

## Care

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by [jamaharon](#)

### Summary

Some people say, "I love you."

Spock says, "You need to eat."

On Tarsus IV, they separated human beings into categories. Those rated Level 1 were the elderly and infirm, the young and helpless — the expendable. Those rated Level 5 were the fittest, the most important — they weren't just spared; they were given extra rations even as supplies dwindled and citizens everywhere tightened their belts.

Jim was Level 5. He survived because he was fit and strong and healthy, because he had skills deemed worthy of survival by the governor. The reading Spock's done on human trauma suggests Jim should prize his fitness above all else — should perhaps develop a near-obsession with physical exercise, with endurance, with practical skills — should feel a pathological need to be present at every meal, to monitor his weight and his cholesterol, to make his check-ups with Bones a calendar event.

But paradoxically — illogically — Jim does none of the above.

"You must eat, Captain," says Spock.

Jim keeps his eyes on his padd. He's been working nonstop even since his bridge shift ended. Not unusual; not healthy, either. Spock gives it a moment, then approaches, soft-shoed, hands folded behind his back, chin angled down so he can study Jim's face as he circles him.

"Replicator," he says softly, "one serving of sa'lat with honey bread."

Jim's eyes flicker at that, and the replicator dings, and the scent of glazed fish and honey fill the office suite. Spock collects the plate and sets it on the desk, close enough to Jim's padd that the back of his hand brushes the plate's edge when he tries to type.

Jim pretends not to see it. He keeps working, doesn't even glance at the plate as Spock moves away. But it's there now — here for him if he can stomach it, easy to recycle if he can't.

And in the meantime, Spock has his own work to attend to. He folds himself onto Jim's sleep couch, his legs awkwardly positioned to keep his boots off the bedspread. He props his padd up on his knee, scrolls through the reports of the day, lets his mind unspool into the web of information before him. Distantly he hears a sigh, a clink of silverware against ceramic, a soft whisper of tearing dough.

"Thank you, Spock," Jim murmurs.

Spock just nods.

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