

A Marriage of True Minds

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A Marriage of True Minds

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Summary

A day in the life of Sarek and Amanda on Vulcan, when Spock was young.

Notes

Betaed by [Medie](#).

This was written for [trekreversebang](#), but the art was not completed.

Amanda glanced at the elegant timepiece on the wall and suppressed a sigh. Like all Vulcan design, it harmonized functionality with pleasing aesthetics in a logical manner, but she was in no mood to appreciate it. She needed to go pick up Spock. Five minutes ago, she had drained the last of her kava juice and hadn't refilled her glass from the covered pitcher in the center of the table. In Vulcan society, that was a cue that she was going to leave and the discussion underway should be wrapped up.

"...I still do not believe the variables the program uses for vocative cases are defined closely enough to be useful in the case of informal communication," Torval said, voice even despite the fact that they'd been arguing the point for the last half-an-hour. His hands were perfectly folded on top of the conference table, every hair in place, every fold of his robe perfectly aligned. "Clear communication requires a set of defined parameters to which all subscribe. Whatever variation there may be, however it may be expressed there must be a common foundation of expectations on which to build. This is especially so in the case of translation between languages that do not descend from a common root."

"Differing levels of grammatical fluidity have been one of the most difficult aspects of this project since its inception fifteen years ago," said T'Kar, raising an eyebrow. She would know, having been one of the original members of the team, as Torval was. "The last five years have seen great progress in this area; the correlation is as exact as it can be, and you yourself have approved the preliminary programming as adequate."

Obviously, neither of her colleagues had any intention of wrapping the discussion up any time soon. Amanda closed her eyes, taking a few deep breaths. Her temper was not helped by the temperature, which was cooler than normal for Vulcan in deference to her species, but still hot. After working with them in person for two years (and corresponding with them for quite some time before that) she knew they were both observant enough to have seen the empty glass. Vulcan academics were far less likely to get so caught up in their work they ignored the world around them than most human academics.

Did Torval and T'Kar believe that she didn't know Vulcan etiquette after almost two years of living on Vulcan, and five years of being married to a Vulcan before that? Or did they just not care that she needed to go? For all her experience with Sarek and the staff at the Vulcan embassy, it was sometimes hard to tell. Amanda had hoped that working with Vulcan scholars on Vulcan would reduce the amount of politics, infighting, and scholarly passive-aggression she had to deal with but the only difference was the language it was done in and the justifications given.

"In most cases, it is, as long as it is not asked to translate poetry," Torval replied. "However, we are still focusing on assuring its accuracy in translating known languages. Once we begin to add linguistic analysis and phoneme decoding, the programming must have a clear guide available to it. One of the most basic needs of communication is to know who is being addressed. I do not believe the data set underlying the vocative module is precise enough to be of any use."

"Then we'll have to cross that bridge when we come to it," Amanda said. "Human and Tellarite languages simply have too many internal idiosyncrasies to quantify further, particularly as regards names and forms of address." This was not the first time she had made this argument.

She already knew what his response would be; and he might even be right, as he certainly knew more about the guts of the programming than she did. He was a programmer who had become a linguist to work on this program; Amanda was a linguist who had learned enough about programming to get by.

"You assume that building algorithms from such an imprecise structure will be possible," T'Pol replied. "I am far from certain that it can be done."

"I share your concerns," T'Pol said, ever the peacemaker. "I believe that in this case, it will be easier to move from a flexible structure to a more rigid one, and thus flexibility should form the basic structure, which can then be adapted as each language requires. But as no one has, to our knowledge, ever attempted a translation program of such scope, there is little conclusive data either way." She paused, tilting her head. "The greatest variation comes from styles of communication appropriate to less formal situations. As formal occasions include the majority of circumstances when a translator is necessary, perhaps we should confine our work to them at this stage, and adapt for flexibility as needed later. Users can learn to use standard grammar and expressions when using the translator."

They'd been arguing about this for so long that Amanda would have appreciated a compromise, if it had been any other issue. "There are a great many translators already in existence that can do that," she pointed out. "Including your translation system of five years ago that forms the basis of our current prototype. It's the informal situations that are most in need of a single universal translator. And the purpose of translation is to honestly and freely communicate across language barriers. Any translation system that requires one or more parties to modify their form of communication to adapt to the translation is interfering in the process of true exchange of ideas. As the Federation's immediate practical needs are fulfilled, it would be illogical to devote substantial time and resources to a translator that would fail in its primary function." She stood up before T'Pol could reply. "We have discussed this issue many times," she said. "We will not settle it in the next five minutes. As I must leave now, I request that the discussion be tabled until our next meeting."

"Very well," T'Pol said flatly. She nodded to Amanda, the brief nod to a subordinate, not the bow due to a lady of the House of Surak, which Amanda was technically owed. Amanda didn't really care, except that it was part of a pattern of subtle disrespect that she could hardly ignore, being a communications specialist. And Sarek would care. And she didn't even want to think of what T'Pol would say if she saw it.

Amanda nodded to her colleagues, the nod of a lady of the House of Surak to her social inferiors, and left.

She had been slightly in awe to meet T'Pol and T'Pol in person, though she had corresponded regularly with them since her first contributions to the Universal Translator project. The pair were two of the best linguists in the Federation. It was an honor to be on their team, and she was the first human to earn it. But by now, the bloom was off the rose. They could be just as pigheaded—more so!—as human scholars. Smiling inwardly at T'Pol's frequent complaints about Human metaphor, she headed back to her office.

Deep breaths. Amanda focused on her breathing as she walked, drawing it in slowly, letting it out again. She needed to get her emotions under control before she picked Spock up. Like all Vulcan children, he was mildly telepathic, and sensitive to the moods of his parents even more so than a human child would have been. He didn't need her frustration with work spilling over into his developing mind.

Focus on good things. One thing she did still appreciate about the Vulcan Science Academy was the attention to aesthetics in its design and décor, which for Vulcans were hardly distinguishable. If one was going to make something, it was most logical to do it to the best of one's abilities; and Vulcans had always been aware of the potent symbolism of aesthetics. No matter how aggravating meetings were, this was a beautiful walk: cool stone from a local quarry, for structural strength and to hold the night's coolness and so reduce the need for air conditioning. Large windows with beautiful geometric patterns to let in light, angled so that the sun would never hit them directly and create a greenhouse effect. Wiring conduits (for several buildings had been constructed before electricity, and the rest of campus was in the same style) carved and painted with elaborate water and floral motifs, symbolizing life and growth, both physical and mental. By the time she reached her office, her mood was much better.

Her aide—a grad student who in a Terran school would be her TA, but here was more of an administrative assistant—was waiting for her as always, and he stood to bow when she entered. "My assignment and the latest paper from Shras of Andor are in your case," he said in a light tenor. "You have four messages; none require action today. The Tellarite Miracht School and the Terran Oxford University both request your presence as featured speaker at conferences within the next three years, for which neither your calendar nor Ambassador Sarek's currently has a conflict. Doctor Park Chun Hei of Sungkyunkwan University wishes your input on a paper on jussive forms in neurolinguistic analysis. Agustín Pérez Rodríguez sends congratulations on the reception of your latest monograph by the Federation Society of Linguistics."

"I'll deal with them tomorrow," Amanda said. "I'm sorry, Suben, but I don't have time to meet with you today." She felt guilty; he was assigned to her so she could mentor him, but her half-time hours cut into her time with him.

"I am aware," Suben said expressionlessly, hands clasped behind his back.

"How about this: why don't you come over this afternoon at the third hour, when Spock is down for his nap. We can discuss your latest work then, if it is convenient to you? I realize that the drive is hardly convenient, and might extend your working day, but I think we need more time together than we've had lately."

Suben's eyes widened slightly, and he tilted his head. "It is an honor to be invited to the House of Surak," he said. Not that he would have protested if he didn't like the idea, a student never would to his professor, but he would probably have been less positive. If this worked, perhaps they could do it regularly.

"Good!" Amanda said with a smile. "I will see you then." She deposited her PADD in her case, slung it over her shoulder, and left.

A twenty minute car ride later, she was at the school Spock attended. On Earth, it would be called a preschool or nursery school, being for children ages two to four, and dedicated mostly to activities conducive to learning fine motor control, developing sensory acuity, learning basics, and facilitating appropriate social interaction between children. Vulcans didn't make such sharp distinction between preschool and primary school, however.

"Mother!" Spock shouted as she entered, running to her with the freedom only allowed small children on Vulcan. Amanda treasured it as she picked him up, knowing he would learn differently in such a short time. She agreed with Sarek that if he was to look Vulcan, he should know how to act Vulcan; still, she did not look forward to it.

"Did you have a good day?" Amanda asked, picking him up and giving him a hug in the process.

"Yes!" Spock said. "I liked seeing pictures of le-matyas. I wasn't scared. I said my alphabet without help." Although he said the large words slowly, he did not stumble over them.

"Very good," Amanda said. If he was that enthusiastic, the other children couldn't have been giving him any problems. They'd had problems before; it was why Spock was now at this establishment and not one closer to their home. His former teachers had not seen the logic in protecting him from bullying. She turned to T'Pran, his teacher, who was waiting patiently.

"His progress remains within the eightieth percentile academically and sixty-seventh percentile physically," she said.

"Thank you," Amanda said. So, nothing noteworthy had happened. She set Spock down. "Go get your bag."

In the car, he chattered on about his day, and the passing houses, and anything that caught his fancy. He rarely lapsed into the babbles that had been his only verbal communication until recently. Amanda listened and encouraged him.

At the estate, they drove straight into the underground garage in deference to the heat of midday. Amanda unbuckled Spock and he ran ahead into the house, forgetting his bag, calling for I-Chaya. Amanda carried it for him, following behind at a more sedate pace.

T'Ton was waiting for her as she entered the main residence. "The quarterly accounts are in your office," she said, taking Amanda's case and Spock's bag.

Amanda unwrapped the scarf from her head, enjoying the feel of air on her neck. "Anything in particular I need to look into?" she asked. As lady of the House of Sarek, the family estate and businesses were her domain, as were a surprisingly large share of the clan's enterprises. But Amanda had no desire to be a businesswoman, and T'Ton had been capably managing the family interests for several decades, and so Amanda's rule was more ceremonial than practical.

"The zhamak'ta harvest is affected more severely than we had anticipated. The weavers may have to buy thread from another clan to meet our needs this year."

Amanda sighed. And in that case, there would be no surplus for sale, and thus no money to upgrade the equipment as planned, unless she decided to transfer money from another family business. "I'll look over the figures and discuss it with you tomorrow," she said. She unpinned her hair from its chignon and ran her fingers through it, willing herself to relax as she did so.

Sarek was content with his classwork at the Vulcan Science Academy. He taught computer science, particularly the integration of systems designed, built, and programmed by different species. Federation-wide standard coding languages and hardware specifications were much closer to reality than they had been when he first worked in the field, before joining the diplomatic service. However, proprietary systems and cultural idiosyncrasies were still prevalent throughout the Federation's computer systems, and both skill and innovation was required to bridge the resulting gaps. Participating in such work was intellectually stimulating; training the next generation up to the proper standards was rewarding; and returning to his first vocation was quite satisfying.

Advising the man who had replaced him as Vulcan's Ambassador to the Federation, however, was neither stimulating, nor rewarding, nor satisfying.

"Human logic is built around very different premises than Vulcan logic," Sarek said, "and is often masked by other factors. However, they are not as random as they seem on the surface; nor are they without reason." He purposefully did not calculate the odds that Sopol would listen this time, as opposed to their previous conversations.

"I am sure you would know better than any Vulcan what logic is to be found in Humans," Sopol said. "I have never seen evidence of it, and certainly not in their diplomatic staff. Please advise what methods are effective in making them conform to logical standards for the duration of the talks."

"If you mean Vulcan logic patterns, I have never found a method; in any case it would be illogical to try, as it would preclude honest negotiations on their part," Sarek said. He understood, in theory, the logic of Sopol's appointment; given Sarek's own marriage to a human woman, and the resulting concerns for his logic, it was only to be expected that the conservative faction would succeed in installing their own candidate in his place.

Still, there must surely be some candidate whose experience was both among humans and relatively current? Sopol belonged to Sarek's grandfather's generation, and was still of the mindset that Humans were primitive and dangerous and must be carefully molded by Vulcans if they were to survive in the larger galaxy; he also seemed to believe that the Federation was a passing fancy of the younger races that would soon collapse, leaving Vulcan in its rightful position of being the central diplomatic and scientific leader in this part of the galaxy.

Sarek cast around in his mind for some advice that the elderly man might actually follow. "I have found that studying underlying patterns of behavior and ultimate ends is more productive than focusing on stated wishes and goals. Also, do not neglect what Humans call 'small talk.' It may seem illogical, but its function is not the communication of information. Rather, the purpose is to foster a sense of emotional closeness through the establishment of a common frame of reference and mutual willingness to learn of the minutiae of daily life. Most Humans respond more positively when their preference for 'small talk' has been indulged prior to serious negotiation."

Sopol raised an eyebrow. "You would pander to their illogic?"

Sarek carefully did not react to the open disdain in his successor's voice. "It is logical to employ strategies which enhance the possibility of a successful outcome. Sometimes, when dealing with other species, this includes bowing temporarily to their cultural norms in small matters that do not impede the Vulcan way. You may, of course, find other methods to be effective." That Sopel's methods had, in the time since his appointment, proven far less effective than Sarek's own was carefully left unsaid.

"I do not believe that true communication can be created with such a chaotic species," Sopel said stiffly. "If they cannot learn to act logically, they should at least learn to communicate logically."

Sarek held his tongue and did not point out the ways in which Vulcan methods of communication were (at times) no more logical than human ones; Vulcan culture and tradition were old, predating Surak in a continuous line, and there were subjects and occasions when that showed. Being married to Amanda, Sarek knew this quite well, as she took glee in pointing such instances out. But it was not a datum that Sopel would accept and it would probably lessen his willingness to heed Sarek's advice. The rest of the conversation was brief, and no more productive than the first part had been.

Once Sopel had signed off, Sarek checked his messages one last time. There was nothing that should be dealt with before he left the office for the day. There was a missed call from Ambassador Oduyoye, with an urgent message to call her back, but it would better to let that one sit. His former diplomatic colleagues had formed the habit, once they had met Ambassador Sopel, of attempting to negotiate "under the table" with Sarek, despite his current position outside the diplomatic corps. Balancing his wish to be useful, his need to keep lines of communication open for his eventual return to that profession, and his duty to keep from undercutting his planet's current representative, was a challenge. He picked up his briefcase and walked out to the public transportation station on the Academy grounds.

As the tram wound through the city, Sarek achieved a light meditative state, the better to disperse the frustrations created by his conversation with Sopel before returning home to his family. The man was an annoyance, to be sure, but not worth interfering with Sarek's home life. By the time the tram reached his neighborhood on the outskirts of Shi'Kahr, Sarek was in a pleasant mood. It was good to be back on Vulcan, in the home he had grown up in and the academy where he had been trained. It was good for Spock to grow up here, so that he might understand his heritage. It was good for Amanda to be able to work with the Universal Translator team in person; it was quite an honor, and one awarded solely on merit, without regard for her status as a lady of the House of Surak. When Spock was older, Sarek would return to the diplomatic corps for short missions offworld; when Spock left for the Science Academy, Sarek would again be a full-time diplomat, and in all probability would be reinstated to his former position. Meanwhile, Sopel's lack of results would lead to his recall within the next 8.63 months unless something drastic changed, and his replacement would certainly be competent to deal with the realities of the current situation.

When he entered his home, Amanda and Spock were waiting for him. They were sitting on a couch in the entryway, reading a book; it was a Human classic, called "Where the Wild Things Are," that Spock had recently become fond of. The monsters appealed to his sense of adventure; reading it in English improved his language skills in his mother's tongue; it also exposed him to a classic of Terran children's literature. The boy smiled as he turned the pages, so intent that he did not hear his father's entrance. As he grew, Spock would need to learn to control his emotions as all Vulcans did.

But for now, Sarek could indulge in his fondness for the little ways in which Spock resembled his mother. Amanda looked up at him and smiled. She nudged Spock. "Your father's home, Spock-kam."

"Father!" Spock said, looking up quickly. He set the book aside, and Amanda stood with him in her arms.

Sarek walked over to the two of them. "How was your day, my son?" he asked, as Spock stretched out his hand to the side of his father's face. The child's telepathic abilities were not, of course, developed enough to facilitate true contact of thoughts; but he could and did give a gentle nudge which Sarek returned with an affectionate mental touch. It was telepathy that made Vulcan adherence to logic feasible; children needed affection and emotional support, and telepathy made that possible even when it was not physically or verbally expressed. Amanda could not provide telepathic support, of course; but she could and did provide the more tangible emotional support that Sarek could not. It balanced out.

The clumsy, indistinct touch of his son's mind retreated. "I learned about le-matyas today, Father," Spock said gravely. "I liked them." He was already trying to imitate adult demeanor at times, however imperfectly and transiently.

"That is good, Spock," Sarek said. "Le-matyas are an important component of the ecosystem of this region, but they are dangerous creatures. It is important to understand them so that we may coexist with a minimum of risk to sentient life."

"Teacher said sehlat's could fight them," Spock said. "I-Chaya could protect me."

"That is true," Sarek replied. "Defense against le-matyas is a primary reason for the domestication of sehlat's. However, it would be best if such a defense is never necessary." He looked over at Amanda, at the dimple in her cheek. After Spock's birth, several elder members of the clan had taken it upon themselves to tell Amanda, in great detail, all of the incidents of Sarek's childhood, in order, they said, that she might be prepared for whatever Spock might do. Amanda had been delighted. One of the stories had been of the time five-year-old Sarek had hidden in the back of one of the work hover-lifts and ridden out to the edge of their lands, so that he might walk out into the desert and see a le-matya for himself. Spock was probably too young for such antics. But he was a precocious child, and it was better to be safe than sorry.

"Yes, Father," Spock said. He wriggled, and his mother set him down to run off and play. He was old enough to know what he should not touch (and most of the relics found in this ancestral home had been placed safely out of his reach), and T'Ton would watch him in case temptation became too great.

Amanda smiled and reached out her hand, first two fingers extended. Sarek matched it, reveling in the telepathic caress that promised more, later. "You were frustrated, this afternoon," she said. "Anything in particular, or just general undergraduate stupidity?"

While most of Sarek's students were exceptional, there were one or two that tried his patience. Sarek wished that was all he had to deal with, illogical though such wishes were; students, after all, could learn. "Ambassador Sopel wished to speak with me." They walked to their bedroom so that Sarek could change out of his teaching robes. Their quarters, and Spock's, were in the family wing, isolated from the main part of the house where the House business was conducted.

Amanda grimaced. As always, Sarek appreciated the play of emotion over her face. Her eyes narrowed and her nose crinkled up to show her disgust. "My condolences," she said as they walked into the courtyard that marked the boundary of the private quarters. "I don't know where they dug up that old fossil, but it would have been better for all concerned if they'd let him stay in whatever museum case they dragged him out of."

Sarek wished he could lose his propriety enough to agree, and from the way Amanda tilted her head and the way her eyes sparkled, he judged that she knew it. Her hair gleamed in the sunlight—such a light color, so unusual for a Vulcan.

"Still, your day can't have been all bad," Amanda said as they passed inside, again. She sighed in relief at the cooler air; Sarek suppressed a shiver. "Anything else of note?"

"I am still not quite sure how Korat qualified for my class," Sarek said. "I must admit, however, that I found his latest assignment quite entertaining in the variety and complexity of his errors. We spent most of class today picking it apart and studying how and where and why he went wrong. It was an educational experience for all, and I am thinking of using it again next year in the syllabus."

"Poor man!" Amanda said. "I do hope he wasn't too embarrassed—and don't tell me Vulcans don't get embarrassed, Sarek, I know better. Still, if he's truly not suited to that field, better he and his family find out now rather than later."

"I agree," Sarek said. "His head of house has made an appointment to speak to me. I believe Korat's course of study may be changing next semester."

Amanda raised her eyes to the ceiling. She knew and understood Vulcan clan and house structure, and lived with it, keeping her complaints about individual freedom and self-determination mostly to herself and to Sarek when they were in private. He could usually win the argument by pointing out that without T'Pau's decision that he would be sent to the Vulcan embassy on Earth as technical support, and later that he would transfer to the diplomatic staff of the embassy, they would never have met.

"How is Suben's research proceeding?" Sarek asked, changing the subject.

"It's going well," Amanda said. "He's turning up some interesting connections; it should be a good thesis, when he gets it written. Solid and original. I hope you don't mind, but I've arranged for him to come over to the house once a week on one of my off afternoons, so that we have more time to talk."

"That is an efficient use of your time," Sarek said.

"Yes, it is," Amanda said with a frown.

"What is troubling you?" Sarek asked.

She shrugged. "More of the usual. Torval was on his high horse about variables in the program and the need for more precision. That's just his usual grumbling, it never goes anywhere, but when I signaled I had to leave he kept right on talking about it, and so did T'Kar. If I hadn't stepped in to end things, I would have been late to pick up Spock. It was rude of me to interrupt the conversation and say it directly, but it was ruder of them to keep me there when I needed to leave! It's always worst on the days it's my turn to go pick up Spock from school. Which is most days this term." She walked into their room and sat down on the bed, curling up in a fashion quite improper for a Vulcan lady. Sarek watched the play of her robe over the delightful curves he knew lived beneath.

"I cannot help the class schedule I have been assigned," Sarek said, shutting the door behind them. "I have the least seniority on the computer faculty." He walked over to the wardrobe, an heirloom of his family, stone and intricately carved. The abstract pattern harmonized surprisingly well with the one carved into the back of the rocking-chair that sat next to it, one of Amanda's family heirlooms shipped from Earth.

Amanda sighed. "I know. It's not your fault. And I do wish I had more time to spend working with the team in the afternoons; writing and testing by myself in the evenings isn't quite as productive as being there to bounce ideas off them when I want to. But them snubbing me isn't going to change my schedule. Isn't it illogical to waste time fretting about something you can't change?"

She sent him a mental pulse of affection and appreciation—what she called the mental equivalent of a 'wolf whistle'—as he stripped down to his underwear and hung the embroidered teaching robes up in their proper place. Amanda's use of the bond was clumsier than a Vulcan woman's would have been, he knew that from his brief first marriage, but he would not change Amanda for any woman in the galaxy. Underneath what she meant to project, he felt frustration and annoyance.

Sometimes, when she felt such things, she wanted him to comment; sometimes she just wanted to 'let off steam.' Even with the bond and several years of marriage, he was not always sure which tactic to follow. "Vulcan women traditionally do not work while their children are small, if they are the primary caregiver in their family, as nurturing a child is considered to be a full-time job of its own, and is highly valued. They believe that if you wish to work, you should engage a woman of the clan to care for Spock, instead of giving only half your attention to Spock and half to your work, thus preventing either of your obligations from receiving sufficient attention."

"I know that, Sarek," Amanda said, rolling her eyes.

Ah, Sarek thought as he carefully fastened on a robe suitable for a quiet family evening. He should have remained quiet and allowed her to vent. "What they don't seem to realize is that I'm not a Vulcan woman. A Vulcan woman has time to have two—sometimes more!—careers in her life. Having one of them be raising a child does not affect her ability to have a long and full career once the child is an adult. I am not going to live that long, and a proportionately longer period of my life will probably be taken up with mental and physical decline."

Sarek suppressed a tinge of regret. It was illogical; Amanda's probable age span relative to his was a fact that could not be changed. Still, he preferred not to think about it.

"Sorry," Amanda said. "But it's true! I don't have the time to do both sequentially. If I left my work until Spock's started in his own career, I'd

have lost the best years of my intellectual life. And believe me, working on this translation project needs all the flexibility and drive I can muster, and I'm at my peak right now. And I'm certainly not going to be leaving Spock to someone else to raise, even if I wanted to, which I don't. He's half-Human, he needs to experience at least a little bit of that side of his heritage, and here on Vulcan that means me. I've got you, I've got T'Ton and other members of the household and Subel, I can do this. They're just going to have to get used to it."

"You are doing an admirable job with both sets of responsibilities," Sarek said.

"Thank you, Sarek," Amanda said.

Sarek nodded. It was not a compliment, it was a fact. That Amanda chose to take it as one was not unexpected. He had offered, the first time this had come up, to use his ambassadorial skills and his rank as a member of the House of Surak to intercede for her with her colleagues; Amanda had refused, saying she'd handle it on her own. Sarek liked solving problems; it was one of the character traits that made him both a good programmer and a good diplomat. In marrying Amanda, he had had to learn to leave her to solve her problems herself, in her own way.

"My skills are certainly no match for Torval's in this area," Sarek said. "However, I would be willing to look at the pieces he considers problematic, if you wish." It was a very interesting problem, on both linguistic and programming ends. And while he couldn't solve her interpersonal problems, perhaps he could contribute to the technical ones.

"Thanks," Amanda said. "But not tonight, okay? I don't want to go over it, I had the glimmer of an idea earlier and I'm letting it percolate in my hindbrain, right now. Don't want to scare it away by trying to pin it down."

"Very well," Sarek said. He did not understand how his wife's brain worked; her intuition was not a quantifiable subject. However, her methodology did undeniably produce results. He sat down in the rocking chair, where she had soothed an infant Spock many times, and looked at her, savoring the picture of her spread out on the coverlet, in the robes of a Vulcan matron, but with her light hair loose and free. Amanda was staring up at the ceiling, at the fresco painted there in a previous era given to greater ornament than the present. It was a traditional motif of T'Kay the trickster attempting to seduce the chieftan's son. When she first saw it, Amanda had laughed to see it above the bed in the master chambers of the House of Surak, and had several choice words to say about the symbolism. Sarek had agreed with her, but felt compelled to argue on the side of heritage and tradition, nonetheless. And it was a beautiful work of art. Though not as beautiful as Amanda, nor as intellectually stimulating.

"I know what you're thinking," Amanda said, amused. She raised herself up on one elbow, facing him. "Later."

"What do you suggest we do in the meantime?" Sarek said.

Amanda hopped gracefully off the bed, and extended her hands to him. "Come on," she said.

Sarek rose and took them, and Amanda began to hum a familiar tune, one she referred to as "their song." It was a waltz, familiar to him from many diplomatic receptions, though he did not know its name. It had no words that he knew of, but he hummed it with her, and took her in his arms as they began to dance around the room.

They sang the song twice, dancing, and when they finally stopped Amanda swept into an elaborate curtsy. "Thank you for the dance, sir."

"You are welcome," Sarek said. There was a trick to keeping his wife happy and content that he'd learned through trial and error, and in this instance, it was no hardship. No hardship at all.

"Come on," she said, linking arms with him. "Supper will be ready soon, and I think we're having balkra with krei'la. And we should see what Spock is up to—I'm sure he'd love to spend some time with you this evening, perhaps with that picture book of animals he loves so much."

"That would be a logical reinforcement of his studies," Sarek said.

Too soon they reached the door that led to the courtyard that connected them to the main house. Sarek dropped Amanda's arm and studied himself in the mirror briefly. Amanda did the same. He opened the door and they rejoined the rest of the household, walking a decorous distance apart, the very picture of a proper Vulcan couple.

But Amanda still had a smile on her face.

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