

## Reflected

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## Reflected

by [SLWalker](#)

### Summary

(2246) - Jay, still on Deneva and not quite done chewing on his regrets, gets an unexpected call from his son.

### Notes

Last story of this 'era'.

The sunlight reflected off of the water so brightly that he had to keep from looking at it directly; high summer, on the ocean, and the light seemed to come from all directions. From the sky, off of the water, off of the polished decking of the ship. Nice, but only in short amounts. He liked the dusk and twilight better -- colors, planet-rise, and easier on the skin and eyes.

The Denevan oceans were deeper and wider than Earth's; he'd liked the long stretches of nothingness back when he'd first worked on them, and still found a good deal of peace there now. He did miss Earth sometimes -- there was no way to be tied to a planet through evolution, right to an elemental level without missing it on some unspoken level -- but for now, this was the best place for him.

Jay McMillan had a lot of good reasons for staying here, but the biggest one had a name.

Despite that regret, though, it was a decent life. He worked hard, and had a good flat he only saw once every few months. There was also a pretty lass, his age, who he hooked up with when he came into port; a casual relationship, just dating. She was a widow, and they both enjoyed going out and having a meal in unassuming company. He stayed in contact with Winslow, too, getting updates on his former business.

And the occasional update about his son.

He wasn't sure how he felt when he found out that Montgomery had been court-martialed by Starfleet; according to what little he'd heard, it wasn't a cut and dried affair. On one hand, he wanted to be disappointed -- after all that boy had to fight to get into Starfleet and out of the range of influence his family levied on him, it seemed to be an entirely foolish thing to get into trouble like that and risk it all.

But on the other hand, it wasn't a matter of Montgomery doing something immoral, unethical or otherwise. Even with just the barest of details that he had, Jay knew that the lad had done what he had because he was still fighting back against the myriad forces that had done their level best to reduce him to a ghost. And when it was all over, and the conviction came, word was that he had no regret for the choices he'd made, even though those choices were ones that flew in the face of the rules and expectations of others.

And on that hand, Jay couldn't help but be a bit fiercely proud of his son.

That had been a few years ago now; last update was that the lad was still in Starfleet and hadn't gotten into any further trouble.

It was rare when a day passed that Jay didn't think of him in some way, even just a passing thought about where he was and how he was doing. Therefore, it didn't seem all that much like a coincidence when Jay had been thinking about him and the call came on the heels of those thoughts.

"Hey, Jay! Got a call!" The first mate Jess called, from the deckhouse forty feet above him. "Starfleet apparently wants to talk to ya!"

He knew in an instant who it was; likewise didn't know why or what he would say. An anxious thought occurred that the boy might be calling to ask some very difficult questions; nervous as that thought made Jay, however, he didn't waste any time going inside and climbing the stairs

to the deckhouse. If that was the case, he'd find a way to give the answers. If it wasn't-- well, it'd still be a good thing to at least set eyes on the child he'd been half responsible for.

Jess was looking at him oddly when he got there, a kind of measuring look. Jay scowled it off, then headed over to the comm station.

He knew immediately that Montgomery wasn't going to be asking any of those questions; he looked tired, but like he was in good spirits. Jay imagined that if the topic ever came up, that would not be the expression that would go with it. But Jay was instantly struck with just how much the lad had grown up, even since his Basic Training graduation photo. Still boyish, but he was strong-jawed and strong-shouldered, and Jay knew where both those features came from. He saw them every day in the mirror.

"Sir," the lad said, not quite comfortably but not really anxiously, either. *"If I'm interruptin' anything important...?"*

"Ye're not," Jay said, trying hard to keep from looking too much of anything. Like surprised. Or happy. Or regretful. "How've ye been?"

*"Well enough."* There was a pause, a bit awkward, then he said, *"Since I'm in orbit, I thought I'd call."*

"Aye?" Jay asked, trying to sound casual. "One o' the Horizon ships?"

*"Aye, the Horizon Sun. Engineering adviser."* Montgomery grinned, a little sardonically. *"Which is a nice way o' sayin' that I'm on call and doin' everything that no one else wants to."*

Jay had to chuckle at that. It was short lived, but it put a pause in his own anxiety for a moment before he said, "Heard from Winslow that ye got yerself into some trouble. I'm guessin' ye'd rather be where ye are, than where ye coulda ended up."

"Aye." The lad shrugged, mostly one-shouldered, with a half-smile. *"It's honest work, and I'll eventually get where I was aimin' for."*

Jay didn't doubt that. He tried to cast about for something to say, but drew a blank. What do you say, to the child you're not able to acknowledge? How do you stop yourself from staring in wonder at someone you had a part in creating, and not just want to talk about that pride? That regret? The hope, the sorrow? He cleared his throat, forcing those thoughts down. "I'm sure ye will," he said, after a moment.

*"Anyway, though..."* There was a long pause while the boy studied the desktop in front of him, with the thoughtful look Jay remembered from too long ago. Then he looked back up with the directness that was new, at least to Jay -- a certainty, a confidence, that made Jay's heart ache. *"I wanted to thank you. Up an' down as my career's been so far, it's still my own."*

There were no words for what Jay felt; for all that he felt in that moment. That any statement of gratitude could ever cause such warmth and pain, all at once. He knew that there would be little more said, that this conversation was coming to a close. He wondered if there was ever a way to express how he felt right then, and knew of only one. There was no way to keep it out of his voice, and maybe, in a way, that was all right.

"I'm proud of ye," Jay said, past the tightness in his chest and throat; past the sting in his eyes that he prayed would hold off until this was over.

There was an eternal moment where some of his own sorrow and warmth was echoed back to him, unknowing and uneasy though it was. And Jay knew he had hit some nerve, still raw, that needed more time to heal. But after a moment of looking down, in some silent internal war, his son looked back up and tipped his chin up. *"I have to get back to work. But--"* and he nodded there, a subtle bow, *"--thanks again. And take care."*

"Take care," Jay managed to say, with a half-smile. "I'm glad ye called."

*"I am too."* And with a sort of reassuring last glance, the lad ended the call.

It was a long time, he didn't know how long, before Jay was able to pull his face out of his hands and get back to work. Even longer before he was able to get back to living his life, and not dwelling so much on his mistakes. Somehow, the knowledge that his mistakes and Cait's hadn't managed to destroy what they'd created, though, made it just a little bit easier.

And despite it all, he believed that last glance which said, *"It's all right."*

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