

## In Another Time

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## In Another Time

by [EnterpriseEnsign](#)

### Summary

What if Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow had ended differently? If James had lived and choices had to be made?

### Notes

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

## Chapter 1

In another time what happened next played out differently. In that time, James took a bullet whilst trying to call Sera's bluff, La'an was forced to gain access to a young Khan and only just stop Sera from completing her mission, returning to her repaired timeline with so many 'what ifs' playing through her mind. In this time however, La'an swung in front of James as Sera fired the gun and took the bullet meant for him.

As she fell to the ground, James rushed Sera and knocked her to the floor. As they grappled the gun slipped from Sera's grasp and slid across the floor towards La'an. Winded, but not bleeding, she wrapped her fingers around the grip and aimed at where Sera and James were fighting. As Sera raised up to deliver a blow to James, who was pinned under her, La'an fired. Sera dropped with a surprised moan and fell still on top of James. He pushed her lifeless body off him and scrambled across to where La'an was still trying to catch her breath and they both watched as Sera's body disappeared in front of their eyes.

"How" James whispered, staring at the spot where Sera had been in shock.

"No time," La'an breathed trying to get to her feet holding her side which had borne the brunt of the impact that should have killed her. "We need to get out of here" With no body, only the sound of two gunshots and an Institute that would likely want to stay under radar, it would probably not get investigated in much detail. They could make an escape. James helped her to her feet, and they left the Noonien-Singh Institute behind them. Its mysteries still contained within.

A safe distance from the Institute, they found an innocuous looking diner to get out of the cold. They now sat in a booth watching the outside in case of further Romulan Agents, or local law enforcement. La'an was still wincing from the impact of the bullet but miraculously otherwise unhurt. As she checked though, she realised though there had been a casualty - one that had saved her life but had maybe also condemned her to a new future. The time device had taken the bullet meant for her, or maybe for James, and it was now shattered. She laid out the pieces on the table between them and they both stared at them "Got a spare time device?" She quipped dryly.

"Do you think we did it?" James asked quietly from across the table "Saved your future?"

La'an shrugged. "I don't know" she wanted to believe it had all been worth it.

"So do I" he picked up the menu from the table and flipped it open "We should eat. We need to figure out what to do next and that will be easier if we aren't hungry. I'm running on empty and you probably are too" He swept the pieces of the time device off the table and into his hand then stored them in his pocket. La'an raised her eyebrows at James' seeming obsession with feeding them both. He passed her a menu, but found she couldn't concentrate on it as the last few hours caught up with her. Her hands started to shake and the world started to swim in front of her. James reached out and took her trembling hand. "We're good. You're good" he said quietly.

She took a few deep breaths and ran through the grounding techniques she had perfected in a time far away. As the world came back into focus she was aware of James staring intently at her with concern. She had no idea how long had passed.

"You back with me?" He asked softly.

She nodded. "It's been a lot" she figured James would assume she meant the last few days, but really she meant it all.

He smiled at her and said lightly, recognising that a change of subject was needed "Anyway, if this hadn't happened, we'd never have met" he picked up the menu that La'an had not noticed she'd dropped. "Now we should eat while we figure out what next"

This time, La'an agreed easily, succumbing to his obsession with food.

As they ate, La'an became aware of a person in grey standing in the alley next to the diner. Finishing her meal quickly, which she now agreed had been a good idea, she pointed them out to James. "Those look like the same clothes the person who sent me here was wearing" she said quietly as she slipped out of the booth leaving him behind.

She approached the woman, but before she could speak the woman spoke instead. "I'm Agent Ymalay. Department of Temporal Investigations" she stated as La'an stared her down.

"Never heard of it" La'an, naturally suspicious as the last person in grey had stranded her in the past, squared herself defensively.

"It's a branch of the Federation. It doesn't exist yet. Not even in your time" the Agent explained, her voice remaining level in contrast to La'an's frustrated tone.

"Did we stop it? Whatever we were meant to stop?" La'an asked as James joined them.

"Yes. You did. I can send you home now." came the confirmation.

Already suspecting the answer, La'an asked anyway "Both of us?"

"Just you. Your companion is another matter. He should never have been here"

"Well he clearly is here" she gestured to James who flashed a quick smile at them both.

"We can't send him back. His future doesn't exist anymore" came the answer, clearly already considered.

"So what? He just poofs out of existence?" La'an glared at the Agent. "That's not acceptable"

Agent Ymalay continued "In your timeline, James Kirk is important. Too important for two of them to be running around. We can insert him

into history here though. He's lived the future that could be and we know he'll not interfere. There's too much at stake"

"He'll be alone though?" La'an knew loneliness. Being out of step with everything and everyone around. But she couldn't articulate the sadness she felt on James' behalf at the thought of him being alone and out of time.

It would take La'an years to understand what made her ask her next question. "What if I stay too?"

## Chapter 2

Una looked up as the new Chief Engineer entered the bridge towards the end of Alpha shift. After her recent incarceration, the normality of a bridge shift had been a welcome relief at first. Now as they had been travelling at warp for days, tedium was setting in amongst the crew. Even it would seem for Pelia who made a beeline for the Captain. Chris gestured for Una to join him as Pelia reached him. She quirked an eyebrow at him to indicate he now owed her one. He flashed a typical Chris Pike smile back. She suppressed the urge to roll her eyes back at him as she stood alongside him before Peila began.

“I have been advised that the question of my personal property, which needs to be returned should be referred to yourself” She paused, seemingly for effect “Apparently it’s on a security watchlist, from a few hundred years ago”

Una nodded noncommittally “And does that bulletin say it needs to be returned?”

Pelia danced around the question “Perhaps I’ll just mail it. Really doesn’t matter what the bulletin says, the statute of limitations passed decades ago. I checked”

Already a little frustrated, Una asked: “Is there a statute of limitations on plundering antiquities?” This was definitely a conversation she did not want to be having.

Sending her annoyance, and recognising the thin ground he was on with his Number One, Chris interjected. “I’ll ask Lieutenant Noonien-Singh to elaborate. I am sure Security has an opinion on this” he pressed a button on his chair console and paged her to the bridge.

When there was no acknowledgement of his page, he looked quizzically at Una. “Any idea where she is Number One?”

Una shook her head. “On duty as far as the rota says” she paused. “I’ll see if I can track her down. It’s not like her not to respond”

Una knew a few places where La’an might be if she was burying herself in work. As she travelled in the turbolift she realised she’d not seen La’an much since her return. It had been a lot to get back into her life, reassume her position and her duties that she’d not stopped to take stock. Plenty of people had sought her out which had kept her busy, but it had stopped her noticing that La’an had been quiet.

After checking all the obvious and not so obvious places Una was starting to get concerned “I don’t understand Chris. It’s not like her” she thought for a moment “At least not now.” Young La’an had been prone to running and hiding but that hadn’t happened in years.

Chris appreciated Una’s concern. Knowing she had never been the one to worry lightly, he ordered a full sensor sweep of the ship, and quickly began to share Una’s growing sense of dread when the scan showed one less life sign than expected on the ship. He’d barely begun to give the order for a compartment by compartment search of the ship before the team on the bridge were swinging into action to implement it.

Una’s worry radiated from her, something rarely seen “This will take a few hours Number One” Chris said. He wanted to reassure Una that all would be well. He watched as Una sat stiffly at her bridge console sifting reports and sensor scan data for the last few hours. Chris already knew she wouldn’t move from that position until the ship wide search was complete.

Three hours later, the rest of the senior staff assembled on the bridge as the final search reports came in. Nothing. No sign at all of their Security Chief.

Una turned around finally at the final report that there was no sign of La’an anywhere on the ship. Her unease had grown as the hours had passed with no sign. The last person who reported seeing her had been a scared looking crewman who’d been caught trying to complete a new square of Enterprise bingo not long before La’an had failed to respond when Chris had paged her.

Then Spock took a step forward. “Sensor scans of the ship are also complete. We also had search teams run detailed Tricorder scans. A slight Chroniton reading was detected on Deck 7” he reported “no other anomalous readings detected”

“Chronitons?” Pike queried, trying to keep his voice level. His own run in with time travel meant he knew what that meant. “Are you sure?”

He hadn’t noticed Pelia walking around the bridge to his chair. Before Spock could answer she said in a voice quieter than Chris heard her use before. “Captain. We need to talk. You and Number One only”

## Chapter 3

“Does that break anything?” La’an stared at the Temporal Agent. Not a week ago she couldn’t even contemplate something as bold as this, something this impulsive. And now here she was on the cusp of a life changing choice.

James looked at her in surprise “You don’t have to do this” he frowned

Agent Ymalay considered this, then using what James assumed was her own time device, looked to do some calculations. “You do have a choice” Agent Ymalay continued looking at La’an “ You can stay here now. Or go back alone”

James turned to La’an “You should go home. To your time,” he said “She’s right, this is better than my future. I can stay out of history’s way. Easy really now your timeline is fixed. I know none of it.”

La’an answered quietly “I’ve got no family left. No one significant” she didn’t add that she also had very few friends. Colleagues and companions over the years but the only person she’d let herself get close to was Una and that was because Una had seen her at her worst. She’d never trusted anyone else enough.

James nodded in understanding. He’d had no family left in his time too. “You can change that though. That’s in your power”

“I could do that here too. No history. No expectation. No one looking at me as if I’m either broken or about to turn into a tyrant. She paused, “The way you look at me.”

Agent Ymalay interjected “You need to be sure. This is your only chance to go back. Once we’ve inserted you into this timeline, you’ll be here and now”

“I’m staying. Insert us both into history” La’an said decisively.

Agent Ymalay shifted so she could address them both “James, we’ll give you a different surname. Apparently there’s a TV show character with the same name in this time. You’ll stand out too much” turning to La’an she continued “You need..”

La’an interrupted, “I know. Not a Noonien-Singh. It will be a problem in the future”

“Something close to your current name so you don’t get caught out” she tapped her handheld device looking for possibilities.

“Nothing is close to Noonien-Singh” La’an commented dryly.

A thoughtful look crossed James’ face “Go for the same as me. We’d blend in better as a married couple. Save a lot of questions”

“That’s very forward of you? Assuming we’ll live together?” She raised her eyebrow, but it was clear she was considering the idea.

“It’s not a no though” a twinkle in his eye caught hers and he smiled “Think of it like being undercover. We know there is chemistry, otherwise would you really be staying?” he thought oof the moment they’d shared whilst searching for the reactor. Before the watch, still on her wrist, had started glowing.

La’an considered it, both James and the Agent allowing her the time to think “Same last name.” She agreed. Insert us in as a married couple”

James was however surprised how quickly gone along with his suggestion. However, even in the short time they’d known each other, he she was not the sort of person to be pressured into anything. This had been her decision.

“Quickest proposal and wedding in history” La’an deadpanned, then took a deep breath as the words sunk in. The biggest decision of her life was made on a feeling that this could be more. It was strangely freeing, like she’d stepped outside of herself into someone she could be. She shivered a little, and she wasn’t sure if it was the cold of Toronto or something else entirely.

Noticing the tremble, James looked into her eyes, like they’d done on the street, acknowledging the gravity of the decision she was making. “You know what this means. My future is gone. Yours is still there. You’ll never go into space again, those wonders, the exploration”

“I’ve been in space, I’ve seen wonders and horrors. But this, this is an adventure that I’d never expected” she took a deep breath “I have never been more sure of anything”

## Chapter 4

"I know where she is," Pelia said once they were in the Ready Room, not waiting until they'd reached the conference table before she began.

Una spun round "Why didn't you say anything earlier?" she snapped "She's been missing for hours"

"I didn't know for sure until the Chroniton particles were detected. I had to be sure" Pelia responded, stopping in her tracks as Una confronted her.

"So where is she?" Pike interjected, holding his hands out to encourage calm, before Una could lash out again. He too faced Pelia, but his look was one of concern, not frustration.

"Earth. And the question you really should be asking, as you know from the Chroniton readings, is when" Pelia looked at him knowingly.

Chris nodded in understanding as he sat down at the head of the conference table, gesturing for Pelia and Una to join him

"So when then?" Una suppressed the urge to snap at Pelia again and forced her voice back to somewhere closer to neutral. She didn't sit however, needing to pace out some of the nervous energy that she'd built up whilst the search had been ongoing.

Pelia reached over and handed over a small card to the Captain. "I'll let her explain. She gestured to a small device Pike hadn't noticed on the side of the Ready Room screen. "Slot it in. It will play"

Chris handled the small plastic card carefully. "This looks old" he commented as he slid it into an appropriate sized slot.

It took a moment for the card to register before La'an's face appeared on the screen. It was recognisably La'an, but this La'an was older, hair loose around her shoulders, the only time Chris could recall seeing La'an even remotely like this was when he'd encountered her briefly in his alternate future.

They all took a moment to study her before she started to speak. Una moved to a spot between the table and the screen, needing to look closer, to be sure of what she was seeing.

La'an began "If Pelia has given you this message, I've disappeared from the Enterprise. If I've gotten this right, it's only been a short while for you. I wanted you to know before you worry too much, that I'm OK. But I also need you to know that I won't be coming back." There was a brief pause, La'an when recording the message knowing her audience would need a moment to process that statement before she continued "I've been living in the 21st century for twenty years now. It was an accident coming back, but a necessary one. We stopped history changing to something a lot worse. Staying was a choice though. One which I have not regretted for a single day. I'm happy. We've been happy. I'm sure with some investigation you'll be able to find me in history, hopefully Pelia remembers my name. I hope my legacy, our legacy, has been a good one. That it's been more than my ancestry would lead anyone to expect. I also wanted to say thank you for everything Captain, for trusting me, for giving me a home. It was an honour" the picture stayed on screen as La'an finished. Her frozen image looking at them softly through time.

They all sat in silence, even Pelia knowing this was not a moment to speak. Una took a step backward leaning against the conference table as the strength seemed to go from her legs "She chose to stay there? To not come back?" She eventually asked of no one and everyone at once.

"How did you know?" Pike looked at Pelia for answers he hoped she had.

"I met her before they stopped whatever they were trying to stop. Her, and a lovely young man who also seemed to come from the future. I assumed they'd gone back to their time. Then she tracked me down years later. Asked me to hide a digital card - well three actually, in a portrait back in the 2040's. Told me to look at the first one after 200 years and the rest would make sense. So I did, and here I am" She started digging around in her pocket as she continued. "Captain. That one was for you to explain. And this one", she pulled out another tiny card and held it out to Una, "is for you personally".

Una took the card, holding it tightly "Do you know who else?"

"No one else from this ship is missing," Pike confirmed. Hours of searching had confirmed that La'an had been the only one not aboard.

Pelia shook her head. "Her message to me was vague. Must have been concerned I'd break the timeline if I knew too much. She gave me just enough information to make sure I ended up in the right place at the right time. I've never met the man she was with though. It had been a long time. Took me a while to recognise her here too"

"I'll do some digging through history" Una said to herself "she'll be there somewhere" Then addressing Pelia she asked "What name did she choose? She said you'd know"

"Lana Cook I believe" Pelia answered "but even then I knew enough not to ask too many more questions so that's all I really know about her"

"Thank you" Una said softly, the fight gone from her voice now she had an answer, even if it was not the answer she really wanted.

Pelia nodded and stood from her seat at the Ready Room table "She did seem happy when I last saw her. And more laid back than I've ever known her here" she gave them both a reassuring look before she left Chris and Una alone in the Ready Room.

Chris stood and moved next to her, putting his arm around her shoulders "I'm sorry Number One. I know how much she means to you" he squeezed lightly "Do you want to watch it now?" he gestured to the slot that would fit the message card.

Una shook her head somberly "Not yet" she steadied herself, then stood up from where she leant on the conference table. "We have reports to

write and a crew to inform” her shoulders sank a little as she admitted in a low voice, unlike her normal assured self “I think I’ll need a little time before I can watch it. I’m not ready to say goodbye”

## Chapter 5

As La'an asserted that she was definitely staying, another Temporal Agent dressed in grey materialised next to them in the alleyway. He passed a packet to Agent Ymalay and disappeared as quickly as he'd appeared.

Agent Ymalay addressed them both "This is all you'll need. New identities, access to currency, and arrangements for somewhere to live, at least initially" she passed over the packet to them. James took it, and with only a cursory glance put it in his pocket as she continued. "This," she held out two small booklets, "is the information we give to Agents who need to spend time in the past. You need to memorise it, and then destroy it please"

La'an took her copy and began to leaf through it. She saw it contained information on how to understand the structure of the government and economy. Also looked to have an overview of what history has happened to date, the level of current scientific understanding as well as some top tips on how not to be too obviously out of time. "A little bit of light reading," she said dryly, but with the hint of a smile.

"Access to currency." James said, taking his copy "I vote for buying some warmer coats first" as he shivered against the cold. La'an smiled and nodded in agreement.

The Agent looked at them both seriously. "You'll not see anyone from our Agency again. Not unless you interfere in history. And all indications are that you won't" she paused "Do you have any questions?"

As they both shook their heads, Agent Ymalay pressed on her time device. "Good luck to you both" she said and disappeared, leaving La'an and James standing in the alleyway.

"Ok then. This is it" La'an said, breaking the silence as they both stood transfixed on the spot that Agent Ymalay had been standing just moments before.

"Where shall we start?" James looked around, taking in their new world. Which looked not dissimilar to the alleyway they'd arrived in a few days before.

La'an looked at him "If you say with food..." she started.

James smiled "It is nearly morning" and winked at her.

La'an looked up and realised the sky was indeed beginning to lighten. The promise of a new day and a new start for both of their lives. Their lives together. "Practically, we should find who we now are, and start learning what we need to do to blend in..." she trailed off

"I think it's ok if we take a little time to process this," he said "let's just walk. That's worked so far for us"

And so they walked as they had earlier. This time with no destination in mind, no watch to glow, no timeline to save. As the sun started to properly peek from below the horizon, they found themselves back at the same harbour they'd been at a few days before, where James had seen his first sunset. Now they both found themselves enthralled by the sunrise.

Their companionable silence continued as they watched as the sky lit up, the darkness fading and the pink hues giving way to the brightness of dawn. It was surprisingly La'an that spoke first. "I've never done anything like this before" she said quietly.

James quirked an eyebrow at her "'And there was me thinking time travel was an everyday occurrence for you"

She elbowed him playfully and smiled. "I mean making such a big decision. Or maybe my own real decision about my own future" she shrugged "I've always gone with where it was expected I would go." She stopped and looked up, although not really seeing the lightening sky. She'd had no part in her family's decision to board the colony ship, and none again once Federation social workers had taken on her care. Whilst she moved between foster families she'd been subject to their way of living and differing guidance. And with no one other than Una, who she trusted as a guide, the Academy had almost been an inevitable destination once she'd reached adulthood. This choice however had been hers. She felt the same sense of freedom she'd felt earlier, freedom from her ancestry and personal history as she watched the new day dawn.

James could see that there was so much more there, but he understood that that was for another time, another conversation. They both had their baggage. His came from a lifetime of conflict and loss and given she'd shared something he was sure she'd never shared before he did too. "I expected to die out there. Fighting the Romulans" he said quietly "We were losing. On all fronts. I expected to die, just like Sam, like everyone else"

Despite the cold La'an sat on a nearby bench, and indicated for James to join her. "Let's just sit for a while. We've got all the time in the world now"



## Chapter 6

"I found her in the historical records" Una burst Chris' quarters almost before the doors opened. "See" she thrust a PADD at him. "There's even some photos of her family"

Chris smiled at Una's exuberance at finally locating La'an in the history books. It had been five days since La'an had left Enterprise for her new home in the past and Una had been relentless in her investigation through 21st Century Earth history. Whilst lots had been recorded, a lot had been lost to time through various conflicts. In some ways it had been lucky that she had found anything.

"She had two children. He looks familiar though" she said as he stopped at a photo of La'an and a man who she assumed was her partner.

Chris' smile dropped slightly as recognition dawned "He should Number One, that's James Kirk, rising star on the Farragut, set to make First Officer this year by all accounts". His experience with his future self had already shown him Kirk was important. "He's still where and when he's meant to be though. His Captain asked me only yesterday if he can shadow you before he takes that commission as XO". He did resolve to double check though. He didn't need any more appearances from future-Chris. Once had been quite enough.

"Those are her children" Una said as Chris sat and flicked through the photos. The images of two children smiled back at them. A boy with dark brown hair and deep eyes who looked a little like Kirk who appeared to be around ten, and a girl who looked to be in her early teens. The girl looked so like La'an had at that age that Una had gasped when she'd found it and Chris could very much see the resemblance.

"This is a lot of research Number One" Chris commented. Never had he doubted the diligence of his First Officer, in all things personal and professional "You can certainly tell who their parents are"

Una continued, ignoring Chris "The boy is Sam" her voice quivered "And the girl is Riley"

Chris caught the hitch in Una's voice. "You meant a lot to her, Una," he said reassuringly.

"I miss her Chris. I've known her most of my adult life. Almost as long as I've known you" she sank onto the sofa next to Chris and her shoulders dropped.

"Have you watched it yet?" he asked softly. He'd never seen Una quite this unsure about anything, even when she was awaiting her own trial she'd never seemed so defeated.

Una shook her head "I want to. And I don't. It will make it final and I'm still not sure I'm ready for that yet"

Chris rose and padded across his quarters. He retrieved another PADD "Here" he handed it to Una as he sat back down "I had Pelia modify this to fit the message card. You can watch it when you are ready. Without needing to be in the Ready Room"

Una looked up and smiled weakly "Thanks Chris". She patted the new PADD as Chris returned to going through the history of La'an's new life, leaving Una to consider again watching her friend's final message.

It took another two days for Una to commit to watching it. She'd picked up the PADD many times but still not been able to bring herself to watch it. It was only after she'd spent the day packing up La'an's quarters that she finally felt ready. Boxing up her friend's life had been bittersweet. She'd found La'an had the same photo from her Academy graduation that Una had on display. But she had so few other personal effects - gymwear, uniforms, a medal from the Klingon War that Una hadn't even been aware La'an had been awarded tucked in the back of a drawer. It was this lack of anything that made Una realise that perhaps she hadn't really known her friend that well, and perhaps she'd not been the best friend she could be, that she'd not spotted that La'an was maybe existing more than living.

As she sat in her quarters that evening she finally pushed the card into the modified PADD and watched as La'an appeared before her.

"Hey Chief. Long time no see" the older La'an began. Watching on the smaller screen, Una took a moment to consider how much her friend had changed. Everything about her looked more relaxed than Una had never seen her "Although a lot less time for you. I can imagine it's been a bit of a shock" Una considered that an understatement and rolled her eyes slightly, despite the intensity of the situation.

As Una watched, La'an continued, clearly having planned what she wanted to say in this message to the future, "I never really thanked you for how much you helped me over the years. I don't remember my parents much at all. I think there was too much tied up with their memories after what happened. It was your friendship that got me out of the dark place I was in. Beyond the rescue, you helped shape me into who I am, and who didn't know I could be. And to be able to do the best job I could as a parent too. Yes, you heard right, parent - I'm a Mum twice over." Una noticed how proud La'an seemed of this. By now Una already knew about La'an's family, but prior to her departure Una had never even considered La'an settling down and having children of her own. It was clear that the choice La'an had made had been right for her in the way she spoke of her children.

La'an smiled before continuing, "You steered me through the teenage years in a way I only now appreciate with teenagers of my own. I want you to know that you set me on the right path when I could have so easily gone off course. Of all the people I knew from before, you are the person I miss the most. There are definitely times I could really have used your guidance and support. You always seemed to know the right thing to do or say" Una smiled at this, though she'd certainly never felt like she knew what she was doing or saying was the right thing at the time, especially with teenage La'an who had been full of anger and fear.

On the screen La'an went on "I also want to say sorry for missing your party which was only a couple of days ago to you. I do wish we'd caught up when you'd gotten back, just before .. all of this. I was so happy you were back. That you were free. I just couldn't trust myself to express it" Una could see the emotion in La'an's face as she said this. "But I took a chance at proper happiness, at being less alone" Una suddenly understood the loneliness she'd missed in her friend until she'd cleared out her quarters was true.

There was a wistful look in La'an's eyes as she contemplated her next words "My last bit of advice now I'm older and maybe a little wiser is: take that chance too. You deserve happiness Una. You don't need to hide who you are anymore. So whoever that is with, go grab them with both hands and build a life together for as long as you have. Thank you for everything Chief"

Una sat back as the screen blinked out. She realised the tears that she'd been keeping at bay for the last week were prickling at her eyes. This time she let them fall as she began to accept her friend was gone. Really gone. La'an in her new life had seemed so at ease with herself, and with the advice she wanted to impart with such feeling gave Una a great sense of relief in knowing that the end of her story was a happy one, and maybe that meant that Una could find true happiness too.

## Chapter 7

In Toronto, the sun was now well above the horizon and the world was beginning to come alive around as people started their day. “We should get started,” La’an said, finally rising from the bench.

James stood and nodded his agreement. As they started to walk towards the city in search of somewhere a little warmer, he knew he needed to confront the question they’d both skirted around since she had decided to remain in the past with him. “About us” he began softly.

“Us?” La’an stopped and looked at him, contemplating his words.

“Us” James repeated, rubbing his hands together nervously “We should take whatever this is” he gestured between the two of them then continued “slowly”. He already knew he wanted it all, but after La’an’s confession earlier he knew it was important for her to take things at her pace, to make her own choices going forward. Even if that choice ended up not being him in the long run.

La’an stared up into his eyes, seeing vulnerability there that mirrored hers. She felt the same feeling she’d had on the street hours before flush in her chest. Finding freedom in her new life she leaned towards James, giving into the sense of trust and ease she’d rarely, if ever, felt. James too seemed drawn towards her. Their lips met in a kiss full of hope and anticipation, and La’an realised she didn’t want to wait. “Slowly” she breathed as they pulled apart “is overrated” and they kissed again. As they drew apart again she simply leaned into his chest, and he wrapped his arms around her. Both knowing that living in the moment was all they really needed to make the most of their future together.

### End Notes

Also - less 'Creator chose not to use Archive Warnings, more 'creator spent longer thinking about what might apply and hedged their bets on it!

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