

Here I Sit Like a Beginner

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Summary

After decades in a transporter, they bring him to Spock

Scotty glanced up when a young man glided into the room. And while he had known few Romulans, he knew Vulcans well enough to see the difference. It was astonishing what nearly eight decades could do, whether turning the faces of enemies to friends, or transforming a dusty refugee camp into a towering New Vulcan city.

The Romulan set a tray down on the table. "The Ambassador sends his apologies for the delay. He will join you shortly, but suggested you might enjoy tea?"

"Aye, thank yeh," Scott said, and the lad stepped aside politely, but remained. It wasn't quite his granny's tea service, but it wasn't quite a Vulcan one either. Either way, he knew his way around a cuppa well enough. He'd had tea on dozens—maybe hundreds—of planets, and somehow, although the flavors and rituals were different, it always felt like coming home. His breath disturbed the faint steam, and he closed his eyes, the smell alone enough to pierce him straight through. He knew the blend; Nyota's favorite.

He knew what this was. And if the testing hurt, it was understandable. That Spock *agreed*, though ... He sipped the tea and tried not to shiver; he'd have to have a word with them about the actual temperature of human climate comfort. Unless it was part of the test too.

The door opened, and he didn't bother to turn. He didn't know if it was the step, the scent, the weight of presence. But if they were going to play these games then—

"Ambassador Spock," he said, without moving.

"Admiral," Spock replied. His voice was lower, rougher. Aged. Scotty turned then, and didn't hide the emotions he couldn't name. A too-large swallow of tea returned his control.

"A posthumous rank," Scotty complained, rolling his eyes with the expected theatrics.

"Nevertheless," Spock said.

"Would you care for some of Nyota's favorite tea?" he asked pointedly, going very intentionally for the barb that Spock's young companion, and anyone else watching, wouldn't hear.

Spock did, and his face twitched very slightly, absorbing the blow, the chastisement, and the message: *I know what this is*.

"Nyota told me, near the end, that she believed you were still alive," Spock said. "I humored her gently. She would have been delighted to tell me 'I told you so.'"

Scotty had to put the tea down, his hands trembling, because he'd somehow forgotten that Spock could be *brutal*.

"I know why they brought me tae you. Just *do it*, Mr. Spock," he snapped. Across the room, the young Romulan, who had not been following the undercurrents, blinked in surprise at what must have seemed like an abrupt change in tone.

Spock arched a brow. "If you are not Scott, you are a very convincing copy. The Federation suspects that you are. If so, I will see you exposed for this desecration," Spock said, fury cracking under his mild tone. Then his affect shifted, in grief and hope. "If you are him, however ... I

would not have you live under their suspicion. Montgomery Scott's mind possessed telepathic anchors I placed there, so Nyota and I could stand with him when the storms came." He lifted his hand toward Scotty's face. "Will you consent?"

"Aye, sir," Scotty said softly. "Of course."

He shivered when Spock touched him, and it wasn't the chill. He couldn't say how much time passed, but was weeping when he opened his eyes. He reached for his tea, which had gone cold, and then dared look up at Spock, who looked stricken.

"How long did I miss her by?" Scotty asked softly, the cold tea helping bring his voice under control.

"Six months," Spock managed. "Nyota died six months ago."

His vision seemed to short out, possibly a symptom of so long in the transporter, and he clenched the teacup in his hand until Spock took it from him. "This was her set. Please do not break it."

"I grieve with thee, Mr. Spock," he whispered.

"And I with thee," Spock said, nearly in his ear. Then the venerable Vulcan straightened. "Starfleet has implied they want you back. But if you are amiable, Mr. Scott—we still have much work to do."

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