

Welcome to Starfleet

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Summary

The first thing Saavik does after arriving at Starfleet Academy is visit her mentor.

Notes

Written for Lieutenant Saavik in the 2017 Star Trek Friendshipfest exchange. Originally posted on AO3.

Saavik pulls her cloak more firmly around her as she leaves the shuttle port. Before she left Vulcan for the academy, she made sure to learn everything she could about Earth, spending weeks reading through texts and peppering the Lady Amanda with question after question, wanting to know as much as possible about the planet that would be her home for the next four years. She knows, for example, that the mean annual temperature of San Francisco is fifteen degrees Celsius, but that doesn't keep the cold from shocking her, the wind biting into her nose and fingers and stealing her breath. Still, she reminds herself, she is Vulcan. She will endure.

The journey to the academy is uneventful, as is the process of registering and being given a room. An older cadet accompanies her to her building, expressing surprise at her lack of baggage. She does not bother to reply – she has brought everything she needs, what use would extra luggage be?

All Vulcan cadets are given single rooms by regulation, and she settles in quickly, unpacking her few possessions before sitting down in front of the computer. Outside her window it has begun to rain, and she stares at it for a moment, watching water flow over the surface of the glass. Nothing like that ever happened on Vulcan.

The thoughts of Vulcan lead to thoughts of Spock. She deliberately avoided telling her mentor of her plans to join the academy, but surely he must know by now.

Sure enough, when she looks through her messages there is one from him, congratulating her for gaining admittance to the academy and inviting her to visit his apartment. The address is at the bottom. She stares at it for a moment, feeling an odd pang in her chest, before swiftly typing out a response.

* * *

That evening, after looking up directions, she sets out. It is no longer raining, but the air is still unpleasantly cool. Fortunately Spock's home is not far, a glass-walled apartment building on a street overlooking the ocean.

She has made the decision to wear one of the cadet uniforms the academy provided her with, and she checks her appearance in the mirrored wall of the elevator before stepping out and heading for the door she knows must lead to Spock's apartment.

The door slides open almost as soon as she presses the chime, and there he is. "Saavik-kam," he greets, his eyes warm. "Welcome to Earth."

She clasps her hands behind her back and nods. "Spock."

He steps aside and she enters the apartment, the welcoming heat enveloping her like a blanket. She looks around curiously, wanting to know everything about the place her mentor calls home. The walls contain an odd assortment of objects – models of old Earth sea ships, antique firearms, numerous pictures and photographs. On one wall is a fireplace, an odd choice in a building with a state-of-the-art heating system. It is all very un-Vulcan, a sign of Spock's human bondmate, no doubt. She has only met Admiral Kirk once before, but from what she can recall he is a particularly *human* human.

"Would you like some tea?" Spock asks.

She nods, and he disappears through a door near the fireplace. She hesitates a moment, then follows.

As she suspected, it proves to be the kitchen. There is a table in the centre, and Spock gestures to her to sit down as he pulls two cups from a cupboard and begins making their tea.

"How are Sarek and Amanda?" he asks.

"They are well," Saavik replies in Vulcan. "Although Sarek does not approve of my choice to join Starfleet."

"That is not surprising," Spock tells her in the same language. "He did not approve of mine, either." He comes over to the table and hands her a cup before sitting down opposite. "I admit to some curiosity as to why you did not inform me of your application."

Saavik takes a sip of her tea, letting the flavours wash over her tongue. "You would have wanted to help," she says simply.

"And you wished to do it by yourself," Spock surmises.

Saavik's hands tighten around her cup. "I wished to gain entry on my own merits, and not because my guardian happens to be the revered Captain Spock." She regrets the outburst almost instantly, and takes another drink of her tea.

"Admirable," Spock tells her, "if unnecessary. You may be my ward, but I would not have recommended you for a place if you had not earned it. Which you did, and against great odds." He hesitates briefly, then adds, "I am... proud of you, Saavik-kam."

Saavik doesn't know what to say to that. She ducks her head and concentrates intently on her tea, and after a moment he moves on. "Have you decided what track you will be taking?"

Saavik nods. In truth, she decided months ago, before she even knew whether she would be accepted. "I have selected the command track. I considered the science track, but-

"But you are not me, and should not be expected to make the same choices," Spock interrupts. "You do not have to explain yourself to me. If you are content with your decision, that is all that matters."

She stares at him as he takes a drink of his tea. Spock has always been able to tell with unerring accuracy what she is thinking. If it were anyone else she would wonder if he were reading her thoughts, but she trusts Spock more than anyone in the universe and she knows that he would never take advantage like that. She supposes it is merely that he knows her so well.

"If I may ask," Spock begins, setting his cup down, "What made you decide to pursue a career in Starfleet specifically?"

It is a question she has contemplated many times. Sarek blamed her choice on Spock's influence, but that isn't the reason, or not completely. She didn't join Starfleet because Spock is there, but she did have his words echoing in her mind when she made the decision to apply.

It was years ago now, just after she came to Vulcan. She was still a child then, and Spock and Sarek argued fiercely over whether to have her betrothed. Saavik did not especially care either way, but Spock was adamant that she be allowed to choose her own bondmate. She does not know the details, but she gathered that there had been some issue with his own betrothal, and he did not wish the same thing to happen to her. In the end he won, and Saavik was left alone.

She asked him afterwards if he joined Starfleet because he did not agree with the culture on Vulcan. *No*, he told her. *I joined because I wished to explore the universe, to find my place in it.*

Did you find your place? she asked, and his expression softened.

Yes, Saavik-kam. I did.

"I wanted to see the universe," she says eventually. It is the truth, if not all of it.

He gives her the same look he did back then, soft and knowing. "To go where no one has gone before."

She nods. "Yes."

"A worthy goal. And one which I have no doubt that you will achieve, should you put your mind to it." He pauses, then adds, "And if you should ever require assistance-"

"I know," she cuts him off. "I shall ask."

Spock nods, taking another sip of his tea. "You are not alone, Saavik. Remember that."

On Hellguard, she recalls, such an idea would have been unfathomable. She is grateful that it no longer seems that way.

"I know," she says quietly. "I will."

She doesn't offer thanks, but from the way he lays a hand on her shoulder as he rises to refill their cups, she thinks he hears it anyway.

