, busy at their duties, seemingly unaware of his presence.

SPOCK
(Unemotional, stoic, pensive)

Cue theme.

Roll credits.

Fade out.