

Blue Jello

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Blue Jello

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Summary

Bones sets up a lunch buddy schedule for Jim to help him remember to eat. It works fine until all of Jim's friends go home for reading week, leaving Jim alone on campus.

Notes

Trektober Day 7
Prompt: "Academy Era"

Jim Kirk returned to his dorm after his last class of the day, feeling exhausted. He walked in and collapsed on his bed, ready to just fall asleep then and there in his cadet reds.

"How was your day?" Jim's roommate, one Doctor Leonard McCoy (AKA "Bones") swivelled his desk chair to face him.

Jim just groaned. "Exhausting."

"What did you eat for lunch today?" Bones asked.

Jim groaned again. "I forgot," he admitted.

"You can't keep doing this, Jim," Bones told him.

"I know," Jim said. "But I'm not doing it on purpose, I swear."

"I know. Look, it's eighteen hundred hours, let's go get some dinner. It'll help you feel better."

"I don't know, Bones, I'm not really hungry." Jim said. Mostly, he was tired and didn't want to be awake for another minute, let alone long enough to eat dinner.

Bones wouldn't have it, though. "Come on, Jim," he insisted. "You have to eat something."

Knowing that Bones wouldn't let up, Jim sighed and rolled off his bed, landing on his feet. "Alright, fine."

They went to the cafeteria and Jim stood before the synthesizer for a long moment, trying to decide what he could eat. Maybe it was because he had been running on an empty stomach all day, or maybe it was because he was just tired. But he felt like if he ate anything warm, he would be sick. He ended up sitting down across from Bones with a bowl of blue jello.

Bones eyed the bowl, but didn't comment on how insubstantial it was. After all, eating *something* was better than eating nothing. Jim silently thanked Bones for not pushing him, and ate his jello.

Jim was studying at his dorm room desk when Bones walked over and slapped a paper down in front of him.

"What's this?" Jim asked, picking it up and peering at it. It had a list with days of the week, times, and people.

"It's a schedule," Bones said. "Since you keep forgetting to eat, I've made you a lunch buddy schedule. You'll meet me for lunch on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Uhura on Mondays and Wednesdays, and Gaila on Fridays. There's no classes on the weekends so it's up to you to make lunch buddy arrangements on Saturdays and Sundays."

Jim groaned. "Do I really need a lunch buddy?" He asked. This was embarrassing.

"As your doctor I'm prescribing it," Bones said. "I know you aren't not eating on purpose. But you need to be eating regularly. And whatever you were doing before clearly wasn't working. This is a new strategy that I think will help. Besides, we're all your friends. We like spending time with you."

Jim sighed. "Alright, I'll give it a try."

"Good."

"Jim," Uhura said in the middle of lunch the next day.

"Yeah?" Jim asked. He was feeling good that day, well enough to eat a cheese burger, and relishing in the fact that Bones couldn't yell at him for eating something so unhealthy.

"Is everything okay?" She asked.

Jim looked up at her with surprise. She had a concerned look on her face. He swallowed a bite. "Yeah?" He said. "Why?"

Uhura stirred her soup distractedly. "Well, it just seems... I mean, don't take this the wrong way, it's not that I don't want to hang out with you, but it's just kind of weird for Leonard to have reached out to me and ask if I'd be willing to have lunch with you every Monday and Wednesday. Makes me think it might, you know, mean something."

"Oh," Jim said. He thought for a moment. Uhura was his friend. He might as well give her an explanation. "I have this weird thing about food," he said. "It's not that I don't want to eat, usually, it's just that I never feel hungry so I just forget to eat. It's been happening a lot lately, so Bones prescribed me lunch buddies."

"Okay," Uhura said, nodding. "I get it." She didn't press him any more on the subject.

"Thanks."

Jim's lunch buddy system worked well, and while he couldn't always eat a lot for lunch, he at least remembered to eat *something*. That coupled with Bones throwing granola bars at him in the morning and making sure he got something to eat in the evening, and Jim was on a fairly regular meal schedule again.

Then came reading week, and all his lunch buddies left campus to visit family. Jim stayed on campus. Determined to finish his academy courses in just two years, he had an abnormally large course load, and he was going to need every second of reading week to keep on top of it all.

In preparation for reading week, Bones had Jim program reminders into his handheld comm, which in theory, should remind him to eat. In practice, Jim dismissed the notifications, telling himself that he'd get something to eat as soon as he finished his paper, or finished studying this chapter, or whatnot. And then he would forget. Not to mention that he was stressed out of his mind. He had fallen behind in the last few weeks, and was working vigorously to catch up while also finishing large projects that were due in the next week, as well as studying for mid term exams that were again, next week. And the stress made Jim's stomach turn at the mere thought of food.

He thought he was functioning fine until the Tuesday of reading week, when he suddenly felt lightheaded in the halls on the way to the library. He stopped, putting a hand on the wall to steady himself and waited for the feeling to pass, but it only worsened.

A moment later he opened his eyes to find himself lying on the floor with a Vulcan face hovering over him. Jim scrambled into a sitting position.

"How long...?"

"Just a few seconds," the Vulcan said. Jim recalled that his name was Spock. He was a rather intimidating friend of Uhura's that he had met a couple times in passing.

"Are you ill?" Spock asked him. "I could escort you to medical."

Jim shook his head. "No, I'm fine, I just haven't eaten since..." he counted, then grimaced. "Since Sunday night."

Spock raised an eyebrow at him, but Jim waved a hand.

"I'll be fine, I just need to eat something," he insisted.

Spock stood from where he was crouched in front of Jim and offered a hand. Jim took it and accepted the help in getting back to his feet.

"Thanks for looking out for me," he told Spock, and headed off in the direction of the cafeteria.

Spock fell into step beside him. "I shall accompany you," he said.

Jim wondered if Spock was following him to make sure if he actually ate. But Spock barely knew him, and certainly didn't care enough to take time out of his day to do so. Maybe Spock was just hungry. "Alright," Jim said.

As Jim stood in front of the synthesizer, he sighed. The stress of his course load made him feel sick to his stomach. He really didn't feel like eating, even though he knew that he had to. He punched in a code, and picked a table to sit down at.

He was surprised when Spock sat down across from him with his own tray. He assumed Spock would go sit off by himself. He wasn't about to say anything, though.

Spock raised an eyebrow at the bowl on Jim's tray. "You haven't eaten in almost two days, and that's all you're going to have?" Spock asked.

Embarrassed, Jim looked down at his single bowl of blue jello. He sighed. "Yeah." When Spock continued to look at him strangely, Jim felt like he had to explain. "I've been so stressed out that I haven't been able to eat because it makes me feel sick, and when things are really bad the only thing I'm able to tolerate is blue jello. Specifically *blue* jello, though. The other colours are off limits."

"I see," Spock said. Jim was surprised at how nonjudgmental he seemed. "It isn't the same," Spock said after a hesitation, "but whenever I feel the isolation of being the only Vulcan at the academy, I find that plomeek soup helps to ease the feeling."

Jim blinked, surprised at how vulnerable this near-stranger was being with him. "Oh," he said. But instead of commenting on it, he asked, "what's a... plomeek?"

"It's a Vulcan root vegetable," Spock explained.

"Like, a carrot?" Jim guessed.

Spock thought for a moment. "More like a cross between a parsnip and a beet," he decided. He nudged his bowl of soup towards Jim. "Would you like to try it?"

Jim felt his gorge rise just at the idea of eating something that wasn't blue jello. But he was curious enough to swallow that feeling down. It was strange, he decided, how he wanted to continue this connection with this person he had only met maybe two or three times, and spoken less than two sentences to until now. And for some reason he thought that if he refused Spock's offer, the Vulcan might close up on him again. So he decided that half a spoonful of the pink, creamy looking soup wouldn't kill him.

He picked up the spoon, scooped a bit of the thick soup into it, and prepared to stifle a gag if his body decided it couldn't handle it in that moment. But when the soup landed on his tongue he was surprised that he didn't reject it. And he was surprised by the soup itself. It wasn't hot, like he expected, just barely above room temperature. It was thick and pulpy, and did in fact taste something like a cross between a parsnip and a beet. And most of all, it was the most bland thing he had ever tasted.

Jim's eyes lit up. "I can eat this," he said excitedly. "Even though I'm stressed to high hell and can't eat anything besides blue jello."

Spock seemed surprised, and also pleased. He pushed the bowl the rest of the way across the table towards Jim. "It has a much greater nutrient value than jello," he said. "I'll be back shortly." He got up and returned to the synthesizers, supposedly to get himself another bowl of the soup.

Jim ate his soup in small spoonfuls. He couldn't wait to tell Bones that he found something he could eat on his low days besides jello. And something with actual nutrients, no less. Bones would be thrilled. He picked up his comm and tapped out a text to the doctor to report his findings.

When Spock returned to the table, Jim couldn't help but ask. "So, you feel lonely?"

Spock blinked at him.

"You know," Jim said, somewhat sheepishly. "You said you eat plomeek soup when you feel isolated."

Spock nodded stiffly. "Indeed," he said. "Earth is very different from my world. I was never particularly social on Vulcan, but there, nobody was. Being among very social humans all the time..." He trailed off.

"You feel left out," Jim filled in.

"Perhaps that's it," Spock nodded. He had a far away look in his eyes.

Wanting to change the subject to something happier, Jim said, "so, I'd bet you haven't tried jello before."

"You should be more careful where you place your bets," Spock said. To answer Jim's look of disbelief, he said, "my mother is human. She made me jello many times when I was a child. But never blue jello, oddly."

"Well, the other colours are flavoured based on actual fruit and stuff," Jim said. "Maybe 'ambiguous blue flavour' was too illogical for Vulcan import laws."

"Perhaps," Spock said, as if that could very well be true.

Jim pushed the bowl of jello towards Spock. "Well, you're on Earth now, you can eat all the flavoured blue you want."

Spock was curious, and tried some of the jello. A look of contemplation passed over his face.

"Well?" Jim asked.

"It tastes... blue," Spock decided.

When reading week ended, Jim's eating habits again stabilized as his lunch buddy schedule resumed and he had Bones around to throw granola bars at his head. When he felt like he couldn't eat, he had plomeek soup. And blue jello for dessert. He still liked the jello.

On the weekends he had lunch with Spock. Before reading week, he was intimidated by Spock, knowing him only as Uhura's scary Vulcan friend, who he couldn't imagine ever spending any time alone with. But thanks to Jim's fainting spell, they discovered that they were rather compatible friends. Jim was pleased. He had gained regular eating habits, a more nutritious food that he could tolerate on bad days, and a new friend. Things were looking up.

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