Variable Definitions

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Summary

Five times Spock obscured the truth, and one time he didn't.

Notes

Written for igrockspock in the 2019 Chocolate Box exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

1.

2248.242

Commander Pike smiles as Spock enters his office. Spock averts his gaze, still a little uncomfortable with humans' obvious displays of emotion. At Pike's prompting, he takes a seat in front of the desk and forces himself to meet his eyes.

"So, Spock," Pike begins, then pauses, glancing over at his computer. "I'm sorry, I'm not certain how to pronounce your family name."

Spock tells him, the syllables heavy on his tongue. "It is almost unpronounceable by humans," he adds, as Pike's eyes widen. "The administrators have decided that it would be easier if I were to go by my given name."

"Yes," Pike says slowly. "I can see that." His gaze strays back to the computer. "I must say, your record is impressive. What inspired you to apply to Starfleet?"

Memories rush through Spock's mind. The taunts of his peers, his father's disappointment, the minister's casual cruelty. *You have achieved so much, despite your disadvantage.*

"It seemed a fitting use of my skills," he replies, and waits for Pike to move on.

2.

2251.215

The ceremony passes quickly. Spock does not bother looking out into the crowd as he receives his commendation, knowing that there is no one out there for him. He tells himself it does not matter, that the graduation and new rank on his sleeve is more than enough for him.

Captain Pike finds him afterwards. Spock is unsurprised; Pike has already made clear his wish for Spock to join him on the *Olympia*.

"Congratulations," Pike tells him.

"Thank you," Spock replies. The words feel strange in his mouth, but he knows that if he is going to work with humans, he shall have to meet them halfway.

Pike smiles, but it fades as he glances around. "Were your family not able to make it?"

"No," Spock replies, and Pike nods, looking sympathetic.

"I suppose it is a long journey. And I'm sure they must be busy."

"Yes," Spock agrees. "My father is a very busy man." That has nothing to do with why he did not attend, of course, but Spock figures the captain doesn't need to know everything.

3.

2252.84

Spock's hands are slick, red, human blood seeping between his fingers and dripping onto the ground below. He presses harder against his captain's side, trying to slow the bleeding, dimly aware of Number One's shouted orders as a pitched phaser battle takes place over their heads.

"Not a great choice for your first landing party."

Spock glances up to see Pike is watching him, his face pale. "Captain," he says. "You should not speak. Your wound-"

"It's just a scratch," Pike cuts in. "I've had worse."

"That is not reassuring, sir," Spock tells him, and Pike smiles, only for it to quickly turn into a grimace. Something twists in Spock's chest at the sight, and he looks away, focusing back on Pike's wound. If he can just find some way to stop the bleeding...

Pike's hand moves, gripping Spock's arm with surprising strength. "Hey," he says. "Everything's going to be fine."

Arguments spring instantly to Spock's mind – they are more than two kilometres from the beam out point, caught in the middle of a firefight, the captain himself is gravely injured, the chances of them all making it out of here alive and well are less than one in two hundred and fifty – but he bites them back. Among humans, even false hope is preferable to no hope at all.

Pike taught him that.

"I am certain the *Olympia* will locate us soon," he says instead, and Pike's hand squeezes his arm before falling away.

4.

2257.304

"So," Pike begins as Spock slips into his habitual seat in front of Pike's desk. "I'm sure you've heard that the *Enterprise* is nearing completion."

Spock nods. "Reports indicate a completion date of three point four months from now."

"Exactly," Pike replies. "And on that note, there's something I wanted to discuss with you." He laces his fingers together on the desk and adds, "With Number One off captaining the *Olympia*, I'm going to need a new first officer."

"Indeed," Spock agrees.

"I'd like it to be you."

Spock finds himself rendered briefly speechless. He was aware he was in the running for the position, but he assumed Pike would pick someone with more experience, such as Commander Tyler. "I... would be honoured."

Pike smiles. "That's what I like to hear." He leans back in his chair and adds, "I've put in a request for your promotion, as well. Commander."

That news is less unexpected, Pike having mentioned the idea a few times before. "I will endeavour to live up to it. Sir."

"I'd expect nothing less." Pike's gaze is fond, warming Spock from the inside. He keeps Spock's gaze for a moment longer, then rises and crosses to the synthesiser. "I'd say this calls for a drink. Altair water?"

Spock nods, and Pike returns with two glasses, setting one in front of Spock. Spock takes a sip, then blurts, "If I may ask, sir, why did you choose me?"

Pike settles into his seat, answering easily, "I needed someone smart, someone I could trust, and someone who isn't afraid to question my orders when it counts. All qualities you possess, and in spades." He pauses, then adds more softly, "I also know that the relationship between captain and first officer can make or break a ship, and I need someone I can rely on absolutely, without question. In the end, it was an easy decision."

For the second time in the conversation, Spock is rendered speechless. Pike smiles, taking a sip of his drink. "Are you surprised?"

"Surprise is a human emotion," Spock responds automatically, and Pike looks amused.

"Of course," he says. "My mistake."

5.

2258.39

Spock glances up from his work as his office door slides open. "Captain Pike," he greets. "Is there an issue with the *Enterprise*?"

Pike shakes his head. "Nothing like that." He hesitates, then adds, "I was hoping we could discuss today's *Kobayashi Maru* test."

Spock tenses, looking away. "There is nothing to discuss. The situation was... unfortunate, but I have located and removed the rogue code and taken steps to prevent anything similar from happening again."

"And Kirk?"

The name causes a flash of annoyance, but it is easily suppressed. "The academy's position on the matter is clear."

Pike sighs. "You're going to throw the book at him."

"That would not be proper disciplinary procedure," Spock replies, though he suspects Pike is not speaking literally.

Pike seems to ignore the comment, resting a hand on the desk and leaning forwards. "Look," he says. "I know Kirk. He can be a handful at times, but he's a good kid. A conviction for cheating could destroy his entire career."

Something unpleasant curls in Spock's stomach at his tone. He has heard Pike mention Jim Kirk once or twice before, but it seems the captain's affection for the cadet is greater than he realised. "I regret that my actions will cause you pain, Captain, but I must follow procedure."

"And this isn't some kind of payback for beating your unbeatable test?"

Spock barely keeps from flinching. His mind flashes back to the test, Kirk's look of utter arrogance as his code activated, offering him an easy victory. One that would not, in the normal course of things, have been possible. *Should* not have been possible.

"That would not be logical," he says.

"No," Pike replies, and Spock can feel the weight of his gaze. "I suppose it wouldn't be."

+1.

2258.43

Pike is awake when Spock visits, a brief visit carved out in the time between his duties to his people and those to Starfleet. Pike is sitting up in bed, studying a PADD, and for a second Spock can almost delude himself into believing everything is normal, that this is just another time visiting his captain in sickbay after a less-than-ideal landing party. Then Pike looks up, his expression cycling from relief to pain to sympathy, and reality comes crashing in again.

"Captain," Spock greets, moving forwards until he is at Pike's bedside. "I wished to ascertain your current condition."

Pike shrugs, his fingers tightening on the PADD. "They say my prognosis is good. With intensive physical therapy, I should even be able to walk again. Eventually."

"I am certain you will be able to do anything you put your mind to," Spock tells him. "Sir."

Pike smiles briefly. "Thank you, Spock. I appreciate that." He is silent for a few moments, studying Spock, before asking quietly, "What about you? How are you coping with... everything?"

The question, asked with such obvious concern, is like a physical blow, and Spock swallows, gaze straying to the walls as he searches for an answer. The loss of his planet and his people is a constant ache, in his chest, in his mind, and there are times when it seems to take a great deal of energy merely to continue breathing.

He is exhausted, body and mind, and the effort to think of a reassuring evasion proves too great. "I... am not, Captain."

"Yeah," Pike says softly. "Me neither." He lays a hand on Spock's arm, and Spock finds himself leaning into the touch, the offer of comfort.

It isn't much, but for that moment, it's enough.

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