

## Those Left Behind

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## Those Left Behind

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### Summary

Both Sarek and Admiral Pike have lost a great deal. Life goes on. So does grief.

### Notes

Written for the [kink meme](#) at [vulcanreforged](#)

Sarek stood in the officer's lounge in Starbase One as *Enterprise* glided out of orbit, carrying his only son into the treacherous darkness of deep space. When even Vulcan itself hung shattered, and T'Kuht was sucked out of its orbit, what protection could a ship of metal and wiring be? The elder Spock from the original timeline had argued persuasively that the Spock of this timeline was young, and had many years to contribute to the new society they were building; at this moment of crisis, when so many Vulcans were leaving positions within the Federation to return to what home was left them, the position of executive officer/science officer on the flagship of the fleet would be a strategic one to retain. It was much the same argument that had resulted in Sarek's presence here on Earth as Ambassador to the Federation.

And yet, Sarek would much rather have his son beside him, where he might see Amanda's eyes and know that the flesh of their flesh, in Amanda's own words, was safe and whole.

Kaiidh. What must be, must be.

"Ambassador! Come to watch our intrepid heroes set off on their journey?"

Sarek turned with composure. There was no reason to continue his watch; *Enterprise* was now far beyond the range of his sight. "Admiral Pike. You are looking well."

Pike grimaced, leaning on his cane. "Not well enough to ever sit on the bridge of a starship again," he said. "Even those who say a Captain shouldn't be going personally on away teams and into hazardous situations know that rule can't hold all the time. So, the *Enterprise* goes to Jim Kirk. He'll do a good job." A firm nod indicated his complete confidence in his protégé.

It would have been far more convincing, were Sarek not a stronger telepath than an average Vulcan. The Human had misgivings. Sarek knew enough of the maneuverings of Starfleet to know that James T. Kirk's captaincy was the result of a lack of truly qualified candidates and the need to capitalize on his image to build popular support for Starfleet in the wake of the disaster. Regardless of any innate skill, his only practice was with the Nero crisis; and however well he had acquitted himself, three years of Academy training were not enough to substitute for experience.

Spock, although still young himself, had the experience Kirk lacked; experience gained while serving under then-Captain Pike, aboard the *Yorktown*. It was not pride to know his son would be instrumental in the functioning of the *Enterprise*; it was merely acknowledgment that the elder Spock's strategy of maintaining Vulcan's influence in the Federation was sound.

(Sarek would still have preferred to see his son contribute to that strategy in a less hazardous position. No matter how much she supported Spock's choices, Amanda would have agreed with him.)

"Are you booked on the 1600 hours shuttle back down to San Francisco, Ambassador?" Pike enquired politely. "If so, you should probably get headed toward the docking bay."

"No," Sarek replied. His time sense had always been excellent and he was quite capable of ascertaining the time needed to locate and board his

shuttle. "I am scheduled on the 1645 shuttle to Dar es Salaam." From there, he would go to the Tanganyika Medical Institute for a reception in honor of Vulcan. There had been several researchers from the Healers' Guild of Xir'tan participating in studies at the Institute, who had left abruptly in the wake of Vulcan's destruction. Sarek's visit was supposed to smooth over any "ruffled feathers" caused by the researchers' abandonment of their project and serve as the occasion for the Institute to present a ceremonial gift to the Vulcan people in their time of need; the actual aid, in the form of gene sequencers and medical computers, had been sent nine days earlier. After the reception, Sarek would travel back to the Vulcan Embassy in San Francisco, in order to be ready for the Federation Council meeting the next morning.

"I'm staying up here overnight, myself," Pike said.

Sarek had to check his memory to be sure he had not missed anything else the Human had said. Obviously, Sarek needed to spend more time meditating, given the amount his thoughts were drifting this afternoon.

"Would you care for some refreshment, while we wait?" Pike asked.

Sarek hesitated. It would be rude to refuse. "Very well," he said. He was adequately prepared for both tonight's reception and tomorrow's meeting, despite his much-reduced staff; there was no excuse to snub Starfleet's newest (but at least for the moment, most favored in both public and private) admiral.

"It's still weird to see this place so deserted," Pike said, making small talk as they walked towards a nearby food kiosk. His tone was light, but his face and emotions were shadowed with grief.

Little as the destruction of several starships seemed in comparison to the loss of an entire world (Sarek's home and family and Amanda), it was heavy to Starfleet officers in ways comparable to the loss of Vulcan was for Vulcans. So, at least, Sarek had been told by those who might reasonably know. "I have few experiences of this place prior to the destruction of the Sector 001 Fleet," Sarek said. "But the level of activity is much less." Maintaining what Humans called "small talk" was draining and difficult at the best of times; it was filled with trivialities, followed no logical course or easily detected pattern, and yet was the "social lubrication" that facilitated all relationships, particularly the diplomatic. (Amanda had spent hours helping him improve his skills, had sparkled with wit and humor and grace as he diligently learned the steps of this verbal dance.) He found the banality more irritating, the illogic more grating, than he had before Vulcan's destruction. Perhaps it was due to the longer hours he worked to compensate for his reduced staff. Perhaps he needed to meditate more.

In any case, Pike seemed no more eager for "small talk" than Sarek was, and the rest of their walk was quiet. At the kiosk, Sarek ordered a cranberry juice and a banana. Bananas were acceptable compromises for Vulcans ordering "fast food" in Human establishments: they could be eaten while holding the peel, never touching the fruit inside, and thus satisfied Vulcan eating taboos without requiring a special request for silverware which such establishments seldom provided. (Bananas had been Amanda's favorite fruit.)

Pike ordered a coffee and a muffin.

"I don't know if you've heard, yet, but I'm supposed to be working with you on the commission that's going to be working on upgrading planetary defenses for Federation member worlds," Pike said as they sat down at a small table by the wall.

"I had not," Sarek said. "I look forward to the experience." One of the benefits of being so often either on Vulcan or sent out to negotiate with other worlds was the excuse to hand off whichever committees Sarek did not like or did not feel required his personal attention off to one or another of his aides. Since he would be staying on Earth for the foreseeable future, that was no longer the case. He had no real knowledge of, nor interest in, the military details which such a commission would be handling.

"Likewise, I'm sure," Pike said dryly.

Perhaps Sarek had allowed his displeasure to show through. His control was ... not as he was accustomed, since Amanda's death.

"I didn't know you were interested in Starfleet, Ambassador," Pike said. "What brings you up to watch *Enterprise* ship out?"

"I wished to bid farewell to my son," Sarek said shortly. It was unsurprising, under the circumstances, that even Spock's former commanding officer did not know who his father was.

"Spock?" Admiral Pike said, leaning back. "Huh. He never mentioned you were his father."

"We had been estranged for some time," Sarek said. "I wished him to enter the Vulcan Science Academy." He paused, as a realization struck him for the first time. "If he had, he would most likely be dead now." And without Spock's knowledge of where the Council would be in a time of crisis, the refuge of the Katric Ark at Gol which was on no map Starfleet had access to, Sarek and the rest of the Council would likely have died, as well; he would have been with Amanda. But he could not wish Spock dead, nor the rest of the Council.

"Good thing he chose Starfleet," Pike said. "Earth might have been destroyed, as well—I don't know if Kirk could have saved the planet without Spock's help. You should be very proud of your son, Ambassador; he's a fine officer and we're lucky to have him."

"Thank you," Sarek said, nodding. He peeled his banana and began to eat as they lapsed into silence again. He was relieved. As a diplomat, he was accustomed to accommodating other species' views on speaking during meals, but it was ... easier not to have to.

As he finished, he found himself watching his companion. As they were to work together, Sarek needed to form a profile of the man. Currently, he was sipping his coffee, watching his fellow Starfleet officers go about their business. His cane was leaned against the wall by his chair, and he idly rubbed his thigh. His body was tense, although Sarek believed he was attempting to project calm body language. On the wall across from their table was a display board listing the ships in dock, parking slips, or close orbit of Starbase One. On a board with twenty-five slots, only three were filled. Admiral Pike's eyes kept returning to that board. It took Sarek almost two minutes to realize that the hollow emptiness he had grown so used to recently came, in this instance, not from himself or his fellow Vulcans but from the Human across the small table from him.

Sarek knew the figures, the ships lost and people dead in what Starfleet called the "Battle of Vulcan." To him, it was mere data, swallowed up in the annihilation of the world. Not so for Admiral Pike. How many of his friends, his close companions, had died that day?

"I grieve with thee," Sarek said. It sounded strange in Standard, but Admiral Pike would probably not understand it in Vulcan.

Admiral Pike turned to him, startled. "Thanks," he said. "I grieve with you, too."

Sarek nodded in acknowledgment. Nothing more was said. Twelve point four minutes later, Sarek rose and left to meet his shuttle.

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