

The Girl's Alright

By: StarTrekFanWriter

'Cause you know, T'Pring got a raw deal in TOS. Spock/T'Pring...and breakdown thereof, but lots of Amanda too. Humor, Family, Drama, Angst, Hurt/Comfort too...kid!Spock / kid!T'Pring Chap 10 has commlink episode from Descartes Error!

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Chapter 1

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Special Thanks to Beta Notes from The Classroom...check out her latest story "The Envoy" in my faves.

Chapter 1

Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.

Leo Tolstoy

T'Pring stared at her feet dangling above the floor as she sat in her mother's chair. Her parents were excited about something. She felt it through her bond with them when they touched her fingers minutes ago, but was not able to discern the source. Her deductive reasoning was weak.

23.75 minutes ago the comm had chimed announcing a call from Ambassador Sarek, an associate of her father's from years ago at the Vulcan Science Academy. Her parents had touched her fingers, asked her to watch her baby sister, T'Pelna, and then left the room.

T'Pring looked over at her sister now. The baby was sleeping soundly in the cradle. T'Pring wished she would wake up...she deliberated reaching over and touching her sister's fingers. A telepathic nudge would surely rouse T'Pelna from her slumber and then T'Pring could play with her.

Her sister was just beginning to transmit emotions through her fingertips. T'Pring found it delightful - and her parents assured her that letting her delight slip back to T'Pelna through her own fingers was a logical way for both of them to hone their telepathic abilities, although a finger touch was actually technically only empathic, not telepathic per se.

T'Pring reached over towards one of T'Pelna's enticingly opened palms, and then drew back. She was nearly eight years old. She should have better control over her impulses by now. How often had she heard her mother say, "A tired baby is a difficult baby"?

T'Pring did the mental arithmetic - no fewer than 13.5 times! She was reasonably sure it would have been 14 times if her mother hadn't been interrupted in one instance by T'Pelna's wailing.

Putting her hands under her thighs to resist temptation, she mentally congratulated herself for being logical. And then, as if to reward her for her control, T'Pelna's eyes fluttered open.

Without hesitating, T'Pring reached over to touch T'Pelna's fingers.

What did T'Pelna feel? Grogginess...and familiarity. Happiness. T'Pring echoed the happiness and T'Pelna made a soft sound. Contentment radiated through the finger link.

T'Pring was so excited she wasn't aware of her parent's approach until she heard her mother say, "Ah, T'Pelna has awakened. How unfortunate. She will be very tired later."

"I will watch her," said T'Pring's father.

Feeling her heart fall, T'Pring said, "There is no need, Father. I will watch her."

Taking a step towards T'Pring, her father held out his fingers. Responding with her free hand she felt his happiness and...pride? "Your mother has something to tell you. Go with her."

T'Pring was unable to contain her disappointment. Unfortunately, T'Pelna and her father both felt it. T'Pelna began to cry.

Kneeling down, her father transmitted calm. "You will be able to play with T'Pelna later. Go now with your mother."

T'Pring sat on her sleeping mat in lotus position. Her mother sat across from her in the same position. Their fingertips were joined. At this age most Vulcan children would not need this physical contact to discern their parents' emotions.

Her teachers used the word 'handicapped.' T'Pring's parents used the word 'delayed.' T'Pring was confident she would outgrow her 'handicap'...her parents were confident.

In the meantime, T'Pring's parents didn't believe in leaving her out of the family bond, so in private their fingers were frequently on hers.

Now her mother's fingers were transmitting relief and happiness. "We have found a bond mate for you. His parents are aware of your delays and they accept them."

T'Pring echoed the happiness her mother felt. All of her schoolmates were bonded. Some even spoke of their bond-mates as 'friends' already.

It was illogical, but T'Pring felt herself ashamed of her unbonded status. It was public proof of her undesirability.

A thought occurred to her. "Is he like me, Mother?"

Happiness burned through T'Pring's fingertips. "No, his telepathy is strong, as are his skills in deductive reasoning. When you have children, it is highly unlikely that they will have any delays of their own."

T'Pring felt herself overcome by wonder. How had she been this fortunate?

"His name is Spock," her mother said. "Perhaps you have heard of him, he is the only Vulcan Human hybrid."

Now that she thought of it, T'Pring realized she did know that Ambassador Sarek had a human wife and that they had one child.

She'd heard about a Vulcan Human child, too - but hadn't put the two together. She'd heard in the 'hybridization process' the Vulcan genes dominated, but she didn't know what that meant really. Apparently his intelligence and telepathy were more advanced than her own. She felt a swell of curiosity. Perhaps he had round ears? That might be interesting.

"Your questions will be answered soon enough," her mother said, picking up on T'Pring's curiosity. A flicker passed through the link that T'Pring could not identify. "He has had some trouble controlling the outward display of emotion. But you," said her mother and the link swelled with pride, "have perfectly adequate control for a child your age. You will balance each other."

T'Pring nodded, pleased. "It seems we are a logical match."

Spock sat across from T'Pring on a pillow upon the raised dais. His eyes darted to the side three times towards his parents. Her mother was right; he was not controlled.

Keeping her eyes focused straight ahead, T'Pring felt happy. She would be able to *help* him, just as he would help *her*. She'd always feared if she bonded with someone smarter and telepathically stronger, he would look down on her. Now she didn't have to be afraid.

He was pleasing to look on, too. That was a pleasant surprise. Did he find her to be as well? In a few minutes she would know! She was very excited but took satisfaction in knowing her outward demeanor betrayed no sign.

A healer placed two fingers on both their temples and then said, "You may begin."

In unison Spock and T'Pring raised their hands towards one another's temples. "My mind to your mind..."

T'Pring felt like she'd been caught in an earthquake. She'd never been this deeply in any mind except her mother's and father's. And their minds were welcoming and filled with warmth towards her - well, when she behaved. But she mostly was a logical girl, and so that was most of the time.

Spock's mind was chaotic and strange and his presence in the meld was overwhelming. Or maybe it was just that she was so weak in comparison? She felt her own shame at her 'handicap' and then felt that feeling of shame resonate with him. Images of taunting Vulcan children welled up before her eyes - taunting him because he was half-human! T'Pring was aware that some Vulcans regarded humans as inferior, but her parents were not among them. T'Pring trusted her parents.

And how horrible to be singled out publically! At least no one taunted her out loud. She tried to transmit sympathy. To her surprise, something in Spock recoiled as if she'd stung him. It hit T'Pring like a physical blow. What had she done wrong?

And then she felt Spock trying to get his bearings. Ahhh...it wasn't just her weakness that made this place between their minds uncomfortable. It was strange, unfamiliar territory for both of them. She tried to speak into his mind. *But it will not be strange forever.*

She felt Spock regard that statement. It did not elicit happiness from him or unhappiness. She felt like he was weighing the truth of it.

What are your interests? she asked...she wasn't strong enough to peer around his mental corners and find them for herself.

Images of numbers, planets and equations filled her mind; notes from his lyre hummed in her ears. And then a multitude of brightly scaled creatures swimming in water shimmered in her vision - Earth fish! His brother liked them and so did he. A thought on fish popped into his mind - some were as smart as the 'dog' animals used for assistance by humans on Earth. He wondered if fish could be equipped with special suits and used as assistance animals in

space; after all, they were already attuned to navigating in three dimensions.

T'Pring could not contain her wonder. He was smart. Very smart. She thought he would one day be as smart as her father and mother. And there was something else, too - the way his mind flittered to the idea of fish as assistance animals in space...It wasn't something he'd deliberated a great deal upon-it had just occurred to him in *this* moment. She wasn't equipped to judge the idea on its merits, but it was... *fascinating*.

Spock's mind seemed to open then. Just a little. She felt something...

What are your interests? he asked.

He could know it in an instant; she knew that. He was strong enough. But he was asking. T'Pring felt joy.

She felt him recoil a bit, but did not understand.

So she stuck with his question. He would not learn anything from her that would be relevant academically. And her skills in the lyre were not as impressive. So she filled him with images of her family - especially T'Pelna. He didn't have a baby sister. That was something new she could give him. And T'Pelna was so interesting. Her sister's new favorite activity was to sit up, and then drop and roll over. T'Pring loved helping her sister sit up so she could do the movement over and over. She loved feeling the baby's thrill through her fingertips.

T'Pring felt Spock absorbed these experiences...and then felt his disappointment.

After the bonding, Spock and T'Pring touched fingertips to the members of their new families.

Shaken by Spock's disappointment, T'Pring hesitated for a heartbeat before touching the fingers of Spock's father Sarek. To her relief she felt only calm, peace, and welcome. His eyes did not dart from hers. Sybok was the same.

And then she found herself face to face with the human woman. Her eyebrows were half circles above her eyes, but her features were symmetrical and not unpleasing. What was peculiar about them was how they moved.

A tightness started in the human's lips and then they appeared to relax and the relaxation spread outward. T'Pring was reminded of a stone dropped into a pool. She could not fathom what the expression meant.

It made her uneasy, but she did not want to be rude. Reaching forward, she brought her fingers up and the human woman responded, but slowly. To T'Pring, touching a human felt different. She felt some resistance; it was more difficult at first to get her bearings, but then she felt a slight spark of connection. T'Pring felt the human woman's own hesitance and...worry...and knew the human was trying to hide both. It struck T'Pring that this was the first time she'd ever been in contact with a fully-grown sentient being whose telepathic skills were less than her own.

When one encountered another being in distress, Surak did command a standard response. T'Pring tried to project calm, peace and welcome - just as Sarek and Sybok had done for her.

The human woman's lips thinned and stretched outward. "Thank you," her bond-mate's mother said. A blend of happiness and sadness T'Pring did not understand flickered from the woman's fingers...and something else...she thought perhaps the woman liked her. It was very pleasant. And if one's bond-mate's mother liked you...

Perhaps she could be optimistic after all.

A/N:

If you haven't guessed by the title, T'Pring will be handled very differently in this story. This won't contradict my other stuff, but my feelings on T'Pring have evolved a lot since I started writing Fan Fiction so it may not completely fit with Descartes Error. (I can't remember all I wrote about her in that tome!)

I have a cold for the third time in about two months (we're thinking our 4-year-olds nickname should be "The Petri-Dish"). I just want to write something that is fun for a little bit, don't have the emotional energy for Tapestry for a while...and this just came to me. Will be an eventual happy ending for both our Vulcan leads.

If you think Spock is innocent...Leave now! Leave now!

Chapter 2

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Chapter 2

"Why must I do this, Mother?" Spock said.

"Because she is your bond-mate, she needs your help, and it would be good if you two got to know each other," his mother said.

She was fixing the collar of his robe. He was pushing her hands away, ostensibly because he found her 'fussing' inappropriate. In truth, he purposely left his collar askew so she would touch him and he would have a chance touch her hands as he pushed them away. He could not read her more subtle facial expressions, had difficulty with her tone, there was no permanent link between them, and he refused to touch her fingertips as a child would do to glean her emotions. He was eight years and eleven months. Too old for that.

He could feel she was worried. He knew she was against the bonding and acquiesced only because of his father's fear.

Spock had gone into the bonding in full agreement with his father.

It was widely believed that those who lacked control, or who were unbonded, would enter full Pon Farr, the mating time, early in life - perhaps as early as fourteen. Spock was terrified of Pon Farr, and he suspected from his father's and Sybok's evasiveness all Vulcan males were. He was especially terrified of early Pon Farr, because that would put a spot-light on his lack of control. Having a bond-mate lessened his risk.

Also, all of his classmates were bonded - and he detested being different.

Finally, it was the Vulcan way. From what he had seen and heard, the Vulcan way was superior to the Human way - weren't the foremost scientists in the galaxy Vulcan? And Humans were savages who didn't believe in logic - except his mother, of course...to some extent. And they ate meat - his own mother sometimes ate fish when they traveled to Earth because, "She was tired of seaweed DHA supplements and soy protein."

But after bonding to T'Pring he felt like he understood his mother's hesitation. Stilling his hands, Spock said, "T'Pring is exceedingly dull, and she is telepathically handicapped."

He was undesirable, and he'd been paired with another undesirable. He should have expected that.

Worse, he'd been paired with an undesirable who pitied him.

His mother's hands reached again for his collar. "She seems like a very nice girl, Spock."

"That is a very imprecise description, Mother."

Amanda sighed, "I didn't sense any prejudice from her."

"You are psi-null and if she did not allow her prejudice to be transmitted -"

Pulling her hands away quickly, his mother furrowed her brows together in an expression even he recognized. She was annoyed.

"I've been around Vulcans a lot longer than you, young man, and I happen to know a bit about spotting prejudice. And a bit more about telepathy than you think I do."

Spock looked down at the floor and mumbled, "Maintaining that your more extensive experience makes my comment invalid is a fallacy of

logic and -"

Just then the door chimed. Putting her hands on her hips his mother stood up, raised an eyebrow at him, turned on her heel and went to the foyer.

Spock fought the urge to stamp a foot in disapproval. She could have T'Lana their maid answer the door.

From the foyer he heard his mother's voice, "T'Pring, welcome to our home."

Spock heard T'Lana's footsteps as well. His eyes widened. Would his mother remember to introduce T'Lana by her current title as maid, or would she forget and refer to her as 'Spock's nanny'?

"Hello Ma'am," said T'Pring's small voice. "I have done some research into Earth customs. I read that it is appropriate to bring a gift when visiting. Spock has communicated to me that you grow roses."

Spock tilted his head. He had, in fact, communicated that one night through the bond. T'Pring wanted to communicate about her sister's first crawling escapades. When Spock had indicated his boredom, she'd responded, *Tell me about your mother. She must be a remarkable human to live on Vulcan. My parents lived on Earth for a time. They expressed their difficulty in adapting to the culture.*

Spock had divulged freely...purely to prove to T'Pring what a logical creature his mother was, and that she had no trouble whatsoever adapting to Vulcan culture.

"There were no roses at the shops, but the florist informed me that this flowering plant would be compatible both aesthetically and in terms of soil and moisture requirements. It is not as fragrant, but -"

"Oh, T'Pring, it's beautiful! And please, you must call me Amanda. T'Lana, please take her cloak."

Well, at least she hadn't introduced T'Lana as his nanny...but...

Spock blinked. Her voice sounded genuinely happy. Peering around the corner, he flared his nostrils. His mother had a wide smile on her face and was holding up a small potted *Uhrinikah* bush with a single white bloom. Its deep red leaves, Spock, had to admit, would contrast nicely with the deep green leaves of his mother's roses. And the white bloom would not clash with any of his mother's rose varieties.

T'Pring's face was a model of non-expression, her back was straight, her hands were clasped neatly in front of her. But Spock could feel her excitement, and through the bond T'Pring was mentally shouting her joy. *She likes it! I have been studying human facial expressions so I -*

Spock cut off the mental link - the nice thing about having a telepathically handicapped bond-mate was that he could block her out momentarily quite easily. He felt his eyes narrow. He would find an excuse to give his mother a gift. It would be a bigger *Uhrinikah* bush with *many* more blossoms.

Spock read aloud, "A sehlat is tied to the corner of a 5-by-4-meter shed by a 8-meter piece of rope. Rounded to the nearest square meter, what is the area grazed by the sehlat?"

T'Pring kept a straight face, but she felt some pride when she said, "The answer is $\frac{3}{4}\pi$ multiplied by 8 squared or -"

Spock looked up at her from the PADD. His features were admirably blank, but she felt his annoyance.

"You are neglecting to account for the length and width of the shed being less than the length of the rope." His voice was completely neutral—his control was improving.

But not her word problems. She had no problem with math when it consisted solely of numbers.

Reviewing this was boring to him. She hoped he felt how sorry she was through the bond. Her practical application of geometry left much to be desired.

She felt the mental equivalent of a sigh from Spock. "No matter. Do you understand why your equation is incorrect?"

She felt a tinge of annoyance of her own. She wasn't that stupid; once the problem was explained to her, her math was fine. "Yes, I need to include the 3 meter and 4 meter quarter circles where the rope wraps around the shed."

Her annoyance made Spock more annoyed, but all he said was, "Let us move on to the next question."

"Excuse me," came Amanda's voice from the side of the room. "You two have been working for two solid hours. Since you're in between questions, I thought I'd bring in some refreshments."

In her hands she held a tray with little squares of bread that were laden with some sort of butter, a white milky substance in glasses, and forks. It looked and smelled extremely palatable to T'Pring, and she was becoming hungry.

To her surprise she felt Spock's embarrassment. Before Spock could modulate his telepathy, his thoughts came into her mind. *Half-human...she will think I am weak.*

And then he withdrew. She felt the familiar emptiness in the back of her mind that came whenever he did so. Her parents had explained that some Vulcans felt shame when they first bonded because they were used to hiding their emotions, and at first having someone privy was uncomfortable. Spock obviously fell into this category. If he would just open up, she could tell him he shouldn't be ashamed...

He did not open up. Instead he said, "Mother, we are Vulcans. We are perfectly capable of modulating our metabolisms to make these refreshments unnecessary."

Putting the tray down on the table between them, Amanda said, "It may not be necessary, but it will help your minds function at optimal efficiency."

"My mother always offers me celia root and t'kela juice after I have studied two hours," said T'Pring. Hopefully, this would make Spock see that his embarrassment wasn't warranted. This was what parents did for their children. Even Vulcan parents.

"Oh," said Amanda drawing upright, her eyes widening slightly, her mouth dropping a little. "Would you prefer celia root? I don't have t'kela juice -"

T'Pring suddenly realized her error. Maybe Amanda thought her refreshments inappropriate? A conversation with her parents after the bonding played in T'Pring's head: "When we were on Earth, we were constantly concerned about breaking unspoken taboos. And the expressiveness of our human hosts - it was as though they spoke a language everyone but us could understand. Undoubtedly, Spock's Mother is as confused as we were..."

"No, this is completely adequate," said T'Pring.

Amanda's expression didn't change.

She remembered her parents' emotions as they told her about life on Earth. Feelings of being lost and bewildered.

T'Pring felt terrible. She'd induced that state in another sentient being. Could she reassure her with a touch? Amanda wasn't a stranger; it wouldn't be uncomfortable...And wasn't Amanda practically family now? Her second mother?

Reaching forward she touched Amanda's hand as she would her own mother and tried to convey reassurance. Again she felt the slight resistance of the human mind, but then felt the familiar spark of connection. "No, these refreshments are acceptable. I am actually curious as to what they are."

From Spock T'Pring felt shock. There was an awkward flutter of surprise from Amanda, but then a very deep feeling of happiness. It was very pleasant and T'Pring had no trouble echoing it.

"Well," said Amanda, not dropping her fingers from T'Pring's, "These are some of Spock's favorites. Toast rounds with almond butter, cashew nut butter -"

As soon as Amanda left, Spock said, "Why did you do that?" He flashed a picture in her mind so she knew exactly what he meant.

"So not to be misunderstood," T'Pring whispered. "It is how I communicate with my own mother and I -"

"You still touch your mother's fingers?" said Spock.

If T'Pring was not mistaken, he said it a little too loudly.

"Yes," said T'Pring. She straightened. One should not be ashamed of something one could not help. "I am delayed, so I still touch my parents' fingers to communicate."

A thought occurred to her. "Are you so strong a telepath that you have a permanent mental bond with your mother?"

She knew that human Vulcan couples had viable bonds, but the parental bond was different. It wasn't as strong and tended to dwindle over time.

"No," said Spock, tilting his head. "My mother is psi-null."

"How do you communicate with her?" asked T'Pring.

"With words," said Spock forking a cashew nut butter toast round.

"Obviously," said T'Pring, fairly certain she'd just been insulted. "But how do you..." She switched to the bond because talking about feelings was so difficult. *How does she convey her caring for you...and how does she know you care?*

She felt Spock become flustered.

Putting down his snack he said, "She knows."

T'Pring blinked. "But if you do not touch her hands, how do you know _"

"It is not necessary," Spock said as the bond hummed with irritation. "And we are too old for that behavior."

She was being insulted. And he was being illogical - but she was too polite to say that.

Spearing an almond butter round, T'Pring said, "It may not be necessary, but it is optimal."

Spock picked up his fork again. They ate their snacks in mental-and audible-silence. T'Pring was so angry she was actually glad he had withdrawn. How could he be so... *mean* ...to his own mother!

A/N

If you read and enjoyed...please leave a review! It helps keep Notes and I going.

Chapter 3

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Special thanks to beta Notes from the Classroom. Check out her latest, "The Envoy"

Chapter 3

Spock quickly realized that he would get no sympathy from anyone in the household.

Without any prompting the night after T'Pring's visit, his mother said, "T'Pring's finger touch was startling today."

Spock lifted his head from where he was playing a game on his PADD swapping virtual DNA to produce single celled organisms that could survive on Class J worlds.

The finger touch had made his mother uncomfortable! He could request that T'Pring desist from that far too intimate activity immediately.

"But I really quite enjoyed it," his mother said. "Especially when your father is away I get so lonely. I miss a friendly touch." She snapped her fingers and I-Chaya, the family sehlat, came over and put his head on her lap. Stroking the fur of I-Chaya's brow she said, "Sometimes I think in my loneliness I'm going to wear away all the fur on I-Chaya's head."

Spock resisted the urge to pull his eyebrows together in a scowl.

He mentioned T'Pring's unsuitability to T'Lana and promptly was told he was "being illogical" and that "T'Pring seems to be in every regard a very logical, controlled young lady who will balance you out."

Even Sybok, who was usually a sympathetic ear on such matters, was no help.

"She is an analytically and telepathically disadvantaged female," Spock said.

The brotherly bond with Sybok went completely blank. And then his brother said, "Did you know I was telepathically and analytically disadvantaged until Mother, Father and T'Lana took me in?"

"No," said Spock. He had a sensation in his gut as though his digestive apparatus had just sunk to the floor.

"And now I am part of the VSA Youth Program," said Sybok, "and soon I will be applying to the Vulcan Science Academy proper. She is too young for you to judge her future potential."

Spock decided he was going to stand his ground. "Maybe, but I have to put up with her being completely unstimulating *now*."

Sybok raised an eyebrow. "She has very symmetrical pleasing features and is in good health. You may find her stimulating enough later."

"What does that mean?" asked Spock.

"At least she is not aesthetically unpleasing," Sybok responded, turning back to his PADD. "I need to study."

Walking away, Spock contemplated Sybok's words. T'Pring wasn't ugly. In fact, he was certain by objective standards of health and hygiene she was quite the opposite, but he felt no pull towards her.

Maybe he just wasn't old enough? There was the potential that one day he might find her pleasing regardless of whether she was dumb or smart.

Yuck.

He didn't voice any of his concerns to his father, of course. All Sarek said about T'Pring was, "Someday she will be necessary to you." Mentioning her unsuitability might elicit another conversation on the dangers of Pon Farr, and Spock did not want to discuss that issue ever again.

A potted rose under one arm, T'Pring walked out to the hover car where her parents waited and T'Pelna slept. She remembered her human manners and turned to wave to Amanda just before entering the vehicle.

Amanda waved back from the porch with a wide smile. Spock stood motionless. He saw the gesture as unnecessary - they'd already said goodbye in the house.

"Is that a rose?" said her mother.

Settling into the seat, T'Pring gazed in fascination at the small potted plant with deep green leaves and a single unopened pink blossom. "Yes," she said. "Spock's mother gave it to me."

Something unfurled in her mind. A spark. She felt happy, but it wasn't her happiness. For a moment she just sat very still in sway of the sensation.

And then she said said, "Mother, Father, I believe we have established a touchless empathic connection."

She felt a swell of curiosity, relief, and happiness so great it made her gasp for breath. And then just certainty and happiness.

"Daughter, I believe you are correct," said her father.

"T'Pring," her mother said, "you see, though you have had your doubts, these in-person meetings with Spock have helped you tremendously. Just six visits and your telepathy is already improving."

"Perhaps it is the close proximity," her Father hypothesized.

"That could be it...Do you and Spock touch fingers?" her mother asked.

"We do not," said T'Pring, feeling a bit of uncertainty.

Her father felt her uncertainty and misinterpreted it. "That is fine. You will work out your differences - you must be patient."

"Yes," said her mother, "your patience has already been beneficial."

Her parents could feel what she felt, but they could not hear what she thought. T'Pring did not think it was Spock who was helping her telepathy.

"Tell us about the rose bush," said her mother.

"Spock's mother invited me out to the garden again today," said T'Pring, feeling happiness at the memory. "We continued our conversation from last time about Vulcan Human comparative development. I told her about T'Pelna's recent first steps. Did you know that human babies sometimes walk as early as nine months? Or sometimes even seven, although that is not as healthy and can lead to bone problems."

"Fascinating," said her father.

"Being on good terms with your bond-mate's mother is optimal," said her mother, and T'Pring could feel her satisfaction.

T'Pring was on good terms with her bond-mate's mother. She always found some reason to touch Amanda and was rewarded with sensations of happiness and friendship. She felt such sympathy for the human woman - abandoned by her own son. Also, T'Pring just liked Amanda. Her laughter was a fascinating sensation beneath T'Pring's fingertips, and Amanda was not at all bored by stories of T'Pelna. Even better, she had fascinating stories about Spock's and

Sybok's development - and had even confided that Sybok had been delayed, too.

Establishing a connection through those little touches was no longer difficult for T'Pring. Had overcoming that initial difficulty honed her telepathic abilities?

Would her parents approve? It was a little unusual. She decided to meditate on it before telling them anything...she didn't want to risk losing the only part of her visit with Spock that went well.

For the most part Spock was annoyed or bored with her. He did not enjoy her company in the least. She never lost control of her physical reactions, though sometimes she did get annoyed or hurt. He knew it, but he did not care.

She stared down at the pink rose bud and felt her heart sink a little bit.

What was worse, even though he cared nothing for her, she did *care* about him. The pull of the bond seemed like something inescapable to T'Pring, like the pull of gravity. But Spock seemed immune.

She felt something...optimism? She realized it was her parents.

"You will be necessary to him someday," said her mother.

She felt her spirits pick up.

A/N:

I really don't think Spock is a brat so much as he is a little half-*human* boy. If you read and enjoyed, please leave a review!

Chapter 4

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Special thanks to beta Notes from the Classroom, check out her latest S/U + Spock!Prime story "The Envoy"

Chapter 4

Four months and eight uncomfortable visits later, T'Pring's family moved to a home 500 kilometers away. T'Pring was both relieved and saddened.

The day Spock lost control and attacked his school tormentors, T'Pring knew immediately and ran home as quickly as she could to access the family comm. She was not in a hurry to contact Spock. He'd already rebuffed her offer to use her mind as a harbor from his emotions, and he'd declared her sympathy as unnecessary...in fact she could feel he felt it was insulting.

But there was someone she was sure could use her sympathy - even without a telepathic or empathic connection. Dropping her school bag and slipping quickly out of her shoes, she took the stairs that led to the family library two at a time. She punched the digits for Spock's number into the comm...and as she predicted, found herself face to face with Amanda.

"T'Pring," said Amanda, "You know, I guess."

Amanda's face looked slack to T'Pring. She couldn't guess what it meant, even though she had taken to studying human facial expressions extensively so she could better communicate with her friend.

Putting a hand to her brow, Amanda said, "Sarek's at school with Spock now."

T'Pring knew that. Sarek was so rarely home - it was rather a fortunate coincidence that Sarek was available now to handle the administration at Spock's school.

T'Pring couldn't imagine what it would be like to have one of her own parents gone so frequently. The parental bond weakened with separation and distance. Of course, Spock tolerated no sympathy over his father's frequent absences, either. He said that having more than one caregiver was not necessary. It was not *necessary*, T'Pring had replied. But having more than one caregiver was optimal.

Amanda sighed. "I'm not sure what it was about -"

"Spock was protecting you," T'Pring said.

Amanda blinked. "Sarek didn't mention that part of the story."

But he should have mentioned it! T'Pring was sure of it. Spock could be so cruel to his mother - cutting her off emotionally, not engaging in her interest in comparative psychology, downplaying human achievements as much as prejudiced Vulcans did. Amanda had to know that underneath, her son loved her.

"They said you engaged in an occupation that has not existed officially on Vulcan for over 2,000 years," T'Pring said. "It was quite illogical of them. It is not an occupation listed on your curriculum vitae. They called you a..."

T'Pring stopped. She knew that on Earth the occupation was common and legal in many places. She wanted to be culturally sensitive but couldn't bring herself to say the word.

Amanda gave a tight smile. "That's okay, T'Pring, I can guess."

Nodding, T'Pring said, "I am sure you can. Your deductive reasoning is quite good. I, on the other hand, am as dull as a box of hammers."

Amanda's eyes widened. "T'Pring, where did that come from?"

"My dictionary of human idioms," said T'Pring. Amanda looked surprised. T'Pring wasn't sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. "I am trying to learn as many as I can for my school's new human culture class. It is a pilot program. They are trying to combat rising Vulcan prejudice towards aliens."

"I see," said Amanda, her brows coming together curiously.

"Did I not use the idiom correctly?"

"T'Pring, you just called yourself not very intelligent," said Amanda.

T'Pring nodded. "My deductive reasoning skills, by any objective measure are -"

"T'Pring," Amanda said holding up a hand, "Don't say that!"

"But if one knows one's limitations one can combat them more effectively," said T'Pring.

"T'Pring, don't call yourself stupid, directly or in an idiom."

"Yes, Ma'am." T'Pring thought it was an odd command, but she had respect for her elders.

There was a moment of silence.

T'Pring felt like she needed to say something. "Amanda, my parents say that since the re-discovery of Romulans...and the destruction of the Kelvin, that Vulcans have become more protective of their reputations as 'logical'...to the extent that they are illogical.

"The boys that try to evoke emotional responses in Spock are behaving illogically."

"Yes, I think so, too," said Amanda looking down. She took a deep breath.

There had been many incidents when Spock had been tormented. T'Pring had informed her family, of course. "My parents say that the teachers and parents of the boys should be informed of their illogical behavior. Not just for Spock's sake. If they are not corrected, it could lead to further deterioration in his tormentors' thinking."

Amanda's brows came together and she looked directly at the screen.

T'Pring stiffened. Had she said something wrong? Maybe humans did not believe in intervention of this sort - Spock certainly didn't want any help. "You are angry?" T'Pring asked. "I did not mean to offend -"

"I am angry, but not at you," said Amanda.

T'Pring relaxed, hopefully not so much that Amanda would notice she'd been uncomfortable a few moments ago.

"I agree with you completely..." Amanda said. "But there is disagreement in our home over how we should handle the matter."

Closing her eyes and taking another deep breath, Amanda said, "But tell me more about your human culture class T'Pring."

T'Pring got off the comm with Amanda, conveniently just as her mother called her to dinner and just before Spock arrived home. She met her father in the hallway down to the dining area.

"You were on the comm with your bond-mate's mother," he observed.

T'Pring nodded. "Spock...lost control. It seemed necessary...and I believe the gesture was appreciated." Amanda had even laughed at an anecdote about T'Pring's human teacher's first response to plomeek soup.

Her father nodded, "It was logical to look after the well-being of your future family members." And then he lowered his voice and sent a powerful wave of reassurance through their bond. "And one day your bond-mate will find you necessary, too."

T'Pring nodded and tried to squelch any doubt.

Years passed and Spock did not seem to find T'Pring anything other than annoying.

When Sybok was expelled from the family, she thought perhaps that might bring them closer together. Sybok was...or had been...perhaps Spock's closest confidant. But Spock did not seek the peace of her mind then, either.

In fact, Spock actively continued to push her away.

She knew he was ashamed of his humanity, which was terribly illogical. She began to think that was her opportunity. If she proved that *she* wasn't illogical or ashamed of him, all would be well.

However, her dramatic efforts to be the best student in her human culture class and her genuine fascination for the subject did not sway him.

She began to lose hope. And then, the year they both turned 13, Spock, Amanda and Sarek went on a trip to Earth for a vacation with the Friedmanns - friends of his family.

A/N:

Sybok's story will be told someplace else. Can't give too much away though!

13 year old Spock's POV next two chapters – Notes has declared them two of her favorites. I don't find him completely unsympathetic even now, but I know lots of people are hating him. (He's just a normal half-Vulcan strong willed boy-child to me!)

Native fans...Rachel from the last chapter of "The Native" will be in the next chapter ;-)

Some people have said that it's weird he doesn't like T'Pring, but likes Nyota. I understand the confusion, but I think in the next chapters it will become clear how Nyota is able to give him a different kind of acceptance. Also...really just a boy now!

If you read and enjoyed please leave a review!

Chapter 5

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to Beta Notes from the Classroom. Check out her latest "The Envoy" for Spock!Prime intrigue/Kirk, McCoy, Spock friendship – and more than a bit of Spock and Nyota romance.

Chapter 5

Rachel Friedmann was standing in the kitchen of the resort home her family was sharing with Spock's. Back to Spock, fists on her cutoff covered hips, she was arguing with her father, Josef, who was sitting at the kitchen counter with the rest of the parents. Her hair arrangement bobbed as she spoke. It was a so called 'pony tail', although Spock knew of no equine varieties that had curly hair that spread out like a thick pillow on their posterior appendages.

Spock was sitting a bit apart at the kitchen table, bent over a PADD ostensibly reading descriptions of the local flora and fauna.

He kept getting distracted by Rachel. They were exactly two months and three days apart in age. They used to play together as toddlers, although once they both started school they saw less of one another. In fact, although Spock saw her father relatively frequently when he visited Vulcan for business trips, he had not seen Rachel in four years. She had changed. A lot.

Her hair and skin were dark, just a shade lighter than her Ethiopian mother's, and the hair style was not new. But her long legs...her hips, and she had breasts. It was not wrong for him to notice these things. How could he not? He had eyes.

But it was probably wrong to stare. And it shouldn't make his pulse quicken.

Spock turned his eyes to her father, hoping his momentary lapse of discretion wasn't noticed.

Josef was gray eyed, had blond hair with streaks of white, and was normally quite pale. Now after two days at the beach his skin tone ranged from gold to slight red. Pushing a pair of wire rimmed glasses up a slightly sun burned nose, he said, "It's too late, it will be dark soon."

Rachel stomped her foot and Spock followed the movement down from her hips to her long legs, to her impossibly narrow foot, which had, he knew from earlier observation had delicate pink painted toe nails.

"But it's not dark yet , and I just want to go for a walk," Rachel said.

"Your mother and I don't feel like it's safe for you to -"

"If I was a boy you'd let me go," said Rachel.

Josef's gray eyes narrowed. "No one should be outside alone at night...you know that."

"Spock could go," said Sarek.

A walk with Rachel, alone on the beach? He should not be as interested as he was. He willed his heart rate to return to normal and his face to remain slack.

Rachel turned her head to Spock, "Well?"

Spock was afraid that any words that came out of his mouth might sound too eager.

It was his mother who saved him - or put him up for an evening of silent suffering, he wasn't sure. "Spock, didn't you say you wanted to observe the glowing organisms in the sand?" said Amanda.

"I did want to observe the Noctiluca" said Spock both eyebrows rising. What a perfect way to appear interested...and yet uninterested. "We would have to stay out until after it got dark though." He looked towards Josef and Esther.

The couple looked at each other. Josef shrugged. Esther said, "You'll both take comms?"

"And flashlights" said Sarek.

"I brought a few petridishes and a digiscope for you, Spock," said Amanda. "They're in my bag."

Spock blinked. He shouldn't be surprised by his mother's thoughtfulness, she did support all his scientific endeavors - but he was. And touched.

As they were slipping out the door and out of sight of their parents, Spock heard Esther say, "Should we have said 'no fashion shows'?"

Spock knew the episode being referred too. Once when they were four years old Rachel had wanted to show Spock her latest swim garment. She hadn't bothered to actually put the garment on. Or any garment. Spock at the time had been completely unimpressed, by the garment or her state of undress. Now, if the same were to occur...

Spock was quite certain Rachel's face went a shade darker. She looked up at the ceiling took a deep breath and gritted her teeth.

From the other room he heard Sarek reply, "Do not worry, he is bonded." And then it was Spock's turn to go slightly green. He was bonded. And he shouldn't be thinking the thoughts he'd been carefully hiding from T'Pring lately. These thoughts shouldn't even occur to him - the bond was supposed to protect him.

The sun was sinking on the horizon of the Qalansiya beach as they made their way down the rocky path from the resort houses. The

houses were carefully designed to look like authentic Yemini architecture, and set into the cliffs that overlooked the ocean.

They were silent for 4.5 minutes. Strangely, Spock wanted to talk, but had no idea what to say. At last he settled on, "So, what are your interests?"

A tightness between Rachel's brows loosened in a most fascinating way. She shrugged her shoulders. "I like a lot of stuff actually. If you mean school I don't really have a favorite subject. I kind of like everything."

Tilting his head, Spock said, "But certainly there is something in particular that you excel at and will pursue?"

Slipping out of their sandals they made their way closer to the water.

Rachel's lips turned upward a fraction. "I really just like almost everything - and I do well in all my classes. I love to read, history is very interesting. But I like math too - there's always an answer in math, you know? An answer you can prove. After writing essays on literature and history that may not be quite the interpretation your teacher is looking for, math is...perfect."

"Yes" said Spock tilting his head. This was not the input he expected from a human, at least not one so young. Humans were vested in the illogical - especially the young. It was a well established...what? Was it a fact? It was something he'd heard said. And something he'd inferred from Terran entertainment.

Rachel nodded, smiled, ran to where the surf lapped at the shore and dragged a foot through the damp sand. Bending down she said, "Are these the night lights you were talking about?"

"What?" said Spock.

"Your Nocti - lusa...or luca," said Rachel standing up her brows furrowing a little bit, but a soft smile still on her face. "Nocti is night,

like nocturnal and lusa..or luca...is light in Latin. We're studying latin roots in school." she looked away and bit her bottom lip.

Spock was used to facial expressions. His mother still employed them even after many years on Vulcan. But seeing Rachel's face contort was different somehow. It was mesmerizing. He felt himself go a little hot, although the ocean breezes were quite cool.

"Right?" said Rachel again.

Spock blinked. "That is correct." Moving forward he gazed down at the sand and ran his own foot through it. Sure enough there was a slight flicker. "I believe they will be more visible as it gets darker," he said.

Looking up Spock realized how close he was to her. She took a step backwards and said nothing, just made tiny circles in the sand with a toe. Spock was disappointed by both her further proximity and the silence.

He tried once again to make conversation. "If you do not have a subject you excel at, or find particularly engaging, how do you and your scholastic advisers choose a track for your future?"

"I am thirteen!" said Rachel.

"Yes, I know that," said Spock, "I am not certain how it pertains to my inquiry -"

"I think I have plenty of time," said Rachel.

"But if you were to focus your efforts in one field in particular, there is greater likelihood that you will distinguish yourself early -"

Furrowing her brow a little Rachel said, "Or burnout."

"Pardon?" said Spock.

Shrugging Rachel said, "I'm not exactly sure. It's something my parents say. I think it means loose interest in everything. They think now is the time I should be exploring all my options."

Spock tilted his head. It was definitely a human attitude. Very inefficient.

Scraping a toe in the sand Rachel moved further down the beach. "What about you? Do you have a favorite subject?"

"We do not speak of favorites," said Spock following the line of sand she'd made with his eyes.

Huffing, Rachel said, "Is there a subject at which you *excel*?"

"Two," said Spock, "Math and science - they are complimentary."

Skipping a little further down beach Rachel made a wide circle with her toe and exclaimed, "Wow! There are a lot here!" She squatted down and began moving a finger in the sand.

Hastening to her side Spock dropped beside her. He quickly scooped up some sand with his petridish and took the digiscope out of his pocket.

The scope was a lot like an old fashioned magnifying glass, but much more powerful. Beneath it the Noctiluca went from 0.5mm in diameter to 5mm in diameter.

Bringing her head close to his, Rachel gasped. "Cool! They are like little glowing jellyfish!"

A bit of her hair tickled his forehead. Spock licked his lips and took a deep breath. "They are in fact, dinoflagellate."

"So will you be a biologist?" said Rachel.

Shaking the petri dish so the organisms would maintain their luminescence Spock said, "There are interdisciplinary studies, of

course, but most likely my focus will be astrophysics or physics."

Looking up he found his face so close to hers he audibly gasped. Licking his lips he said, "Why...do you suspect biology."

Rachel looked down at the petridish. "Oh, I don't know..."

Averting his eyes, Spock said, "Yes, of course you may not know. The human mind, unlike the Vulcan mind, is not capable of tracking where all of its impulses come from."

Standing up quickly Rachel said, "That was sarcasm."

Putting her hands on her hips she looked pointedly at the petridish again, and then met his eyes.

"Oh. I see," said Spock.

"So..." said Rachel. "Do you already have your college picked out and all?" Squatting down next to him again and shaking the petridish that was in *his* hand - somehow not touching his fingers...Usually, Vulcans found new empathic contact disquieting and uncomfortable but Spock found himself wishing their fingers would touch. They had touched when they were small of course. Often. Before Spock's empathic abilities were fully developed. He remembered curiosity and affection. Would it be the same?

It did not matter. It was inappropriate and he would control himself. Tilting his head he said, "It is reasonable to suspect that I will go to the Vulcan Science Academy."

Rachel shifted her weight a little bit. Looking up at the sky she said. "And you're bonded. That means you're engaged, right?"

Spock felt his shoulders tighten. T'Pring was the last thing he wanted to think about right now. Nor did he want her listening in. He gently partitioned that part of his mind connected to her. He'd gotten better at it over the years.

"It is less than a marriage, more than a betrothal," Spock said. It was the standard reply.

"Huh," said Rachel. "It's a shame that the only time Vulcans are allowed to marry for love is when someone dies...like your father-"

Spock looked up at her quickly. "My father married my mother because it was logical. As ambassador to Earth -"

Rachel's jaw got tight. "He wasn't ambassador to Earth at the time. He was an interim ambassador and he thought they'd fire him. But yeah, I guess it was logical. He married her in a big pompous ceremony so that all of Earth would know and if divorce ever happened it would make all Vulcans look illogical. But they were bonded long before that anyway so -"

Spock took a deep breath. His jaw tightened. "You are mistaken."

"I am not!" said Rachel raising an eyebrow and tilting her head from side to side. "My dad was their best man!"

"I am aware of that," said Spock. He tilted his head. "Arguing this is pointless. You have your facts wrong."

"No, I don't," said Rachel.

"Human memory is deceptive," said Spock.

"Is that how you win an argument," said Rachel standing up and crossing her arms. "Insulting your opponent?"

It was darker now, but a full moon provided enough light to see her expression. Her brow was furrowed, her jaw tight, and her lips were turned down. The effect was fascinating. Although objectively her features were perhaps slightly less symmetrical than T'Pol's the way they moved...it was exciting, and something else...he felt his body go unaccountably warm again.

She stamped her foot, and it occurred to him she might leave. That was not what he wanted her to do.

Standing Spock said, "You are correct. I cannot disprove your facts, so my argument is flawed." Although human memories were notoriously unreliable and he didn't think for a minute she was correct.

Rachel's shoulders dropped, and then her face softened. "Okay," she said.

Illogically, at that word, Spock felt like he'd just been victorious at...something. Although...He looked down. She was correct, he had reverted to a fallacy in reasoning.

Turning her back to him Rachel walked further down the beach, dragging a toe in the sand occasionally. The Noctiluca shimmered in her foot steps for brief milliseconds nearly as brilliantly as the stars.

Spock jogged to catch up with her. They were silent again for 3.35 minutes and then Rachel said, "I'm really looking forward to going inland tomorrow. They say the Dragon's Blood trees are amazing."

Spock blinked. He was actually looking forward to the next days inland trek. "I too, find the prospect fascinating."

"The Desert Rose plants remind me of some of the flowers on Vulcan, too," said Rachel.

"Yes," said Spock, "A fascinating example of convergent evolution. That is when -"

Rachel made a sound that seemed similar to a laugh. "You know, we learn biology in Earth schools too."

They walked for what was in Spock's estimation 3 kilometers, before Rachel moved up the beach and sat down in some dry sand.

Looking up at the stars she said, "So where is Vulcan up there?"

Sitting down beside her, perhaps a little closer than was absolutely necessary, Spock pointed in the direction just below the horizon. "It would be more accurate to say, down there. It is not visible at this time."

"And Orion Prime?" said Rachel.

Spock pointed upwards.

She had him point out several different systems, and Spock was happy to oblige. She kept her eyes on the stars. His eyes kept going to her face, to watch the facial expressions she made.

"All those, worlds...so much to see," Rachel said. "Don't you ever feel like you're in a cage?"

Spock wasn't sure how the two thoughts fit together.

"Pardon?" he asked.

"Your whole life is already mapped out for you," said Rachel rocking slightly with her knees pulled up to her chin. "Your career...your marriage..."

Spock looked up to the stars. He hadn't thought of it in quite such evocative words. But...did he feel like he was in a cage? The Vulcan Science Academy was not a cage, it was a gateway to the universe. He might never leave Vulcan physically, but his mind would journey beyond the stars and beyond quanta through the language of mathematics. He would have the deepest minds on Vulcans to share his discoveries with.

But his bond-mate. He looked down at his feet. He hurt T'Pring. Usually unintentionally. And hurting her hurt him through the bond. She was accommodating. And behind that frozen face she was kind. But whenever he tried to open the bond, just a little, she wound up

boring him or insulting him by pointing out just how he could use her much more controlled mind to ease his emotions...He could control them. He would control them.

He tilted his head. T'Pring would be 'necessary'. Perhaps in as little as one year. His chest tightened. They wouldn't make them marry if *it* happened next year...no, they'd be allowed to live apart until they were older. But it was all the same sooner or later. He'd be coming home to her and the children he was expected to provide but was uninterested in...children she most definitely wanted.

...and then the cage would be truly locked.

Although the air on Earth was oxygen rich he gasped for breath.

He had to think about something else. Burrowing his foot into the sand he found the moisture the Noctiluca needed to survive. He kick more sand away until a few of the little organisms released their glow.

"Stars above, stars below," said Rachel. Spock turned to see her smiling. She laughed, "It's like we're free floating among them."

Spock gazed at her smile. He pushed T'Pring from his mind, it was easy in that moment, on an alien world, with an alien being.

And then Rachel's comm rang. Flipping it open, she said, "Yes? What?" She paused. "Oh, Spock was just pointing out where every known system to Vulcan and man is in the galaxy. Sure, we'll come home. It might take a while...we walked kind of far..."

Hopping to her feet, she said a few quick, "Uh-huhs", flipped her comm closed and looked down at him.

"Are you coming?" she said wiping sand off her body.

Climbing to his feet he felt the doors of the cage swinging shut.

A/N:

Is Spock becoming more sympathetic? He's a little older, and understands T'Pring more now, but he still doesn't love her...but I don't necessarily blame him for that.

If you read and enjoyed please leave a review!

Chapter 6

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to beta Notes From the Classroom. Check out her latest, "The Envoy" in my faves.

Chapter 6

They were getting close to the resort homes when they saw a dark shape writhing on the beach twenty five meters ahead of them.

"A beached marine mammal?" said Spock.

"There are supposed to be a lot of dolphins around here," said Rachel. "Come on, let's look."

With that she took off in a sprint, flashlight in hand. Spock followed her, the sound of their feet pounding the wet sand filling his ears. They were nearly at the shape, which Spock was really beginning to suspect was an extremely sick, retching animal when Rachel's hand caught his arm.

The shock of the contact made him stop immediately. He turned to her hand, on the long sleeved shirt he wore, and then to her face.

Putting a hand over her mouth she said, "Oh!" Her eyes were wide and staring at the animal.

"It appears to be ill," said Spock.

"It's not an it," said Rachel in a whisper.

Spock turned back to the shape. 'It' was two people. The female appeared to be oxygen deprived and perhaps injured, she was breathing audibly and moaning. "Indeed," he said. "Is the one giving

the other mouth-to-mouth? Perhaps there was a swimming incident?"

Abruptly, Rachel pulled him up the beach and away from the forms. "That's no swimming accident," she hissed.

"Then what is it?" said Spock following her.

Still tugging on his arm she said, "You know sometimes my dad has said you're some sort of a genius."

Spock wasn't sure how this related to the topic at hand, but he responded honestly. "I suppose on the human IQ scale I am, but -"

"Then put one and one together, Zephram Cochrane," said Rachel.

Trying to slip his arm from her grasp, and maybe if he was lucky his hand *into* her grasp Spock said, "One and one -"

Sadly, she let his arm go. "Spock, two people on the beach, gasping and moaning..." She gestured with her hands and her eyes got wide.

"Yes..." said Spock slowly. "That is what I observed as well..."

Gesturing more wildly, but still walking up the beach she said, "They're...you know!"

"No, I do not know," said Spock getting frustrated.

Rachel sighed and put her hands to her head. "They're getting it on, or as a biologist would probably say, 'mating'".

Turning his head back towards the shadows, now a single form, Spock said, "Are you sure?"

"Yes I'm sure!" said Rachel.

"You have experience in these matters?" said Spock.

Stopping short, Rachel put her hands on her hips. "What?"

Human hearing was not as acute as Vulcan hearing. "I asked if-"

"I heard you!" said Rachel. "No! I do not have experience in these matters. I'm. Thirteen. Years. Old!"

Spock raised an eyebrow. "I. Know. Your. Age. But since you put yourself forward as an authority..."

Slapping one hand against the palm of the other, Rachel said, "It doesn't take a genius to put two and two together, Spock!"

"I believe you said in this case it was one and one," said Spock becoming confused.

Rachel's opened, her hand paused in mid air, and then she put both hands on her hips. Her eyes narrowed, she turned her head so she was looking at him sideways, and she smiled. The effect of all this expressiveness on Spock was...enticing.

"Are you joking? Have you been teasing me this whole time?" she said.

Spock blinked. "Vulcans do not joke. It is illogical."

The ends of her lips turned down. "Your father tells jokes."

Tilting his head at the insult Spock said, "No he does not."

"Does too."

Narrowing his eyes Spock said, "Give me one example of my father joking."

Tapping her foot, Rachel tilted her head in the opposite direction and said, "Well when he said 'not to worry, he is bonded', I think that was a joke."

"Explain."

Rachel's posture suddenly relaxed. She looked at her feet, and began making a circle in the sand. "Well, you know, I think it was his way of saying we wouldn't get up to any funny stuff."

Spock tilted his head the other way. "Well of course we would not get up to any funny stuff. I am Vulcan."

Abruptly stiffening, Rachel said, "You think that is the only reason we wouldn't get up to any funny stuff?"

Spock blinked. "As I explained, jokes are illogical."

Rachel looked up at the sky, rolled her eyes and started walking ahead. "You are impossible."

"Impossible in what way," said Spock skipping to keep up with her.

Apparently not hearing him, Rachel said, "Anyway, both my mother and my father say your father has a very dry wit, and that he can be quite funny."

"I am certain that is not true," said Spock.

"Maybe you just don't get his jokes," said Rachel.

Spock pondered that for 2.5 minutes. "Are you saying, my father is making statements with a subtext I do not understand."

"Yep," said Rachel.

Spock was silent for 1.5 minutes more. "Are you insulting me?"

"Yep," said Rachel pausing to slip on her sandals before heading up the rocky path to the house.

They were silent for another 4 minutes. Spock was feeling disappointed as they climbed up the final steps. As vexed as he was,

he didn't want the evening to end badly, he wanted to do it again. At least it had been interesting. However, if she was insulting him, she was upset with him for some reason. Which meant that the likelihood -

Stopping abruptly Rachel whispered, "Don't tell my parents about the couple on the beach. If you do, they'll never let us go out alone again."

Blinking Spock said, "Agreed. And you will exhibit the same...propriety...when talking with my parents?"

"Done," said Rachel beginning to extend her hand in what Spock recognized was going to be a hand shake.

Spock looked at the long, delicate looking fingers hanging in the air before him like forbidden fruit. All he had to do was -

"Oh," she said, quickly withdrawing her hand, "I forgot you're a touch telepath and that sort of thing makes you uncomfortable."

Heat washed over Spock. He resisted the urge to groan.

"It's going to rain," said Rachel.

"That is unlikely," said Spock as they hiked along the barren hills behind the resort houses. "The island of Socotra only receives 130-170 mm precipitation per year."

"I know it never rains here, Spock; but it's going to rain now."

"That statement is internally inconsistent," said Spock.

"You know what I mean," said Rachel.

He did know what she meant. He simply found it interesting to catch her whenever she misspoke, or was wrong...she had no problem doing the same to him.

It was a very different relationship than the one he had with T'Pring. T'Pring...he was trying to keep her so far from his mind.

Rachel was so very different. She didn't have a Vulcan memory, or a Vulcan mind for computation, but despite that she had a very lively and curious mind...about absolutely *everything* . They had both "nearly pestered the guides to death with questions" according to Esther.

And the constant "bickering" between them...T'Pring would back down, concede defeat, or apologize. Sometimes she'd pull completely away in annoyance. Somehow she'd always leave Spock with a nagging feeling of her sadness in his mind.

Rachel did not appear emotionally compromised when they argued. And she hadn't mentioned babies or children once.

Stepping forward he heard Rachel's voice behind him. "It's. Going. To. Rain. We better get back."

He didn't want to get back, it was their last full day together.

Turning Spock said, "I am from a desert planet with climate very similar to this island. Those clouds will pass over. The eastern wind will carry them out to sea."

One hand on a hip, the other pointing up at the admittedly rather dark sky, Rachel said, "This island isn't *your* planet. I'm from this planet, and those are rain clouds about to burst."

Spock opened his mouth to retort...and felt a raindrop on his nose. Staring at it he said, "Perhaps there will be a modest amount of precipitation, however not enough to discontinue our hike."

The staccato sounds of raindrops began to fall all around. Rachel's other hand went to her hip. Spock looked up at the sky. "Or perhaps we should go back."

"Well, yeah!" said Rachel turning and marching down the path.

Four minutes later they stood on a ledge in pouring rain looking down at the resort 30 meters below. The path they were on wound on to their right along the hillside for nearly .9 kilometers.

"I believe that we reach the house much quicker if we leave the main path here," Spock said. Water was dripping from his nose, his clothing was soaked, and he had to force his body not to shiver.

He looked at Rachel. She was peering over the edge.

"I don't know, it looks very steep. Maybe this shortcut isn't such a good idea," said Rachel.

"Yes, it will be more difficult," said Spock. He tilted his head.
"Perhaps you are simply not up to the challenge?"

She turned at him and narrowed his eyes. "Perhaps I just don't want to do anything stupid."

"Getting home more quickly is not stupid," said Spock, moving a little closer to the edge to get a better view.

"Not if one of us winds up breaking a leg...Don't you think you're a little too close to the edge there?"

Turning and licking at the water running down his face Spock said, "If you feel that you are too frail I will -"

His foot closest to the edge suddenly had no support.

"Spock!" said Rachel reaching towards him.

He felt the spark of connection as her hand connected with his, and then the ledge melted beneath him. There was no purchase, and he was sliding down the slope, Rachel frantically trying to hold him up. Spock didn't even have time to tell her to let go before she was slipping after him.

Sliding down the hill on his backside, Spock frantically tried to gain traction with his feet, or find something to hold with his free hand. He was dimly aware of Rachel next to him trying to do the same.

When they finally came to a stop they were just a few meters from the trail that wound around the resort houses. Panting Spock's head fell back on the rocky Earth. He heard Rachel's own panting and then his hand and his mind erupted in a cacophony of electrical impulses. He was so overwhelmed with sensation it took him a few minutes to hear the sound and understand what was happening...

Rachel was *laughing*, and their hands were still joined. He felt like every serotonin receptor in his brain was being flooded.

Gasping for breath she said, "You were right Spock, that was much quicker!"

And then she began laughing again, softer this time. Spock lay, head turned to the side, not minding the rain falling on his face, and just watched her as sparks flew through his fingers.

At last she was quiet. He no longer felt the electric pulse of her laughter. He just felt a heat...his own.

Regaining control of his higher functioning, he reached out...T'Pring was well, but quiet...Of course, she would be sleeping now.

He should let go.

He didn't.

Closing his eyes, he swallowed, and closed the bond.

Opening his eyelids he said, "I trust no bones are broken." He was anxious to fill the silence, to distract her so she wouldn't notice the inappropriate touch.

"No, bones broken," she said turning her head towards him.

Their eyes met. And then Spock felt something else through his fingers. A heat that echoed the warmth in him.

Rachel looked down at their hands. Through the heat Spock felt embarrassment. He wanted to pull her closer to him, but before he could her eyes came quickly up to his, and she pulled her hand away.

Turning she stood up quickly and began wiping mud and pebbles off her body. She gazed at her backside and said in a shaky voice, "It's a good thing you're bonded, or our parents might think we were up to funny stuff."

Spock sat up but did not stand. He did know what "funny stuff" she was speaking of, he'd looked it up.

It wasn't the bond that had prevented any "funny stuff", it was her pulling her hand away.

The bond shackled him, and yet didn't protect him from his impulses. He felt the same tightening in his chest he did when Rachel had asked him if he felt like he was trapped in a cage.

Without looking at Rachel he climbed to his feet. "We should go inside."

As soon as they got home the adults commanded them to "hit the showers." Sadly, their respective bathrooms were very far apart.

Spock turned the heat in his shower to maximum and leaned his body against the wall for a moment. He let the water wash most of the loose grime away before picking up the wash cloth and soap. As he lathered himself up the memory of the heat he'd felt from Rachel washed over him.

His body responded. Normally he would will away such a response. He wasn't sure why but he didn't this time. Images of Rachel flashed

in his mind - her long legs in the denim shorts she liked to wear, the bikini she wore on the beach, the expressions she made - smiles and frowns as he goaded her...He shouldn't find her emotional responses exciting, but he *did*.

He reached down with a soap slicked hand...The same hand that had ignited when she laughed, and that had been full of such heat.

It didn't take long.

A spasm shot through his body and he found himself forehead against the wall, gasping for breath, evidence of what just happened slowly sliding towards the drain.

Every muscle fiber felt warm and relaxed. His brain...his brain...Every mental barrier was down. For an instant it was wonderful and then he was overcome with panic.

Across the bond came a feeling of alarm. *Spock*, he felt T'Pring ask, *What was that?*

A/N:

Permanent mental link...not always that great. This was one of Notes and my favorite chapters – let us know what you think!

Chapter 7

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to Beta Notes from the Classroom. Check out her latest "The Envoy" in my faves.

Rather extended Author's Note about Pon Farr at bottom. I know what I describe below won't be liked by some.

Chapter 7 (Posted this yesterday, but FanFiction was hiccuping all day long!)

T'Pring awoke with a start. There was a sensation that started from her core and radiated out through her body like the buzzing of insects. What was happening? Her body quaked and shuddered and then the buzzing subsided to warmth everywhere in her body and mind. The bond was alive and more present than it had been in years.

Spock, T'Pring asked, what was that?

She felt a rush of his embarrassment and felt him trying to compose himself. The bond was so clear she could see where he was. He was alone, in one of the water showers so prevalent on Earth. There was a part of her that was relieved. He had spent his vacation in company of a human girl. From glimpses she caught, she knew the girl's features were not as symmetrical as hers, nor was her deportment as tidy, and Spock's relationship with her was highly antagonistic - which shouldn't be surprising, really. Spock wasn't particularly nice to T'Pring, either. T'Pring really should feel sorry for that strange human girl. But there was something...

She shook it off. Bonded Vulcans did not think in *that* way.

Making a hypothesis based on where the sensations had emanated from she said, *Is it pon farr?*

The link became hot with frustration. *I am only thirteen!*

T'Pring tilted her head. *But you are half human; perhaps -*

No! Spock shouted into her mind.

T'Pring felt her stomach constrict. She was frightened. She knew there was always a chance that Spock would enter pon farr early. The openness of the link, the sudden rush of sexual feeling, she could think of no other explanation. He was returning to Vulcan soon. She swallowed. She knew what she would have to do in a vague, clinical sort of way. She wasn't ready for it, but it was her duty. And if she helped him...maybe then there would be something more...caring between them.

Spock alighted on her thoughts as easily as a kelnat bird upon its prey. *It is not pon farr, T'Pring.*

She felt his exasperation, anger and still the embarrassment. And then his mind began to turn inward. Of course, emotionalism was a symptom of pon farr. It would get more and more intense as the hours wore on. 48 hours from now she was scheduled to visit him. By then she would know, and it wouldn't be too late.

She felt Spock withdraw and compose his mind. Sitting up and arranging her body into the lotus position, she composed her own mind and began to meditate.

Within 24 hours she knew it couldn't be pon farr. Sitting on the sleeping mat in her room, she reached out to Spock's mind and found it as it always was. Slightly closed. If she pressed him at all for details, he became ill tempered.

So, pretty much normal.

She was relieved but confused. What had happened?

There were topics in human psychology and physiology that made T'Pring cringe inwardly to delve into - so she avoided them. Her parents had assured her of the essentials - human anatomy was basically the same as Vulcan, externally. Humans did not have any weird prongs, tentacles or dual shafts - despite the rumors...But...

Putting her PADD on her lap, she straightened her back and typed in 'human sexuality male' very tentatively.

She read late into the night. What she learned made her eyes widen, and her mind just a little more than a bit suspicious of that 'Rachel' human. She was sure that nothing had happened between Spock and the girl...and yet she couldn't help but want to pound the weak little human into the sand.

And T'Pring wanted to bite Spock, somewhere conspicuous. Just so no loose human female or male got any ideas.

She blinked. Where had that come from?

She took a deep breath and surveyed the information she'd learned. This was her opportunity to prove she accepted him exactly as he was.

Spock and T'Pring walked silently through the desert behind her parents' home. Their parents sat outside on the porch.

T'Pring was keeping the bond quiet, too. Spock tentatively opened it a little and saw a bit of her envy of her sister's recent bonding - apparently T'Pelna and the boy were instant friends...

He quickly withdrew.

They were outside of earshot when T'Pring suddenly said aloud, "You were masturbating."

Spock stopped short. His ears went green and his nostrils flared. "We will not discuss this."

Turning, T'Pring lifted her head. Her face was a perfect mask of control - control he was not sure he'd ever completely possessed. He felt mocked. He opened the bond a little, saw only sympathy, and then shut the link tight. He didn't want her to see how *furious* he was.

"It is a natural thing...for humans," said T'Pring. "Quite common. Hence the large number of idioms used to describe the function: toss off, bash the bishop, spank the -"

"We will not discuss this!" said Spock again. He couldn't keep the irritation out of his voice, and that made him even more furious.

"But I need you to know that I accept it," said T'Pring in her calm, even tones. "And if you need -"

"I do not *need* ," Spock said, inwardly fuming at the inflection sounding in his own voice. "I *will* control it."

T'Pring blinked. "If that is what you wish," she said. "My mind is always open to yours -"

"I do not need your mind!" said Spock.

Even through his shields, he felt her pain at his words. And it hurt him.

Closing his eyes, he breathed deeply. "I apologize for my outburst," he said. It would be better if he could open the bond and let her feel how sorry he was - except that he wasn't sorry. He felt humiliated.

And he felt manipulated.

Fourteen was a big year for Vulcans - male and female. Although it was rare, early onset of full pon farr was not completely unheard of.

A 'proto-pon farr' was a given. It was accompanied by a rise in hormones and some moodiness - although hormone levels varied, as did the accompanying emotional state. Sometimes it went completely unnoticed by the boy and his bond-mate.

It was generally accepted that Vulcans in stable bonds and those who had greater emotional control were the most likely to have mild 'proto-pon farrs.' These mild hormonal cycles could go on for decades - some Vulcans didn't experience full pon farr until their 70's.

As Spock was neither in a stable bond, nor particularly emotionally stable, he expected the worse. Like all Vulcan males, he dutifully submitted to weekly blood tests administered by his parents. Each one filled him with dread.

...Except this one.

It was his last blood test. He would be 15 years old in less than three days. The doctors were so surprised by the results of his tests that they had requested he receive one more.

Sarek was home and administering the test for him. They were in the study. Spock held up his hand, and his father's fingers came in contact with his own. Sarek's emotions were a mixture of relief, curiosity and *envy*.

Spock stood a little straighter. Sarek took the test prick out of the kit and quickly stabbed Spock's finger; then he pulled out the tricorder. A few lights flashed green. Putting the tricorder down, Sarek blinked at the results. "Your readings are, once again, completely within normal parameters." He looked up at Spock. "You have experienced no cycle this year."

Spock put his hands behind his back. His human genes were good for something. "Perhaps I will never have it, Father."

Sarek tilted his head. "Perhaps. Although our sample size is too small."

Spock barely heard him. His heart felt light.

That night as he lay in bed, he actually reached out to T'Pring. He knew she had been worried about the prospect of a full pon farr. At this age it would not be healthy for her to have children - her hips were still too narrow, and of course neither of them had an occupation. They both would have received birth control. Still, she'd been afraid of the physical aspect of it.

T'Pring, he whispered through the bond. He felt her happiness at feeling his presence, and her anxiety, too.

He let her feel his own happiness. *My readings were completely normal - or abnormal as the case may be. I have not had a cycle this year.*

He could feel her relief...but an emptiness, too...or perhaps a question...he couldn't decipher it.

And perhaps, he said to her, *I never will have a cycle. You need not worry. I am free!*

And then the emptiness she felt hit him in the gut.

He let out a long breath. He couldn't win.

T'Pring reached equilibrium in her bond with Spock. They weren't precisely friends. They weren't enemies. They stayed out of one another's minds as much as possible.

She envied her sister. T'Pelna's relationship with her bond-mate Derreck was very close. But she focused on what she did have. She had a loving family, one that she would undoubtedly be able to remain physically close to. Both of her parents worked at the Vulcan

Science Academy - and despite the prejudice towards humans rampant on Vulcan, there was little doubt that Spock would be admitted to the VSA.

...and perhaps when they had children, she and Spock would be a little closer. If not, she would always have the children. Wouldn't she? Would they marry if Spock didn't experience pon farr? Was she really necessary?

She pushed the thought from her mind. They were bonded. To seek dissolution of a bond was illogical. The only way out was to become V'tosh ka'tur and find a healer in their midst who would dissolve the union – and obviously she didn't have any desire to become V'tosh ka'tur.

Well, there was one other option if he *did* enter pon farr...but it was illogical and savage and T'Pring would not think of it against a man who, although uncaring, was not violent towards her.

T'Pring was working the day Spock went before the VSA council. She was employed by a distributor of Vulcan goods, and most of the customers were human. T'Pring was very proficient at reading facial expressions – at least for a Vulcan. And she was interested in human idioms and slang. Although she rarely understood the motivations behind many human sayings, she accepted the definitions for these sayings without questioning the logic behind them. Or as she told Amanda, she didn't, "get a bee in her bonnet about expressions that didn't make sense."

That comment had earned a laugh. She was quite proud of it.

She had just come off a call when Spock went before the council. She purposely left a half hour window to be with him mentally in that moment.

Although she didn't expect anything different, her heart leaped when he was accepted.

And then he turned down their offer in favor of Starfleet.

Pushing back from her chair, she banged at the door of his mind; for once she could not suppress her feelings. *Why have we not discussed this? How can you do this?*

Inexplicably, he wasn't even angry at her. He was too happy. *They insulted my mother*, he replied.

That is an excuse, she said. *You turned them down because they were insulting you by implication.*

She felt him bristle at the comment. *You will not be challenged at Starfleet, Spock. You know that. What do you really want?*

Her mind filled with stars going on to infinity, and a sensation of lightness swept through her- the same lightness she'd felt when he'd realized he'd missed his pon farr cycle and said, *I am free.*

A/N:

So, did you expect that's how she'd react? Next Chapter is one of Notes and my faves! If you read and enjoyed, please leave a review.

A NOTE ABOUT PON FARR

In *Enterprise*, T'Pol went into pon farr (although I think it was as a result of a chemical agent). There is a lot of *Enterprise* that doesn't seem to jive with TOS (T'Pol dissolved her own union w/o a fight to the death, among other things).

Anyway, some authors seem to think yes, females go through pon farr, others say no, others say it can be induced by being bonded to a male or by an infection. Memory-Alpha prefaces references to female Vulcan pon farr with "according to T'Pol," I suppose to acknowledge that her account doesn't jive with previous canon.

There are a lot of discrepancies in *Star Trek*; pon farr, perhaps because it is a popular subject, gets more play time in many different

story lines....and hence it has many more contradictions. For instance, in TOS Spock undergoes pon farr for the first time at 35, but on the Genesis planet in *Star Trek III: The Search for Spock* , he goes through it as a teenager and is helped by Saavik. And then some people have commented that the time lines of Tuvok's pon farrs actually don't work out to be every seven years...

So...pon farr tends to be whatever is convenient to the author. I've made it a male Vulcan phenomenon, and I believe I've kept that consistent throughout my fics.

Chapter 8

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to Beta Notes from the Classroom. Check out her latest "The Envoy" in my faves.

Chapter 8

Spock woke up with a start. T'Pring felt it behind her desk at work.

There was the sound of bedsprings creaking beside him from a few different beds.

Is it an earthquake, Spock? She asked through the link.

Spock didn't push her away. *I do not know*, he said. He swung his legs out of bed and she saw the whole scene through his eyes - long lines of beds in the darkened basic training barracks. The noise was not abating, but his own bed was not shaking.

T'Pring tilted her head.

From beside him a human male yelled in what she estimated to be irritation. "Hey, all you launching your photon torpedoes, cut it out! Spock and I are trying to sleep!"

Some of the bedsprings stopped creaking.

T'Pring? Spock asked, tentatively. He occasionally would ask for help with human slang now. Being surrounded by humans in basic training had oddly brought them closer together. He felt more Vulcan now. He was more secure in his identity. It almost eased the anger she still felt about his turning down the VSA.

T'Pring referenced her mental dictionary of slang - and promptly became embarrassed. Spock felt her embarrassment. *What?*

It is slang for masturbation. T'Pring replied. *It is natural for humans, especially males -*

In public? Spock asked.

It does seem rather extreme, T'Pring admitted.

Falling back into his bed, Spock let her feel his exasperation. He was less forgiving than she was. He'd mastered that human impulse long ago.

Curling on his side, he pulled up his blanket, threw a pillow over his head and squeezed it tight. His bed was too small for him, too cold, and his human companions were too noisy. T'Pring tilted her head, but there was one thing that was unusually right. *You are not hungry,* T'Pring noted.

Basic training provided only the base line caloric intake for humans - and Vulcan requirements were much higher. Spock hadn't pointed that out to his superiors, of course. Vulcans did not talk of their physical needs. He'd only survived due to packages sent from Amanda and T'Pring.

He sent her a wave of gratitude. *Your care package arrived today - you were in a meeting. I didn't want to disturb you when it arrived. Thank you, T'Pring.*

And then exhaustion took him and despite the continued night noises, he drifted into sleep. She saw odd images. No matter how Vulcan he felt, he dreamed like a human. T'Pring followed for a few minutes. It must have been a dream of a real life event - there was no flying, melting clocks, or instruments he mysteriously knew how to play. In this dream a human male cadet was crying because his girlfriend back home had broken up with him. In his dream Spock found the human's sadness completely inexplicable.

T'Pring pulled away quickly. She shouldn't have stayed in his dream; after thirteen years she should know better. They weren't real

anyway.

Nonetheless, she knew she'd have to meditate an extra hour to remove the chill his reaction gave her.

A few months later T'Pring was in her chamber, alone. She didn't have any other commitments for another thirty minutes... Things with Spock were oddly better than they had ever been.

He was out of basic training now. He found human behavior no less confusing, and human sexuality in particular 'illogical.' He watched his fellow cadets burn countless hours in pursuit of the opposite gender and saw how it 'wasted valuable time.' He had even confessed that he saw the logic of the bond more and more.

But she felt something else. He was surrounded by females who were, in T'Pring's estimation, predatory, and Spock could not help but find them attractive.

He appreciated the food she sent. He appreciated the bond on an intellectual level - but there wasn't real warmth between them. He didn't feel the pull to her that she felt to him, and he had human impulses.

She reminded herself that did not mean he would act on them. But it was hard to resist checking in on him.

...And now his guard was down. She could catch glimpses of what he was seeing. Spock would be coming home for a visit in only three weeks so there was really no need...she reached out anyway.

He was standing in front of a row of mirrors brushing his teeth. He was in a hygiene area shared by all the cadets just out of basic training. He was wearing only a towel. His head that had been bald sixteen weeks ago was finally growing back, but it was still in the formation humans called "high and tight." He was dusty olive from days in the sun, and there was no fat on his frame. Feeling her mind

reaching out to his, he tilted his head in acknowledgment of her presence.

From behind him, another cadet approached. "You going to that party Leila Kalomi is hosting?"

For an instant she had a mental image of blue eyes and gold hair, and then Spock closed himself off a bit. Even without grand powers of deduction, T'Pring could tell he found this human attractive. She willed herself not to seethe as she gazed at the wide planes of his unmarked skin. T'Pring wanted to bite him, mark him as her own, show this strange female he was taken.

She had no doubt what that human woman's intentions were towards her intended.

Spock looked at the mirror hard, and she realized he was looking at her. Rinsing his mouth, he spit and replied to the other cadet, "No, human parties are too loud and involve dancing." Unfortunately, that was the truth. He wasn't abstaining from any loyalty to her.

"Not this one," said the other cadet, moving to an adjacent sink. "These are botany geeks. They'll probably be talking about the latest mass of blue green algae discovered floating on some otherwise lifeless ball."

She felt Spock closing the bond, but not before she caught his sense of fascination and another brief image of blue eyes and golden hair.

She should have stayed out of his mind.

"Spock, are you going to answer your comm, dude?"

In the midst of meditation, Spock tried to pull inward. If he just ignored his roommate...

"Oh, fuck, I'm answering it," his roommate Brian said.

Spock's eyes flipped open. "There is no need I -" Uncurling his legs he jumped off his bed and moved quickly across the room.

It was too late.

"Well, helllooo," said Brian.

"Spock is there. I wish to speak with him," he heard T'Pring say.

"You sure you do not wish to speak with me?" said Brian.

"Affirmative," said T'Pring.

Pushing Brian to the side, Spock sat down in front of his monitor. He was in a bind. To simply end the call would make Brian curious. On the other hand, he did not want to speak to T'Pring. The last time he'd allowed the link to open, it was oozing with what he could only describe as jealousy.

Slipping into his native language, Spock said, *"What is the purpose of your call?"*

"I cannot reach you any other way," said T'Pring. *"I - she approached you."*

Spock did not have to ask who. Leila had made her intentions known to him. He had been talking to the human woman in the kitchen about a new line of research into genetically modifying blue green algae to excrete insulin as a byproduct. And then out of nowhere she'd taken his hand. The shock of it had made Spock's shields fall. Disorientated by the unexpected contact, he'd fallen into her confusing emotions and been unable to pull away. She found him very interesting...in more than an intellectual capacity.

"If you know that," Spock replied, *"you know that I left the party immediately."*

"You were tempted. You should not have been tempted," said T'Pring.

He had been. Leila was beautiful, intelligent, and *fascinating...* in more than an intellectual capacity. If someone had not entered the kitchen at exactly that moment, would he have pulled away?

Spock tilted his head in irritation. Regardless, he had *left*.

He closed his eyes. T'Pring had helped him through basic training. They were bonded. But what did she want him to say? Lowering his shields, he switched to telepathy. *The bond is weak-which could be the result of my human heritage...or your inferior telepathic abilities.*

It was an honest assessment. He perhaps should not have made it.

T'Pring's gaze did not waver, but he felt her draw back mentally as if stung. *Both are possibilities*, she acknowledged.

And then he felt her sadness - which was much worse than her jealousy or anger.

" *I will see you in three weeks?*" T'Pring said.

They were bonded. She was loyal, unlike the human girlfriends and fiancées of many of his human companions. And on one level he did understand she couldn't help being who she was. "Yes," said Spock.

She nodded and then vanished.

"Girlfriend?" said Brian.

"No," said Spock.

"Family?" his roommate asked.

"Something like that," said Spock, still staring at the monitor.

"She's hot...kind of cold...but hot. Could you set me up?" Brian said.

Not bothering to point out the internal inconsistencies of the statement, Spock said, "No...unfortunately."

It was four days after the beginning of Spock's winter leave from Starfleet Academy when T'Pring arrived at his home. She had chosen a day to visit when his parents were off planet for a diplomatic event. He wondered at her timing; usually she was happier in his mother's company than his own.

She did not knock or ring. She did not need to.

It would have been completely proper to have T'Lana, the maid, answer the door. But Amanda had said long ago, "You cannot control what you *feel* towards T'Pring, Spock, but you can control what you do." Based on his mother's suggestion he answered the door himself.

Like him, she was dressed in ceremonial robes.

Greetings, he said into her mind.

Greetings, she responded.

She was normally as uncomfortable in these meetings as he. But this time she was uncomfortable and very nervous, despite her formal cool demeanor.

Please come in, Spock said.

She entered and walked past him with her customary poise. But he could feel the anxiety coming off her in waves. Tilting his head he added, *Is everything alright?*

Her back still to him, she asked, *May we go somewhere we will not be overheard by servants?*

Yes, said Spock, now very curious. *This way.*

He led her to a chamber his father used sometimes to speak with visiting dignitaries. She walked past him as he closed the door.

Not facing him, she spoke into his mind, *Normally at this time you will discuss the latest events of your life, what you are studying, and new discoveries you are interested in. I will listen politely and attentively...but then you will become discouraged because I will have nothing to contribute to the conversation. I can do nothing but parrot things I have read...*

Why was she stating the obvious? He didn't know what to say.

And then, she continued, I will tell you about the various customers I have interacted with and tell you of the emotional nuances I successfully identified and the ones I did not and you will be bored.

He could feel her sadness and sense of failure.

Spock put his arms behind his back. He was stuck. There was nothing he could deny.

We are uniquely unsuited for one another, T'Pring said. For a moment he felt a twinge of annoyance, but her mind spoke quickly to his. Not because you are half-human...because I am mentally not your equal.

Her sense of failure was overwhelming now, although her shoulders did not slump and her figure did not sway.

Your control has always been greater, Spock said. It was an odd thing to bring up, but it was a human gesture to point out another's strengths when they were discouraged - something he'd learned to do in basic training and did without thinking.

But what purpose did her line of thinking serve? They were bonded. It could not be helped.

She heard the thought. *Yes, we are bonded, she said. And the bond does not even fulfill its most basic functions for you. You still find yourself tempted by other females.*

Spock drew up. *We have discussed this...*

T'Pring turned. *Perhaps there are ways to strengthen the bond, to help...mitigate the temptation you feel...and perhaps it could be a bridge between us. If I filled your physical needs...*

Spock's jaw clenched.

I know you do not need this, My Spock. You can control your impulses. But think of how convenient it would be if you did not have those impulses in the first place?

What she was offering suddenly clicked in his mind. He stared at her - neat upswept hair, symmetrical features, full kissable lips. Her figure, even beneath the robes, was soft in all the alluring places. And although sometimes he thought that he would not be able to get excited by a face that was as placid as hers, he realized he was wrong. Her words were beginning to have an effect. He felt himself warming. He checked his physical response.

The side of T'Pring's cheek twitched, as though she had been bitten by an insect. Spock tilted his head. She was trying to smile.

It is not illogical. S he said looking down. *It is merely a language of a different sort. And I have noticed you...enjoy...expressive faces.*

It was almost as though there were another man inhabiting his own body...some instinct compelled him to touch her. Spock stepped forward and smoothed her cheek where the twitch had appeared. " *Thee are beautiful as thee are,*" he said in the high speak. And it was true. In every objective way she was very beautiful.

There were few times in his life when he had made T'Pring actually happy. This was one of them.

"As are you," she replied aloud.

It struck him that she really meant that, despite the fact that he still had not recovered the weight he'd lost in basic training, and by Vulcan standards he was still nearly bald.

He felt a twinge of her confusion. "Because you are mine," T'Pring said as though it were the most obvious thing in the galaxy.

They were bonded. Without the intervention of death, their fates were inextricable. They would mate, they would have two children...

"The standard issue birth control shot you received in Starfleet will prevent pregnancy," T'Pring said. "This is not about a biological imperative or duty." She swallowed.

It struck Spock that she smelled wonderful. They never touched; he hadn't been this close to her since their bonding. Her hand rose to her shoulder and his hand automatically went to it. He could feel acceptance, nervousness, and that feeling he thought was jealousy but now seemed more just possessiveness. And her hand was warm as his, unlike Leila Kalomi's.

He moved closer and could feel the softness of her breasts against his chest even through their robes.

After consummation, bonds were more difficult to break, but neither of them was going to break the bond. If they were going to live with it, why not make the best of it?

And he was so tempted. Would this temptation remove other temptations?

"It is an experiment," T'Pring said.

"Logical," said Spock. He dropped his forehead to hers and heard a slight humming in her chest. His breath started to come more quickly. His lips fell to hers instinctively. Her mouth did not respond, and he could feel her discomfort. His lips were hard and unsubtle upon her own.

"I do not know how to kiss," she said.

"Neither do I, apparently," he said. His mouth still felt drawn to hers, though he could feel no corresponding pull. He did not wish to make her uncomfortable again. Instead, he brushed his mouth up her cheek to her ears. He felt her tremble a little as his breath caressed the edges of her delicate pinna.

"This could be a very interesting experiment," he whispered. "But I do not know where to begin."

"I believe, it is customary to disrobe first," T'Pring said.

"Logical again," Spock said moving his forehead back to hers and rolling it slightly. The hum in her chest increased and was met by a hum of his own.

She reached for the collar of her garment, but Spock caught her hands. Pulling his forehead away, he asked, "May I?"

She nodded.

He began to slowly undo the fastenings at her collar, moved his hands down towards her waist, and then pushed the loosened garment off her shoulders.

She stood before to him in her undergarments - practical, non-revealing and nearly the same shade as her skin. He reached back and unhooked the clasps of her bra and then she stood before him fully exposed from the waist up, head still high, still with her dancer's poise. Her nipples were the same slightly green olive as his. He'd been exposed to so much human porn in basic training - human coloring was not disturbing, but here was a body that was closer to his own.

"It is yours," she said. He felt a longing from her more emotional than physical...but it was quickly submerged in his own physical longing. He closed his eyes and tried to control the rate of his breathing.

He felt her hands on his collar. "May I?" she asked.

He nodded without opening his eyes. He felt her hands gently unfastening the front of his robe, and then pushing it over his shoulders. Mens' attire had loose trousers; her hands went there and pushed them and his undergarment over his hips.

It took every bit of control to keep from responding as his length was exposed to open air.

And then she wasn't touching him, but he could feel her presence nearby.

"I do not know what to do next," T'Pring said.

Spock wasn't precisely sure either. Opening his eyes, he reached forward and pulled her body against his.

"You find this more interesting for you than listening to me talk about work," she noted.

Spock nuzzled her ear and dropped his hands down the length of her back. "Yes." Something like affection welled up in him.

He felt the hum in her chest increase. He kissed her very lightly. This time she responded by nibbling his lip. He was intrigued. He felt more warmth pooling in his center.

"The effort I am utilizing to constrain my physical reactions is probably illogical," he whispered.

"Yes," T'Pring said. "It probably is."

Sighing, he let his body respond to her. And then hooking his hands into the waistband of her underwear, he pushed it over her hips.

For a few minutes they just stood, their bodies together, their foreheads touching. A release Spock hadn't acknowledged he'd needed was beckoning to him. He was...grateful. T'Pring was

aroused, though not as much as he was. She was still nervous. He wanted to make her more comfortable. He did not want this to end. "Let us move to the couch," he said.

She turned and he saw her backside for the first time. He had heard human males speak in admiration of 'heart shaped' derrieres. For the first time, Spock knew what they meant. And why it was appealing, the smooth softness over muscle. She was as beautiful from behind as she was from in front.

Turning her head, T'Pring said, "It is all yours."

She was looking for an acknowledgment, he could feel it. "Thank you," said Spock. *"Thee are beautiful."*

"Yours," T'Pring said again and then he knew the word she was looking for.

"Mine," said Spock anxious to give her what she wanted. He wanted so much to be inside her.

She tilted her head and lay down on the couch, her legs tightly together. He straddled her body and did his best to control his heart rate. This was so beautiful and so *logical* ...

T'Pring reached down and tentatively stroked his length. He dropped his forehead to hers and found that all those years suppressing his desire to relieve himself were rewarded. He was able to overcome his urge to release immediately. He reached into her mind and tried to share all the pleasure he was receiving, all his gratitude, and tried to allay the nervousness she was feeling.

He was the stronger telepath. With a deep breath, she relaxed her legs and opened just a bit. But her body was not as ready as Spock's own. He thought back to the humans in basic training. Specifically he thought of things they said were guaranteed to 'turn a woman on.' He imagined his head between her thighs and let her

see it. Her breathing hitched and that perfect mouth actually gaped. It was gorgeous and Spock had to still her hand on his length.

Closing his eyes he said into her mind, *I want to give you pleasure. Whatever you want, T'Pring.* They were not compatible in most ways, but maybe here, in this new physical realm...

There was a rush of emotion. Possessiveness again? He saw what she was about to do before she did it and was able to prepare himself. Lunging upwards, she bit him hard on his shoulder. He didn't flinch...nor did he mind even though he knew she'd drawn blood. If that was what she needed...if that put him closer to burying himself inside of her.

"Bite back," she said stroking his length again. "Please."

Opening his eyes, he regarded her flawless skin. It seemed a shame to mar it. She squeezed him a little harder and he stifled a groan. Bending down, he lightly nipped at the skin just above her breast.

"Please, with more force," she said.

Raising an eyebrow, Spock bent forward and bit a little harder.

T'Pring almost sighed, but it was not a sigh of contentment. Her hand stopped moving.

He was losing her. He nuzzled her ear hoping to hear her hum again.

"Please get off," she whispered.

He would forever regret the lack of control he demonstrated by not moving. For an instant he was angry.

T'Pring's hands went to his chest and shoved him. She was slightly stronger than a human male and it was an effective push. He fell back on his haunches painfully aroused and angry.

He was ashamed she'd felt the need to push him, and angry at her for bringing him so close to physical completion, and angrier again at himself for both of these conflicting emotions.

Pulling her legs out from beneath him she said, "You do not..." She switched to the mental link. There was a wave of anger. *Why can you not feel it?* Spock felt something in her...a pull to him...and another emotion, an emotion not her own, a reflection of emotions she'd felt second-hand from her parents, and in her sister. Protectiveness, possessiveness...

Spock stared at her. She wanted that emotion. He took a calming breath. *It is not something you feel either...*

But I am drawn towards it! T'Pring's mind shouted. *I need it...or something even close to it...*

It is illogical...and unnecessary, Spock replied.

He felt T'Pring's anger flare again. Closing her eyes quickly, she stilled her mind, and he found himself once again jealous that she could calm herself so quickly.

"I apologize," she said looking down at the floor. And then she added, "I cannot experiment. I am Vulcan."

He could see behind her words and feel that it was a revelation about herself, not a judgment.

But his emotions were still raw, and his control not fully intact. His mind screamed out, *But what am I then?*

T'Pring turned to look at him. And he was ashamed again. Her statement had not been about him, and yet he reacted like a child.

"You are high maintenance," she said.

A/N:

Notes & my second favorite chapter I think. (I've been wanting to use that "high maintenance" line to describe Spock for such a long time.)

Echos of Nyota and Spock in Chapter 7/8 of Descartes Error (intentional!). Completely different reaction from Spock. And Nyota's response was completely different from T'Pol's. If you haven't read those Chapters of DE you don't really need to read the rest of the story to enjoy.

Gah! And I feel so much for T'Pol now I want to post the next chapter right away...

If you read and enjoyed *this chapter* pls leave a review!

Chapter 9

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to Beta Notes from the Classroom. If you haven't checked out her latest "The Envoy" in my faves, now's a good time!

Chapter 9

" *You are planning on going on a deep space mission for 4 months ?*
" T'Pring said over the comm trying to keep her anger in check. She was using the comm because it would prevent Spock from tuning her out. His roommate was in the room. He would not wish to embarrass himself by appearing to be in a 'fight' with a 'family member.' She did use their native language, of course; that kept the conversation private enough.

It had been almost two years since the incident at Spock's parents' house. After his initial annoyance at her he had been almost apologetic. Almost. He was angry at himself for losing control - and she suspected at her for making him lose control. T'Pring was angry at herself. She'd attempted something illogical, and of course one could not expect illogical behavior to be beneficial in the long run.

And the memory soured their relationship. His lack of feeling still burned her. She was only a body to him...less than that, she suspected-a body that was not fulfilling his basic needs. There were human women who would be willing to enter into sexual congress without commitment.

Although Spock was tempted, he did turn them down. For her, or because he was too Vulcan to want to be involved in a relationship that would result in gossip, she could not tell.

And now there was this.

" Yes," Spock said. He tilted his head and she felt his bafflement. *"I fail to see how this concerns you."*

" You will be twenty one years old. If you enter your Time while in deep space it will be dangerous," T'Pring said.

Spock straightened. His bafflement turned to irritation. *"I did not experience a cycle before. If I do in the next year, there is every reason to suspect that it will be mild. Moreover, if I do enter my Time in deep space the only person that will be endangered is me."*

T'Pring stared at the monitor for 2.5 seconds in shock. *"Are you losing grip of your logical facilities? If you become ill, your human associates will quickly realize they cannot assist you and -"*

" And I might die," Spock said so completely unafraid it startled her.

" They are human, Spock." How could he be so dismissive of the merits of a species that was partially his own? *" They may eat meat, but they are not complete savages. You are a sentient creature - as soon as they realize they cannot cure you, they will contact Vulcan, organize a rescue mission and ship you home."*

Spock tilted his head. *"And then I will not die. What is your point, T'Pring?"*

T'Pring took a deep breath. She was less than a body. *"At that point you will be deep in the plak tau. An emergency situation is one thing, but you will be putting my life in danger with your willful negligence."*

" This is wild speculation," said Spock, *"based on no evidence."*

Suppressing shudders of rage, T'Pring responded. *"Your belief that you will not enter the Time, or that it will be mild and constrained by your hybrid physiology, is wild speculation . Based perhaps on illogical pride and hope."*

Spock hit the cut off button on his comm and the screen went blank.

The link hummed with rage from them both.

"It is time to end it, T'Pring."

The words came from behind her. T'Pring turned to see her sister, T'Pelna in the doorway of the room. She'd been so overcome with rage she hadn't heard her enter.

Biting back her bitterness, T'Pring said, "Short of finding a champion to fight Spock to the death during Pon Farr - when and if that happens - or joining the V'tosh ka'tur, that is not possible."

"No," T'Pelna said. "There is now another way."

T'Pelna held out her fingers. Hesitatingly, T'Pring did the same. As their fingers touched, T'Pring met a wave of love, protectiveness, resolve and anger that burned as deep as her own.

"I will not let you give yourself to a man who apparently values your life less than an animal's," her sister said.

T'Pring sat with her head down in her family's formal sitting room. Her father and mother were there, as well as T'Pelna and her bond-mate Derreck. Everyone in her family who would be affected.

"There are healers now who offer to sever the bond of any Vulcan bonded to another species...I have been told that Spock qualifies," T'Pring said. She felt so much shame, though not for wanting to end the bond with Spock. Ending it now was logical – and even though it hurt even to think of it, it was the right thing to do.

But highlighting the failure of her bond to her parents...They knew things were never *good* between her and Spock, but she had managed to hide how *bad* things were.

As she suspected, now they felt guilt. She tried to keep her mind calm, tried to let them know she held them responsible for none of

this. It had seemed a logical match at the time.

T'Pelna said, "Derreck and I willingly stand behind T'Pring on this. In fact, I insist that she breaks the bond."

"Martyrdom for one who obviously has little regard for her life is illogical," said Derreck with a nod.

"Mother, Father," T'Pring said, "I will not do this without your consent. I understand the scandal this will bring among your associates." T'Pring's parents were not xenophobes. Nor was their social circle.

"Better dishonor than your death, Daughter," her mother said quietly.

"He has not sought to make any arrangements to mitigate the severity should an incident occur?" her father said.

T'Pring shook her head. She had tried once more to reason with Spock. He saw this opportunity as too important to miss - the deep space assignment would be in that mysterious area of space where the Kelvin had been destroyed so long ago. And he saw her fears as illogical. He refused to make a contingency plan should his Time occur.

His family was well connected; indeed, their friends the Friedmanns were one of the wealthier families in the galaxy, with multiple private long range vessels. One could be held in reserve for a potential 'medical emergency' if Spock was not too proud to ask. He need not say what sort of 'medical emergency' it would be for.

"The kal-if-fee seems more appropriate," her father said naming the ancient, savage fight to the death by name.

For a moment T'Pring thought her father was saying no, and then something white hot flashed across the link she shared with him. She suddenly realized her father didn't just want the bond broken; he wanted to kill Spock.

Her father tilted his head at her. T'Pring looked at him...she was overwhelmed by his feelings of rage and protectiveness; her mouth even dropped half a centimeter.

Derreck said, "There is nothing in the official rules of the kal-if-fee that says your champion must be your future mate. Any may stand."

Her father turned his head to Derreck and nodded.

"Death is illogical when it can be avoided," T'Pring's mother said, but there was heat beneath her words. Reaching out, her mother touched her father's fingers. They were quiet for 4.5 seconds.

And then they said in unison, "Contact the healer."

"I am making an appointment to have our bond broken," said T'Pring over the comm.

Spock tilted his head. His heart was pounding fast in his side. It would bring dishonor to his family's name. And yet...he found that more than shame, he felt elation. "How can this be done?" he asked.

T'Pring's anger at him flashed across the bond - and a little of the old sadness she used to feel.

"There are healers who break the bonds of those bonded to non-Vulcans," T'Pring said.

"And as I am only half Vulcan I qualify," said Spock. He was amazed how smoothly the words came out despite the bitterness behind them.

"I do not do this because of your heritage," said T'Pring. "But would you prefer the kal-if-fee?"

Spock tilted his head. That could only occur if he were to enter Pon Farr - that could take too long, or never occur. He wanted out of the

relationship. He wanted freedom. Still, it stung to be seen as less than Vulcan.

Bitterness welled up from T'Pring. She did not speak aloud; instead she used the bond, *And to you I am less than human or Vulcan. You refuse to make plans -*

Spock tilted his head. *"It is highly unlikely I will enter full Pon Farr -"*

Cutting him off, T'Pring said quickly, *"As I will be perceived as the illogical one for ending the bond, you will be perceived as the injured party. The healer at the Vulcan Embassy in San Francisco will erase your side of the bond without objections."*

She stared at him for 2.1 seconds. Spock felt a confusing mixture of relief, shame, anger, bitterness, longing, sadness and failure.

"Live long and prosper, Spock," T'Pring said at last.

"Peace and long life, T'Pring," Spock said as the comm went black.

His own emotions were conflicted. There would be a confrontation with his father, and worse, a 'talk' with his mother. How would she take it? Would she feel betrayed by T'Pring? The 'nice girl' was using his mother's heritage to end the union.

He tilted his head. Despite all this, he found that the dominant emotion he felt was relief.

The cage was open.

Amanda was right on time. She didn't smile when she saw T'Pring. T'Pring scolded herself; why had she thought she would? She remembered her own parents' protectiveness towards her...She wasn't even sure why Amanda had accepted the invitation.

The bond was broken. T'Pring had been told that a broken bond was as tragic as losing a child if the union was consummated. Though they had not completed the physical union T'Pring did feel as though a piece of her was missing...but she also felt incredibly relieved.

She was strong enough to handle dishonor to her reputation. Only one thing really bothered her.

She stood as Amanda approached and then they sat down together.

For 3.5 seconds there was silence. It was Amanda who spoke first. Staring at a point on her spoon she said, "It took me a while, but I did manage to wring out of Spock your logic in breaking the bond."

T'Pring swallowed. "I hope you do not think in any way that my decision reflects upon you."

Amanda looked up at her. "I've heard that statement before."

T'Pring did not know what to say to that vague response.

Amanda sighed. "Oh, T'Pring, I am so sorry."

T'Pring blinked. Amanda wasn't angry at her...but how confusing. If anyone needed to apologize it was her, not the mother of her former bond-mate.

Amanda began to speak slowly. "I should have fought harder to prevent the bonding. Sarek was so sure...we were told that there was a high likelihood Spock would enter his time early. The choice was to go through with the bonding at the traditional age, or find an older woman who would be willing to take on an unbonded half human Vulcan.

"Sarek was so certain a young bonding would be better, it would give Spock a companion and confident...Sarek's own first bonding went so well..."

"You could not have known," T'Pring said.

Amanda closed her eyes. "But it was terrible for both of you. I should have fought harder - but the thought of some older woman only taking on Spock in an emergency in order to receive some of his property..." She rubbed her forehead. "Sarek's second bond was an emergency situation...it went...very badly."

She sighed again. "Now you've wasted so much time. I am so sorry."

"It is I who should apologize," T'Pring said, deeply upset by Amanda's obvious distress. "I have put you in the position of having to arrange a partner to be on standby should an emergency occur...one that is potentially undesirable...for the reasons you have stated."

Would such a woman be kind to Amanda? Or would she regard her as inferior for being human? If Spock did not enter Pon Farr, there would be no need for a partner, and no union. T'Pring did hope for Amanda's sake that Spock's hybrid physiology protected him from the Time.

Amanda looked down and huffed out a laugh. "It hasn't really been so difficult. Sarek has already begun making inquiries...We have a lot of property...we've had more than one offer. And, after the way Spock treated you..." She looked up at T'Pring. "An older woman, with experience, would be better should an emergency situation arise."

T'Pring said nothing, just nodded, and accepted Amanda's word on faith. Though smaller and frailer than T'Pring, the older woman had navigated the fires of Pon Farr at least three times with a full Vulcan male - she was the authority.

Amanda sighed and said again, "You've lost so much time."

T'Pring tilted her head. She thought she understood. "It is illogical to dwell on what might have been. And if I had not been bonded to Spock I would not have made your acquaintance." And where would she be then? Her only real talent lay in interacting with humans.

Amanda said nothing. Was T'Pring mistaken, or did the human's eyes look moist? It would be best to change the topic.

"If I wish to bond again, even with the dishonor to my family name, I should be able to find a suitable partner. I have heard that piquing the interest of an of-age unbonded Vulcan male is..." T'Pring tilted her head trying to find the right idiom, "like shooting fish in a barrel."

Amanda raised an eyebrow.

"Although," T'Pring added hastily, "I believe securing his intention to bond is a bit more difficult."

One half of Amanda's mouth turned upwards in what T'Pring believed was a 'wry smile.' "I happen to know something about unbonded Vulcan males," she said. "Their eyes, if not their hands, wander as much as a human man's."

T'Pring blinked. Here was an area where Amanda had more expertise than any Vulcan woman T'Pring personally knew. Would it be impolite to ask...

Taking a deep breath, Amanda said, "Would you like any advice?"

T'Pring sat up very straight. "Yes, please."

A/N:

I tried to keep this true to the reason I think T'Pring was justified in calling for the kal-if-fee in TOS, and love Spock though I do, I think she was justified. Some people have told me that she was a coward for not dissolving the bond earlier but I think in the TOS verse she didn't have that option. (She couldn't have counted on Kirk being there to be her champion and would have had to risk Stonn – which evidently she really didn't want to happen...if she could have spared Stonn some other way she would have).

Also, as far as Stonn went, according to Nimoy he and Roddenberry imagined Spock as being very naughty in his Academy days, seducing women with his "hypnotic gaze"...so he wasn't all that pure himself.

Anyway, that is my interpretation.

If you read and enjoyed, please leave a review.

Chapter 10

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to beta Notes from the Classroom. Check out her latest "The Envoy" ...and put her on author alert, she's got another story coming and it's very exciting!

Chapter 10

Spock was dreaming. It was a very pleasant dream about his time at the deep space station that had ended over 23 months ago. Now in his dream he was on the station in front of two monitors, staring at readouts of subspace noise and radio signals. There was a pattern there, and it was about to reveal itself to him.

Abruptly the monitors flicked to a picture of a woman Spock knew only too well. Kathleen Parker...Hair shiny and black, eyes icy blue, a wide mouth that was quite capable of feats of pleasure that...

The woman's beautiful mouth screamed, "Get your half Vulcan ass out of bed, you motherfucker, and answer your comm!"

"Arrrgghhhhh...what the hell is that?"

That was his roommate Brian's voice. What was he doing at the deep space station?

Kathleen's voice came again. "Spock, I know you're there, asshole! I see you! Get out of bed! I'm not going until you give me an answer!"

"Shit! Make it stop, it's 4 freakin' a.m. and I have an exam tomorrow." That was Brian's voice again. "Spock! Spock! What the hell, Spock!"

Spock opened his eyes. Why was their room so bright?

...His vision sharpened. Both his and Brian's monitors and their mobile comms were lit up with images of Kathleen.

This was not good. And fascinating.

Brian was sitting looking wildly from monitor to monitor. Springing to his feet, Spock tried to turn off the screens...only to find that they came right back on again.

Kathleen's hands were waving. "You think it would be so easy just to walk out on me - after four months of dropping by whenever you felt like and fucking me -"

"Wha-?" said Brian.

Surveying the monitors and the comms, Spock managed to speak calmly despite the fact that his ears were going quite green. "She is using some sort of transmission device to remotely control all the wireless devices in our room."

"And you're not going to turn me off this time, Spock! You think you can treat me like some sort of...of...whore?" Kathleen said.

Kathleen had never been in this room, or even on campus - Spock tried to be discreet, which logically meant...

"She has sabotaged my comm," Spock said.

"You think you're some sort of alien sex god just because of your green penis?" Kathleen said.

"Spock, I do so not want to hear this!" said Brian still on his bed.

Popping open his comm, Spock turned on a lamp, quickly surveyed the circuitry, and released the tiny receiver board.

The monitors stayed on as Kathleen continued to rant. "Or because of that mind touch sex thingy you do?"

How had she done this? He tilted the comm up and surveyed it under the light. "Fascinating," said Spock.

"Spock, I don't want to hear this! Make it fucking stop!" said Brian.

"Fucking, fucking, fucking - that is all you care about, Spock. No matter how prim and proper, and so very Vulcan everyone thinks you are, Spock, I know the real you," said Kathleen.

"Spock! I have a test at 8 a.m.!" said Brian.

"They may think you're a giant asexual walking calculator, but I know the truth!" spat Kathleen.

Opening a drawer in his desk, Spock tried to retrieve the tools he'd need to operate on the main board in his comm. He had to know how she'd managed this.

"You're an animal," she hissed. "No, worse than an animal. Animals have feelings! You're just a robot, a machine, a giant green dildo -"

"Aaaarrggghhhhh!" screamed Brian. Before Spock knew what was happening, his roommate ripped the comm from his hand, threw it down on the desk and began bludgeoning it with a shoe. The comm shattered into pieces and the monitors went dark.

Spock sat back in his chair. Brian stood next to him, panting, shoe still in hand.

Blinking, Spock mumbled, "Regrettable." His face was warm with embarrassment he was determined not to show.

Brian turned to him, chest still heaving.

"Now I will never know how she managed that," Spock said.

Grunting, Brian whacked Spock's back no less than five times with the shoe. But the onslaught only utilized 50% of Brian's maximum strength. Spock decided not to respond.

Turning away, Brian threw himself stomach first onto the bed and buried his face in a pillow and made a muffled sobbing noise.

Spock remembered his nights in basic training. "I do apologize for the disruption," he said.

Brian grunted.

Spock turned off the light and lay down on his bed. He was deeply disturbed. He went to great lengths to preserve his reputation as an asexual walking calculator. Now -

He heard Brian turning on his bed.

"Spock...why? Why tonight of all nights?"

Tilting his head, Spock said, "I cannot say why she chose tonight in particular. It has been a week since I ended our association."

"Uh-huh," said Brian. "What the Hell happened? What did you do to her to make her go all ape shit?"

"I am not entirely sure." Spock blinked. "I believed our relationship was equitable; she seemed satisfied with the...physical aspect, but recently she began asking for commitment. She is apparently slightly unstable."

"Apparently," said Brian.

"At the outset of the relationship, she insisted that commitment was the last thing from her mind," said Spock.

"And you fell for that?" said Brian.

Spock tilted his head on his pillow.

"They all say that, but every woman wants a serious relationship, with love, and commitment," said Brian.

Spock raised an eyebrow. "I do not believe that is true. In my experience with human women, Kathleen is the first to make such a demand."

Brian was quiet for 3.5 seconds. "How many human women have there been?"

"Well -"

"I don't want to know!" said Brian. He groaned. "She may have been the only one to demand a commitment, but I bet she wasn't the only one who wanted a commitment."

Spock tilted his head. His first relationship had ended amicably. An intriguing woman. Her emotions nearly as flat as a Vulcan who had undergone the kohlinar. It had been, in Spock's estimation, a nearly perfect association.

He had explored his human sexuality with this woman and found that regular sexual encounters made it easier to focus on his studies and work, allowed meditation to come easier, and in general allowed him to be more relaxed. Although in most respects he thought of himself as Vulcan, when it came to sex he was more human. It was quite an advantage. He had breezed through his 21st year unbonded without the slightest symptom of Pon Farr.

He thought back to the very end of the association with his first partner. He wasn't sure why she had ended it. He was scrupulous about making sure her needs were met - he believed in fairness, and frankly, he found it quite a turn on to see her come undone. Their relationship hadn't been purely sexual; they conversed well enough together.

He blinked. The last day of their association she had seemed somewhat distraught when she asked if he felt any emotional attachment to her and he told her he had not.

He crossed his hands over his chest. Did Brian have a point?

The others, besides Kathleen, had been one-night affairs. He found them less satisfying. He liked the predictability of knowing he had someone available. And he did not enjoy having to explain his unique needs to each new partner. He did use a light empathic link to heighten his partners' pleasure, but he did not like sudden unexpected touches to his fingers. All of these one-night arrangements had ended with them giving him their numbers and invitations to come call - but the women were quite dull, and he didn't want to risk extended bouts of conversation with them.

Perhaps, Brian was right. He took a deep breath. He suddenly found he had a new respect for T'Pring. At least she knew what she wanted.

"Spock," Brian said, "If I do badly on this test and have to resort to extra credit, you're helping me out."

"I can depend on your discretion in this matter?" said Spock.

"Yes, you can depend on my discretion on this matter. But you're helping me study for my Advanced Subspace Theory exam, too."

"Done," said Spock.

"Ugh!" said Brian. "I can't believe I'm having less sex than a Vulcan!"

Spock said nothing. Before this night's escapade, he had thought that the benefits of his sexual encounters outweighed the risks. However, if Kathleen had chosen a time when he was in lab to activate his comm...He would have to meditate on the relative merits of pursuing future relationships for quite some time.

Spock decided that the input of time along with potential risks to his reputation did not make further sexual associations wise.

Which did mean he had more difficulty controlling his urges - and might have been why, several years later while he was a Starfleet

faculty member, he very unwisely attempted to seduce his lab assistant, Cadet Uhura. When he put his fingers to her temples and transmitted the lust other human women found so pleasurable, she did something quite unexpected.

She reached back through the telepathic link he had created and probed his own mind. And discovered that beyond lust, for her at least, there was nothing else there.

She went completely cold. This time, unlike with T'Pring, Spock desisted immediately.

Her reaction was quite unlike T'Pring's, though. Cadet Uhura took the incident as an instance of her misreading cultural cues.

But Spock felt he owed her an apology. His behavior had been out of line. She was a student. Moreover, she was very capable, bright, and had advanced his research months ahead of schedule - and would continue to do so if he kept the situation between them...amicable. It was only logical to make amends.

After walking her home at her request, he said, "Cadet Uhura, earlier tonight, when we touched minds if you felt manipulated. I apologize. And I am sorry that my lack of...my lack of affection hurt you."

She looked up at him and said, "...you should never have to feel ashamed or guilty for what you feel, or what you don't feel."

Which was precisely the moment he fell in love with her. It only took him one hundred fifty four days, fifteen hours and twenty-four minutes to convince her of that.

In the process of falling in love, he found he became possessive, territorial, and that he wanted to bite and mark her - and be marked by her. The emotion he'd seen reflected in T'Pring he felt for Cadet Uhura, his Nyota.

When it came to sex he could be human. But when it came to love it turned out he was Vulcan. And after feeling that love he wasn't sure he could accept anything less ever again.

He began to understand T'Pring.

A/N:

'Cause I know everyone wanted a little bit more on that Comm Link episode.

For more details on the exact moment Spock fell in love w/ Nyota, and how he wound up seducing her to begin with you could read Chapter 7/8 of Descartes. Brian pops up in Descartes in Chapter 19/20.

If you read and enjoyed this story please leave a review! Fanfic authors need love as much as Vulcans ;-)

Chapter 11

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Special thanks to Beta Notes from The Classroom. She has several great S/U stories, check out my "Favorite Authors" and click her name.

Chapter 11

Nyota's head lay on Spock's shoulder. Staring up at the ceiling, he tried to let the hum of the Enterprise's life support systems lull him into a meditative state.

Meditation did not come.

The fall of Vulcan had been nearly three months ago. He had turned down his father's invitation to join him on New Vulcan and instead chosen Starfleet. He did not regret his choice. He did not regret that it was Nyota's cool body that lay beside. And yet, there was still an emptiness.

Nyota stirred and rolled off his shoulder as his body heat became too uncomfortable for her. He waited until he was sure she was still sound asleep and then slipped away.

Padding softly out of the bed alcove, Spock made his way to his computer terminal and sat down. With a few clicks he found the latest list of survivors. The 10,195 survivors from Vulcan proper were accounted for - but the accounting for the estimated 39-40 million Vulcans off-world expats and colonists was still going on.

The list was especially long tonight, 4 million. The census for a populous Vulcan colony had been completed. Scrolling through the names, Spock looked for any name he recognized. Friend or foe, it did not matter. After 97 minutes he stopped, not even close to the end of the list.

He stared at the data. And then he entered T'Pring's name and family name. Nothing. She could have gotten married and changed her name. He entered 'T'Pring'. 35,000 results appeared - it was a common name. He sorted by birthdate and narrowed the search to 989. He then devised a search by mother's name and clicked. He didn't find her, although a number of results without mother's maiden name did appear. Orphans? Or a simple omission? He stared at the T'Prings on his screen. Occupation. If he searched by occupation he could winnow the list down. He lifted his fingers.

"Did you find her?" said Nyota from very close behind him. She could read the screen filled with a long list of 'T'Prings,' of course, even though it was in Vulcan.

Spock's fingers froze in mid air. Feeling himself flush, he took a deep breath. Cool arms wrapped around his neck from behind. Nyota tapped his chest in a gesture that invited him to touch her fingers. They weren't bonded, not yet. Nyota had been injured in a previous attempt to bond and now became physically ill in any deep telepathic contact. They needed a healer - and what healers remained were very busy right now.

Still, despite that lack of a true bond, his connection to her was much deeper than anything he'd ever felt with T'Pring.

Taking her fingers, he said, "No." He felt odd. He wasn't even embarrassed by Nyota finding him. He felt numb.

Nyota did feel. Sorrow came through his fingers. She pressed kisses to his cheeks. "I'm sorry," she said. Her voice sounded thick, as though she might cry.

Swallowing, Spock closed his eyes, and turned his chair towards Nyota. She slipped into his lap and laid her head on his shoulder.

"I..." He had no idea what to say. Staring straight ahead he said, "I do not have any intention of seeking her out to re-establish our union." He did not want to say it, but he felt he had to.

"I know," said Nyota, and through his fingers he felt her complete and utter confidence in that.

Surprised, he turned his gaze to her.

Her eyes were wide and moist. She made a tight half smile. "If you did, you wouldn't be here, My Spock."

There were so many reasons to love Nyota.

He tried to articulate his feelings. As usual, his words were ungraceful. "I find...I find that I...need to know if she is alive or dead." For the first time he actually missed the bond. Not T'Pring. Just the bond.

"She was in your head a long time, Spock." Nyota said. And she did cry. "I think it is only natural."

Spock had told her only the barest essentials about T'Pring. Now he let Nyota feel all of the annoyance, frustration and anger he'd ever felt towards his former bond-mate.

Nyota pulled back slightly at the onslaught of negative emotions. Her brows furrowed. He felt curiosity through the link.

"She sent me food during basic training," said Spock, feeling some small amount of affection that he knew he was transmitting to Nyota.

Nyota made a small huff of a laugh. He felt a bittersweetness from her.

He felt his brow furrowed infinitesimally. "She was not xenophobic. She tried to do the right thing to make our bond work. She bored me. And the harder she tried, the more she did the wrong thing." He thought of her attempt to accept his 'need' to self gratify and felt a wave of embarrassment even now. Closing his eyes he said, "But she did not...deserve to die..." Had she gone quickly at the end as

the planet was sucked in on itself? Or been one of the victims that died in the earthquakes, crushed slowly beneath rubble?

He turned his mind away from these thoughts. They would drive him mad. And it was possible she had not perished...as slim as those odds were.

"No," Nyota said, "she didn't."

Pulling Nyota tight towards him, Spock pressed his forehead towards hers, a Vulcan gesture. His lips felt drawn to hers, too. Perhaps she felt that through their linked fingers, or perhaps it was just a natural impulse, but her mouth met his own. Their kiss was soft, and natural and right in a universe that had gone horribly wrong.

"I need you to go to sickbay," the Captain said to Spock in the turbolift. It was 7.5 years after the Fall of Vulcan - two days after Spock's first Pon Farr.

Spock clasped his hands behind his back. He had no doubt this related to his Pon Farr. Fortunately, the Time had been mild, short and it was over. He'd gone on duty yesterday without mishap.

"I assure you, Captain, that is unnecessary," he said.

Reaching out to touch the turbolift stop button, Jim said, "Last night, Spock, after you got off duty, Bones and I caught you in this very turbolift about to sink your teeth into your bond-mate's shoulder."

Spock straightened. He clenched his jaw.

Jim gave a tight smile. "And then you chased her down the hall. Remember any of that?"

"No, Sir," said Spock.

Go, Spock. It was Nyota in his mind. They were bonded now. He felt a warm swell of affection and gratitude towards her. Pon Farr...could have been much worse.

He felt a bit of laughter from her. *It was kind of fun. But the pain in your head and shoulder, Spock; it is killing me. Maybe McCoy can fix it?*

He'd thought he'd been shielding that more successfully from her. He looked at Kirk. "Very well," he said to the Captain.

Jim hit the code for sick bay. As the turbolift doors opened, Jim stepped through with him.

"Is it necessary for you to accompany me?" Spock said, carefully keeping the annoyance out of his voice.

"I can't have you suffering from another memory lapse," Jim said.

Spock said nothing. Arguing would be futile.

They entered sick bay and walked straight into McCoy's office.

Looking up from a PADD, McCoy's eyes got wide. "I can't believe you managed to get him down here, Jim. Did you threaten to court martial him?"

Spock stood straighter at the insult. Putting his hands behind his back, he said, "No."

McCoy frowned at him, and then turned to the captain. "Okay, Jim, I can take it from here. I'll let you know -"

"The Captain may remain if he wishes," said Spock. "Beyond a slight headache and a tension in my shoulder, I am perfectly well." He looked at McCoy. "The sooner the Captain is assured of my health, the sooner I can get back to duty. If he leaves, I estimate that there is a 78.5% chance your flirtations with a certain nurse will delay your final report."

Narrowing his eyes, McCoy pulled out a tricorder. "Chapel is preparing to apply for medical school. I'm helping her study for her MCAT."

"I am confident her knowledge of anatomy is exceptional by now," Spock said. It was in reference to an incident all three of them knew well. He could have dropped in "male" anatomy, but that was just too vulgar.

Jim coughed. "I'll stay, Bones."

McCoy glared at them both. "Sit down," he said to Spock. And then he ran his tricorder over Spock's torso - crude blood tests were no longer needed for this sort of thing. "All vitals are normal - for a green blooded son of a -"

Spock raised an eyebrow.

" - Vulcan and a human," McCoy said. He ran the tricorder up Spock's neck. "Looks like you pulled the muscles in your neck pretty good." Without ceremony, the doctor pulled out a hypospray and pressed it into Spock's neck. Spock felt the muscles there instantly relax. He thought he heard a mental *ahhhhh* from Nyota.

Running the tricorder up to Spock's head, McCoy gave a low whistle. "Slight headache, Spock? What the Hell; you've gone and bruised the bone!"

Jim had been leaning against McCoy's desk; now he straightened. "Could there be a concussion? Could that be responsible for his memory loss last night?"

McCoy looked down at his tricorder. "No, no concussion - the memory loss was residual affects of Pon Farr." He looked at Spock and then at Jim. "Vulcans have thick skulls. But that has got to hurt."

Spock blinked. That was rather more severe than he had expected. Nyota had used a derm kit to shrink the knot left after the incident,

but obviously it hadn't been able to heal the bone.

McCoy put down his tricorder and reached for his hypospray. Spock cut off his bond to Nyota just as McCoy pressed it directly on the sore spot on Spock's head. He did not wince. But it did hurt...and then he felt nothing.

McCoy walked around his desk to a cabinet and began taking out medical devices that had rather primitive looking needles attached. "Numbed your thick skull. I've got to repair the fibers in the cortex and extract any contents that have leaked out. Will take a few minutes."

He came back over to Spock. Spock felt pressure in his head but no pain. His eyes wandered over to Jim. The Captain was holding his hand over his mouth. It was a gesture he made to appear like he was deep in thought, but really had a joke he was suppressing.

He shouldn't ask. "You find something amusing, Captain?"

"Well, since you ask, Spock -" the Captain dropped his hand, a wide grin spread across his face. "I just thought it would be your other head that got injured."

"Jim!" McCoy shouted, pulling back from Spock. "I'm trying to operate on the man's head here. Don't make me laugh, for Christ's sake."

Jim blinked a wide grin on his face, apparently unrepentant. "Seriously, how did you get such a bad knock on your noggin?" Tapping his head with a knuckle he said, "And was it in any way related to the large crash security heard coming from your quarters?"

Spock stayed silent.

McCoy moved back to Spock's side and resumed his task. "The last time I saw something like this, some idiot decided that having a

personal trampoline in his quarters was a fine way to get some exercise."

Spock closed his eyes and willed his ears not to go green. He should not have asked to hear the Captain speak his mind. Now he'd never shut him up.

Chuckling, Jim said, "So, were you jumping up and down on your bed like a trampoline, Spock?"

Spock took a sharp intake of breath. His ears did go green. Really, Spock shouldn't be surprised. The Captain's mind did tend to make rather odd leaps of logic.

Jim blinked. McCoy pulled just far enough away to look Spock in the eye. The two men looked at each other and then back to Spock. Their mouths were slightly agape. McCoy coughed. Obviously, they realized the Captain's hypothesis was correct.

At the time jumping on the bed had been exhilarating, joyful, and he couldn't help himself. Now his childish and foolish behavior was embarrassing.

The shame of Pon Farr wasn't sex; it was the loss of control.

"Okay, Jim, you can leave now." McCoy said gruffly, hands going back to Spock's head. Spock wondered if he was trying to spare him further humiliation. The doctor picked odd times to invoke a bedside manner. "When I release him from this office, he'll be fine."

Instead, Jim leaned back against McCoy's desk. "Really, Spock, you're lucky. You had fun. You had Uhura. In the last timeline, T'Pring called the kal-if-fee."

The Captain had memories from his elder self's life - sometimes these memories were useful. In fact, it was the Captain's memories that had convinced Spock that he needed to prepare for Pon Farr at

35...but Spock hadn't asked for details. Now he was curious. He resisted the urge to tilt his head. "What happened, Captain?"

"Well, in the last timeline you didn't tell us what was wrong with you," said Jim.

"Shocker," said McCoy.

"McCoy had to drag it out of you - and by that time you were pretty far gone. Already on your way to Plak Tau. And then Starfleet tried to divert us..." Shrugging Jim said, "Some mission or other...we disobeyed orders and took you to Vulcan anyway."

T'Pring's words came to Spock's mind, " *...They are not savages ... as soon as they realize they cannot cure you, they will contact Vulcan, organize a rescue mission and ship you home . At that point you will be deep in the plak tau...*" She'd been right. And he had put her life in danger.

Spock swallowed. And then he blinked. His counterpart had a theory that the timeline tried to 'fix' itself. Spock thought the theory highly illogical, but he wanted it to be true. "What was the name of her champion?" He said.

Jim blinked. "I was her champion."

Spock tilted his head.

"Don't move!" said McCoy.

Jim waved a hand in the air. "She wanted to be with this guy Stonn. She knew you'd kill me - which you did by the way, or thought you did, and be dragged away by Starfleet. Then she'd have Stonn, without hurting you."

She couldn't kill him. In that universe, too, she still felt, "The Pull."

In this universe there were thousands of Vulcan-human bonds. The destruction of his homeworld had killed more females of childbearing

age than males - leading to desperate situations. Some of the bonds made with humans by Vulcans in these situations were not...ideal.

Vulcans were a monogamous species. Humans were more flexible. Unless there was some underlying attraction, the humans could and did move on. The Vulcans continued to feel compelled to be with 'their humans' and faithful. The compulsion was especially intense if the union had been consummated physically. It made Vulcans occasionally violent and territorial. That was "The Pull." It was the subject of plenty of daytime talk shows and soap operas.

It was something Spock didn't have in this universe, or the other. Over the years Spock had picked up bits and pieces of his other life from Jim. He knew his counterpart had eventually given in to temptation in his early years. By the time the elder Spock joined the Enterprise, he'd managed to make enough trouble for himself personally and professionally that he'd decided to go the Vulcan way. Spock couldn't blame the other T'Pring for deciding that rejecting him was logical after such betrayal. Nor could he blame her for wanting to protect herself by calling the kal-if-fee. He had so little regard for her life that he didn't bother to make "contingency plans." Martyrdom was illogical; she'd deduced that despite the Pull. And in the other universe there was no convenient xenophobic excuse to dissolve bonds.

He tilted his head again.

"Stop moving, Spock," said McCoy.

"What was Stonn's family name?" Spock asked.

Jim's brow furrowed. "I don't remember..."

"No matter," said Spock, opening the bond with Nyota and feeling a bit of illogical hope in his chest. "I will get it from my other self."

Jim raised an eyebrow. "Why are you so interested in this Stonn guy? You should forget about T'Ping -"

"T'Pring," Spock corrected.

"- and him completely." Jim made a huff. "If anything, you should feel grateful to *this* T'Pring for breaking your bond in this universe."

Spock tilted his head again. "I am, Captain."

"Stop moving!" said McCoy.

Spock stared at the monitor in his quarters at the results of the query based on Stonn's family name his elder self had provided. Stonn had died in this galaxy. With or without T'Pring, Spock did not know.

Nyota gently touched his arm. "I'm sorry."

Sliding his fingers into hers he said, "It was an illogical idea to begin with."

He felt disappointment at the results, but not the overwhelming sorrow. It had been many years - he was accustomed to defeat in this matter.

"Come," he said, fingers still gratefully on Nyota's, "Let us go to dinner."

A/N:

Next chapter, and final chapter, all T'Pring's POV. Probably won't appear until next Saturday though.

Would love to hear from you if you enjoyed this story so far!

Chapter 12

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to Beta Notes from the Classroom

Chapter 12

" *Mama, a human!*" T'Pelna pulled T'Pring forward by the hand so hard she bent over. T'Pring clutched instinctively at the baby in the sling on her shoulder.

At six years old, T'Pelna had very high telepathic abilities, but her control left a little to be desired. Fortunately T'Pelna spoke in Vulcan, so there was little risk that the human had been insulted.

" *May I touch her fingers?*" T'Pelna said, excitement and curiosity sparking across the link.

T'Pring looked down the aisle of cribs. A healthy though petite, symmetrical, chocolate-brown human woman with a nearly overflowing cart by her side was gazing up at the 10 meter high floor-to-ceiling display of wares, her brows slightly knitted together, her eyes wide. T'Pring judged the expression was one of confusion.

The woman was wearing modest clothing, but it was Terran in style. An off worlder then, not a human bond-mate. T'Pring estimated the likelihood of her speaking Vulcan to be less than 2%.

" *T'Pelna,*" she said, squeezing the child's hand, "*I know you find Torak's human mother fascinating, but you must not think that all humans exist to heighten your telepathic experience.*" T'Pelna wasn't too old for touching stranger's fingers, but T'Pring was worried her attitude towards humans was a bit too...experimental. They weren't insects.

Turning, the human woman regarded T'Pring and T'Pelna. A wide smile split her face. *"It is quite alright with me,"* she said in flawless Vulcan. *"If it is alright with your mother."*

T'Pelna sent a wave of expectant hopefulness through the link. T'Pring relented and let go of her hand.

Darting forward, T'Pelna held her fingers out to the human woman who obligingly held out her own.

As soon as their fingers touched, T'Pelna said, *"Fascinating."* Through the bond T'Pring could tell it was a manufactured emotion on T'Pelna's part. She wasn't fascinated yet...

The woman raised an eyebrow. *"You are attempting to make me laugh by tickling me with your fascination."*

T'Pelna and T'Pring both tilted their heads.

"Fascinating," said T'Pelna. *"You are correct. How did you know?"* This time the fascination was real.

The human woman laughed. *"I know something about Vulcans."* Perhaps she was a human bond-mate.

Moving her hands to her hips, the human woman said, *"What I know very little about are babies - Vulcan or human. And I know less about cribs."* She sighed. *"My bond-mate's sister-in-law gave birth three months early."*

T'Pelna made a little gasp. *"That is far too early."*

T'Pring straightened. *"I offer my sympathy. But you are here - so the baby is well?"*

The human nodded and put a hand to her face; the other she put below her elbow. A gesture of contemplation, or perhaps anxiety?

" Yes," said the woman. *"She will be leaving the hospital in a few days. But it was quite a scare for us all...and Sybok and T'Ell do not have clothes, or a stroller, or...a crib. My bond-mate and I offered to pick up baby gear since the parents are still at the hospital."*

T'Pring blinked. *"Well, if you would like my advice -"*

" I would greatly appreciate your advice," the human woman said, smiling. She looking at T'Pelna, the baby in the sling, and back to T'Pring.

Her brows furrowed together. *"You look very familiar to me..."*

" We have not met," said T'Pring. *"Your bond-mate may have met me at some point."* Switching to Standard, T'Pring employed an idiom. *"Perhaps it will come to you."*

Pointing to a dark gray metal crib with clean lines at the end of the aisle, T'Pring said, *"Now, that crib, is the one we are here to purchase."* Although how she was going to move it without her husband help she did not know. He was detained by work. At this moment he was assisting in a delicate surgery.

"I broke my sister's wooden crib," said T'Pelna, putting her hands behind her back. *"But it was not illogical. She asked me to climb in with her - telepathically, and the side broke."*

The woman smiled at T'Pelna, then looked at the crib and made an odd expression. A wince? Had she been bitten by one of the insects that inhabited New Vulcan? T'Pring had heard they were drawn to iron-based blood.

"My bond-mate says we should get that one, too," said the woman. *"But -"*

"I will test its strength for you," said T'Pelna.

The woman's wince disappeared as she watched T'Pelna go. With a smile she said in Standard, "She is darling. I hope I have a little girl just like that someday."

Starting down the aisle, T'Pring tilted her head. Obviously, if the woman had children of her own, they were likely to be several shades darker, even if her bond mate was pale skinned...it must be a figure of speech. T'Pring let it slide.

The other woman was in step beside T'Pring when she reached the crib. T'Pelna, still in the crib, gave a few solid jumps. *"It seems very solid, Mother. I believe you should put T'Amanda in with me to see if it bears both our weights."*

"T'Amanda?" said the human woman at T'Pring's side.

"T'Pelna, I cannot put T'Amanda in the crib with you jumping up and down," said T'Pring. Keeping a careful eye on T'Pelna, T'Pring said, *"The baby is named after a human friend who helped me meet my husband."*

After Spock, T'Pring requested she be given some choice over who she would bond with. Her parents reluctantly agreed. They allowed T'Pring to go on 'dates' arranged by themselves, friends and work associates...and even agreed that T'Pring could consider someone she met on her own, although that never happened. Asking a male if he was 'unbonded' was too uncomfortable.

T'Pring had plenty of 'dates.' Unfortunately, after dissolving a bond under the pretense of 'racial purity,' it was hard to find a bond-mate who wasn't a xenophobe. Amanda devised a clever plan to 'weed out the bad ones.' T'Pring began meeting her dates outside coffee shops, Amanda in tow. At the entrance to the coffee shop, T'Pring would turn to Amanda in front of the prospect, touch her human friend's fingers as she would a relative, and say, "Live long and prosper."

It didn't make finding a good mate easier...but it did make a lot of bad dates extremely short.

T'Pelna made an exceptionally exuberant leap. "T'Pelna," said T'Pring, "That is enough testing the strength. Please test the drop side now, or the cover."

Remarkably, her child obeyed without a telepathic nudge and began climbing out of the crib.

"You're T'Pring," said the woman.

"Yes -" T'Pring turned. The human's woman's eyes were wide. T'Pring blinked. All of her friends and family were accounted for - a few had survived, most had not. This woman's bond-mate could only be some distant acquaintance, and yet her expression was one of tremendous shock. Maybe the bond was new and she was just unaccustomed to the sharing of memories?

"He has been looking for you for ten years," said the woman.

T'Pring blinked again. "I am sorry -"

There was a loud clang from the crib, T'Pring started to turn, sure her child had broken something. Her movement was stopped by the human's small hand on her sleeve.

"Please don't go. He's coming now - he's here in the store, he was just exchanging something...He does want to see you," said the woman.

T'Pring stared at the hand. And then a movement caught her eye. She looked up and froze. It was Spock, standing motionless at the opposite end of the aisle, staring at her.

T'Pring pulled her arm out of the human's grasp, perhaps with too much force. What was he doing here? He couldn't be this woman's bond-mate. Could he? He would not want to see her.

"Mama," said T'Pelna, slipping her fingers protectively into T'Pring's, obviously feeling her distress.

Spock began walking towards the human woman, but his eyes were on T'Pring. If this human was his bond-mate, she was shockingly undisturbed by Spock's far too intense stare at another female.

She looked down. Of course, humans did not always respond the way you expected them to. Amanda had been her friend even after she dissolved the bond to her son under such horrible pretenses.

"Greetings, T'Pring," Spock said.

T'Pring looked up. "Greetings, Spock."

They stared at one another for 2.5 seconds. T'Pelna's feet shuffled.

"You have met my bond mate, Nyota Uhura," Spock said.

T'Pring nodded. She wished Korval was here...he'd just left surgery. It would be approximately twenty-five minutes before he could arrive. He felt her distress and was anxious to be by her side.

Both of Spock's eyebrows rose. "I have searched every database of survivors. I could not find you."

T'Pring tilted her head. "I was on the human colony of Epsilon 1235; a human census taker did come to visit us -"

One of Spock's eyebrow's shot up. "T'Ping...they put you down as T'Ping." His voice was low and dangerous sounding. "The birthdate was correct, but there was no mother's or father's name." He briefly closed his eyes. Opening them he said, "Your husband's name is Korval. He is a medic - he specializes in human and Vulcan medicine, particularly pediatrics."

T'Pring was surprised that he would go so far as to look for her in records from so remote an outpost as Epsilon 1235. "Yes," said T'Pring.

Korval wasn't a doctor, someone who was expected to do research and contribute new findings to the field. He was a medic. He specialized in treating the sick, the broken and the burned. After the invasion of Epsilon 1235 Spock had been responsible for repelling, Korval had taken a position there, serving the human colonists and some of the Vulcan researchers and expats that stayed to study the unique flora and fauna.

Of course...just because he wasn't supposed to make medical discoveries didn't mean he hadn't. Spock was unlikely to appreciate that. He was rather prejudiced when it came to perceived intellect.

"A useful person to know," said Spock.

T'Pring almost started. To be useful was nearly as high a compliment as to be logical.

"Yes," she said.

Spock had been looking ten years...for her. But it didn't make sense. "I sent my condolences when I heard of your Mother...you should have received my message just before her memorial service."

Spock tilted his head. "I never received the message."

And that did make sense actually. After the Fall of Vulcan, the Federation and Starfleet had been in complete disarray. Communications got lost. People got lost.

"When I did not hear back from you..." T'Pring said.

Spock nodded. "You thought you offended me and did not endeavor to do so again." Looking down he said, "It was a logical deduction."

"I grieve with thee," T'Pring said.

Spock's eyes flicked briefly to the baby in her sling, then up to T'Pring. "And I with thee."

T'Pring did not know what to say. She had no questions about his family. Sarek was a prominent person; she knew of his marriage and children. Now she knew from Ms. Uhura that Sybok was back, but it would be impolite to ask how that came about.

Spock evidently did not know what to say either.

Ms. Uhura looked back and forth between them both. After 7.5 long seconds the human woman said, "Spock, she likes the crib you were admiring."

Spock's head jerked. He raised an eyebrow and turned to his bond-mate with a half smile that T'Pring interpreted as triumph. It was quite a rude display.

"You see, it is a logical choice, Nyota, despite your reservations."

Was he, correcting his bond-mate? In public? For a moment T'Pring had thought he'd changed...but he was still so...mean.

Ms. Uhura's brow furrowed, but oddly she was smiling. "I don't care how logical you say it is, it looks like a cage."

"But it has three adjustable mattress heights," said Spock, "A drop side, casters that will make it easy to move if need be -"

"And it is strong," said T'Pelna getting tired of being left out.

"I will not let you put my niece in a cage," said Ms. Uhura with her hands on her hips.

Spock ignored her and went to the crib and put the optional black wire door on top. "And the cover will prevent the child from exiting through the top," he said raising his eyebrow. A sharp half smile on his face.

"Now it looks like a dog kennel!" said Ms. Uhura, a slight smile still mysteriously on her face. "You will not be putting the little girl who

may someday be in charge of choosing our convalescent home in a dog kennel!"

Both of Spock's eyebrows shot up; for a moment both his lips quirked up. "Nyota, young Vulcans are predisposed towards climbing -"

"We are, we are," said T'Polna.

T'Polna tilted her head. "It would be unsafe to get an infant Vulcan a crib without a cover. They do attempt to climb before they are even capable of walking."

Eyes still on Ms. Uhura, Spock tilted his head in T'Polna's direction and gave that peculiar half smile again. T'Polna felt distinctly uncomfortable. She was in the middle of an open domestic squabble.

"It looks like something out of an Orion orphanage," said Ms. Uhura. "You can't put her in that."

Spock's smile vanished. T'Polna regarded the crib. It did actually look like something from an Orion orphanage. It was quite a practical design. A sort of convergent evolution. She doubted a baby would mind one way or another, though. "Babies do not have the frame of reference to make that distinction," said T'Polna.

Spock tilted his head. "Logical."

"However," said T'Polna, not sure how far tolerance for former bond-mates a human was actually capable of, "If you wish for something less utilitarian in appearance, perhaps you could get one of the tent covers."

"Tent covers?" said Ms. Uhura.

Pointing to a shelf a meter up, T'Polna said, "Yes. Some of them even have pictures on them, maps of the cosmos, tree foliage, cloud

formations."

"Map of the cosmos?" said Spock.

Looking up, Nyota said, "That would be appropriate from us, her Starfleet aunt and uncle..." She looked down at Spock. "But you're painting this crib so it isn't flat black."

Spock tilted his head. "What color?"

The human looked at the crib. "Sea foam green. That will work well if they have a boy next time."

"Done," said Spock.

T'Pring blinked. He compromised.

Spock went a few paces down the aisle to where the flat storage boxes that held the unassembled cribs were held. Pulling one out he said, "These are surprisingly heavy." He looked at T'Pring. "I heard you say you were here to purchase one, too. Would you like our assistance getting the item to your hover?"

It might have been the nicest thing Spock had ever offered her, but T'Pring was feeling as though she was imposing upon Ms. Uhura. "That will not be necessary," said T'Pring. "My husband is delayed, but he will be here in approximately fifteen minutes."

At just that moment, T'Amanda started to stir and kick in the sling and T'Pelna decided to say aloud, "I am hungry."

"Please," said Ms. Uhura, "Let him help you. Lifting heavy objects is one of the things he's most useful at."

Spock raised an eyebrow in her direction but turned to T'Pring and said, "It is really no imposition."

T'Amanda started to fuss; T'Pelna began shuffling her feet. It would be best to get them out of here as soon as possible, and T'Pring

would prefer to nurse her baby in the quiet of her hover, sitting down.

T'Pring looked at Ms. Uhura. The woman gave her a soft smile. She didn't look jealous. "I accept," said T'Pring.

Spock nodded and began pulling out another box. And then T'Pelna made an insightful deduction.

"Are you Commander Spock from the U.S.S. Enterprise?"

"I am," said Spock, still focused on his task. The box appeared to be sticking a bit in the back.

"My friend Torak is a hybrid, too," said T'Pelna.

Spock stopped to look at T'Pring's child.

T'Pelna continued to speak. "He says that hybrids are smarter and more highly evolved than Vulcans or Humans. He says you are proof."

Spock tilted his head. "His sample size is too small." Looking up at T'Pring, he added softly, "And in some ways, I was significantly delayed."

T'Pring was too overwhelmed to do anything other than look at the floor.

T'Pring felt, rather than saw, Korval arrive just as they exited the store. She felt relieved. As touched as she was that Spock remembered her, that he'd actively been *seeking* her for 10 years, the time in the checkout line had been distinctly uncomfortable. Spock and Ms. Uhura argued constantly - and smiled while doing it. Well, with Spock it was a sort of half smile with a raised eyebrow, but Ms. Uhura smiled with all teeth bared.

T'Pring had heard it said that in most animals showing teeth was a sign of aggression. T'Pring had not thought that a human smile could be both aggressive and friendly, but the way Ms. Uhura delivered taunts and rebukes with all her teeth showing made T'Pring realize that the possibility did indeed exist. Perhaps this aggressive behavior was part of how she kept Spock in line?

It was interesting...but also very confusing. And it made her tired just watching it.

She turned her head to see her bond-mate. He was not confusing at all; in fact, he was completely predictable. Korval was wearing the simple utilitarian garb that he always wore under his surgical clothes. He was as tall as Spock, dark-haired, black eyed and in T'Pring's estimation, even more handsome. Unlike Spock, Korval's expression was completely neutral and calm.

His emotions were as predictable as his appearance. His external calm completely hid the fact that he wanted to grab Spock by the neck and beat his head against the pavement until the parking lot ran green with his blood.

...which was lovely and possessive. And of course Korval would never do such a thing - well, not without further provocation, and that was logical and lovely, too.

"Ms. Uhura, Spock, this is my husband, Korval," T'Pring said, briefly touching her fingers to his. "Husband, this is Spock and his bond-mate, Ms. Uhura."

Korval nodded politely again at them both.

T'Pring noticed Spock kept his gaze deferentially downward and his arms behind his back.

Next to T'Pring, T'Pelna said, "Papa, you are here. Now we can go to dinner."

Ms. Uhura smiled, "If you'd like, we can all go to dinner together."

"That would be fascinating," said T'Pelna.

T'Pring felt Korval's stomach drop. He had just had a very stressful day and the last thing he wanted was to control his urge to beat Spock during dinner.

Spock's eyes went to T'Pring's, then to Korval, and it suddenly hit T'Pring he knew what Korval was thinking. Spock, T'Pring and Korval all looked at Ms. Uhura.

Her smile vanished. "Or perhaps we can do it another time -"

Spock, T'Pring, and Korval said nothing.

Ms. Uhura looked at T'Amanda. Spock's gaze followed. Ms. Uhura lifted a finger in T'Amanda's direction.

T'Pring's baby was about 30.5 seconds from screaming in outrage at the postponement of her own meal; allowing Ms. Uhura to touch her would not be wise.

"If it is acceptable to you," T'Pring said, seeking to be polite. "I will keep you informed of her progress."

Spock tilted his head. Ms. Uhura smiled. "We would both like that."

T'Pring blinked, wondering if Ms. Uhura really meant that. Spock was not typically interested in babies...yet here he was shopping for Sybok's newborn. Maybe he had changed?

T'Amanda began to cry, which was actually very convenient. It provided the perfect escape. Korval nodded at Spock and Ms. Uhura, "We must go. Thank you for your help."

As they left the pair, T'Amanda quieted and T'Pring overheard Ms. Uhura say, "Vulcans...so territorial."

T'Pring tilted her head. It was a well-known saying in the galaxy now.

Spock responded, "You once told me that our territorial instincts were adaptive for the harsh Vulcan climate, and therefore logical. When you lose your favorite PADD..."

"Don't tease me about that PADD," said Ms. Uhura

"Your emotional response is very illogical," said Spock.

Or maybe he hadn't really changed.

She didn't hear Ms. Uhura's response as Korval opened the door to the hover. But the human was smiling.

T'Pelna sprung inside the hover in front of her parents. Korval followed T'Pring's gaze. Spock was no longer in T'Pring's vicinity and Korval's temper was cooling. It was replaced by his general curiosity towards humans.

"They are very argumentative," he noted.

"Yet, oddly...compatible..." said T'Pring.

Korval put his fingers on hers and she felt a rush of protectiveness, and that emotion that Vulcans didn't really have a name for - the human word "love" was too vague.

"Compatibility is good," he said.

FIN

A/N:

Aww...happy ending for all (I don't think Nyota and Spock are really "fighting", but teasing was a big part of their relationship in Descartes). For those of you who haven't read my version of Spock's Pon Farr check out "Overflow: Pon Farr 35". It's a funny, non-angsty Pon-Farr story!

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