

The Final Farewell

Posted originally on the [Ad Astra :: Star Trek Fanfiction Archive](http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1659) at <http://www.adastrafanfic.com/works/1659>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	Major Character Death
Fandom:	Star Trek: Alternate Original Series
Relationship:	James T. Kirk (AOS) & Leonard "Bones" McCoy (AOS) & Spock (AOS) & Nyota Uhura (AOS)
Character:	James T. Kirk (AOS) , Leonard "Bones" McCoy (AOS) , Spock (AOS) , Nyota Uhura (AOS) , Spock
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2024-07-03 Words: 8,016 Chapters: 1/1

The Final Farewell

by [trekfan](#)

Summary

The starship Enterprise, commanded by Captain James T. Kirk, is re-routed to New Vulcan under mysterious circumstances; what they find leaves the crew wrestling with questions there are no easy answers to.

Notes

This story takes place in the AOS (Kelvinverse/JJverse) continuity, after the events of Star Trek Into Darkness and before Star Trek Beyond. This story represents a point of divergence with how the main AOS continuity goes and was written in response to the passing of Leonard Nimoy in 2015.

2262

Two steps. He had made it two steps into the corridor before his rank was called out and he was reminded — again — that he wasn't just a person aboard this ship: he was *the* person. *Part of the responsibility of being the captain*, he reminded himself with a grin as he turned to see his CMO storming down the corridor.

"Bones." Jim Kirk twisted the dry, unused workout towel in his hand, his eyes watching as McCoy's face grew just a shade redder. "You're up early."

Leonard McCoy wasn't amused; which, as per usual, wasn't surprising. What was surprising was how tired the man looked; he was usually good at getting his rest. "You got a minute?" the older man asked breathlessly, his eyes bleary.

Jim motioned forward with his hand and the two began to stroll down the corridor, heading for the nearest turbolift. "You should take your own advice and get some more sleep."

McCoy's lips formed into a scowl. "We're not heading back to Earth."

"Orders came through an hour ago to divert to New Vulcan," Jim confirmed. "Starfleet hasn't said why."

"You don't find that odd?"

Jim gave him a curious look. "Should I? We were in the neighborhood."

McCoy pulled out a PADD tucked under his arm and held it out for him. "Medical sent me this. Know anything about it?"

Jim took the PADD and read it. His eyes widened slightly. McCoy's concern seemed more valid now than it had ten seconds ago. "Augment blood?"

"They've sent me all the research they have on it. Research which, if you recall, was banned by the Federation from ever being used or divulged." McCoy snatched the PADD from Jim's hand. "That ruling was made before we left Earth and it hasn't changed."

The two of them had reached the turbolift and they entered it. The door shut, offering a bit more privacy, and Jim let the turbolift sit there for a moment. "I'm sure Medical is still smarting from your testimony, but at least they're talking to you."

McCoy's entire body tensed. "I don't give a damn if they're talking to me, this stuff is dangerous!" He waved the PADD angrily, almost threateningly. "That blood may have saved your life but the aftereffects were completely unpredictable ... it took months to clear you for duty, and more months to make sure your body had fully recovered."

Jim pursed his lips. "You don't have to remind me." He remembered those months. The cold sweats, the pain, the seemingly endless battery of tests and theories ... his life had been saved, true.

But the costs were great and, based on what Starfleet had done with Khan's knowledge in secret, the Federation Council had ruled to suspend all research on Khan's blood until the rights of the surviving Augments could be established. Right now that debate was raging in the courts and it looked like Starfleet was going to lose the battle.

McCoy's testimony about the blood hadn't helped matters.

"Jim, something's going on here," McCoy asserted. "Something stinks. Medical hasn't wanted to hear my opinions since the testimony and we shouldn't be heading to New Vulcan — we were scheduled to go to Earth and we're on a tight schedule even then."

Jim called out his destination and the turbolift began to move effortlessly. "You're tired."

"Damn right I am." McCoy ran his hand through his hair, a slight bit of gray beginning to show. He took a deep breath. "Something's up."

"You've made yourself clear on that point." The lift stopped and the two stepped out, this deck more active than the last one. It was early in the morning but Jim wasn't the only one who enjoyed a good workout before his duty shift started. "Bones, I've told you all I know." He offered a shrug as McCoy's eyes drilled into him. "Honestly, I'm just as much in the dark as you are."

"And you're fine with that?" McCoy growled. He shook his head, the scowl on his face only deepening. "Can't you call someone?"

Jim gave him a soft pat on the back. "Go get some sleep. Your shift starts in about two hours."

McCoy let out an audible groan. "I'll never understand your confidence in the people above us."

Jim flashed a smile. "You're a doctor, not a psychiatrist."

McCoy rolled his eyes as the two entered into the captain's private gym; there were some benefits to being in command, after all. His scowl lessened into a somewhat curious frown. "Uhura?"

Uhura flashed him a smile. Dressed in a variation of standard-workout attire, the woman stood tall with her feet firmly placed on the mat at the center of the gym. "Doctor." Her eyes glanced over at Jim. "I didn't expect you'd be bringing company."

McCoy rubbed his forehead. "Don't tell me."

Jim laughed at him. "Relax, Bones. She's just my training partner."

"I thought Spock was your training partner."

Jim cleared his throat. "He was, but he decided I needed a different one."

McCoy glared at him. "Ambiguity is overrated at 0500."

"Captain Kirk needed a training partner closer to his level," Uhura clarified, amusement clear in her voice. "Spock said that he 'demonstrated a need to take his training at a more deliberate pace.'"

McCoy stared at her for a moment before a grin came over him. "You got your ass kicked by Spock." He turned to Jim, his eyes dancing. "He was too good for you."

Jim dropped his towel onto the mat, stretching his legs to limber himself up. "It's a minor setback, that's all. Spock just wants me to build my confidence with a few easy wins." He smirked at Uhura. "Right, Lieutenant?"

She returned his smirk, her eyes unwavering. "Captain, I'd focus on your stretching if I were you." Her eyes jumped to McCoy. "I'm afraid this isn't a spectator sport, Doctor. If you're here, you're participating, too."

McCoy grinned as he held up his hands. "Oh, no. I had my ass handed to me by my ex in the divorce, I don't need a repeat experience in the gym." He turned and walked out, saying over his shoulder, "Just make sure he can still make it to sickbay afterwards!"

The doors closed shut behind him as Jim only shook his head. "You scared him off."

She crossed her arms across her chest. "Are you stalling or are we doing this?"

He finished his stretching and entered into the beginning stance. "What's the score?"

She entered into her stance with little effort. "I own you six matches to none."

"Best out of seven then?"

She laughed at him. "Five. We can't have you *beamed* to sickbay."

He smiled. He was ready this time. He'd lost to her six times in a row, but each loss was closer than the last. He'd beat her today. He almost had to ... McCoy would never let him live it down otherwise.

"Arrival at New Vulcan in five minutes, Mr. Spock," Chekov reported from navigation.

Spock offered only a half-nod as he scanned over that morning's duty roster and tried to focus his mind on the objectives at hand. His focus was lacking, once again, this morning ... his meditation had been off as well, marking the sixth day in a row that he was unable to fully immerse himself.

He had logically run through every reason why his mind was uncooperative. He had spoken about it, at length, with Nyota over the past three days. His lack of focus had been the primary reason he had asked her to take over the captain's martial arts lessons; he could not be an effective teacher in his current condition.

The turbolift to the bridge opened and Spock recognized the footstep pattern of his captain. Wordlessly, he stood from the chair and turned around.

A grin greeted him. Spock glanced quickly at Nyota, who only offered a small shake of her head before she assumed her station. "I take it your lesson went well?"

Jim clapped his hands together, rubbing them vigorously. "It did." He sat down in his chair, crossing his legs. "Ship's status, Mr. Spock."

Spock silently made a note to ask what had transpired during that morning's lesson. He had calculated a 78.3 percent likelihood that Jim would need another two weeks of training with Nyota before he was able to beat her. *My lack of focus may also be affecting my calculations.* "We'll be arriving at New Vulcan in two minutes, Captain. Mr. Scott reports all systems are green and performing well above operational standards."

Jim happily thumbed the engineering communications toggle. "Scotty, how's she doing?"

"*She's doing fine, Captain; a wee bit sluggish compared to last week, but once we get Earth side I'll fix that.*" Mr. Scott paused for a moment and then added, "*You think we're finally getting that parade they promised us?*"

Spock slightly arched his eyebrow. Mr. Scott was referring to the parade procession that had been *suggested* by the Starfleet public relations office prior to the start of their five year mission. Based on public polls of Starfleet at the time, the decision had been made to forgo any parade procession; the *Vengeance* crash into San Francisco and the following investigation into the actions of Admiral Marcus had left the public largely untrusting of Starfleet, even a year after the events.

To Spock's knowledge, even now, the polls still indicated a strong distrust.

"I doubt it," Jim responded, his enthusiasm dampening slightly. "Let me know if there's anything you need, Kirk out." He toggled the switch off and turned towards Spock. "Excited about seeing New Vulcan?"

"I am ... looking forward to it," Spock answered truthfully. He hadn't had many occasions to visit the new homeworld or his elder counterpart. There was much he wished to ask, especially with his recent difficulties mediating.

“Arrival at New Vulcan,” Chekov reported. The *Enterprise* dropped out of warp and the viewscreen showed the planet in full. Much like Vulcan itself, New Vulcan was a world with a predominantly desert climate, one well-suited for the remainder of the Vulcan people.

“Captain, we’re being hailed by the Vulcan High Council,” Nyota reported from her station. “They say its urgent.”

Jim turned in his chair to face her, then cast a look at Spock. “Open hailing frequencies.”

The viewscreen changed its image from that of New Vulcan to the chambers of the High Council. An elderly, dark-skinned Vulcan displayed the traditional salute. “Greetings, Captain Kirk. Your arrival has been expected.”

Jim returned the salute, his form not particularly good but better than it had been in years past. “Your hail said it was urgent?”

The elderly Vulcan offered a solitary nod. “You have been sent here by special request.” His eyes, dark and emotionless, flickered briefly as they looked at Spock. “Commander Spock, your uncle has succumbed to the final stages of Bendi Syndrome. He has asked for you and your ship’s presence in his last days.”

Spock could hear Nyota gasp from behind him. He could feel Kirk tense beside him.

His “uncle” was, in fact, his elder counterpart. Spock felt a pang of remorse, a beat of sadness, but more than anything he felt relieved. He now knew why his mind was so unfocused, why he could no longer immerse himself in meditation.

His elder self was dying and, across the vast distances of space, the connection the two had was making itself apparent. “I see,” Spock said, his tone measured. He carefully folded his hands behind his back. “Please inform my uncle that I will visit with him as soon as my duties allow.”

The elder Vulcan offered a slight nod. “I will relay the message.” He turned his attention back to Jim. “Captain, your presence has also been requested.”

Jim stood from his chair, his eyes saddened. “Of course. Mr. Spock and I will make ourselves available immediately.”

“The presence of your doctor has also been requested.”

“We’ll all be there,” Jim assured the Vulcan, his voice questioning.

“Very well.” The Vulcan offered another nod before the communication ended.

The bridge was oddly silent. Jim turned to face him, words escaping him for a moment. “Let’s go.” He began to move towards the bridge’s turbolift.

Spock looked at him questioningly. “Captain, we have duties —”

Jim turned around, his eyes hard and his face tensed with emotion. “*Now*, Spock.” He clenched and unclenched his fist, his eyes searching Spock’s face before they softened. “He’s family, Spock. You don’t wait.”

Spock's eyes briefly glanced over at Nyota, who offered him a small nod. "Very well." He and the captain headed to the turbolift, the bridge around them quiet.

Once they entered the lift, the silence seemed deafening. Jim's good mood had completely disappeared, replaced with restlessness. "Captain —"

Jim held up his hand. "Don't start quoting Starfleet regulations, I don't want to hear it." He bit his lip, shaking his head. "I don't want to hear it."

"I was merely going to suggest we call Doctor McCoy."

Jim shot him a sidelong glance before nodding. "Right." He tapped the comm. panel in the lift. "Sickbay."

"McCoy."

Jim took a breath. "Report to transporter room one, Doctor. We have a patient who needs you on New Vulcan."

"A patient?" Silence for a moment and then, "*I'll be there.*"

The line cut out and Jim stared at the panel with a frown.

Spock looked at him questioningly. "Captain, Bendi Syndrome is incurable. There's nothing Doctor McCoy can do."

The captain didn't make eye contact. He just stared ahead at the panel. "We'll see about that."

His medical tricorder was stating the obvious, even if the obvious had already been stated by Spock at least twice since they got here. Looking up from the readings, Leonard H. McCoy offered a small shake of his head. "It's terminal." He would have showed Jim the readings if he thought the man cared.

But Jim Kirk didn't care about what the tricorder, Spock, or anyone else was saying; he wanted Spock's counterpart to live. He wanted that and there was little Leonard could do at the moment to convince Jim otherwise.

The other Spock lay before them, his breathing erratic, his eyes closed. He was asleep and, judging by the tricorder's readings, it was a sleep that was desperately needed. The man's body was exhausted and the man's mind was a mess; neurochemicals were all out of whack and wreaking havoc with every biological function.

Spock — their Spock, it got confusing sometimes — was taking this far better than Jim, which both annoyed and fascinated Leonard. He snapped his tricorder shut, unsure what the point was of him or Jim being here. They weren't family. They weren't Vulcan. This was clearly a matter which required Spock's presence, but why were they here? "I can't do anything for him that hasn't already been done," he continued, more for the benefit of his own ears than Jim's.

"Nothing else?" Jim looked at him with disbelief. "That's it?"

“Captain, Doctor McCoy is correct.” Spock looked at both of them, his eyes dispassionate. How the Vulcan was keeping so calm while standing at the deathbed of his older self was beyond Leonard. “The specialists here would have logically attempted any and all procedures to aid him.” His eyes briefly darted to his counterpart. “Spock knows this.”

Leonard could hear the slight inflection of regret in their Spock’s voice. *Well, at least that confirms he feels a little something about it all.*

Jim’s communicator beeped and he pulled it from his belt, angrily flipping it open. “Kirk here.”

“Captain, there’s a priority communication from Starfleet Command coming through.”

Jim frowned. “Can you tell them to wait, Uhura?”

“They’re insistent, sir.”

Jim gave them both a glance before stepped back from the elder Spock’s bed. “Give me a moment to get outside.” He left the room, the sound of the door opening and shutting soon following him.

Leonard was now alone with two Spock’s; it wasn’t an enviable position, especially since he could barely figure out what to say to one. He looked between the two, unsure if there was anything he could do for *either* of them. “Spock ...” He sighed. “I’m sorry.” He turned to face the Vulcan, his eyes playing across the seemingly ageless man’s features. “I know you don’t have much family left.”

Spock didn’t make eye contact. “He is not family. He’s from an alternate reality.”

“Point,” Leonard admitted. “Still, he’s ... well ... he’s *you*.” He scratched at his cheek. Damn heat was drying out his skin. “I wouldn’t know what to do if I were in your place.”

Spock’s eyes focused on him now. “He and I have never spoken at length. We both agreed it would be best to avoid one another.”

Leonard shook his head in disbelief. “Why the hell would you do that?”

“In order to avoid corrupting the timeline any further,” he answered succinctly, as though it were obvious.

It might have been obvious to him, but it certainly wasn’t obvious to Leonard — and probably no one else, either. “If I remember right, didn’t you call him up when we were dealing with Khan?”

Spock arched an eyebrow. “There are always ... exceptions. My counterpart encouraged me to avail myself of him if I deemed there to be an occasion to make an exception. Khan was one such occasion.”

Leonard looked between the two with a newfound appreciation. “An exception,” he repeated. “I didn’t know you made exceptions.”

Spock turned his attention back to the other Spock, his face unreadable. “At the time, neither did I, Doctor.”

He could scarcely believe his ears. “I’m sorry, could you repeat that, sir?”

Admiral Robert Fox, his dark hair thinning and beginning to turn silver, glared at him on the small screen of the communicator. “I’ll say it *slow* for you this time, Captain. Your orders are to keep the elder Spock alive until the *Hall* arrives at New Vulcan with the Augment blood. You are to instruct your CMO to prepare for treatment immediately once that blood gets in orbit.”

Jim stared at the screen, the anger and grief he had been grappling with replaced by confusion. “Sir, that blood can’t be used —”

“Captain Kirk, the Federation Council has made an exception in this case. The elder Spock has knowledge and experiences he is willing to share with Starfleet in order to better prepare ourselves against the threats we may face.” Fox leaned forward, his face taut. “We’ve been trying to convince him for years to share this ... two weeks ago he agreed. It’s taken longer than anyone would have liked to get the blood out to him — bureaucratic bullshit got in the way — but we needed Doctor McCoy to oversee this procedure if it was going to be successful anyway.”

Jim’s hand tightened around the communicator, so hard he almost felt he could crush it. Spock would never have agreed to that; he’d been adamant that any knowledge of future events never be revealed to anyone else so as not to influence things in *this* reality. Jim knew this with his very soul ... their mind meld from years past confirmed how right he was and how wrong Fox had to be. “Admiral, with all due respect, I can’t believe that.”

“Believe it,” Fox spat back. “I’ll send the communications records to you, you can see for yourself; you just tell your CMO to be ready. Fox out.” The communique ended there.

She stared at the records before her, her fingers hovering over the controls. She had already played it. She had already heard it but she needed to hear it again. It was his voice ... but it wasn’t. It was Spock’s voice, but not *her* Spock’s. The computer confirmed that the voices were the same, that this wasn’t a forgery, but she found herself disturbed.

She had never imagined her Spock sounding so old ... so confused. She replayed the message, listening to the inflections and the rhythm. All of it was off. Wrong. The elder Spock’s voice was right, but the quiet sureness, the qualities that told her the speaker was fine ... they weren’t there.

This Spock sounded lost. He sounded broken.

“Nyota?”

She jumped and turned around, the youthful face of her Spock looking back at her. He brought his hand to her cheek and wiped away a tear.

“I’m sorry.” She wiped her eyes and turned off her console in a hurried motion. “Did I wake you?”

She knew the answer even before she asked the question. “You did not,” he responded, an edge of concern to his voice; his pitch was slightly lower when he was worried. He took her hand and pulled her to a standing position. “Are you all right?”

She traced her hand down his cheek. “Are you?”

He cocked his head slightly to the side. "I am not dying, Nyota. He is not me."

She looked up at the ceiling before forcing herself to look at him. She could hear the elder Spock in his voice, *see* the elder Spock in his eyes. "I know that. And you know that. But ... he *is* you, in some ways."

His eyes softened. "In some ways," he conceded. He pulled her towards their bed, allowing her to sit at the edge of it before he did the same. "Captain Kirk and Doctor McCoy are similarly disturbed by my counterpart's condition."

She could believe that. Kirk, especially, seemed almost as upset as she did ... angrier, even. He was adamant that she examine those communication records with a fine tooth comb. "They both care about you."

He didn't break his gaze. "Yet that concern manifests itself in different ways."

"They're different people."

"As I am different from my counterpart. His condition does not imply my life will end in the same fashion."

She squeezed his hand, thankful he had said that. It was hard to think of one's impending death without thinking of the other's possible future. "You're the calmest out of everyone about this."

"Calm is relative." He considered his words for a moment. "I am relieved to know why my mind has been so unfocused of late ... my elder self's condition explains that. My other feelings are ... clouded."

She rubbed his knuckles with her fingers, trying to offer him some comfort. "That's understandable."

He glanced at the console across from them and then met her eyes once more. "The records?"

She frowned. "Are you curious or are you changing the subject?"

"Curious." His tone confirmed that to her ears. "Doctor McCoy stated that my counterpart is family. Though that statement is inaccurate on many levels, it does apply." His lips curled downward ever so slightly — the closest he would get to a frown. "I care."

She squeezed his hand again. "It's him. No forgery, no mistake ... at least in identity anyway. But he wasn't himself when he made that call."

"Was it apparent?"

"Blatantly so to me." She stared into his eyes. "But I know you very well."

He took his free hand and placed it gently upon her cheek, a feeling of warmth beginning to overtake her. "Yes, you do," he whispered.

Sickbay was silent this early in the morning. For the second night in a row, Leonard had pumped himself full of stimulants and stayed up, unable to sleep. Two nights ago he couldn't sleep because of stress; returning to Earth wasn't exactly what he called a good thing. Five years in deep space was a hell of a trip, but he had grown to accept that. There wasn't much left on Earth for him except memories of years past and a bunch of angry people — his ex-wife leading that mob, no doubt.

Last night he found himself sleepless again, this time courtesy of the Frankenstein research Starfleet Medical had sent him on the Augment blood. It was barely in its infancy when the Federation had pulled the plug; what Medical had sent him reflected that in spades.

They expect me to save a man with this? He rubbed his eyes and glanced at the wall chronometer at the far end of sickbay. At almost the same time, the doors to sickbay opened and Jim walked — no, charged — through them, like an angry bull about to gore a matador. “Report.”

Leonard grimaced, swiveling in his chair to face his captain and friend. “The research is half-cocked, half-baked, and mostly theories.” He jerked a thumb at the screen behind him. “No doctor in his right mind would try and cobble something together from that.”

Jim's eyes didn't leave Leonard's face, a cold fire burning in them. “And the charts?”

Leonard reached behind him and picked up the PADD. “I've reviewed what the Vulcan doctors down there noted ... thorough, all of it. Two weeks ago, at the time of his message to Starfleet, he was technically lucid.”

“Technically?”

“Technically,” Leonard repeated. “Bendi Syndrome operates for Vulcans much like Alzheimer's does for humans; lucidity comes and goes. When the other Spock made that call, he was technically lucid.” He dropped the PADD onto his lap, shaking his head. “But the day before he wasn't. The day after he wasn't. And, frankly, being that he's from a completely different reality, I don't know if he was even aware he was calling *our* Starfleet.” He frowned. “Jim, his readings indicated he was having a good day that day, but that doesn't mean he was having a *normal* day.”

The younger man's shoulders tensed, his face darkening. “Can we legally claim he wasn't in control of faculties then?”

“Legally?” Leonard offered a tired shrug. “I'm a doctor, not a lawyer ... but we could make the case he wasn't. Hell, the charts show how erratic the patient's been over the last six months. His condition has steadily declined, usually in sharp drops.”

The words seemed to have a crushing effect on the man. Jim sat down in the nearest empty chair and leaned forward, hands clasped together. “Right.”

Way to go, McCoy. “I'm sorry,” he said in a softer tone. “I know this means more to you than it normally would.”

Jim released a deep sigh, one that he seemed to be holding in for this entire conversation. “Starfleet's orders are to save him.” He met Leonard's eyes. “Can you do that?”

“Maybe,” Leonard conceded. “This isn't as simple as they'd like anyone to believe, though. The other Spock's blood is Vulcan, but it has human properties. His nature as a hybrid makes this tricky ... the Augments are super-humans, not super-Vulcans. Getting the blood to work for him like it worked for you is probably out of the question.” He sighed. “I can't save him indefinitely ... this isn't going to add years to his life.”

“What will it do, then?”

“Months. Maybe a year, tops.” Leonard ran his hand through his hair, wishing he had better answers to give. “It’s guesswork. I could be wrong and the blood could kill him. Honestly, after seeing what it did to you, I can’t use it in good conscience.” He met his friend’s eyes. “It nearly killed you after it saved you. We had to wean your body off it for months ... if we didn’t have the supply of blood we did and the facilities to properly treat you, you would have ended up dying all over again.”

Jim looked away for a moment, staring at a far corner of sickbay, before shaking his head. “So he’ll suffer like I did.”

“Probably more, based on how infirmed his body is,” Leonard confirmed. He picked up the PADD again and flipped it over, showing Jim the elder Spock’s readings. “His body isn’t much better off than his mind. The Vulcan mind plays a larger role in controlling bodily functions than it does in humans; the Bendi Syndrome is killing him in two ways.” He set the PADD back in his lap again, exhaustion beginning to set in. “I can’t save him ... the best I can do is prolong his life.”

The younger man put his head in his hands, gripping at his hair. “What if he made the offer in good faith? What if he knows something we need to know, Bones?”

“If he does, he picked a hell of a time to tell us.” Leonard shook his head, memories of his own father’s demise and death playing out in front of him. “In their last days, patients like this ... they get desperate. Desperate for it to end, desperate for it to be over ...” His voice trailed off. God, he needed a drink.

Jim looked up at him, concern and curiosity playing over his features. “You sound like you speak from experience.”

“I do,” Leonard said curtly. “Trust me, if the older Spock wanted to say something important, he would have done so before now; Bendi is incurable. He knew this when he was stricken with it six months ago. He’s known it for as long as he’s been alive and he’s been alive a *long* time.” Jim looked at him hopelessly. He was grasping for something, anything. *Like I was*, Leonard reminded himself.

“So we can’t do anything?”

“He has days left.” Leonard stared at the younger man; what good was he as a doctor at this point? “But ... we might be able to do something.”

A flicker of hope. “Something?”

Leonard stared up at the ceiling. *God forgive me*. “I can’t save him. I can maybe prolong his life with the Augment blood but it’s dangerous and will probably kill him.” He met Jim’s eyes. “*But*, if Spock had something he needed to tell us, if there was something he had to say ... we could make him lucid enough to say it.”

“You don’t sound enthused at the idea.”

Leonard offered a small shake of his head. “It’s not a good idea. The Vulcan doctors suggested it but I don’t like it.”

“Bones,” Jim warned.

Leonard clenched his jaw. “We can have our Spock mind-meld with the other one; because the two are, basically, the same, the mind-meld will have a bracing effect. It’ll temporarily restore the other Spock’s cognitive functions.”

Jim narrowed his eyes. “A reset?”

“A *temporary* reset. Probably will last a few hours from what I’m told, but it’s dangerous; the other’s Spock’s mind is a mess and the strain on our Spock would be great.” Leonard leaned forward. “If there’s a miscalculation, if something goes wrong, we could lose them both.”

“Doctor McCoy is correct.” Spock rarely had an occasion to say those words, but this was one such occasion. As he watched Doctor McCoy look at the captain, and the captain look back at him, he sensed the two disagreed on the proper course of action to take. Logically, there was only one course of action. “However, we must know.”

“Damn it, Spock, are you out your mind!” McCoy held a PADD out to him, his emotions clearly getting the better of him. “Look at these readings and tell me it’s safe!”

“I cannot.” Spock met Jim’s eyes. “However, the captain’s logic is sound. If my counterpart knows of an impending threat to the Federation and wished to communicate it to us, the only way to do so at this juncture is through a mind-meld.”

McCoy’s face reddened. Spock’s words only seemed to incense him. “He’s not in any shape to to go through a mind-meld, Spock! If you link up with him, you’ll have to prop him up more than normal ... hell, this could be worse than using the Augment blood!”

“Ethically, it is the better option.” Spock watched as McCoy looked away, knowing that the doctor agreed. “The Augment blood was ruled by the Federation Council to not be used again until the rights of the Augments could be ascertained by the courts. Even if they have made an exception in this case, as my counterpart’s legal guardian I know he would not want his life saved in such a manner.” He met Jim’s eyes. “But my duty — and his — as a Starfleet officer demands that we ascertain his reasons for his offer to Starfleet two weeks ago.”

McCoy scowled and turned his attention to Jim. “It’s not worth the risk.”

The captain’s eyes didn’t leave Spock’s face, though. The man had already made up his mind. “How long do you need?”

McCoy recoiled back as though he had been punched.

Spock calmly calculated the time required for preparation. “Based on my counterpart’s condition and my own ... three hours.” He glanced at McCoy. “I will need your assistance, Doctor. After the meld, my own mind will be drowned in the chaos of his. I will plant a suggestion in my own sub-conscious to fall asleep immediately after the meld. When I do, you will need to restrain me ... sedation may be ineffective. I highly recommend you have security posted in sickbay during my time there.”

McCoy only shook his head. “Restraints. Security. I run a sickbay, not a prison.”

“Doctor, this is not open for debate. Please, do as I ask.”

“Do it,” Jim agreed, his tone leaving no room for debate. “Is there anything else you need?”

Spock offered a small shake of his head. “Only privacy for the next three hours, sir.”

Jim watched in fascination as Spock placed his hands on the face of ... Spock. It was a surreal moment, one which he wished there wasn’t a

need for. But they had to know and this was the only method they could use that wasn't completely wrong. McCoy wasn't happy about it, the scowl affixed to the man's face seemingly having been there for hours now.

"Bones?"

"Lifesigns are good ... for now." McCoy waved his sensor around the two Spocks, his eyes drilling into the tricorder. "If things go south, I'm breaking the meld, you understand, Spock?"

Their Spock didn't respond. He merely adjusted the width between his fingers, firmly pressing his hand into his counterpart's cheek. Suddenly, both Spock's jerked back as McCoy's tricorder blared.

"Damn it," McCoy muttered. He waved his sensor over the elder Spock before the tricorder's sounds calmed. "Wait ... they're stabilizing." He stared at the readings before shaking his head. "I should have bet on Vulcan stubbornness." Their Spock's hand fell from the elder Spock's cheek and Jim's first officer slumped backwards. McCoy held up hand, indicating there was no need to panic. "Out like a light." He flipped open his communicator, paused, then looked to Jim. "Be direct. I can't predict how long he'll be lucid."

"Long enough, Doctor McCoy." The sage voice of Spock echoed in the room as the elder Vulcan's eyes opened. For the first time since they arrived, he was awake. "You should endeavor to return to the *Enterprise* as quickly as possible, per Spock's instructions."

McCoy was caught between a grin and a grimace. "Right; McCoy to *Enterprise*, two to beam up." In moments the two disappeared in a beam of light.

And, once again, Jim was alone with Spock, like they had been just a few short years ago. "You seem better."

Spock's eyes were bright, his face composed. He didn't look as exhausted as he did previously. "The mind-meld has given me brief control again; it is good to be in control again." He pressed his hands together and formed a steeple with his fingers. "Spock communicated to me your question."

"And?"

Spock cocked his head slightly to the side, eerily similar to their Spock. "My stance remains the same: I will not share knowledge of future events with you or with Starfleet. Your destinies are your own."

Jim let out a sigh of relief. He leaned back against the wall, pressing himself against the cool surface. "So what you said to them —"

"Was not said in good judgment," Spock concluded, his voice wavering. "My condition does not allow for such things often, especially of late." He smiled, something that seemed oddly natural for him. "It is good to see you again, old friend. I don't have much time ... I'm glad to spend it with you."

Jim looked at him with confusion. "Spock said the meld would last for hours."

"He intended that, yes. But he is not as well-practiced at it as I am. I did not allow him to give me hours." Spock visibly shuttered, the steeple he formed with his fingers beginning to shake. "I could not allow him to take my burden for that long."

"Burden?"

“Yes, Jim,” Spock said, his voice grave. “A great burden.”

“I killed them!” Tears, hot and stinging, poured from his eyes as he fought, as he strained, as he tried to move. Vulcan was dying. He killed them, he killed them all, and it was his fault — all of it was his fault. “Stop me, please, stop me from killing them!”

He begged, but no one heard. No one came. No one saw. No one knew. He could not stop them, the ice and the snow his only companions in this frozen wasteland.

Why had he failed? Why had he been so wrong?

He pulled, gritting his teeth, needing to be free. He had to fix it. He had to save them all ... he couldn't fail them again. He couldn't kill them *again*. Forcing every ounce of power he had through his right arm, he ripped through one of the restraints.

“Spock, damn it!” McCoy yelled, rushing at him, throwing his full weight upon his freed arm. “You're safe, you're in sickbay!”

He gripped McCoy's shirt and threw the man away. Weak. Inferior. Nothing. They couldn't stop him, they couldn't hold him back, he wouldn't be stopped anymore ... he'd be free. He'd save his world, his *people* and stop the death.

He began to pull at the other restraint, but his hand grew weak as a face flashed in his mind: Leila. Oh, how she would hate him for his failure. How she loved him and cried for him, cried and showed him happiness. How he had thrown it away.

He wept for her. He beat his fist against the bed, his mind chaotic as it tried to reason with his emotions, but all he could do was cry. Like a little boy, like a child ... he was weak like a child. Weak, hopeless, helpless, so *human*.

“Spock, it's okay.” McCoy approached him, a gash down the man's cheek, blood leaking from it. He held out a hypospray. “Let me give you a tranquilizer, take the edge off.”

“I'm sorry.” He fell face first onto his pillow. Why hadn't he been there? Why had he forsaken his friend in his hour of need? “Jim, I'm so sorry.” Nothing to be buried. Nothing to be found. Nothing to hold onto, nothing to mourn.

Only a memory. Another memory in a list of memories he didn't want.

A hiss could be heard and his eyes widened, then relaxed. Fear overcame him. Darkness was coming. Sleep was coming. “Doctor McCoy ... do not leave me. I don't want to be ... alone ...”

Hard as he fought, he could not keep his eyes open.

“Rest easy, Spock. I'm here,” a soothing voice said near him. “We're all here.”

Darkness overtook him.

His control was fading and fading fast. It was expected. It had to be done. He had been trapped in his own emotions, in his own feelings, for too long now ... his younger self's intentions had been pure, but the burden was not his to bear.

Jim Kirk stood before him, as youthful as ever ... perhaps more youthful. It was a man he knew and didn't know, yet a man he cared for all the same. "Do not mourn me when I pass," he told his friend, knowing that his words may not make a difference at all. "Do not grieve for me."

Jim looked at him with understanding, panic and fear flashing in his eyes. "You're going to die."

"Soon," Spock said calmly. Death was welcome now. "I have had the pleasure of living a very long and fulfilling life."

"You can't die." His words were rushed, his voice full of emotion. "We still need you. *I* still need you."

Spock allowed a small smile. "You have me. We share a bond that death will not undo and that bond will only grow stronger with your Spock."

Jim Kirk did not like death, in any reality. He did not like to lose. He did not like giving up. All qualities which made him the complicated and fascinating being that he was. "It's not the same, not like it was up here," he said, pointing at his head. "I *saw* what it was like with you and your Kirk."

"Do not judge your relationship with my counterpart by comparison," Spock told him gently. "Your paths have been altered, your destinies redefined. Your friendship will take on a different form but one that is no less great."

"And what about what's out there?"

"Your adventure is your own." Spock breathed in sharply. "My time grows short."

"Let McCoy try the Augment blood —"

"No," Spock said with finality. "The Federation and Starfleet need your example and the example of your crew, Jim. Do not let the acts of a few define the fate of the many." He could feel it now. Strange how little pain there was compared to before. He met the eyes of his friend one last time. "Thank you for this."

Spock made the all-too familiar gesture of the Vulcan salute and opened his mouth to say the words.

He never did.

"You sure you don't want me to stay?" Doctor McCoy looked at her with equal parts fear, confusion, exhaustion, and understanding.

Nyota nodded. "You said it yourself, he's been out for hours."

“He also tossed me like a salad earlier.” He rubbed the back of his neck, grimacing.

“Hours ago,” she stated again. “I promise you, I’ll be fine.” She allowed a small smirk. “I’ve trained under him, remember?”

McCoy sighed. “Security is posted outside if you need anything,” he said reluctantly. He sauntered out of sickbay, leaving her and Spock alone.

She pulled her chair closer to his bedside, taking his hand and placing it between hers. She knew, somewhere, that he felt that. He was only asleep after all, but seeing him in here, like this ... it made her think all too much about what would eventually happen to him. About how he would die.

Would she be there? Would he want her to be?

Don’t dwell on that, she warned herself. *He’s alive, here and now. He’s not going anywhere.* She squeezed his hand, hard. “Spock, can you hear me?”

It took a moment, but she could feel his pulse pick up slightly — it wasn’t easy to feel that, but she had spent many nights by his side. She knew what it felt like when was asleep and when he was awake.

His eyes opened slowly, searching the space around him before finally resting on her face. “Nyota.”

She smiled. “Hi.”

He sat up but stopped midway. “The restraints are unnecessary now.”

“Of course.” She removed the restraints and he moved his arms, flexing his muscles. “How are you?”

He stopped what he was doing, his bottom lip trembling. “I am not well.” He looked up at her. “But I will be.”

She pressed her hand into his cheek and he closed his eyes, pressing his cheek back into her hand. “What’s wrong?”

He opened his eyes, tears welling up in them. “He gave me something ... a gift.” He blinked away the tears, but they were streaming down his cheeks now. “He gave me memories of my mother.”

She wrapped her arms around him and he cried into her shoulder, overcome with emotion.

And she cried, too.

Jim silently stared into his untouched glass of Saurian brandy, his dress uniform cap right beside it.

Leonard couldn't tell if the man was contemplative, shell-shocked, or both. It was just the two of them in his quarters, a full bottle between them and not a single drop of brandy drunk. "One of us has to start," he found himself saying.

"Then start." Jim didn't take his eyes off the glass. "I'll catch up to you, promise."

Leonard picked up his glass and shifted uncomfortably in his chair. He put it to his lips but couldn't do it. He set the glass back onto the table. "Damn it."

"My sentiments exactly."

"No ... no." He pointed at Jim. "You're taking this all wrong."

Jim's eyes shifted from the glass and focused on him with a laser gaze. "He died right in front of me, Bones. *Right in front of me ...* and I let him. I could have called you, I could have had him beamed aboard, but I didn't. I let him die."

"You honestly believe that?" Jim didn't respond, which was confirmation enough for him. "Spock *wanted* to go."

Jim leaned back in his chair, his hand spinning the glass of brandy. "I could have saved him."

Leonard stared at him. How many times had he said the same thing? Thought the same thing? "If I were Spock, I could tell you the exact number of times I believed that. And you know what?"

A shrug.

Leonard pressed on. "I can't save everyone and neither can you. *No one* can save everyone and I'll be damned if I let you sit here and ignore that truth." He jutted a finger at him, coming dangerously close to pushing it into Jim's chest. "If there's one thing you should take away from this, it's this: Spock died because he *wanted* to and he told you that. If you ignore it and blame yourself, you might as well go piss on his grave."

There was an uncomfortable silence for a long moment; Jim looked like he was about to jump across the table and Leonard couldn't blame him if he did. Instead, he picked up his glass and held it out. "To Spock."

Leonard picked up his glass and repeated, "To Spock."

The two clinked the glasses together before downing the brandy in one shot.

They would repeat the process many more times that night.

He opened his eyes to find himself in a turbolift, far away from his home on New Vulcan. He took a moment to index himself and found, to his surprise, that his mind was functioning normally. In fact, it was functioning better than it had in many years.

"Fascinating," he found himself saying. His eyes scanned over the lift, a sense of familiarity overcoming him. He knew this lift. He knew the

vibrations it produced, the sounds it made, the feelings it gave him.

He was on the Enterprise. The lift's layout and design was exactly as the design Starfleet used in 2267. Logically, he could not be in this lift — the design had been phased out over a century ago and the Enterprise had been destroyed only decades later.

The lift came to a stop and the doors opened to an equally familiar symphony of sounds. The bridge's design was from the same era as the turbolift.

That detail, however, was insignificant compared to whom was on the bridge.

Standing before him, from left to right, was his crew. Scott. Sulu. Chekov. Uhura. McCoy.

And Jim ... his Jim.

Spock stared at them all, unable to comprehend what he was seeing.

Jim Kirk gave him a warm grin, as the rest of them did the same. "You always said there were possibilities, Spock."

"Yes," he found himself saying, scarcely able to believe it. "This is highly illogical."

"What's illogical is how long we've been waiting," McCoy grumbled with a smirk. "God almighty, Vulcans live a long time."

"Waiting, Doctor?"

Jim smiled broadly. "Yes, waiting. You're the last one to arrive. We couldn't leave without you."

He stepped onto the bridge, the lift doors closing behind him, the familiarity overpowering him. "Where are we going?"

Jim's eyes lit up with excitement. "Where no man has gone before. Welcome home, Mr. Spock."

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!