

# Expectations

By: Reyka Sivao

“They will never accept you as you are,” Spock had told him. “You will have to make your choice: change yourself to fit their expectations, or else resign yourself to living outside of their acceptance.”

Sarda had spent several long nights meditating on those words, trying to make the choice that Spock had set before him.

“I can attempt to restore your place with the Science Academy,” Spock had gone on. “I...or my father...may have enough influence that they will allow you a second chance in a more conventional field.”

Sarda had been silent at that, imagining himself welcomed back at the institution that had rejected him despite the talent they had acknowledged in him.

“And the other choice?” he had asked, finally.

The quality of Spock’s eyes had changed slightly, almost imperceptibly.

“The other choice,” he had said, “is that I can offer to contact with a teacher who is similarly on the outside of Vulcan’s grace. He could teach you to hone the talents you

have expressed, as well as much about life on the edges of Vulcan society.”

The choice should have been a simple one. The easy, obvious answer was to go back to the life he had always known, to rebuild the future that had been torn away from him.

“I...will require time to consider the options.”

Spock had only nodded slightly. “I will contact you again in three days’ time. Will that be sufficient?”

And so Sarda had considered his options carefully, slowly going over every relevant factor through the long hours of the ship’s ‘night’.

It still should have been a simple choice. The Vulcan Science Academy was the unofficial arbitrator of everything it meant to be Vulcan. To be rejected by them in the manner that he had been was very nearly the equivalent of being declared outcast by his own family—and they had not, indeed, come to his defense.

If Spock could convince them to accept him again, to give him a second chance, then he had every logical reason to accept the offer.

And yet, he could not.

Eyes closed, Sarda attempted to follow that thread of refusal down to the root, past the part of him that desired the safety of acceptance, past the part of him that desired vindication, past the part of him that wanted nothing more

or less than the life he'd always known, down to the part of him that stood its ground and refused to become a part of what he'd left behind again.

What he found there surprised him.

There was pride there, that he already knew—a pride that refused to admit he was wrong, because he had not been wrong. There was even a little fear—that he had guessed, fear of leaving the new life he had almost come to understand.

But there was something else there too, something unfamiliar. Something he had never thought to find in himself, not as quiet and unfrontational as he had always considered himself.

He was tempted to call it *defiance*.

Sarda took a measured breath and tried again.

That was not enough. While he could be convinced to consider that a *motivation*, it could never be a *reason*. If he was going to choose the second option, he needed a reason.

He quietly ignored the backwardness of his logic and kept on.

When had this started?

The seeds had been there for a long time, he now realized. The foundation had been laid even before he joined Star Fleet—had to have been, or else he never would have defied the wishes of the people around him to seek his fate elsewhere. They had been there through the Academy,

when he had taken the classes and chosen the projects that had led to his discovery of his own aptitude for weapons design.

He had blamed Piper for what he had become, he now realized, despite the fact that she had not created the circumstances that had led to his dismissal. She had only revealed them.

It had not been her prerogative, even she admitted that now. She had come tearing through his life like a firestorm, burning away the shields he had so carefully hidden himself behind and exposing everything he had become without his consent, simply because she could.

He ought to blame her for that. And yet, again, he could not.

Why could he not?

He tried to answer that question for himself, letting chains of association lead him toward new ways of thinking.

One image led to another, and then to an unexpectedly familiar pattern: in a moment of strangely sideways clarity, he saw her as T'Kay.

T'Kay was the trickster: the ancient goddess dancing through Vulcan myth, insatiably curious and often too impulsive for anyone's good, jumping in wherever she wanted with little thought to the consequences—but often enough jumping out again, little the worse for wear. Those who traveled with her were often burned, but also tended to come away with the gifts that only a trickster could give.

And that, he realized slowly, was why he could not go back.

He had been given a gift—and however unfortunate the terms of its giving, however much it should not have been given, it was still *there*, and it was something precious.

The door buzzer called softly, and Sarda unfolded his legs and rose to meet it.

Spock was there on the other side of the door, hands folded behind his back, nodding a greeting that Sarda returned.

“I hope I have not disturbed you.”

“You have not.” Sarda stood aside to allow Spock into the small quarters.

The door slid shut behind him, and Spock turned to face him again.

“Have you made your decision?”

Sarda was quiet for a long moment.

“I have.”

Spock said nothing, waiting for him to continue.

Sarda took a slightly deeper breath.

“I will remain on the outside. I will become a student, if the teacher you spoke of is willing.”

Spock nodded once.

“It is not an easy path to take,” he said. “Are you certain?”

Sarda looked down. “It is the only choice I can make.”

“May I ask why?”

Sarda was silent for much longer than a full human would have found comfortable.

“Truth.”

Spock raised an eyebrow, and Sarda elaborated.

“I always believed that the Science Academy sought after truth. But I have been shown that their definition of acceptable truth is...limited. If I were to go back, I would have to give up much that I have learned. My very presence there would be dishonesty. I cannot do that.”

Spock nodded, apparently satisfied.

“It is not an easy path,” he said again, “but I think you may find it worthwhile. There are many things that those caught within the boundaries of tradition cannot see, and you may find that some of those are worth the cost of living on the outside.”

Sarda inclined his head. He ought to be concerned about the backlash of his choice, but the only image behind his eyes was that of the whirlwind who had shaken out of his complacency.

He glanced towards the door, into the future he had finally chosen.

“I believe,” he said quietly, “that it has already been worth the cost.”