

She Who Loves Roses

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She Who Loves Roses

by [Planxty](#)

Summary

Saavik's case was a unique one: bonded to a Vulcan male in her youth and later in life unintentionally finding herself with a second bond to a human woman. They found harmony in living separate lives...until her Vulcan partner entered Pon Farr.

Notes

Content warning:

Throughout there will be discussions of Pon Farr related consent issues, as well as discussions of past abuse and sexual violence

This is part of a series that spans several novellas. If you're just jumping in, see end notes for a brief recap

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Blackpool, England

May 2304

So much was lost centuries ago when Earth was engulfed in war, but some of it was restored, thanks to tireless work from artists and historians who carefully studied old photographs and used their knowledge to fill in the gaps. The Blackpool Tower Ballroom was one such structure that fell into disrepair when humanity cared less about beauty and more about destruction, was nearly destroyed during the Eugenics Wars, and later rebuilt with all the care and consideration necessary to bring a relic from Earth's Gilded Age back to glory. Its purpose? The same as it was before: a dance venue, and now a proud host to events whose participants traveled from across the galaxy.

In a society whose design sensibilities had shifted in favor of clean lines and bright lights, the warmth and dim ornateness made this piece of Earth's history feel otherworldly. The ballroom was lit with crystal chandeliers that glowed soft light on ornate wood carvings and murals, and its occupants were nearly as spectacular to see. Fully half of them were dancers of the highest caliber who carried themselves with elegant confidence and wore costumes that sparkled with rhinestones. Even the spectators were also neatly polished and smartly dressed.

Maya should have been thrilled to be here and on this stage with her dance partner, Bea Durand. Thrilled or nervous or honored to be a finalist in the World Dancesport Championship after years of working to qualify, instead everything felt wrong, and that sense of feeling like she didn't belong tied up Maya's stomach into an anxious knot. This place was destroyed back in the days when her father had tried to rule the world, Khan's empire may have been on the other side of the planet, but Maya still felt an uncomfortable connection to this link to the past.

Ten couples stood on stage. Maya glanced to her partner as an announcer began to call the results. The pair of them were coordinated to be inverses of one another: Maya's gown was silver (which glowed against her tan skin) with blue rhinestones, and Bea's was blue with silver. Maya's heart raced faster and faster as each place was called, every time she heard a name called that was not her own the more excited and nervous she grew. Dancers she had never heard of earned tenth through third place. And then.

"In second place: number one-seventeen, Maya Noonien-Singh and Bea Durand."

The pair stepped forward to accept their trophy. Maya managed to keep a pleasant smile on her face, but inside she felt like she had been stabbed in the stomach. Second place, because Maya Noonien-Singh the half-Augment could never be good enough no matter what planet she lived on. Her mind swirled trying to grasp for some explanation other than her dancing. Maybe her twisted feelings distracted her technique, or maybe switching to using her real surname in competition hurt her (this wouldn't have happened when she went by Maya McGivers). She kept on a happy, brave face while the competitor's were dismissed from the stage and until she was out of view of the spectators.

Maya pushed the trophy to Bea and ran away. As she weaved in and out of elegant dancers, Maya kicked off her shoes and began to pull pins from her hair to set free unruly dark waves. When she emerged from the halls of Blackpool Tower and into the night air, she looked every bit like a wild half-Augment girl from an untamed planet...only now in a glittering gown.

Frustration boiled into rage which Maya couldn't keep inside. She punched the side of the wall and let out a guttural scream when pain surged through arm, and when she tried to shake out the pain she saw that the skin on her knuckles was split and bloody. She turned to lean back against the wall and closed her eyes to try to calm the fire that burned inside. Deep breaths, slow and steady, but nothing soothed her.

"Maya," a familiar voice called. Maya opened her eyes to see her bondmate Saavik standing just outside the door. The Vulcan looked just as graceful in a plain black dress with her dark hair neatly styled. Seeing her lover, however, did not comfort Maya. Instead it brought a sense of shame to her already overwhelmed mind.

"Saavik...please let me be alone. I can't stand for you to see me like this." She forced herself to laugh. "I'm acting horribly illogical, and I know it."

"Yes. You are. However, you are also acting in a manner that is unsurprising for someone with your experiences: held to a standard of perfection you were unable to achieve, desperate for approval, failures weaponized against you..."

"This should have been an easy victory." Maya shook her head and looked back down at her bloody knuckles. Her hand still seared with pain, and her fingers were beginning to swell. "I must be worse off than I thought if I can't succeed against a field of unaltered humans."

"Maya." Saavik's tone was stern. "I recall that you requested that I never hesitate to 'call you on your bullshit.' I believe your last statement was an example of...your bullshit."

"You mean I'm starting to sound like my father?"

"I cannot be the judge of that, but I can say that your attitude suggests a degree of arrogance and entitlement linked to your genetic status."

Maya shook her head again. "You're right. I should be pleased just to have qualified, but I've already ruined the moment. I'm going to get changed, I need to get away from here." She walked toward the door, but before she passed, Saavik reached out to stop her.

"Before you go, there is another matter I would like to discuss while we are alone." Vulcan's were difficult to read, but Maya felt well attuned to Saavik. There was something in her eyes, in the way she touched her arm. Saavik was worried. "My leave of absence has been extended.

I must return to Vulcan and will be departing in the morning.”

Maya forgot all of her own problems. People did not suddenly drop everything to go to another planet when everything was fine. “What happened?”

“Nothing yet, but Tural will be in danger if I do not return to him in eight days’ time.”

Tural. Saavik’s Vulcan bondmate. Hers was a rare situation, to be bonded to two mates—the link between her and Maya had been forged unintentionally. Maya had never met Saavik’s other partner and sometimes felt a mild sense of jealousy, but she tried to keep a charitable view of him. “I don’t understand.”

“This is not for outsiders to understand.” Saavik let go of Maya’s arm and stepped back inside, but Maya trailed behind her. They were no longer alone (though they were still far from the main crowd), and the people they passed stared at Maya’s disheveled state.

“Wait, let me come with you!” Despite Maya’s calls, Saavik ignored her and continued to walk forward. “I have no commitments keeping me on Earth.” Still no response. “I’ve been wanting to see Vulcan and meet Tural.” Nothing. “How much of an outsider am I if we’re bonded?”

Saavik stopped short and turned around to face Maya. “You may accompany me only if you understand that my business on Vulcan is private. I am not likely to divulge any further details.”

“I understand. I won’t pry.”

“Then be ready to depart in the morning.”

Bellingham, WA

Maya returned home still straining to carry the garment back slung over her left shoulder—no matter how many times she re-injured the damn joint she still found herself favoring her dominant side. She went straight to the bedroom and laid the bag on the bed, her competition gown could be properly stored later. For now there was a teenage boy who needed to be told of their sudden change in plans.

Though the hour was late, she could hear that her nephew, Enzo, was awake. He was usually awake all night; the day he turned thirteen he turned into a nocturnal creature whose favorite hobby was eating. His room was supposed to be soundproofed, but Maya could still hear a faint tapping from his drumset. At least he had an impeccable sense of rhythm.

The door slid open, and the full blast of percussive sound blasted through the air. Maya stood outside the door and waited until he noticed her and suddenly stopped playing. Enzo glanced from her bloody knuckles to her tousled hair and smeared makeup.

“Did you get in a fight or something?” he asked.

“What? No. It’s complicated. Apparently my ego is too fragile to tolerate second place.”

“Maybe don’t lose next time,” Enzo answered with a shrug.

Maya closed her eyes and took a deep breath. Enzo had never met his father, yet every now and then he would say something that reminded Maya of her brother. It was troubling, not only for the painful memories it stirred up but also because Maya couldn’t stomach the thought of raising a boy who might grow up to be as hateful, angry, and arrogant as her brother.

“I’ll keep that advice in mind.” She opened her eyes again. “Pack your bags, we’re going to Vulcan in the morning.”

“Really? Why?”

“If I knew, I’d tell you.”

Chapter End Notes

- This is an AU where the destruction of Ceti Alpha V was delayed by several decades
- 25 years after “Space Seed” Kirk et al return to Ceti Alpha V, Maya defects
- 10 years later Saavik (now a captain) goes to Ceti Alpha V (which has been recently devastated) and rescues some child Augments including Maya’s nephew.

Chapter 2

Traveling on such short notice, they couldn't be choosy about which vessel to take to Vulcan. Rather than a sleek Starfleet ship or passenger transport, the trio's only option was a small, worn-out cargo vessel whose interior looked less like a modern starship and more like a submarine from centuries old photographs. Saavik, Maya, and Enzo had to share cramped accommodations, and the ship had no amenities to speak of. If one was not content to lounge alone in their bunk and read, the only other option for recreation was to hope to find someone to join in a game of chess or cards in the mess hall. Luckily this arrangement would only last for a few days.

The first day passed without incident, though there was a heavy, uncomfortable air hanging about them. Due to their bond, Maya usually felt a vague sense of what was going on in Saavik's mind, but ever since their conversation in Blackpool, Saavik built a mental wall between them. Thanks to Maya's promise not to pry, she was in position to ask anything about it.

On the second morning, Enzo was awake and full of energy at an unkind hour. Not awake before Saavik (who hadn't slept since before Blackpool), but early enough to disturb Maya's deepest slumber.

"Hey..." He nudged his aunt's shoulder, and she opened one lazy eye. "The chief engineer said I can watch him work today. Can I go?"

"You couldn't have mentioned this the night before?" Maya mumbled without so much as lifting her head. "Nevermind. Go on, just be sure not to get in the way."

Enzo dashed off, and Maya sat up, stretched, and yawned. She was amazed that after all these days with no sleep and some secret emergency on her mind that Saavik still looked fresh faced and full of energy. "Have I ever told you how much I envy Vulcans?"

"If you knew more about my situation, you would not find it enviable."

Maya looked down. "Oh." Unable to ask questions, there was nothing to say.

Saavik sat down next to Maya, but she did not look at her partner. "I have reached the conclusion that I should be more transparent with you, as this situation may affect you more than I anticipated."

Maya looked at Saavik in silent anticipation, but the Vulcan said nothing. Maya took Saavik's hand to offer some comfort, but Saavik pulled away. Still, Saavik did not look at Maya.

"Tural is in the throes of Pon Farr, an urge to mate that occurs every seven years and is lethal if unsatisfied."

"Why can't he just satisfy himself on his own?" Saavik gave Maya a sharp look that warned her that she had crossed a line. "So that's why you need to return to Vulcan." They sat in silence until Maya found the courage to ask a question that felt bold and perhaps more intrusive than the last one. "What happens if you don't want to sleep with him?"

"Normally the telepathic bond ensures that both bondmate match one another's desire." She spoke slowly and softly and if the words were difficult to say.

"Normally?" Maya felt her heart flutter, and she sprang to her feet. She had a creeping suspicion that this conversation was liable to take an uncomfortable turn. "But not this time?"

"Not yet, though that may change with time and proximity."

"And if it doesn't? If you don't end up wanting him?" Maya closed her eyes and took a deep breath. They were already sprinting down that uncomfortable path, and she felt every instinct to scream or run. "Does it have to be you? Could he find someone more willing?"

"I have an obligation to him."

Those words made Maya's stomach twist into knots, and every fiber became alert as if to respond to some invisible threat. "I've heard that one before. Disgusting."

"Maya." Saavik rose her voice but still was controlled and steady. "Your outburst was unnecessary."

"Was it, though?" She still kept from yelling, but each word had a sharp bite and she pointed an accusatory finger at Saavik. "You've been in my mind, you know what I've endured."

"This is a matter of life and death. I do not think it is comparable."

"An obligation to fuck someone you don't want. Forgive me for not giving a damn about the nuance. I need space." Without another word, Maya stormed off.

She needed space but there was nowhere to go on this damn ship, so Maya stayed in the corridor just outside the door and sat on the floor, leaning against the wall with her head hung low. She closed her eyes and took slow, deep breaths to try to chase away the terrible memories that all tried to flood back. A few minutes passed, some of the raw feelings eased, and Maya was lucid enough to realize that she had been sitting outside barefoot and still wearing the worn out tank top and sweatpants she had slept in. Maya took one more deep breath before she got to her feet and stepped back inside.

She braced herself for another uncomfortable conversation but was relieved to find that Saavik was processing things in her own way. She sat on the bed with her eyes closed and deep in meditation, and she made no notice of Maya. No need to disturb her. Maya was quick and quiet when she slipped in a pair of shoes and a jacket and ducked back out.

Though she had no appetite to speak of, Maya padded through the dark, narrow walls toward the mess hall. There was nowhere else to go, and at the very least she could sit down with a large cup of coffee.

The mess hall was empty aside from three people grabbing a quick breakfast, which came as a relief because with so many tables and chairs crammed into a small space. If it was full there would be no way to avoid sitting shoulder to shoulder. Maya ordered her coffee and took her first sip as she scouted out a place to sip. The coffee was scalding hot with a burnt aftertaste, but that didn't bother Maya. What bothered her was the creeping desire for a drink that had more of a calming effect.

She found one familiar face sitting by a window (even the windows were tiny): the transporter technician they had first met when they stepped on board very early the previous morning, a man who was built like a brick wall with a shaved head and a thick gray beard. By her estimation, his shift had likely just ended.

"Graham?" He looked up. "I realize this sounds insane at this hour, but is there anywhere on this ship to get a beer?"

"Trouble with the missus?" Graham asked.

Maya looked down and let a nervous smile creep onto her face. "What gave it away?"

"You look like you just rolled out of bed and like you're about to cry into your coffee, and you're looking for a beer before 0800. Lucky you, though." He smiled. For all his size and gruffness, he had kind eyes. "It's basically early evening for me, and I could stand to wind down with a drink. I've got a decent selection in my quarters."

"I'd like that, but it wouldn't look right if I was arguing with my partner and then was seen going in and out of someone else's quarters." Not that Saavik would be in any position to complain if she were to stray, given...everything.

"Even if that someone was a gay man?"

On the way to Graham's quarters, Maya got a real sense of how small the ship was: Graham's quarters were only three doors down from her own and had the same cramped layout, though his living space was understandably more cluttered and lived in.

"My bunkmates might be coming back," Graham explained as he opened a foot locker and produced two bottles of beer. "Komi might be a while because she usually ends her shift by eating a huge meal and doing sudoku. Alejandro likes to go straight to sleep, but won't be bothered. He can sleep through anything."

Graham cracked open a bottle and handed it to Maya. "Bottoms up."

Maya grabbed the bottle from his hand and took a long sip. "I won't lie, but I feel a little insulted. You said you had a variety, but you served me something that's like making love in a canoe."

"What?"

"It's fucking close to water."

Graham laughed. "I'm stealing that one." He sat down on the bunk, and Maya sat beside him. "You know, I didn't think Vulcans argued."

"Oh, believe me they do." Maya took another long sip of her beer. Because of its weaker taste it went down quickly. She could stand to drink several of these and knew she metabolized alcohol efficiently enough to barely catch a buzz, but it would be taking advantage of Graham's hospitality to drink all his beer. "And it's awful because everything they say is rooted in reason and they mean every word of it. No petty insults thrown around just to be hurtful."

"Damn." Graham took a long drink from his beer, draining a third of it in one go. Maybe he was thinking of drinking for speed and volume too. "Remind me to never complain about disagreements with my boyfriend again."

"Well, we don't argue often, but the disagreements we do have generally aren't about smaller issues." She took another sip of her beer and sat in thoughtful silence. She had been the cause of their few arguments and always left the exchange feeling deeply hurt and ashamed. Maybe she wasn't cut out to be in a relationship with a Vulcan...or anyone.

They drank their beer and didn't speak another word until the door opened and a tall, thin man stepped inside and kicked off his shoes. He only looked at Graham and Maya, grunted, and climbed into bed fully dressed. No matter what Graham had said, it didn't feel right to stay around when someone was trying to sleep.

Maya finished the rest of her beer quickly. "I should go. Thank you."

"Any time."

Back out the corridor and three doors down, Maya stood in front of her door and tried to work up the courage to speak to Saavik and the humility to apologize...maybe she should have had more beer. She took a deep breath and closed her eyes; she wouldn't get easier with time, so she punched the access code on the door and stepped inside after the door slid open.

Saavik still sat on the bed with eyes closed in meditation. As to not disturb her, Maya hung back to just inside the door and hoped that Saavik would notice her and be the first to say something. Nothing.

"Saavik?" Maya's voice was soft and frail. It felt wrong to interrupt her meditation, but if she didn't she might be waiting for hours.

Saavik opened one eye, but otherwise did not acknowledge Maya.

Another deep breath. "I want to apologize, for earlier. Not for what I said, because I still mean every word of it, but the way I said it."

Saavik opened her other eye. "I accept your apology. As I said before, my situation is not an enviable one."

Some of the tension in Maya's shoulders and back eased, and she went to sit on the bed beside Saavik. "I realize that this whole...everything is difficult for you. I shouldn't let my own problems make it worse."

Saavik said nothing, she only nodded and took Maya's hand. Maya closed her eyes and rested her head on Saavik's shoulder. A few moments passed where they enjoyed the simple comfort of each other's presence before Saavik spoke.

"There is another problem I neglected to mention."

"Hmm?" Maya kept her eyes closed. Rather than bracing herself for bad news she tried to stay in her relaxed mindset.

"Having two bonds complicates matters." Saavik spoke slowly, giving careful consideration to each word. "My desire for Tural has not grown, but my desire for you has."

Maya opened her eyes and sat up. "That doesn't sound like a problem."

Saavik took both of Maya's hands in hers and gripped them tightly. They sat still together, letting the telepathic bond between them grow and strengthen until Saavik let go of her self-restraint and tacked Maya to hold her down against the bed.

Lust transformed into panic, and Maya turned her head to dodge hungry kisses. "Wait, Saavik, please, I don't like it rough."

Lucidity and control returned. Saavik sat up and brushed a stray lock of hair out of her eyes. "Forgive me. I am finding it difficult to control myself around you."

"No...please!" Her panic grew, and she gripped Saavik's arm in desperation. "I didn't mean to refuse you! I was surprised, that's all."

Saavik stood and did not look at Maya when she answered. "For your safety, it would be best if we spent the remainder of our journey apart."

"That isn't necessary," Maya begged, she grabbed Saavik's arm again, but Saavik pulled away. "I want to please you."

"Everything you say only serves to support my decision. You do not deserve another coercive partner. Goodbye, Maya."

Maya watched in shock as Saavik walked out the door. This place, this strange small ship didn't exist anymore. Maya was a teenage girl again, hearing her father's stern instructions to never refuse a sexual advance from one of her betters and his insults to her intelligence when she questioned him. Decades later and she still couldn't learn how to set boundaries. Earth's society might be several orders of magnitude more respectful than the augments of Ceti Alpha V, but there were still little things like dalliances Maya had gone along with in spite of second thoughts.

And now her bondmate avoided her because she said no.

Chapter 3

Savvik had made herself scarce after her last interaction with Maya, only crossing paths for the briefest encounters. Where she managed to hide in such a small, cramped ship remained a mystery. All the while, Maya's fears and anxieties never eased. She couldn't sleep, couldn't eat, and every moment felt this creeping fear that she either had made a terrible mistake or she was about to. Her only comfort was the knowledge that this ordeal would only last a few days longer before they could put the whole affair behind them and forget all about it for another seven years.

With Saavik isolating herself and Enzo constantly pestering the chief engineer, Maya was alone with her uncomfortable thoughts and memories she wished she could forget...so much on her mind but no one to talk to. She wasted away the remaining travel time in the mess hall, drinking coffee after and coffee and trying to read a novel even though she couldn't focus on the words enough to have any clue what she had been reading.

It was midday, and after hours of solitude, the lunch crowd began to trickle in until the cramped room was full of people chatting and eating. Maya set her PADD on the table and closed her eyes to try to block them out. She wasn't in any mood to be surrounded by people.

The sound of someone setting a tray down at her table made Maya open her eyes. It was Enzo, and he had loaded his tray with enough food to feed a small horse.

"Have you been here all morning?" he asked as he began to shovel food into his mouth, starting with a slice of pizza.

"I'm...really into my book." She wasn't

"Oh. Well, it turns out that Skorik is a drummer too." Skorik was the engineer. "He had some music recommendations. Have you heard of Rush? They were an old Earth band."

Maya shook her head. She should have been pleased to hear her nephew finding something new to be excited about and that at least one of them was having a good time, but she wanted space from him. He looked hauntingly like his father, and he was approaching the age where Arjun began to transform from a bratty child into a monster. Enzo had none of his father's cruelty, but from time to time little things reminded Maya of her half-brother. Now, she found herself especially raw to those reminders.

"Well, Skorik said I really need to start listening to Rush." Enzo had already made his pizza disappear and began to make a dent in a large bowl of rice. He was unaware of the internal struggles his aunt was facing. "You're not eating?"

"Not hungry."

Enzo had nothing more to say as he finished eating. "Well, I should go."

"Be sure to thank Skorik," Maya said as Enzo stood up to clear his tray. "He's done a lot for you that he didn't have to."

"Don't worry, I will." With that, Enzo cleared his tray and ran off.

Maya sat back and watched the stars go by out of the tiny window. She craved a change of scenery and a new activity, as sitting around and reading for hours wasn't at all engaging. What she really wanted was to have a beer and nice chat with Graham, but at this hour he was sure to be fast asleep. Her own boredom was no reason to wake a person up.

With nowhere else to go, she went back to her quarters, maybe if she could take a long nap more of this journey would pass by. Enzo was still tagging along with the chief engineer, Saavik was nowhere to be found, and Maya expected to open the door to an empty room and several hours of isolation.

The room, however, was not empty.

She couldn't help but gasp to see Saavik sitting on the bed meditating with her eyes closed, just like the last time they saw one another. This time, Saavik opened her eyes right away and stood up.

"Forgive me," she began as she took a few steps toward the door. "I incorrectly expected you to be out for a few more hours."

"No, wait! I want to talk" Maya begged. She reached out to take Saavik's hand, and the Vulcan offered no resistance. They shared a moment, holding hands with their bond stronger and more connected in a way it hadn't been since this whole ordeal began. "I've had time to think. I'm not frightened anymore. I'm ready to do whatever you ask of me."

They lingered together for another moment before Saavik gently pulled away. "And if you were to change my mind, I still do not trust myself to honor your needs. I realize this arrangement is not ideal, but believe me when I say that this experience is unpleasant for everyone involved."

"Except for Tural," Maya muttered as she looked away and crossed her arms.

"Especially for Tural. Find comfort in the fact that this arrangement is a temporary one. We will be arriving soon."

"And then what?"

"I have arranged for you and Enzo to stay with Ambassador Sarek while I am with Tural." Saavik took another step toward the door, but Maya moved to block her.

“So I’m supposed to sit back and wait?” Maya could feel her face getting hot. She never thought she was jealous of Saavik’s other partner, but it was easy not to get jealous when Tural was only some stranger on another planet who Maya never met and rarely thought about. This changed, of course, now that he was a very real person about to sleep with her lover, especially when Saavik seemed less than enthusiastic about him.

“Being near Tural at this time would be dangerous. I cannot predict how Tural would react to your presence, but it is likely that in the throes of the blood fever he is likely to view you either as a challenger to his mate or as a potential mate.”

“That doesn’t make me feel better about leaving you alone with him” Maya closed her eyes and took a few deep breaths. Losing her temper would not solve any of their problems. “Back when we first met, you followed me into danger that I was willing to face alone. At least let me return the favor.

“I will not be in danger.”

“I have a hard time believing that.” Maya sighed and stepped away from the door. “If you want to go, you can go.”

Saavik took a step forward and reached toward Maya with her index and middle fingers extended. Maya smiled and reached out to touch Saavik’s fingertips. The fire growing inside her began to subside, and she would have been content to stay like this for hours, but Saavik pulled her hand away.

“I should leave. We will speak again before we arrive.” With that, Saavik stepped past Maya and out the door.

Chapter 4

As the days went by, Maya managed to recover from any discomfort suffered from her uncomfortable interactions with Saavik, and she learned how to find some grace. Saavik shared the same intimate bond with Tural, her partner was in danger, and they would be cutting it close with their arrival on Vulcan. With that perspective, it felt small and selfish to be distressed over a bit of isolation.

Maya made a point of waking up early enough to catch Graham in the mess hall when his shift ended and was lucky enough to catch him sitting alone with a portion of bacon, eggs, and fruit (which did not look like any Earth fruit she knew of) that would even impress her teenage nephew. She walked toward his table and gave him a playful smile, but she did not sit down.

“Is this breakfast or dinner for you?”

“Breakfast for dinner.” He only glanced at Maya briefly before shoveling a few more forkfuls of eggs into his mouth. “I love breakfast food.”

“When you’re done, do you want to join me in my quarters and bring some beer?” Even though Graham insisted his roommates didn’t mind the extra company, it didn’t feel right to sit and talk while others were trying to sleep. Her own space was sure to be empty.

“I don’t know, you insulted my taste the last time,” Graham teased with a smirk on his face. “But I wasn’t lying when I said I do keep a variety around. What’s your preference, hoppy or malty? Bitter or sweet?”

“Hoppy,” Maya answered with excitement. “And bitter enough to slap me in the face.”

Graham’s smirk grew. “Challenge accepted.”

“I’ll see you there.”

Maya rushed off to return to her quarters and busied herself with a token effort to straighten up. Saavik was the tidy one in their odd little family. Maya cared for cleanliness but not organization, and Enzo (true to form for a thirteen year old boy) didn’t give much a damn about either and was unbothered to leave old socks and empty cups anywhere.

“Computer, play music.”

A few bars of classical music began to play, and then a vocalist sang in a soft yet ominous voice:

*There is trouble in the forest. There is unrest with the trees.
For the Maples want more sunlight, and the Oaks ignore their pleas...*

The music picked up in intensity and tempo, and there was a chime at the door.

“Come in,” Maya answered.

The door slid open, and Graham stepped inside with a few bottles of beer tucked in the crook of his left arm. “Hey, this sounds like the stuff Skorik listens to,” he noted.

“I think my nephew is trying to turn into Skork.”

Graham shrugged, only on his right side as to try not to disturb the delicate balance of the bottles on the other side. “There’s worse people to try to be. Go ahead and take one.”

“Here...” Maya took the bottles (all six!) that Graham had so delicately balanced in the arms and found a safe spot on a low shelf, took one in each hand, and passed one back to Graham.

“Wait...” Graham looked down at his body and frantically patted his pockets with his free hand. “Dammit...I think I forgot an opener. I’ll be right back.”

“Hold on.” Maya did a quick search of her surroundings, not only looking around but also feeling the edges of furniture and wall panels. On the lower edge of the bunk there was a spot that seemed like it would work nicely. Maya placed the bottlecap into the space so that the edge would act like a wedge to drive the cap off.

Graham’s eyes grew wide with delight as he watched. “Badass! Let me try!” He found the same spot and imitated Maya’s technique. With little effort, the cap popped right off. “Where did you pick up that trick?”

Maya shrugged. “I just figured it out now, thinking about a solution to a problem and about simple physics.”

“Well, cheers.” They clinked the necks of their bottles. “This one’s an imperial IPA. I hope you weren’t kidding about liking bitterness. I’ve found that most people like the idea of liking IPAs better than actually drinking them.”

Maya sniffed her beer before her first sip: it smelled more like raw hops than a bottle of beer. The taste was only marginally more balanced, with a taste like grapefruit skin and no shortage of bitterness. “I know what you mean, half of Bellingham acts like that, but this is what I crave. The planet where I grew up, everything that came out of the soil there was bitter and alkaline.”

“Damn. They couldn’t do anything about it? Terraforming or something? Or even simple soil treatments?”

“No, it was too primitive for any of that.”

“Damn.”

Maya sat down on the bunk, and Graham sat beside her. They sipped their beer and enjoyed the music until Graham spoke again.

“Saavik isn’t around...you two aren’t still fighting are you?”

Maya shook her head and kept looking straight ahead as she answered. “No. Not exactly. She’s...worried. About her personal business on Vulcan, I mean.”

“Didn’t know Vulcans could worry either.” Another sip of beer. “But that would explain why she’s been so cagey.”

Quickly, Maya turned to face Graham. “You spoke to her?” Her voice was bright and excited, enough to make her feel a bit foolish. She regained her composure with a long swig of beer. “Vulcans are very private as a rule.”

“I figured.”

“She didn’t even want to share all the details with me.”

“Well, I didn’t get any details, not that I need to know. Just instructions and beam-down coordinates.”

The music shifted into a lengthy instrumental break, and an idea popped into Maya’s head. It was an idea that in her heart she knew was wild and impulsive and gave into the parts of her personality she wanted to change. She sipped her beer and tried to focus on the music to clear her mind, but that one crazy thought wouldn’t leave.

“So she told you about the two locations?”

Graham nodded.

Maya took a deep breath and gave a moment’s consideration to abandoning the plan but went ahead. “I need to go to the same location as her, and I can’t go at the same time.”

Graham raised an eyebrow in a way that almost seemed Vulcan. “Let me guess, she doesn’t know.”

“She can’t know. And I can’t say anything more about what’s happening or why I feel this is necessary, I just need you to trust me.”

“I’ll think about it.” Graham drank down the rest of his beer and stood up. “Not that you’ve given me much to consider, but I’ll think about it.”

“Please...” Maya remained seated and craned her neck to look up at Graham.

“Look.” He had warmth in his voice. “I’m not the kind of person who says things just to say them. When I said I was going to think about it, I meant it, even though I don’t know how I feel about helping you go behind your partner’s back.”

Maya smiled. “I appreciate it.”

“I need a nap. See you around, and try to go crazy on the beer. It’s still early morning for you.”

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

CW: mention of past rape/incest

With each passing hour, Maya felt the growing tension within her like a knot that started in the pit of the stomach and grew to tangle up every inch of her like the roots of so many weeds. They were in orbit over Vulcan, minutes away from being able to sort out this whole mess and put the ordeal behind them, yet Maya was still isolated and in the dark. Graham hadn't said a word to her about the plan she proposed, Saavik was just as distant as ever, and when Enzo wasn't tagging along with Skorik he couldn't be bothered to pry his attention away from some advanced study or music recommendation. She was alone in her quarters when the ship's intercom gave the notice that they were in orbit and ready for beam-down, and she had to trust that the others would be there to meet her in the transporter room.

And they were. Saavik and Enzo seemed to have been waiting for her, and Graham was ready at the console. All of Maya's stress and tension melted away when she saw Saavik. Her partner was even more enchanting than when they first met and so much more... Vulcan. Rather than another Starfleet officer in a tailored uniform, Saavik was every bit an elegant Vulcan woman. She wore traditional white and silver robes and arranged her hair in elaborate braids. If she had any concerns for what would happen down on the planet's surface, she hid it with poise and grace. Maya was all the more aware that her partner was not human and about to engage in a tradition that was beyond her comprehension.

Saavik extended her hand toward Maya with her index and pointer fingers outstretched. Maya touched Saavik's fingertips, and in that moment she felt... something. Something she couldn't describe because it was gone as soon as Saavik took her hand away. All Maya knew is that it was strong, bold, and desperate.

"Maya, Enzo, you're up first." Graham seemed completely unaware of anything that transpired between Maya and Saavik. Enzo hopped up to the transporter pad with an energetic spring in his step, but Maya moved slowly. All the while she kept unwavering eye contact with Graham, daring him to do differently than what she asked. She stared him down until the moment the transporter energized.

When she re-materialized on the planet's surface, Maya felt the dry heat and sun hit her like a blast of fire. She gasped for air as she tried to calm a frantic mind and reassure herself that she was safe and unharmed. She tried to take a deep breath as she took in her surroundings, but the hot, thin air made her chest burn and sent her doubled over and into a coughing fit. When she regained enough of her composure to stand up straight and look around she saw that she stood in an open courtyard with a few small stone buildings around. The only person present was a Vulcan man, too young to be Sarek, and sitting alone with a look of intense concentration on his face. Graham had come through for her after all.

Moments later, Saavik materialized beside her. In the blazing Vulcan sun, the white and silver of her robes glowed, but Maya could not take the time to enjoy her ethereal appearance. Saavik gripped Maya's hand tightly and looked into her eyes as she spoke with more forceful energy than Maya had ever heard her use before.

"I cannot guess what you hope to accomplish, Maya, but you need to leave. Now."

Maya opened her mouth as if to answer, but before she could invent a reasonable sounding excuse Saavik snapped her head toward Tural. Maya glanced to look and saw that he had stood up and began to take slow, lumbering steps toward them. Saavik left Maya's side and walked to close the distance between herself and Tural. They came close enough to one another to touch the tips of their fingers: a moment of tenderness that surprised Maya when her understanding of Pon Farr was that it was a wild, frenzied affair.

The moment, however, was fleeting. Tural looked away from Saavik and toward Maya with an angry hunger in his eyes. Maya panicked. She had seen that look before, when her brother was so consumed with rage or lust that he lost his humanity and turned into a wild animal. Maya wanted to run but with nowhere to go she simply took a deep breath and stood her ground. Saavik tried to hold him back, but Tural pulled away from her and rushed toward Maya.

He lunged toward her and knocked her to the ground. The pair fought furiously in the sand, and while being half-Augment put Maya at less of a disadvantage than a regular human, she still could not match Tural for strength or speed. Maya, however, was used to fighting people who outpaced her in every way and wasn't afraid to fight dirty. She scratched, bit, pulled hair, and hit below the belt, but none of it worked until Saavik joined the fray and tried to pry Tural off of her.

Maya laid on the ground and gasped for air and watched as his bondmate's presence caused Tural's drive for violence shift back to a drive for reproduction. Saavik's presence had a calming effect on him, and, as if the altercation had never happened, he regarded Saavik with tenderness just like he had moments before. His hand went to the side of her face in the unmistakable position for a mind-meld, and after a moment of stillness the couple went inside.

And Maya was left alone in the heat and the sun: bruised, bloody, her left shoulder forced out of track, and her lungs hungry for air with a sharp pain with each breath. She forced herself to sit up and inched to a wall so she could lean up against it to massage her deformed joint back into place. She tried to take a few deep breaths to calm herself, but panic gripped her so tightly that she couldn't keep her breathing from growing shallow and rapid. The world was spinning, and Maya hung her head and began to shake: in part from dizziness and in part from her desperate attempts to keep from sobbing.

She couldn't stop the tears and had to bite down hard on her lip to keep from screaming. Around her, the world fell apart and left nothing but the darkest, deepest parts of her own psyche. There was nothing but fear and isolation, and Maya could not console herself or listen to any of her own rational thoughts. Everything good in her life she was about to lose, and it was her own damn fault for rushing headlong into some

unhinged and poorly thought out plan.

In time the searing panic subsided and was replaced by an awful sense of dread that hung around her with a crushing presence—or maybe that was the planet’s heightened gravity. She closed her eyes and tried to block everything out, but she felt too much at once—both physically and emotionally: her own twisty feelings, the heat, the blinding sun, the pain...but somehow there was a grounding presence reaching out to her: Saavik. Maya felt Saavik before she heard the soft sound of her footsteps. She opened her eyes to see Saavik standing over her, and somehow her bondmate was more ethereal than before. Saavik wore the same brilliantly white robes, but she was barefoot, and her braids had been undone to let her hair frame her face in thick waves. She knelt beside Maya, and Maya made a quick move to wipe the tears from her eyes.

“It is done,” Saavik said.

“Waited seven years, and he didn’t last too long, did he?” Maya teased.

Saavik ignored Maya’s quip and placed a gentle hand on Maya’s cheek. She sensed no distress or pain in Saavik’s mind and tried to reassure herself that maybe when Tural was with her he favored his tender side over his violent side. Most of Maya’s fear and anxiety melted away, but she tried to hold on to some of it. She wasn’t ready to forgive and forget yet and might not ever be.

“You require medical attention,” Saavik added.

“No, it’s nothing that won’t be able to sort itself out in time.” Maya began to get back to her feet and with every ache and pain realized maybe Saavik was right...but she had too much pride to admit it. “This makes two times I’ve had my ass handed to me in a fight over a woman with a jealous man who I’m not sure if meant to kill me or rape me. At least this time it wasn’t my brother.”

Saavik stood up beside her. “Tural wishes to speak with you.”

“I’d rather not.”

“He is back to himself.”

“I’d still rather not, but I’ll do it to be polite.”

Maya stepped inside, hoping to a respite from the Vulcan heat, but the interior was just as warm as the exterior. The blazing sun, at least, wouldn’t be a problem, and the room looked dark and shadowed as her eyes adjusted.

Tural sat on a low chair with his hands folded in his lap. The look of typical still Vulcan calmness on his face was a sharp contrast to the wild creature she first met. However, he didn’t look entirely civilized. There were bruises and green scratches on his face from where Maya had made her mark. He did not rise when Maya stood in front of him.

“If you were hoping to apologize, save your breath,” Maya spat. “I’m not interested in hearing it.” Her words came out harsher than she intended. Even with Saavik’s attempts to calm her troubled heart, she was in no state to have a civilized conversation with this man.

“Your insistence on holding a grudge is illogical, but there is no need to apologize, for I have done no wrong, can you say the same?”

Maya opened her mouth to respond but stopped herself from saying something she would truly regret. Losing her temper at a Vulcan would do her no good, but, really the nerve of this man! Try as she did to be respectful and focus on the conversation at hand, her wild imagination had other ideas that Maya truly wished she could purge. She took a little breath to center herself. “I think what I’ve done was irredeemably stupid, but not morally reprehensible. So, yes. I, too, am guiltless.”

“Your presence, Maya, is reprehensible.”

Her bravado vanished. That sounded like something her father would have said. Rather than boldly standing up to a man who tried to hurt her, Maya wanted to run far away. She had nothing to say in response.

“You have been an interference from the start,” he continued. “Your bond with Saavik has weakened mine and left me with a partner who is disinterested. While nothing can be done to sever one bond are repair another, it would be most logical for you to stay out of my life.”

Another deep, calming breath. Talk about literally adding insult to injury! Maya managed to control the tone of her voice, but she had no intention of walking away from this interaction without serving a scathing insult of her own. “Call it logic, but all I see is the ugliest emotion there is: jealousy.”

If her words bothered him, he did not show it. “That is all. My final request is that you do not, under any circumstances, share the details of what happened while I burned. Live long and prosper, Maya.”

She had nothing else to say, and so she turned on her heels and rushed back outside to the blinding sunlight where Saavik waited, Saavik reached out to take her hand, but Maya pulled away.

“I need to get out of here.”

She had nothing else to say.

Chapter 6

In spite of her stubborn protests, Maya eventually relented and sought medical help for her (in her own opinion) superficial injuries. What made her concede was Saavik pointing out that her hard-headed arrogance was another fantastic example of “her bullshit” that Saavik promised to call her out on. When they beamed to Sarek’s home, there was no sign of any altercation (Saavik had even re-braided her hair) but Maya still felt as though she had an invisible sign over her head that told everyone around her exactly what had happened early that day.

Rather than Ambassador Sarek, it was his human wife who stepped outside to greet them. Amanda Grayson was very old, looked frail, and moved slowly with the use of a cane. Maya’s mind strayed to wonder if this is what she would be like one day: entering her final days while Saavik might have another century to live...or if maybe her father’s augmented DNA would grant her a longer life.

“You must be Maya.” Amanda’s voice was warm, and she wore a kind smile. “I thought you were coming over with your nephew.”

“Last minute change of plans,” Maya answered with a shrug.

Amanda only nodded and did not pry further. It would seem a benefit of living for decades among Vulcans was an unquestioning respect for privacy. “Well, it makes no difference. Come in out of the sun.” She turned to lead them inside, and much like Tural’s home the interior was a respite from the sunlight but not the heat. “Enzo went out for a bit, Sarek introduced him to some Vulcan boys who are showing him some traditional sports.”

She led them into the main sitting room where Sarek was waiting. He stood up and went to Amanda’s side, and after a brief touch of their fingertips, he helped his aging wife to her seat. All Maya saw was another possible glimpse of her future. The years never seemed to slow down her father, but her future was unclear when it came to the timing and tempo of aging. All she knew was that before she left on this misadventure she noticed her first few gray hairs growing in, and she expected that number to triple by the time she returned to Bellingham. Maya forced those thoughts out of her mind. Their hardships were over, best to be present and try to enjoy this social call.

“Please, have a seat,” Amanda continued. “Saavik has told us so much about you.”

Maya glanced toward Saavik as they sat down. She had no idea her partner had so much contact with Amanda and Sarek and wondered what she had said about her.

“My wife is exaggerating,” Sarek noted. “We were made aware of your relationship and essential biographical details.”

“I hope she didn’t mention any of the awful things I’ve done,” Maya teased, but her attempt to diffuse the situation was met with silence.

Amanda was the first to break the silence. “Well, Maya I can’t imagine what it must be like to have a partner in Starfleet. So much time apart.”

“The bond helps.” Even as she gave her simple answer, Maya worried she said too much. That bond was the reason this whole affair became so complicated.

Silence fell. That was one thing Maya preferred when spending time with Vulcans: they didn’t feel the need to fill every moment with small talk and were candid and direct. Her kin on Ceti Alpha V didn’t care much for idle chatter either, but their reasoning was very different. What broke the silence was the sound of the front door sliding open.

Enzo rushed in, short of breath yet bursting with energy. He was soaked with sweat, and his face was flushed pink.

Maya smiled. Her nephew enjoyed being active and athletic but made a point to avoid team sports, embarrassed by any unfair advantages he had. “Were you able to keep up with the Vulcans alright?”

Enzo nodded. “They seemed impressed, but they said I smell bad.”

“All teenage human boys smell awful, even to other humans.” Maya teased. At least someone wasn’t having a terrible time on this planet. “Go get cleaned up.” With that, Enzo turned to go. “And drink some water!”

“We will depart in two days,” Saavik went back to business, addressing Sarek and Amanda. “I would like to express my gratitude again, for welcoming us into your home.”

After days in cramped quarters on the cargo ship, Sarek’s modest home was a significant upgrade in comfort. Even the Vulcan heat didn’t bother Maya so much, a small benefit from spending most of her life living near the equator on a planet without the convenience of modern climate control. She and Saavik had privacy, and Saavik had lost her hesitation with spending time alone with Maya.

They sat alone on the bed, holding hands and feeling close to one another before Maya spoke. She looked down, not sure how to phrase what was on her mind. “I know I’m not supposed to ask about it, but did everything go...well?”

Saavik closed her eyes. “My desire never grew to match Tural’s until we melded. My primary motivation was to protect his life.”

Maya took a deep breath. She wasn’t going to have another outburst, not in Sarek’s house.

“Maya,” Saavik continued. “You cannot hope to understand the nuance of Vulcan relations if you insist on stubbornly holding onto a human outlook.”

Maya shook her head. “I was brought up with a flawed understanding of human relations, so it might all be beyond my comprehension. I’m just glad you aren’t avoiding me anymore.”

“Maya.” Saavik took both of Maya’s hands in hers and turned to look her lover in the eye. “My own desires have not been satisfied, but from you I need trust and a level head.”

“Please.”

Saavik placed her hand on the side of Maya’s cheek, and Maya closed her eyes. “Your mind to my mind. Your thoughts to my thoughts.”

San Francisco

Three months later...

After a Starfleet career that spanned five decades, in a move that surprised everyone who knew the woman well, Admiral La’an Noonien-Singh actually retired. Even the most ambitious and hard working people would in time reach a point where they were ready to slow down and rest. The party, however, had not been La’an’s idea, and she made herself scarce at her own celebration. With few familiar faces in sight, Maya felt painfully out of place. Most of the guests were flag officers in dress uniforms, and Maya couldn’t decide if she was over or under dressed. Her fashion sense swung wildly between full ballroom glamor and threadbare sweatpants. She had no idea how to dress smartly without drawing too much attention to herself, and her orange cocktail dress felt both too flashy and not flashy enough.

Maya had been at the party for half an hour before she caught sight of La’an, who had retreated to a quiet corner where the music from the band didn’t echo quite so loud and wore a stern look on her face. “Congrats on your newfound freedom.” Maya raised her glass of champagne.

“Please, I’m already beginning to regret this. And I certainly didn’t want all...” La’an gestured broadly. “All this.”

“Then I’ll have to drink enough for the both of us.” Maya drank down the rest of her champagne, set her glass down on a table and went in search of another. As she wove through the crowd, a familiar with a Southern accent voice called to her.

“Maya!”

She turned around and smiled when she saw who it was, forgetting about her promise to drink for two. “Doctor McCoy?”

“It’s been a while. You know I heard about your recent victory and thought I might like to ask the second best dancer on Earth for a dance.”

“I had no victory, Doctor. Second place is the first to come in last. And besides...” A sly smile appeared on her face. “I doubt you could keep up with me.”

“Oh? Why is that, because I’m old, or because I’m not an Augment?”

“A bit of both.”

“What if I want to take on the challenge?”

“Then you’ll have to follow because I can’t.”

McCoy shrugged and allowed Maya to lead him to the dance floor. The music was lively, but they couldn’t match the energy on account of an awkward start.

“Start on your right foot,” she whispered in McCoy’s ear. “And you still have to count.”

They found their rhythm and to his credit he mostly kept up aside from a few missteps (though he was out of breath by the end of the song). He gave Maya a gracious bow, but Maya was pulled out of the moment when she spotted Saavik watching. Without a word she left the dance floor and went to her partner’s side.

“Please don’t be upset,” Maya begged. Even though Saavik had said expressly that she was unbothered by seeing Maya in typical human contact—handshakes, dancing, and the like—she still felt a pang of guilt. Their recent struggles left Maya feeling like she stood on shaky ground.

Saavik raised an eyebrow. “It would not be logical for me to experience jealousy over an innocuous action. I would like to step outside to speak privately.”

They left the noise and the crowd of the party to step out into the night air. Maya was reminded of the last time they had a private conversation away from a formal event, and her heart began to race. She looked to Saavik, and without a word she was able to guess what was on Saavik’s mind.

“You’re pregnant.”

Saavik nodded. “Tural will want to raise the child on Vulcan.”

“That figures,” Maya sighed. “But what do you want? It’s your baby too.”

“I have not yet decided.” She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “This is not what I had planned, but now that I am presented with the possibilities I do not find the outcome unfavorable.”

Maya considered this. She swore off having children after she had healed enough to free herself from her sense of obligation to further her

father's bloodline, but still ended up adopting her nephew and secretly hoping her pregnant girlfriend wanted to keep the baby. "Does Tural even need to know? You rarely see him."

"I cannot ignore the possibility that he was able to sense the change in the same way you were, even if our bond has been weakened."

And that was Maya's own doing. She kept her own wishes to herself, far be it from her to make a mess on Vulcan again. "Whatever you do..." She looked down as she spoke. "I just hope it is what you want, not Tural or anyone else."

Saavik reached toward Maya with her index and middle finger extended, and Maya reached out to touch her fingertips. "You have my word that my decision will be on my own terms."

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