

Remnants of Forever

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by Kara Hughes

*For all Star Trek fans,
May all our Treks be 'Enterprising'
And may we always 'boldly go' -
Wherever the future takes us.*

Chapter 1

McCoy stared down at the unconscious body of Captain James T. Kirk. Despite all the doctor's skill, five minutes beforehand the theta brain wave had ceased. Kirk's breathing too was becoming deeper as if it took a great deal of effort to take a breath.

"Your effort is wasted, Doctor," Spock was standing in the doorway.

McCoy turned and snapped, "Your precious logic, Spock?"

"No Doctor. Reason. You have done everything in your power to save the Captain and he is still dying." Spock paused, "therefore your effort is wasted."

"When you've finished quoting your precious 'Reason' to me Spock, perhaps you'd care to cast your mind back to the oath I took upon becoming a doctor!"

"I am aware of that," Spock replied, "but despite my demeanour, Doctor, this is not easy for me, nor do I revel in telling you of what you must already be aware. Since we are dealing in facts, the facts are that James Kirk is dying."

"If that's all you came to say Spock, you can leave me alone to try and save him." McCoy's tone was caustic.

Spock replied, "One final hope is the Vulcan Science Academy. I know that their techniques of late have improved tremendously, they have even managed to regenerate brain cells and nerve axons - perhaps -" he left

the words unspoken but McCoy grasped the fleeting hope.

“Yes, Spock. Yes! Will you order a course change to Vulcan?”

“Anticipating your answer in the affirmative, I have already done so, Doctor.” Spock replied.

Half a day later Kirk lay silent in a single room, his condition had deteriorated further, M’Benga looked up at the overhead monitor and shook his head, only the delta wave was flickering now.

“Leonard,” he said softly, “there’s nothing anyone can do, he’s dying.”

McCoy stared at his Captain and friend of more than ten years and uttered one word, “When?”

“One, maybe two days it’s hard to say,” M’Benga replied, “once we’ve hooked him up to a parental fluid system his condition should stabilise – but I give him a week at most.”

Suddenly McCoy collapsed, Spock caught and held him as easily as one supports a child. M’Benga turned to the nurse, she stared back, her dark eyes wide, “T’Kar,” he said softly, “can you put a Saline i.v. up, there’s an attachment on his arm. Stay here and call me if anything happens tonight.” A small smile touched his lips, “Don’t worry. I’ll be back soon.”

T’Kar walked out with them and slipped into the medical cabinet, she returned with the bag of saline, T’Kuht, the moon of moonless Vulcan had risen and she caught a glimpse of it as she passed one of the windows,

hanging like a balloon in the night sky.

The ventilator was still pumping oxygen into Kirk's flaccid lungs, T'Kar surveyed the encephalograph and saw that even the delta wave was beginning to fail, the peaks and troughs of each wave were flattening out and each wave was less pronounced. T'Kar hooked the saline up and watched the solution beginning to drip into the vein.

Gently she laid her hand along the side of his face, pity welling up within her, not just for this man but for the one that Dr. M'Benga had called 'Leonard'. There was no movement from the supine figure on the bed and she looked up at the brainwave display. The delta brainwaves had stabilized but the others remained flat and she knew, as Dr. M'Benga had said, that it was just a matter of time. She stroked the hair away from his forehead and sighed again, she hated the **Death Watch**, *I wish I could do something*, she thought helplessly.

M'Benga was as good as his word, within five minutes he was back in the room. T'Kar stood up as he entered, "You know why I've asked you to stay here," he said gently.

"To show me that we can't save everyone," T'Kar's face became troubled.

M'Benga nodded, "It is something every doctor, nurse and healer must face sooner or later. Will you stay with him tonight? I would like you to even if you feel uncomfortable."

"I will," T'Kar replied, her voice thick.

M'Benga smiled again, "Well done. I do not expect him to pass soon, but within the next few days."

She swallowed hard and nodded. M'Benga left soon after and the hospital settled into silence and she could hear the occasional sound of footsteps in the corridor. T'Kar had the feeling that her room was being avoided like the proverbial plague.

Moving across to the bed she took the PADD and looking at the panel above the bed wrote down some readings and then replaced it. She wondered about this man again, she'd seen how much the one called 'Leonard' cared about him, and although Vulcans were taught to control emotion, she'd seen the depth of grief in Spock's eyes and the tense lines of his face that belied his sorrow.

Again she laid her hand on the side of his face, "I am sorry," she murmured, glad that none of Vulcan could see this display of emotion, "I wish we could have saved you."

As she lifted her hand from his face a trail of blue-white light followed it and the monitor next to the bed beeped suddenly. Puzzled she looked up and saw that the delta brainwave seemed to have steadied, the peaks and troughs seemed more pronounced, clearer.

Shaking her head to clear it, she turned back to the PADD, she ought to note down the improvement in the omega wave at least, and then she heard the voice, *Touch him.*

Her head jerked up and she looked around wildly for the source, *Touch him*, the voice whispered again.

Slowly, reluctantly, almost as if she was afraid of the consequences she laid her hand along the side of his face, and watched with a mixture of horror, disbelief and fascination as light seeped from beneath her palm to be absorbed into the body of this man.

The PADD dropped from nerveless fingers onto the floor and her other hand, now free, came up to rest on the other side of his face.

“Gukk,” she said, trying to speak but it was as if she was held in amber. Then her hands moved so that they rested on certain points on the unconscious man’s face which bore no resemblance to the Vulcan mind meld, and light began to creep up her legs and torso until she shone like a star.

A small part of her was wondering why the alarms weren’t going off, and that was the last conscious thought she had before she slid into his mind. At first it was fire and confusion and she had to fight her way up through scorching air and pain, then he was standing in front of her, a boyish, quizzical look on his face. *Charmer*, she thought wryly, and knew that he’d heard her.

Spinning away, she saw great cornfields and felt her heart clench. She had no memory of earth, despite the fact that half her heritage was there, but suddenly she knew the meaning of homesickness.

He too caught snatches of things. An injury during a trial of strength that she’d bound up and not mentioned to anyone only seeking a healer that night when all of

ShiKahr was asleep. A tight lipped whiteness when other Vulcan children called her 'half-breed'.

Dipping deeper she sensed the presence of another from a previous meld and was surprised and gladdened when she saw it was Spock, *T'hy'la* she heard him say, and for an instant she could see below Spock's cool, crystalline exterior, and realised the strength of their bond, their loyalty and Spock's pride.

Great trio we make, huh? He was standing in front of her again, but this time the fire and flames had gone, and they stood in what appeared to be an Iowa cornfield. Then she was back in herself again and looking through a shimmering veil into a pair of hazel eyes.

A sensation of something filling her throat almost overwhelmed her before she realised that it was the ventilator. Almost in a trance she looked down at him, *James*, she thought, a wave of joy bubbling up inside her. *I must remove the tube, you have to help me.*

A quick nod was the response and her second thoughts wondered how her body could operate while her mind seemed to be doing something else. She watched, almost incuriously as her hands gently removed the sticking plaster, she stared down into his eyes, *I need you to exhale forcefully as I begin to remove it.* He nodded and she gently began removing the endotracheal tube, as she did so, his eyes met hers and as if responding to her command, a half cough erupted from his throat and with it came the end of the tube.

Thank you. A half-smile touched his lips and then his eyes closed. She sat still for a few moments her whole body shimmering with a blue-white silver skin, and then it began to run off her like water, some sinking into the floor and the remainder disappearing into the supine body of the man in front of her.

Somehow she found the strength to lift her head and stared in disbelief at the display above Kirk's head, all the brain waves were active: delta, theta, alpha, beta, gamma.

She was suddenly seized with a totally irrational un-Vulcan impulse to stand up and cheer but she forced it down. Standing up she noticed the PADD on the floor and a plan began to take shape in her mind.

Sitting down in the chair she pressed the buzzer and contrived to look shocked. Dr. M'Benga and Mr. Spock burst in on her so quickly that T'Kar was sure they hadn't been asleep. Then M'Benga was leaning over her, his face concerned and the dark eyes filled with compassion, "Nurse are you all right?"

T'Kar would later say that it was the best performance of her life as she stared back at the man, "Yes, Doctor, I was walking back to my desk when everything went black. When I woke up I thought I ought to call you."

Spock cleared his throat, "Look at him, Doctor." M'Benga turned around slowly and stared, all the brain waves were flickering, and as he regarded the occupant of the bed, Kirk sighed in his sleep and turned over pillowing his head on his hand.

“I-I’m flabbergasted,” M’Benga said, “This is impossible! The man was dying!”

Spock turned to the Nurse, “Did you see anything?”

“I’m sorry,” T’Kar lied, “I thought after I regained consciousness I should call Dr M’Benga first.”

M’Benga eyed her thoughtfully, “I see.” He said dubiously.

T’Kar watched the two men guardedly, aware of the silence, punctuated only by the hissing of the disconnected ventilator. As if suddenly becoming aware of this, M’Benga walked across the room and switched the machine off.

Spock looked thoughtful and then he said, “This kind of happening sounds like one of the old legends about Vulcan. No-one even studies this philosophy now but while Surak was alive there was more than Kolinahr that an adult Vulcan could undertake, it was called Kahinahr. They say even today that beyond the mountains of I-langon lives one called the Shatry’a and that once every ten thousand years a new one is chosen to undertake the ritual of Kahinahr. They can hold back the curtain between life and death and even restore life to those dying-” Spock halted suddenly aware of the expression on M’Benga’s face. “We do not talk of this legend very much, the last Kahinahr’a was before even my father’s time - besides which if there was one who could heal everything then the whole of the universe would come to Vulcan to seek her out.”

Suddenly a half-stuporous Dr. McCoy shot into the room, "He's dead, isn't he!" Spock turned and caught him, he was firmly propelled to the side of the bed, Kirk stirred dazedly and opened sleepy eyes, "Bones," he murmured, "I had the strangest dream."

McCoy found his voice from somewhere and replied, "Jim. How d'you feel?"

A dry chuckle erupted from Kirk's throat, "Like I've been jumped on a couple of times. You did a great job, Bones."

Spock bent over him and gently laid the back of his first and index fingers against the side of his face next to his eyebrow, "Do you remember anything, Jim?"

T'Kar watched Spock's face and saw the tenderness in the gesture and in his eyes and was suddenly glad that whatever had erupted within her had done so tonight with this man.

A crooked smile touched Kirk's lips, "it was a woman," he whispered, "She blazed, like a comet. She had amazing eyes-" then he was suddenly asleep again.

T'Kar felt the tension drain from her body, M'Benga turned to her and said, "T'Kar, are you all right?"

"I'm feeling a bit tired," T'Kar admitted.

"Go home," M'Benga ordered, "All of us will spend the night here. In any case, you need rest. See you in the morning."

"May I remain with this patient - I mean I know I shouldn't have lost consciousness-"

M'Benga took her shoulders and replied, "There is no shame involved, you could not have prevented it." The smile he bent on her was gentle, "Go home, T'Kar. Tomorrow you may attend to him, will that satisfy you?"

T'Kar's face became a mask and she inclined her head gracefully, "Forgive my outburst, thank you Doctor."

"There is no need for thanks." M'Benga replied, "the cause was sufficient."

T'Kar left the hospital her heart singing. She placed her books in her car and drove herself home, then she sat down to attempt to study, after only ten minutes she stood up and walked across to the window. T'Kuht seemed so close that T'Kar felt she could reach out and touch it.

Suddenly her weariness dropped away from her and she was filled with the desire to go out onto the desert floor and dance beneath the moon. The flat was dark and silent as she crept downstairs, every nerve and muscle tense as a bowstring scared that someone might discover her. Eventually the door to the apartments opened quietly and T'Kar slipped out into the warm evening air, she walked for miles, it wasn't until she looked behind her to see the lights of ShiKahr faintly winking on the horizon that she realised how far she'd walked. Then she saw the creature, it was a Kenel, a breed of horse thought extinct on Vulcan.

T'Kar thought that it must have been at least seventeen hands high. Then she became aware of the le-matya surrounding her, there were almost fifty, possibly more. Her knees started to shake as one of them began to

advance, it took her trousers in its jaws and tugged firmly,

T'Kar staggered and nearly fell but managed to regain her balance by taking a step forward, the le-matya tugged again and she took another step, gradually she became aware that the creature was guiding her towards the Kenel. As she reached it she realised that her estimation of its height had been quite wrong, *Seventeen hands! It was closer to twenty!*

She turned and saw the lights of ShiKahr now mere flickers on the horizon and realised how far she was into the deep desert. The Kenel stood as if were a solid marble statue, she reached up towards it and with the realisation that she was doing a very foolish thing she slid a finger beneath one of the fangs that protruded from the Kenel's upper lip and tugged. The creature moved like cold marble coming suddenly to life and T'Kar nearly leapt out of her skin with shock. Very carefully and very slowly she led the creature across to one of the many outcroppings and then released it.

Climbing onto the rocks she placed her hands on its back and then very gingerly, mounted. The Kenel moved so fast that she gasped for breath, the land rushed beneath her and she looked up as the l-langon mountains suddenly leapt forward and felt sick and dizzy and out of breath all at once. She remembered feeling the wind whipping through her hair and wondering where the creature was taking her. She wound her hands into the thick mane and tugged, but it seemed to make no appreciable difference to

the creature's direction or speed and logic taught her that it would be futile to continue.

The horse had the agility of a mountain goat, although once or twice as it scrambled up mountainsides that seemed almost vertical and she wound her fingers tighter into the Kenel's mane and squeezing as hard as she could with her thighs, T'Kar wondered if this was the day she was going to die.

Eventually the animal seemed to find its footing and for a moment it stopped, breathing heavily and T'Kar looked out across a high plateau. Although T'Kuht still shone, the dark valleys seemed threatening and the mountains and plateaux glowed with an eerie light. She gripped the mane harder and the creature turned its head and snarled at her. Slowly, and with great presence of mind she carefully relaxed her hands. She thought about dismounting to give the creature a chance to recover but as she looked down she saw a pair of yellow eyes and then another pair and then another pair and realised that the le-matya were accompanying them and wisely decided to stay where she was.

The night seemed to pass slowly but eventually she saw the thin line of fire which told her that dawn was coming. She watched as the sky turned from black to violet and then the creature turned so that the line of fire was behind her and all was blackness in front.

Swallowing hard she straightened her back and felt the animal move beneath her. Dawn found the Kenel picking

its way up what looked like a well worn path until it finally stopped in front of a small cave. She was relieved to see that the le-matya had disappeared. She dismounted, or rather slid from the animal's back, her thighs and back protesting as she landed on the hard ground.

She saw a fire burning within the cave and wincing she walked towards it and saw the old woman seated before the fire. "Shatry'a," she said softly, inclining her head in a gesture of obeisance, "we meet again."

"So it would appear, T'Kar." The woman replied, "I hoped you would return and now I see that my faith in you was not misplaced. Be welcome."

"Did you know that I would?" T'Kar replied sitting herself before the fire and accepting the drink that the Shatry'a poured for her.

"Let us say that I had a strong feeling that you might, but I could not tell you of that four years ago."

"Why not?" T'Kar demanded.

"Because of many things," Shatry'a replied, "for instance it was only a possibility, what would have happened if your power had never developed? You would have become bitter and twisted. Better that you should know it now."

"I suppose," T'Kar sipped the dark liquid thoughtfully and said, "am I to be the next Shatry'a?"

"Not necessarily," the woman replied, "I still have many years ahead of me and you must follow your dreams for a long while before you receive the call to return to this

planet. You are the youngest Shatry'u ever and so I must give you some leeway with regard to your own life."

"What about this power?" T'Kar asked. "I have no control over it, and I don't know why it erupted last night."

"I know that. Any power takes time to develop, do you think I was born Shatry'a?" The woman smiled, "Take your time, explore your limits."

"Can I heal anyone?" T'Kar swallowed, "the man last night. He was almost dead-"

"The universe may not have finished with him, you may come to believe as I do that the universe itself has sentience. I have always believed that the universe puts you in the place you are needed. They are not easy places, nor places without pain, but they are the right places. So, you were needed last night."

"Is it my power or the power of the universe through me?" T'Kar asked, "or am I just a conduit?"

"Now that you will have to find out for yourself," the Shatry'a replied, "as do all who come into this power."

"And the man I healed? Will he know?"

"That depends on him, and on you. The bond you shared may enable him to recognise you. If not you lose nothing and he may become a good friend. Drink your tea, you will have to return soon."

A sudden terror took hold of her, "What if I cannot maintain my control, what if I give in to my emotions? Everyone will know."

"No, they won't." The Shatry'a replied gently, "They

did not know last night after your extraordinary display.”

“They were more interested in the Captain,” T’Kar replied quietly.

“But I maintain that had any Vulcans sensed your high emotional state they would have taken steps to inquire why. You will have to maintain your meditation sessions and it is possible now that when you receive momentous news you find it harder to keep your emotional state in check. But I have faith in you.”

T’Kar set her cup down, “I must go. I do not want to be missed.”

“You will not be, count on that. Go in peace, T’Kar, you will not see me like this again. Fare thee well.”

“Will I ever see you again?” T’Kar asked in a small voice.

“Not here in this place. As for the future, that is undecided. Go back to your people and remember what I said. You must find the answer within yourself.”

Chapter 2

The Kenel was waiting for her, T'Kar scrambled onto its back and wound her hands into the long mane, the sun was already a yellow disk above the horizon. She stretched and thought to herself, *Going to be a hot one.* To her surprise the animal seemed to take a more leisurely return journey leaving her wondering if the first ride had been to test her courage or her ability or both. The animal stopped some distance from ShiKahr and gratefully she slid down from its back.

Definitely a hot bath when I get in, she thought wincing. She turned and laid a hand on the animal's neck and patted it absent-mindedly. It snorted at her and then wheeled and cantered away. She stretched again and then began to walk back to her apartment. Luckily it was still early and she could slip into her apartment without anyone noticing, *Unless the Shatry'a's done something, but surely that's not possible.* Then she shrugged and slipped into the bathroom. A bath was a luxury she rarely indulged in, most Vulcans seeing it as a waste of resources but today she fancied a quick soak, the ride hadn't done anything for her muscles. Filling the bath she climbed in and lay back feeling the warm water relax her aching body.

Reluctantly she washed the grime from her body and then slowly climbed out of the bath. Despite her tiredness

her shift would be starting soon and she had to report to the hospital. Dressing quickly in her medical uniform and slipping her keys into her bag she ran downstairs.

The sister met her at the entrance to the Isolation Block, "Captain Kirk?" and when T'Kar nodded nervously she smiled kindly and opened the door, "Quietly now," she admonished, "he's still sleeping."

"Parental fluids?" T'Kar queried.

"Soups and semi-solid food when he awakens and we'll see what Doctor M'Benga says later today."

T'Kar nodded, and then putting her hand on the door pushed it open and entered the room. To her surprise he was sitting on the edge of the bed.

Although Vulcans rarely touched others because of their latent telepathy, she gently laid her hand on his shoulder, "Captain, where are you going?"

He raised his head to look at her and a puzzled look crossed his face as he stood up, "Who are you? How did I get here? Where's McCoy?"

She eased him back down onto the bed, "Easy, Captain, easy. If you get back into bed, I will call for Dr. McCoy." He nodded wearily and she crossed the room to press a buzzer on the desk. Within ten minutes the door opened and McCoy entered.

"Bones," the relief in Kirk's voice was palpable, "Where is this place? What happened?"

"We're on Vulcan, Jim," McCoy replied softly, "Remember the incident with the Klingon Bird of Prey?"

Kirk nodded, "K't'inga class wasn't it?"

McCoy nodded, "You remember that. Good. What else do you remember?"

"Awful dreams," he whispered.

"Just dreams," Bones said, easing his friend back against the pillows. "I promise I'll be nearby."

Kirk nodded, leaning back and closing his eyes.

McCoy turned to T'Kar, "I'll leave him in your capable hands, Nurse. You," he said, turning to James Kirk, "Get some rest, we'll talk later."

T'Kar nodded, "I'll get us something to eat," she said quietly to the man lying on the bed.

When she returned she was carrying two mugs, both of which she set down on the table next to the bed, "Chicken soup for you, *plomeek* for me."

He managed a weak, distorted smile and without thinking she took one of his hands in her own, "It'll be all right, Captain. It'll be all-" She never finished the sentence as the same blue-white light that had emanated from her palm the night before now seeped from between their clasped hands and spun gently upwards like cigarette smoke.

"It was you," Kirk murmured, staring.

"Yes," T'Kar replied shakily, and then swallowed, "I did not expect that."

"No, nor did I," Kirk replied, "What are you?"

"I suppose since I am not ascended, the correct term would be Shatry'u." She smiled.

“I was dying,” Kirk said slowly, “you healed me.”

“Well not really,” she smiled, “I think that the universe healed you for its own reasons, but although I believe the universe has a kind of sentience, it isn’t very good about giving you reasons why.” She smiled shyly, “you have to figure out your own life path.”

“Well I think I know where I’m going,” he said firmly, “or at least I plan to when I can get out of this place.”

“Your inability to remember could impede that,” T’Kar replied gently, “I’m no psychologist but I think there may be a reason you have this blank spot in your memory. You will need to deal with that before you can return to command.”

He stared at her and for a moment she thought she’d overstepped the mark and then he said, “I tried, when I woke up. I remember the Klingon ship but almost nothing before that, except that I think I made one of the hardest decisions of my life-”

She took his hand again and they were both relieved when the blue-white light didn’t appear again. She smiled, “Look, finish your soup and try to get some rest. I’m sure that Dr. M’Benga will talk through this with you when he makes his rounds.”

“What’s your name?” he asked softly.

“T’Kar,” She replied.

“James Kirk, my friends call me Jim.” Kirk sipped his soup, “so tell me what happened last night.”

“All right,” T’Kar said slowly, “but you may have to

suspend your disbelief.”

“My dear T’Kar,” Kirk said softly, “by all rights I should be lying in a coma in this bed, I don’t think disbelief comes into the equation - I know what you did and I’m the living proof of it.”

She took a deep breath and began her story, once or twice Kirk interrupted her but mostly he listened his eyes dark and thoughtful. She finished and looked up at his face.

Kirk surveyed her silently for a moment and then he said, “That is amazing!”

T’Kar set her mug on the table and smiled at him, “If you say so, I was scared witless most of the time.”

Kirk took her hands, “You saved my life, nothing can compare to that, whatever you ask of me, if it is within my power I shall do my utmost to grant it.”

“That’s quite a promise,” T’Kar smiled, “But I cannot accept it yet.”

“Why not?” Kirk’s eyes became hard as stone.

“Because you’re not totally well,” T’Kar said gently, “and until you remember whatever you’ve forgotten, you won’t be totally well. But if when you’re fully recovered you want to make the same promise, I shall gladly accept it.”

Kirk nodded, “All right. But I can’t marry you!”

“You’re married to your ship,” T’Kar replied, her lips curving in a smile, “so I wouldn’t ask it. What I might ask is that you give me a commission aboard the Enterprise when I finish my studies on Vulcan.”

“That would depend on your grades, but if they’re good enough then I’ll certainly recommend it.” Kirk grinned, and then suddenly yawned.

“I’ve tired you with all my talking,” T’Kar said, “Rest Captain. Dr. M’Benga won’t be doing his rounds for quite some time.”

Kirk made no protest as she fluffed up his pillows and pulled the shades down so that the room was in semi-darkness - she walked across to her desk and turned on the desk lamp. Then she sat down and began to write.

She wrote down the events of the previous evening in the diary that she carried. Talking to James Kirk had somehow made them seem more real. She regarded his still figure at least three or four times while she wrote.

Picking up her pen again she smoothed the page and started a new paragraph, *I am glad that whatever Power in me leapt out to heal this man. Perhaps I have something else, some Extra-sensory Perception that makes me feel that this man is important, or if not important then he matters. Of course every being matters, but somehow I felt and still feel that this man matters more - to me. Perhaps we have a link.*

Kirk stirred and sat up, T’Kar laid her pen down and stood up, “Are you feeling better, Captain?”

He blinked and smiled, “Yes, thank you, Nurse.” He looked at the book “What are you writing?”

T’Kar smiled, “I keep a daily journal, an ancestor of mine kept such a journal. I think it was the only thing that

helped her keep her sanity. My mother suggested that I ought to do the same.”

“Your mother was Terran?” Kirk stared at her, “and your father?”

“Vulcan. Mother came out here after she married Father, she died six years ago and then Father died three years ago. I am glad that I was here to return his spirit to those of our ancestors.”

“Do you miss Earth?”

“I don’t know,” T’Kar replied. “I was born there, but we came here when I was two, I have no memory of it. I’m just waiting for some of my mother’s things to come here and there are bound to be things that need sorting out. There invariably are.”

“So you’re all alone?” Kirk asked suddenly feeling dreadfully sorry for this youngster who had been much like his first officer.

“I’m afraid so, Captain.” T’Kar looked up, “but it could have been worse. Sarek and Amanda took me in, I think after my Father died they decided that I needed looking after. I didn’t really know what to do, I didn’t know how to grieve because it felt as if no-one grieved on Vulcan. Amanda showed me how to grieve as a young human and how to cope as a Vulcan.”

Kirk settled himself against the pillows and T’Kar said, “I’m sorry, Captain, I must be boring you.”

“No.” He shook his head, “gods, no! Please carry on.” “Unfortunately, Captain, that won’t be possible at the

moment. I've decided to discharge you. Mr. Spock is here to take you to his home." Dr. M'Benga had stepped into the room unnoticed by either of them.

"As soon as that?" Kirk looked startled.

M'Benga smiled, "Captain, there's nothing wrong with you."

"But you said-"

"I must have been mistaken." M'Benga smiled tautly, "we'll leave you in peace to get dressed and then you can go."

"T'Kar, can you come with me?" Kirk asked quickly.

"I'm still on duty, Captain," T'Kar replied gently, "and as you're not sick I'm not sure that you need the services of a nurse."

Dr. M'Benga pursed his lips and then he said, "On the contrary, Jim, I think it's a fine idea. T'Kar will stay with you until you've fully recovered. Then she can return to the hospital. T'Kar, you will come with me now and I shall give you a list of instructions. See that Captain Kirk follows them. When his memory returns you will inform me or Dr. McCoy in person. Understood?"

"Understood." T'Kar replied. "Doctor-"

"Yes, Nurse?" M'Benga turned to face her.

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me," M'Benga replied, he leant forward and said, "I think it would be useful if you could have access to the Captain's and the First Officer's log entries, I shall see about getting you clearance, it may mean that you

have to be sworn into Starfleet as only Starfleet personnel are allowed such access.”

“But Doctor, I’ve only just qualified as a nurse.” T’Kar explained, “I’m trying to save enough credits to purchase my ticket to Earth and Starfleet Academy.”

“I am aware of that,” M’Benga said gently, “but you graduated *magna cum laude* from your school of nursing and *cum laude* from the Vulcan Science Institute, your application to Starfleet Academy has been accepted provided that you find yourself a sponsor.”

“And I may have a problem with that,” T’Kar said, “you are aware that none of my family are alive, Doctor, and I have not asked the Vulcan Science Institute for very obvious reasons.”

“And they are?”

“T’Pel,” T’Kar said slowly, “if it were a choice between me and her they would choose me because my academic qualifications are higher - but she should not be overlooked. She has a wealth of practical knowledge that many would envy. So I shall not ask.”

“You don’t know that. The Science Academy decide in secret who they should sponsor.”

“But it would always nag at me,” T’Kar explained, “anyway enough about me. You’d better give me your instructions for the Captain.”

M’Benga nodded, “He’s to take things easy for a couple of weeks, no getting up at the crack of dawn; no strenuous activity, that means no walks in the desert; he’s to sleep for

at least a couple of hours every afternoon. Think you'll remember all that?"

"I'll try, sir," T'Kar smiled.

Kirk took T'Kar's hand in the ground car, "Thanks for coming with me," he said, "you didn't have to."

T'Kar smiled at him thinking how weary he looked and tired, there was a thinness about him that disturbed her. Kirk rested his head on the headrest and closed his eyes. Almost without knowing it he drifted into a doze...

He was back aboard the Enterprise, strange, he'd almost fallen asleep, still no time to consider that now. He looked up at the forward screen again , "Status, Mr. Sulu."

"Deflector shields still holding, Sir."

"Arm phasers; lock on target-"

"Locked on, aye sir."

"Prepare to fi-" then something hit the bridge and then only blackness.

"Captain? Jim? Jim, can you hear me?"

He opened his eyes dazedly and stared up into T'Kar's face, she gently touched the back of her hand to his temple and spoke softly, "Are you all right, Captain?"

"I-I was on my bridge, then something happened, a Klingon ship - I-I can't remember-"

"Spock, stop for a moment and let the Captain gather his senses." T'Kar said quietly. The ground car stopped

and Spock half-turned in his seat. Although he didn't say anything, T'Kar could see the tense lines around his eyes and mouth. She nodded at Spock and then laid her hand over Kirk's "Just relax for a moment or two, Captain, I'll give you a minute to recover and then we'll go on to Sarek's house."

Kirk smiled wearily and T'Kar tried to smile encouragingly back at him but it came out rather lopsided.

"Call me Jim," Kirk said softly.

"All right," T'Kar replied quietly, "if you will call me T'Kar."

He grinned tiredly, "That would be a pleasure."

Amanda was preparing a salad when they entered, she smiled when she saw her adopted daughter, "T'Kar, how lovely to see you! Captain, Spock mentioned that you and Dr. McCoy would be staying with us-" her voice died away as she saw Captain Kirk's face.

"I'll take you to your room, Captain," T'Kar said softly.

Kirk let her lead him to the room prepared for him and made no protest as T'Kar eased him onto the bed. She turned away and Kirk caught her elbow, "Stay-" he begged.

"All right," T'Kar replied. She sat on the bed, "You need sleep," she said softly, "let me." She reached out and gently took his face in her hands, "Sleep, James."

Once again the strength of her will was no match for his in his weakened state and he started to fade off into sleep, just before darkness descended he caught himself thinking,

She's just like me. Her strength of purpose is like mine before darkness descended and sleep closed over him like a cloud.

He woke slowly, he could tell from the brightness of the curtains that it was mid-morning. "Good morning." T'Kar smiled.

"Good morning," he yawned, "Have you been there all night?"

"No," she smiled, "I just came in to see how you were. How are you feeling?"

"Tired." He rolled over and closed his eyes. T'Kar smiled, pulling the covers up around Kirk's shoulders she quietly slipped from the room. Amanda was in the kitchen when she entered, "Morning sweetie, how's Captain Kirk this morning?"

T'Kar helped herself to the Vulcan equivalent of cereal and replied, "He's still asleep, he awoke, said 'Good Morning' and fell asleep again."

"He probably needs it." Amanda walked across the kitchen to her adopted daughter. "How are you with this, T'Kar?"

"All right, I think."

"We're dealing with a different class of man than those you normally see here. This is a Starship Captain. They're a breed apart. Whatever injured his body is not the issue, it's what injured his mind before that."

"He seems to be suffering from some sort of amnesia," T'Kar said slowly, "he says he remembers being attacked

by a Klingon Bird of Prey, but nothing before that.”

Amanda looked thoughtful, “I do not know what happened during their last mission, neither Spock nor McCoy will speak of it, and my Son looks emotionally drained which is unusual for him. But you do understand that even if he should use you as his crutch, it will only be for a short while. He is not a man who can stay long in one place, the *Wanderlust* is strong with him.”

“Stronger than most men’s?”

“Indeed. I believe his passion for the *Enterprise* may be his undoing.”

“Perhaps,” T’Kar replied her eyes far away, “but when in future times, men speak of the *Enterprise*, they will speak of him in the same breath.”

Amanda turned and laughed, “I hope so, T’Kar. Go and get dressed, Dr McCoy will want to know the status of his patient.”

T’Kar nodding slipped into the spare room to change. She was reading quietly in the lounge when McCoy arrived,

He saw T’Kar and asked quickly, “How is the Captain, Nurse?”

“I’d prefer it if you checked him, Doctor,” T’Kar replied, she smiled and led the way into the bedroom where Kirk still slept.

McCoy gently checked Jim’s vital signs and then nodded to the Nurse, “All right, T’Kar. I think we’ll leave him to sleep now.”

She poured a drink for him and handed it to McCoy before sitting down again, “Did you sleep at all last night?”

“Some,” McCoy responded, “I came to ask your opinion of Captain Kirk, you mentioned before that he was suffering some kind of amnesia.”

“So you read my report,” T’Kar’s eyes grinned back at him, then her smile faded and she continued, “the last thing he remembers is a Klingon attack cruiser, but there’s something else that’s disturbing him, something he wants to remember but his conscious mind won’t let him. Can you tell me anything of what happened on your last mission?”

“No,” McCoy responded so abruptly that T’Kar stared at him shocked, she folded her report and was about to hand it to McCoy when a familiar voice said, “I think that if we are to heal Jim’s mind then we must tell Nurse T’Kar some of what occurred without infringing our oath of loyalty to Starfleet.”

McCoy saw the delight blossom in T’Kar’s face before she composed it and turned to Spock, “Live long and prosper, Spock son of Sarek.” She said solemnly as she gave him the Vulcan salute.

“Peace and long life, T’Kar daughter of Sorak,” Spock replied, “it is good to see you again. How are your studies progressing?”

“I am pleased to report that I graduated *cum laude* from the Vulcan Academy of Sciences,” T’Kar responded, “forgive me Spock, I should have thanked thee more fully,

for it was thy tutelage that enabled me to pass the astrophysics exam.”

Spock replied, “I accept thy apologies now.”

McCoy looked from one to the other and said, “You two know each other?”

“Of course, Doctor,” Spock replied, “T’Kar and I were to be joined some years ago our fathers arranged it.”

“But we decided that we were not compatible,” T’Kar replied, “I could not be the wife Spock desired because I wanted to serve in Starfleet and he could not be the husband I desired because he already served in Starfleet, so we met and decided that it would be better if we did not marry. We had not undergone bonding so there was no need for any ceremony to divorce us.”

Spock ushered T’Kar to her chair, and then seated himself between Dr. McCoy and T’Kar.

“I don’t agree with this, Spock,” McCoy said harshly. “Nurse T’Kar doesn’t need to know what happened in order to help Captain Kirk!”

“Wait,” T’Kar said softly, “Doctor M’Benga wants me to be sworn into Starfleet sometime next week in order to view the *Enterprise’s* logs, I can find whatever information I need from them. The last thing Captain Kirk needs at the moment is his closest friends at each others throats. He will recover, given time, there is no point in forcing him to try and remember what he doesn’t want to.”

“But supposing he never remembers?” McCoy asked harshly.

“I can only try to get his conscious mind to want to remember, it doesn’t at the moment, so there is no use me trying to get him to remember while he doesn’t want to,” T’Kar replied.

McCoy nodded and rubbed a hand across his face, “I’m sorry. What do you suggest?”

“I was rather hoping you might have some suggestions about that,” T’Kar smiled, “I can only do what Dr. M’Benga has told me. Perhaps the atmosphere of Vulcan will help to dispel whatever demons haunt his dreams.”

“Does he tell you anything of these dreams?” McCoy asked quickly.

“No.” T’Kar replied, “although I suspect that the dreams are of what occurred just after your last mission. I think he dreams that he’s on the bridge and then the *Enterprise* is attacked by a Klingon Ship, after that nothing.” She paused and then dropped her bombshell, “You encountered a Klingon Vessel inside the Neutral Zone which fired on you, you destroyed it but Captain Kirk was injured. Now you tell me the extent of his injuries.”

Spock regarded her, T’Kar could tell that she’d hit a nerve because something flashed in his dark eyes and his face was set harder than stone, finally he opened his mouth and T’Kar was suddenly afraid, then another voice said thickly, “Yes.”

The tension vanished as Spock turned to McCoy, “I beg your pardon, Doctor?”

McCoy looked up at them both and to T’Kar he

suddenly seemed old, “Yes we encountered a Klingon vessel which refused to respond to our hailing signals. There were a few minor injuries, even Jim’s weren’t that serious, but it was as if – as if-” he broke off unable to continue.

“His mind had already given up and started down the spiral of death,” T’Kar and Spock said simultaneously and then T’Kar laughed, “this telepathy will have to stop,” she said softly her face creasing in a smile.

“I am glad that we still have a connection,” Spock said gently, the dark eyes placid again, “for you are dearer than a sister to me.”

T’Kar blushed furiously. She forced a smile through her burning emerald cheeks and said, “So, we are agreed that it was whatever happened before you intercepted the Klingon vessel that almost killed Captain Kirk and has left him with this amnesia. So, as I said before, any suggestions gentlemen?”

McCoy sighed, “If it hadn’t been for that person in the hospital, what did Spock call them - Kahinar - we would be making arrangements to say farewell to Captain Kirk. Spock, you said you knew about these Kahinaru, would they be able to help?”

Spock regarded McCoy impassively, “Unfortunately they no longer exist,” he said quietly, “to a great extent a Kahinaru initiate, a potential Shatry’a must maintain Vulcan control while allowing emotions to flow through them, I could not do it, nor could any of the followers of

T'Vet, I do not know who could."

T'Kar leant forward and said quietly, "Doctor, they might tell us that the task of restoring his mind is something best left to his friends anyway. After all, if it were Spock or you, wouldn't they rather be with friends and family than with strangers?"

"We've been down that road once," McCoy remarked quietly, giving Spock a strange look, "I just need to be able to do something. This could be my friend's career!"

T'Kar laid a hand on McCoy's in silent sympathy. "Then you can start by giving me some suggestions about treating Captain Kirk."

They were still talking together in low voices an hour later when Kirk walked, yawning into the room. He surveyed the little group and said, "Is there a reason you three look so miserable?"

T'Kar looked up at him and smiled, "We're just discussing your case."

Kirk frowned, and poured himself a glass of kasa juice, "Something along the lines of which mental asylum to commit me to?"

Spock looked affronted, "Certainly not, Captain, we were discussing treatment."

"Spock," T'Kar said gently, "he's making a very bad joke."

"How d'you feel, Jim?" McCoy asked.

"Better," Kirk ran a hand through his hair and smiled, "you've a very gentle touch, T'Kar, I slept like a baby."

“It’s not something to boast about, Captain.” T’Kar smiled tautly.

Spock surveyed T’Kar quietly, he had no remembrance of her being skilled as a healer, true, he had heard from his mother that she was academically the highest qualified in her set but that she wasn’t destined to be a Healer, that she hadn’t got the touch needed. He pushed the thought away and turned back to Kirk, “How do you feel now, Captain?”

Kirk sighed and eased himself into a chair, “I still can’t remember what happened, Spock, I keep thinking that I made the most important decision of my life in our last mission but I can’t remember what it was.” He looked at his two friends closely for a couple of moments and said, “and I don’t suppose you can tell me.”

“What happened on your last mission seems to have had profound effects on you, Captain,” T’Kar began softly. She gently touched his arm to try and offer some comfort.

He shook it off and snapped, “It’s obviously had profound effects on me, I can’t remember what happened on our last mission, I can’t get into my own ship’s logs and you all know what happened but won’t tell me about it.” He stormed out of the front door.

Spock rose to his feet, “I should go and explain.”

“Not this time,” T’Kar replied softly, “I don’t know what happened either, perhaps I can make him return.”

“And if you can’t?”

“I don’t know,” T’Kar replied, “we have to make a decision about sending him to rehabilitation as you well

know. If within the next two weeks this state of amnesia persists then we will have no choice. He will have to go into rehabilitation and lose his Starship. You would in effect become Captain, Spock.”

McCoy stood up, “I will go and talk to the Captain,” he said slowly, “and leave you *logical Vulcans* dissecting my friend.”

Spock watched him go and then turned to gaze back at the woman, “T’Kar,” he said softly, “what do you think Jim’s chances are?”

T’Kar swallowed hard and then her stomach churning opened her mouth, “If his mind doesn’t return in the next two weeks, then it never will. I would venture to say that if it never returns that he may degenerate further into insanity.”

“Could he become psychopathic?”

“I don’t think so. He would probably lash out in frustration not realising what he’s doing. Somehow we have to find a way to unlock those doors in his mind.” She said a tongue twisting word that made one of Spock’s eyebrows arch up in surprise.

“I didn’t think you knew such a word,” he remarked.

T’Kar frowned, “I know a few more - worse than that. The followers of V’tosh ka’tur tend to use them, when they indulge in their mating rituals sometimes they get hurt. They usually scream at us while we’re trying to treat them.”

“But that will not help us treat the Captain.”

“Spock,” T’Kar said softly, she leant forward, “this may mean the Captain’s life. Can’t you tell me anything - anything at all that might help him.”

Spock regarded her thoughtfully, “I cannot tell you what happened on our last mission. I will tell you this, the Captain had to choose between himself and the universe.” T’Kar nodded, “I gathered that from his words in the hospital. Presumably it was something all three of you were involved in, McCoy almost as much as the Captain.

Is that why he feels so guilty?”

“You sensed that?” an eyebrow lifted and T’Kar nearly smiled, “I did not think your telepathic abilities that strong.”

“Empathic,” T’Kar corrected absent-mindedly.

Spock nodded, “You are correct T’Kar, but I did not think you possessed empathic abilities of that strength.”

“Truthfully, Spock, neither did I.” T’Kar lied, “but they seem to have developed while I was nursing.”

“Then I am pleased for you, dear one, for that will give you an advantage when you go before the Vulcan Council.”

“That may not be for some time,” T’Kar replied, “I have not requested a formal meeting to decide the candidature for the Vulcan Scholarship.”

“But surely they have asked for you to appear before them.” Spock stared at her, the first time she had seen the normally placid Vulcan nonplussed.

“No. But I have not requested an audience. I have

submitted the forms and I await their decision. There are other candidates, doubtless they will look at their credentials first.”

Chapter 3

“Perhaps, perhaps not. I will speak with my father and ask him whether the Council has begun to process applications.”

“As you wish, Spock.”

“It would give me pleasure, T’Kar.”

She stood up and bowed, “I will go and speak to the Captain. We will be together for the next two weeks at least, I must try and explain that we mean him no harm.”

“He may not see it your way.”

“That I fear is true,” T’Kar replied, “but if he attempts to hurt me I shall scream.”

“If he attempts anything, T’Kar, press your communicator. McCoy and I shall be there within minutes.” Spock’s dark eyes held hers and T’Kar nodded soberly.

Kirk was sitting on the steps that led down into the garden, T’Kar settled herself beside him and wrapped her arms around her knees, “It’s peaceful out here,” she said softly.

“Yes,” Kirk replied, he turned to face her and T’Kar was struck again by how haggard he appeared, “I was trying to remember what happened on the *Enterprise*.”

“Mmm,” T’Kar responded, she licked dry lips and said, “Are you really afraid of not being able to remember?”

A dry laugh erupted from Kirk's throat, "Afraid? Not really, my whole life seems to be ending and there's nothing I can do about it." He stopped and laid a hand on T'Kar's, "I am sorry for the way I acted, there was no excuse."

"No, but you did have a very good reason. I must confess I am confused that Spock has not suggested a Vulcan mind meld."

"Perhaps he feels it would do more harm than good. Even aboard the *Enterprise* he has only consented to such invasive techniques under duress."

T'Kar stood up, "I must get back to the house, don't stay out here too long, sunburn is the last thing you need in your condition."

"No, Mother," Kirk grinned at T'Kar and she smiled down at him, "We'll get there, Captain, I'm sure of it."

Kirk stared out at the garden for a further ten minutes before finally getting to his feet and returning to the house. T'Kar was tossing a salad in a bowl, Spock and McCoy were nowhere to be seen and Sarek and Amanda were sitting quietly in the lounge. Amanda was reading a book and Sarek was gently strumming his lyrette.

"James," Amanda said gently, "come and sit down."

He nodded, suddenly tired. Amanda regarded him thoughtfully, "Here, Captain, drink this."

She handed him the glass of kasa juice and he regarded it suspiciously, "Have you—"

She surveyed him quietly, her eyes dark and fathomless,

“Have I what, Captain? Poisoned it, drugged it – what?”

He looked sheepish and then took the glass of juice, “I’m sorry,” he murmured.

“Yes, Captain.” She replied, and then smiled, “Any medicines you need to take I’d ask my daughter.”

“Daughter?” he frowned.

She gestured towards T’Kar, “Adopted,” she responded thoughtfully, “but loved as much as my son.”

“So the glass of juice you’ve just given me-”

“Is juice.” Amanda replied.

He nodded and took it across to a chair. “I wish I could find something to do,” he said suddenly, “I know that I’m not supposed to undertake any strenuous activity but if I don’t do something I think I might go insane.”

“There are a few things we could do together,” T’Kar said thoughtfully, “Don’t worry, Mother, I won’t take him walking in the deep desert.”

Amanda smiled, “I know that, what about your birthday celebrations?”

“Birthday?” Kirk turned to her and for the first time a spark of something seemed to light up his eyes.

“My twenty-first,” T’Kar confirmed, “and all the joys of seeing the family’s lawyer.”

“It won’t be that bad,” Amanda replied, “and it’s only to tie up a few loose ends from your mother’s estate. She just put the proviso in her Will that you would inherit when you reached twenty-one.”

“Seems a lot of work for nothing,” T’Kar shrugged,

“But I’ll trundle along in four days. Not sure I’ll be in any fit state to have a party that evening though.”

“Why do you say that?” McCoy asked.

“I just have a bad feeling about this,” she shrugged again, “a sense of foreboding I guess.”

Amanda laughed, “Come, dinner is served.”

“So how long have you lived on Vulcan,” McCoy asked as he helped himself to salad.

“About eighteen years,” T’Kar replied, “My mother met my father when he was assigned to the Vulcan Embassy on earth. They married and I was born on Terra – when my father returned to Vulcan two years later he brought my mother and I with him. I’ve never really known anywhere but Vulcan.”

“And this proviso in your Mother’s Will?” McCoy asked.

“Apparently it was something that was started lifetimes ago,” T’Kar said. “Whenever a son or daughter reaches twenty-one, they have to do this. Some sort of ceremony I believe. My mother would never tell me what it was, she said that when I reached the appropriate age I would find out. So, in three days I will.”

“Sounds intriguing,” Kirk smiled, for the first time looking more like himself.

“Oh most definitely,” Amanda replied, “but it’s no good asking me the particulars, Sarah never told me what she experienced the day she saw the lawyer. In fact I’m not even sure she told Sorak.”

“Interesting,” McCoy smiled, “so you have to go and meet with the lawyers and then some great secret that your family has kept down the years will be made plain and you have to decide what to do about it.”

“Oh I doubt it’s any great secret,” T’Kar sipped her drink, “it’s probably something like my ancestor had a child out of wedlock or that they divorced and had to bring up the child in ignominy.” She sighed, “Why this elaborate scheme when you reach twenty-one for God’s sake!”

Sarek spoke softly, “Less emotion, T’Kar. It is what it is, accept it. If you view this with anger then you will be unable to view it objectively when you see the lawyer.”

T’Kar nodded, “Yes, Father. Forgive my outburst.” She paused, “As I have finished supper may I be excused, I should like to meditate.”

Sarek nodded and bowing her head, T’Kar got up from the table and quietly slipped into the next room. Kirk’s eyes followed her, “Will she be all right?”

“Yes,” Sarek responded.

Kirk didn’t see her at all for the remainder of the evening. At one point he said to Amanda, “T’Kar’s not being punished for what she said at dinner is she?”

Amanda shook her head, “No, of course not, Captain. She’s a bit – I suppose you would use the word conflicted over this ‘secret’ that her mother’s kept from her. She would feel ashamed to be with us when she has not examined her feelings.”

“Typical Vulcan,” McCoy muttered, “repress

everything, don't talk about it, don't mention it and it'll all go away." He stood up, "I'm going out for a walk."

"Don't go too far, Doctor," Amanda replied softly, "We wouldn't want you to get lost in the deep desert."

McCoy nodded tersely and then he was gone. Amanda looked at the door for a long moment, but didn't say anything.

Kirk sighed softly, "I'm afraid that Dr McCoy often feels that Vulcans are too repressed."

McCoy stormed out of the house and began to walk across the desert. He was so annoyed that he didn't realise how far he'd walked until he looked back and saw the lights of the city flickering behind him. *Oh shit*, he thought, *how the hell do I get back?* He looked around and then he saw the creatures. For a moment he considered running and then he realised that would be the worst thing he could do. As he looked at the creatures he swallowed hard, *This is it*, he thought, and then a soft smile curved his lips, if this was it then so be it. He took a step forward and then he felt a soft hand on his arm, "Doctor McCoy what in the name of all that's Holy are you doing out here?"

He turned and was suddenly lost for words, T'Kar was standing behind him holding a huge horse-like creature and he noticed that she had one finger beneath what looked like a *fang*, "T'Kar! What the hell-"

"I could ask you the same question," she replied, "You shouldn't be out here unescorted. Although," she paused, "They wouldn't have hurt you."

“They’re le-matya aren’t they,” McCoy asked quietly watching the creatures who seemed completely unfazed by his presence.

“Yes,” T’Kar replied, “And this is a Kenel,” she gestured at the creature behind her releasing her hand.

McCoy swallowed, T’Kar looked different out here in the deep desert, primitive almost ancient and McCoy asked in a voice that didn’t sound like his own, “T’Kar, what the *hell* are you?”

“I wondered when you’d get around to that question,” she half-smiled, “Come on. I’ve got a thermos of coffee and a snack, I’ll attempt to explain as much as I can.”

She turned and pulled a pack down from the ‘horse’ and then she reached up and stroked the creature’s muzzle. McCoy had to swallow hard again when he saw the fangs protruding from its top lip. She slung the bag over her shoulder and began to walk towards the le-matya. “Follow me, Doctor,” she ordered, “As I said, they won’t hurt us.”

They walked for about ten minutes and McCoy stared in fascination as the le-matya parted to let them through. T’Kar set her bag down near an outcropping of rock, and began to rummage through her backpack, “Drinks first.”

McCoy watched somewhat stupefied as she opened the thermos and poured them both a cup. She handed one to Dr. McCoy and then sat down, her back against the rock. “Feeling better?” she asked gently.

“Not really,” McCoy replied, “I’ve never seen anything like this before in my life. And I’m beginning to wonder

what other secrets you've kept from me."

"None that would damage your reputation," T'Kar replied guardedly. She took out a packet of sandwiches and unwrapping them handed one half to McCoy, "Here, it'll keep you going."

He watched as two of the le-matya came and lay down a few metres away from them, "They're the Alpha female and male," she said gesturing to the creatures.

"Know a lot about them?" McCoy asked quietly.

"This pair, yes," T'Kar said softly, "They've been together almost ten years. They mate for life."

"How long have you been doing this?"

"Since I was ten," T'Kar admitted sheepishly, "I knew that my mother would have been upset and my father would have hit the roof so I kept it a secret. And as for Sarek and Amanda, they'd have had conniption fits. When I was a child I used to come out and walk with the le-matya."

Something clicked in his head and he turned to her, "You're one of those people that Spock talked about, Kahinaru wasn't it?"

"The correct term would be Shatry'u," T'Kar said quietly, "as I have not ascended to that position yet."

"But I'm right aren't I?" He stared at her "My God, you're the reason James Kirk's alive and well."

"I don't think it was me," T'Kar smiled, "I think I was more of a conduit and what it was, well I couldn't tell you."

“Oh boy,” McCoy sipped his coffee and stared out across the desert, “So what now?”

She sighed, “I don’t know, Doctor. I’d rather not broadcast what I am. This *power* isn’t exactly under my control – I don’t even know why it erupted when it did. Plus there’s always the familiarity problem.”

“Familiarity problem,” McCoy looked bemused.

“You know, it’s like Clark Kent or Bruce Wayne suddenly announcing that they’re Superman and Batman respectively.” She sighed.

“Mmmm,” McCoy smiled, “The perceived idea that this person’s friends and family have got to know them and they couldn’t possibly be a superhero.”

“Yep,” T’Kar grinned, “I call it the familiarity-stroke-contempt clause. Besides one of the problems with being able to do this,” she gestured at the animals, “is that I don’t want to broadcast it. They’re not pets, we have a relationship and I would not abuse that.”

“There is one problem,” McCoy said gently

“Your friends will be looking for you,” T’Kar sighed. “Oh damn. She stood up and spoke quietly, the two lematya’s ears went up and their tails flicked back and forth but they stood up and with the pack quietly slipped away.

“We’d best get going,” T’Kar said quietly.

The ‘horse’ as McCoy would always think of it was waiting for them, McCoy watched as T’Kar walked across to it and slid a finger beneath one of the fangs, and he stared as she gently tugged and led the creature across to

them.

“You’d best mount,” she turned to Dr McCoy, “and I’ll run.”

He swallowed again and carefully putting his hands on the animal’s back he clambered up and onto it. After a brief amount of slithering he managed to straighten himself up and wound his hands through the long mane. “Take this,” T’Kar said handing him the pack. “And now we must move before we are missed.”

Ever afterwards Leonard McCoy would remember that night, how he held on for dear life with his hands and his thighs, how the ‘horse’ seemed to move beneath him like water and how he wished it was wearing a saddle. He remembered looking down and seeing T’Kar racing beside the Kenel her hair being blown back from her face and her cheeks flushed with exertion. He one abiding memory was of staring down at her lithe figure and being stunned by her beauty.

The creature steadily slowed to a halt and gratefully Dr McCoy slid off its back. T’Kar patted its flank and it turned and almost silently sped away, its hide gradually blending with the colour of the desert until it disappeared. “You’re coming home with me,” she said firmly, “as I have no doubt your friends are turning ShiKahr upside down.”

“I want a shower first,” he said as he entered her flat.

She nodded, “Go ahead.”

She slipped in after him and he was fixing a drink when

she entered the lounge, he looked at her, "Nice shower?"

"I could spend forever under there," she said, "Is that for me?"

He handed her the glass and they stood looking at one another, "You saved my life out there," he said slowly.

"You'd have been all right," T'Kar smiled up at him, "your friends would have found you eventually."

He stepped forward setting his glass down on the top, "My name's Leonard, T'Kar. And it is a pleasure to meet you."

"Likewise, Leonard." She shook hands with him gravely.

He smiled, "Now I believe that as a mark of respect I should cook you dinner."

"Perhaps we could cook a meal together," T'Kar said slowly, "then I can show you that Vulcans eat more than *plomeek* soup."

She was about to serve when there was a pounding at her door and she heard Captain Kirk's voice, "T'Kar, T'Kar are you in there?"

Sighing she put her fork down and opened the door, "What is it, Captain?"

"Doctor McCoy's disappeared, we were hoping-" sighing she opened the door wider and said, "Come in."

Kirk entered and she spotted the wild look in his eyes. McCoy came through from the dining room and both of them had to catch Jim as he collapsed. Carefully McCoy eased his friend down onto the sofa and then he sat beside

him while T'Kar pulled up a footstool and sat down her eyes never leaving his face. McCoy carefully examined his friend and turned to T'Kar, "Would you go and get a glass of water."

She nodded quietly and when she'd left the room Dr McCoy eyed his friend thoughtfully, "You went out into the desert didn't you?"

"Sorry, Bones," the smile on Jim's lips didn't quite reach his eyes, "I thought that you might have got yourself lost."

"What were you thinking?" McCoy demanded, "you're in no condition to go gallivanting around the Vulcan wilderness!"

"He was concerned for you, Doctor," T'Kar had come back into the room, "or perhaps I should use the word 'fearful' and fear makes people do things they would otherwise not consider. Besides, he is still the Captain, no matter that he is off duty."

"Hmmpf," McCoy retorted but she noticed that his eyes never left his friend's face and his fingers remained on his friend's wrist.

T'Kar handed him the water and said, "You'll make yourself ill again."

A weary smile touched Kirk's lips, "I had no choice," he replied. "You understand that, don't you? He is one of my crew – my responsibility."

T'Kar shook her head, "Drink your water, Jim." She stood up, "And I'd better contact Sarek, Amanda and

Spock or they'll kill me.”

Kirk leant his head back against the top of the couch and closed his eyes, “Gods I’m tired,” he muttered.

T’Kar re-entered the room, “I’ve told my parents and Spock is furious.”

“How do you know?” McCoy turned to survey her quizzically.

“Tone of voice, the look in his eyes. I may only be half-Vulcan, but to coin a Terran phrase I can tell when one of them is ‘pissed’.”

McCoy laughed, “You sound almost human, T’Kar.”

“Don’t tell Spock,” she smiled, “he would be seriously offended. Now, Captain, Doctor, I think you should spend the night here and we’ll decide what to do tomorrow morning.”

McCoy eyed his friend quietly, “I know who T’Kar is, Jim, she saved my life when I walked too far into the desert. She saved your life too, didn’t she?”

Jim nodded, “When did you know?”

“Tonight, when she found me in the deep desert. She was holding a *horse with fangs*. And she’s made friends with a whole group of le-matya.”

“Hardly friends,” she smiled, “I hold that all life is sacred. Do you feel well enough to eat something, Captain?”

Kirk nodded, “I think so.”

“I’m trying to convince Dr McCoy that we eat more than *plomeek* soup.” T’Kar replied, she regarded the two

men quietly and then said, "Come and sit down, Jim. We're having the terran equivalent of stuffed peppers with salad and *kreila*," at McCoy's puzzled expression she said, "A kind of flat, unleavened bread. Used to be known as pitta bread I think."

"Should I not serve you?" McCoy asked gently.

T'Kar managed a wry grin and handed him a spatula, "As you wish."

McCoy sat down and said, "Who do I serve first?"

"I have no idea," T'Kar laughed, "I've never had a dinner party before."

"Human custom states that guests should be served first," Kirk smiled, the gesture lightening his face, "So technically, you should serve us, but human custom also dictates that ladies should be served first. So, I'll serve you and then Dr McCoy and then we'll eat. Give me the fish slice, Bones."

T'Kar smiled and accepted the plate.

They ate slowly, savouring each mouthful, "Are you feeling better?" she asked gently, turning to Jim.

"Yes, thank you," he smiled, "Thank you for finding Dr McCoy."

"I think he found me," T'Kar replied.

"Do you have any celebratory plans for your birthday?" Jim asked.

"Well, apart from seeing the lawyer, no." T'Kar replied.

"Are you nervous about seeing him?" Leonard asked.

"A bit," T'Kar admitted, "I'm afraid that the

information I discover will affect my life in ways I can't imagine."

"Whatever it is, surely it can't be as frightening as saving me," Jim said.

"I don't know," T'Kar replied, "I don't know why it's been kept a secret until I was twenty-one."

"Perhaps she felt at twenty-one you would have more maturity than you did at eighteen." Leonard said gently.

"I think she may have been wrong," T'Kar stabbed her pepper.

"No," Jim said quietly, "I don't. You are a bright and courageous person and whatever terrors this meeting holds for you I think you will overcome them."

"What about your terrors?" she asked turning to Kirk. He shook his head, "I can't remember anything beyond that Klingon attack cruiser, I know that something happened but I'm damned if I can remember it. It's just blank."

"Everything? Or just your last mission?" T'Kar asked curiously.

"I remember when we encountered a man named Lazarus," he smiled wryly, "he was trying to stop an evil version of himself from destroying the universe. But after that--"

"Nothing?" T'Kar queried.

"Nothing." He confirmed. Awkward he looked down at his plate, "It feels completely stupid but there's just a blank space and then the Klingon attack."

“Well you at least seem more amenable to rational conversation today than you were a couple of days ago,” T’Kar said gently.

“It’s because he’s exhausted,” McCoy replied as he finished his *kreila*, “Tomorrow he’ll be his usual irascible self.”

Jim smiled and then yawned, T’Kar smiled, “Bed, I think. We’ll talk about treatment tomorrow.”

“Which lunatic asylum to send me to?” he joked.

“Not quite yet. Let’s see if we can get you talking about how you feel.”

“Starship Captains are supposed to be above that,” he said slowly.

“But they’re not,” T’Kar replied, “I don’t expect you to talk to me, Jim, or even to Dr McCoy – and if I was honest I would say that would not be a good idea, but I do think that you need to talk with someone about this.”

Jim didn’t respond and then T’Kar was rising to her feet, “I’ll show you both to your rooms.”

“Where will you sleep?” Leonard asked.

“Oh I’ll crash on the couch,” T’Kar replied.

“You won’t,” McCoy responded, “I’ll take the couch.” Reluctantly T’Kar raised her hands in submission, “As you wish. Come on, Doctor, I’ll get you some bed linen.”

“See you in the morning,” Kirk smiled and they heard the door of the guest bedroom close.

“You really think that he should talk to someone,” Leonard asked.

“Some cogent amnesia is permissible,” T’Kar said slowly, “after a serious accident when cognizant memory of an accident may never fully return, but this is different. It is sometimes known as a Psychogenic Fugue State where the mind blocks out a traumatic event. I know he’s a starship Captain and must be seen to be almost superhuman, but if he can’t talk about this he’ll lose his command.”

“You really think so?” McCoy looked shocked.

“You know so. A starship Captain must almost be beyond reproach, beyond the human world almost. If he cannot remember an event related to a mission and deal with the turmoil it causes then he cannot command a starship.”

“Who would you recommend?” Bones asked.

“I’ll let you talk to Dr M’Benga in the morning,” T’Kar said quietly, “this is something that should be decided between the two of you. Actually it would be better decided between the three of you.”

“What will you do?” McCoy asked gently.

“Are you kidding?” She laughed, “I can go back to normal work. It’ll be wonderful!”

“You’ve been a rock you know, these past two days.” Bones said slowly, “I don’t know what we would have done without you.”

“But I don’t know why,” T’Kar replied, “and that is as worrying as the power itself.”

“Yes.” McCoy nodded, “I do understand that. Don’t

worry, we'll keep your secret.”

“Thank you,” she smiled, despite everything she yawned suddenly.

“Go to bed,” McCoy said firmly.

Stripping she pulled on a light nightshirt and crawled between the sheets. She was asleep before her head hit the pillow.

She woke slowly, the early morning sun shone through a crack in the curtains and she stared at it for a few moments wondering what time it was. Then sighing she lifted herself out of bed.

McCoy was still asleep on the sofa and she regarded him quietly for a couple of minutes and then she padded through to the kitchen. She was making herself a cup of Vulcan mocha when she heard Kirk say, “Did you sleep well?”

She turned and smiled, “Yes thank you. Want breakfast?”

“I can make my own if you have terran food.”

“Cupboard with the blue sticker on it,” T’Kar replied, “Terran milk in the fridge, same colour label.”

“What will you have?”

“Mine’s in the cupboard with the green sticker, and the same for my milk in the fridge,” she grinned, “I colour coded them about 6 months ago. It occurred to me that if I had Terran friends come over then it was important that I not poison them.”

Jim laughed, “Yeah, I can understand that.”

They helped themselves to both Terran and Vulcan equivalents of cereal and coffee. T'Kar looked at Captain Kirk and asked, "What are your plans this morning?"

Kirk grimaced, "I'll go talk to Dr. M'Benga."

"Is it so bad?" She sighed, "No, don't answer that. Of course it's bad. I suspect that like most men you don't want to talk about it because that's not how the male psyche works. Men who talk about doing things don't 'do them', so asking you to talk about your problems is not really what you want to hear. You want to go out and fight them."

"Given the choice I'd prefer to wait," he scowled. "And see what happens,"

T'Kar sighed, "a mind-meld?"

Kirk looked up at her and said, "I doubt you would want that."

"It would not be easy," T'Kar replied, "But if it restored your mind, then I would have to live with it."

Kirk shook his head, "We'll try the other way first. I know how much you want to keep this other *life*, secret."

Chapter 4

“Well, not secret exactly,” T’Kar replied, “obviously I’ll have to tell someone sooner or later, at the moment I’d rather it was later because I really don’t know how to handle this ability.”

Kirk nodded, “I don’t think I can be of much help if I’m honest, given the choice I’d shout what you did for me and Bones from every rooftop in ShiKahr, but that’s not possible either is it?”

T’Kar shook her head, “Sorry.”

Jim sighed, “So, it’s your birthday in three days? Are you going to have a celebration after you’ve seen the lawyer? I’m sure that Leonard or I would be delighted to take you to dinner.”

“Now don’t start fighting over me, Jim,” T’Kar warned, “you can’t ask me to choose between you and Leonard, I like you both.”

“Then both of us will take you out,” Jim promised, “you can tell me all about the lawyer and I can tell you how my treatment’s going.”

“You’ll go and talk to Dr M’Benga?” T’Kar stopped with a spoonful of cereal halfway to her mouth, “I didn’t think you’d go for it.”

Kirk scowled, “I’m not sure I have much choice if I want to get my ship back. All I ask is that you stay with

me.”

“I will speak with Dr M’Benga,” T’Kar said, “although he may prefer a more specialised nurse, one who has psychiatric experience to deal with your case.”

“I don’t need to be babied,” Kirk scowled and took a sip of his coffee, “I want a friend, someone who will stick by me when nothing’s working and I can’t remember and all I want to do is to scream and shout. I need someone who will shout back at me and tell me that I’m being an idiot.”

“Like I did last night when you went looking for Dr McCoy?” T’Kar raised a dark eyebrow and Jim smiled.

“Is there any breakfast?” McCoy came into the kitchen, running a hand through his still sleep-tousled hair.

“There’s cereal in the cupboard with the blue sticker,” Kirk replied, “Milk in the fridge, same label.”

“Would you like something cooked?” T’Kar asked.

“Cereal’s fine,” McCoy smiled, “How long have you been up?”

“Twenty minutes or so,” Jim smiled, “we’re just debating when to visit Dr M’Benga and talk to him about treatment.”

“He’d know more about them,” McCoy agreed, “although I know some of them if you’re interested.”

Kirk scowled and played with his breakfast, “Bones, I know I have to do this but-”

T’Kar smiled, “I understand, Jim, I do. This is why I don’t think it would be a good idea for me to be involved with you any longer. You are the debonair, charming,

Starship captain and this is going to show the cracks in your armour. I think you would prefer it if things stayed that way.”

“Maybe not this time,” Jim looked up and T’Kar was stunned by the intensity in the hazel eyes, “you’ve already seen beneath my ‘armour’ – as I have beneath yours. Whichever course of treatment I pursue I want you by my side.”

T’Kar looked from one to the other and swallowed hard, “If you’re asking me to be your lover-”

“No,” Jim shook his head tiredly, “I’ve never had much luck with women whenever I’ve visited this planet. If they decide to use drugs I want you in the room to hold my hand, I need someone I can trust.”

“But you’ve got your friends,” T’Kar stared at him bemused, “you’ve trusted your life to them many times.”

“But not my soul,” Jim replied sombrely.

T’Kar risked a quick look at Leonard McCoy and thought *He knows! He knows and it’s killing him to keep this from his friend.* Swallowing she replied, “All right. But I must speak to Dr M’Benga and abide by his judgement.”

McCoy bent to his cereal and said, “I hope that he agrees.”

When Kirk had finished his cereal he asked quietly, “Would you mind if I used your shower?”

“Go ahead,” T’Kar nodded, “Leave your bowl, I’ll clear up when I’ve finished.”

When they were alone she looked over the top of her spoon at Dr McCoy, “You know why he has amnesia don’t you?” she said gently, “I can feel the guilt boiling off you in waves.”

“Yes,” McCoy said softly, almost too softly to hear, “the whole episode was my fault.”

“How so?”

“I injected myself with cordrazine,” Leonard replied, “and we ended up in another place and time and Jim made the hardest decision of his life. I don’t think I will ever be able to forgive myself.”

T’Kar laid a hand on his, “Perhaps you need therapy too. Someone to talk you through this.”

“Not until Jim’s memory is restored.” McCoy said firmly.

“You said that he seemed to be all right,” T’Kar frowned. “And then there was the encounter with the Klingon vessel. I take it you came through pretty much unscathed.”

“A K’t’inga class warship decloaked off our port bow,” McCoy replied, “she fired on us.”

“Injuries?”

“Minor,” McCoy replied, “or at least we thought so. Her guns had been disabled and we thought she’d probably surrender, except that she didn’t. She self-destructed.”

“And-”

“Well as she self-destructed the Captain was standing next to the science console. It exploded. Jim was left with

lacerations and burns across his chest but nothing serious, nothing that would cause this. We got him into sickbay and I treated the injuries-”

“And that’s where it all went wrong?”

McCoy nodded, “I couldn’t stop the deterioration. His brain waves just started to fail and I couldn’t stabilize them. I couldn’t work out what was wrong and then Spock suggested the Vulcan Academy of Sciences.”

T’Kar sighed, “And I don’t know what I did either, which I admit doesn’t help at all.”

McCoy smiled and took her hand, “That doesn’t matter, I’m just glad you were here. More than glad if I’m honest.”

“Ah, flattery will get you everywhere, Leonard,” T’Kar smiled.

“I just wish I could do more.”

T’Kar bit her lip and nearly demanded that he find her a place aboard the *Enterprise* but pushed the thought to the back of her mind and shook her head, “Let’s just get the Captain well and then go from there.”

McCoy nodded, “All right. Can I jump into the shower after Jim?”

“Go ahead,” T’Kar stood up and began gathering the dishes, “I’ll wash up.”

She was quietly humming to herself as she gathered the utensils together when she heard Jim’s voice behind her, “Can I help?” he asked.

T’Kar turned and to Jim’s surprise a slight smile curved her mouth, the lips relaxed and she said, “Sorry, you’re

probably not used to Vulcans smiling.”

“It’s a bit incongruous,” Jim replied, “to say the least. After all don’t you Vulcans pride yourselves on having no emotions?”

“It has never been a case of having *no* emotions,” T’Kar replied, “or at least I have never thought so. I have always believed that it is a matter of being able to divorce your emotions from the situation. That of course causes half the problems between Vulcans and Terrans.”

“You think so?” Jim looked at her surprised.

“Well think about it,” she said, “when someone you care about is hurt, injured or dying, the hardest thing to do is to make any decision without your emotions coming into play. That is the one advantage that we have by being Vulcan, an ability to set one’s emotions aside. It isn’t pleasant and it isn’t easy and we get labelled as being cold and uncaring.”

Jim stared at her, as if seeing her for the first time, “My God,” he murmured, “I think you’ve hit the nail on the head.” He laughed, “and you say you’re no psychologist.”

“I’m not,” T’Kar replied, “but I do have a couple of advantages. I was brought up as a Terran although my father insisted that I learn some Vulcan meditation techniques and also that I undergo the trial of strength because if I did not I would gain no respect from any of my peers. Half-Vulcans can still be regarded with suspicion so in that respect he was right.”

“How do you do it?”

T'Kar shrugged, "Because I must, and it is half my heritage. It is doubly hard to stand in two worlds you know. You cannot be one thing or another and neither side truly accepts you as their own. Perhaps in that respect Vulcans are better. Despite me being more inclined to my Terran side than my Vulcan I have never felt such xenophobia from Vulcans as I have on occasion from Terrans."

"You'd think that in the twenty-fourth century we'd be above that," Jim smiled wryly, "but I am afraid that it is not so."

McCoy came out of the bathroom looking marginally more refreshed, "Better?" T'Kar asked.

"Much," McCoy smiled, "I guess we'd better head for the hospital."

"Yeah," Jim scowled, "let's go."

Jim watched the young, capable woman as she manoeuvred the ground car along the streets of ShiKahr,

"Any word from Mr Spock?" Jim asked.

"We spoke this morning before you were awake," T'Kar said, "he'll meet us at the hospital, my guess is that he could sit in with your session with Dr M'Benga if you wish."

"Actually I'd rather it was just you," Jim said thoughtfully.

"Are you sure?" T'Kar stopped the ground car and turned to look at him, "I'm sure that Dr. McCoy would be a better choice."

“I want you,” Jim insisted.

T’Kar looked at both of them, her gaze flicking from one to the other until finally Dr McCoy nodded, “All right, I agree. But any problems-”

“I’ll come and find you,” T’Kar promised. She sighed softly, she had a sneaking suspicion that Spock also knew the intimate details of their last mission and he wasn’t talking either. *Something bad happened*, she thought, *something that threatens not only to break their friendship but also to cripple it*. Sighing she turned her attention back to the road and wondered if she was making the right decision.

Dr M’Benga was waiting for them, “Are you sure about this, Jim,” his dark face was sombre, “I would have recommended at least a week’s rest before we started on any programme like this.”

“I need to know what happened,” Jim said shortly, “I don’t want to lose my command and if I don’t find out what went wrong and how to deal with it I’m going to.”

“There is a drug that might help,” M’Benga steepled his hands in front of his face, “but it has dangerous side effects.”

“Will it work?” Jim asked.

“Seventy percent possibility,” M’Benga replied. “But there’s also the thirty percent probability that it’ll leave you with brain damage.”

“I’ll risk it,” Kirk said, his hazel eyes dark.

“Jim! You can’t – the risk – ” to T’Kar’s surprise it was

Spock who'd spoken.

Kirk turned and T'Kar thought that something passed between them before Kirk shook his head, "Spock, I know that you and Bones know what happened and for whatever reason you feel you can't tell me – but I have to find out – or I'll go mad."

Spock nodded and T'Kar saw a shuttered look pass across his face and the dark eyes became unfathomable. "All right, Jim."

"How soon can we arrange this?" Kirk asked, turning back to Dr M'Benga, "and I want T'Kar there. I trust her."

"She's not a psychiatric nurse, Captain," M'Benga warned.

"I trust her," Kirk replied stonily. "I want her there."

T'Kar swallowed hard and looked across at Dr M'Benga, "I don't want to ruffle any feathers-"

Jabilo frowned again, "I'll agree to the procedure provisionally. But I'd like a word with T'Kar in private if I may."

The men nodded and then they were alone, M'Benga sighed, "What have you done?" he asked.

"I really don't know," T'Kar lied, "I mean there was last night but-"

"What happened last night?"

T'Kar licked her lips, "I found Dr McCoy out walking so I invited him back to my apartment. We were just sitting down to dinner when the Captain showed up." For the first time in her life she prayed that the lie would hold and he'd

believe her.

“I thought you were supposed to spend your evenings in meditation,” Jabilo replied, “don’t tell me you were looking for someone.”

“Just trying to keep myself occupied,” T’Kar lied, “I know I was supposed to be in meditation but I couldn’t concentrate. This damned meeting with the lawyer is doing my head in.”

“I know, I know.” M’Benga smiled, “so, you were about to sit down to dinner and the Captain turns up on your doorstep. What happened next?”

“Well he’d gone looking for Dr McCoy,” T’Kar explained, “I think he’d even walked partway into the desert because he collapsed on us when he arrived and saw the doctor was safe. I told him he was an idiot.” She added.

“Yes, well he’s Captain Kirk,” M’Benga said, as if that explained everything. He ran a hand across his face, “I’m not even sure that you should be involved.”

“To be honest, Jabilo, nor am I.” T’Kar replied, “I know that Captain Kirk wants me with him, although I think that Dr McCoy or even Mr Spock would be better choices than I would.”

“Perhaps,” M’Benga smiled, “but he wants you, and I should warn you T’Kar, Captain Kirk usually gets what he wants.”

“I had noticed,” T’Kar smiled, “so? Do we agree to let me sit in despite both our misgivings or not?”

M’Benga nodded, “I would rather that you had

misgivings than were certain sure. I agree with provisos.”

“And these are?” T’Kar felt her mouth suddenly go dry.

“This is a dangerous procedure and it is possible that it could cause more harm, if I ask you to leave the room I want your solemn promise that you will do so. You are a civilian and therefore not privy to some of the classified information in Starfleet.”

T’Kar stood up and said quietly, “There is a way around that you know.”

M’Benga shook his head, “It isn’t a solution I want to consider. You can’t take the Starfleet Oath and then rescind it. It is binding and once taken you will be an enlisted member of Starfleet. Do you understand that, T’Kar? You’ll probably have to leave Vulcan and you could end up anywhere.”

“I think I knew that,” T’Kar said slowly, “so did you, which is why you haven’t suggested it again.”

“It was the wrong suggestion.” M’Benga replied, “You could have a bright future in Starfleet – if you were to be sworn in, just for this one case it could destroy you.”

“What would they do?”

“I don’t know,” M’Benga replied, “I just don’t think that it’s right to drop you into this situation.”

“Then maybe I should look at the literature,” T’Kar replied, “make up my own mind. Isn’t that my choice?”

“Will you remember that when you’re serving out your three years on some mining world like Alcanor?” M’Benga replied sharply, “Starfleet takes a very dim view of

someone being sworn in on a whim. They generally take reprisals.”

“Then perhaps the question should be, ‘Is this man worth it?’” T’Kar sighed, “And I am afraid that the answer is ‘I do not know’.”

“I cannot help you with either,” Jabilo replied, “however I think that for now, you can ‘sit in’ with us. It would ease the Captain’s mind and for this procedure he must be calm.”

“I have read some of the literature,” T’Kar replied, “it is dangerous isn’t it?”

“All procedures are dangerous,” M’Benga replied, “this one doubly so. You know enough about cogent amnesia after an accident to know why.”

“There’s usually some memory loss,” T’Kar frowned, “sometimes the actual memory of losing consciousness, or even the accident itself is lost, but when a large chunk of memory has disappeared with no apparent reason then it is usually due to some trauma that the subject can’t face. Usually the appropriate treatment is to allow the subject to rest and allow them to come to terms with what’s happened. But not in this case.”

“No, not in this case,” M’Benga smiled wearily. “I need to read up on the merits of using feromazone – and so do you if you’re going to assist me.”

The three men were waiting outside when they emerged, Leonard took her arm, “Are you all right?” he asked solicitously, “Dr M’Benga didn’t upset you did he?”

“No, he just vocalized what we’d both been thinking.” T’Kar swallowed.

Bones eyed her thoughtfully, “Why don’t I believe you?” he said quietly.

“You know us Vulcans too well,” T’Kar replied slowly.

“Spock, will you and the Captain be all right if I take T’Kar for a coffee somewhere?” McCoy asked quickly.

“I should think so, Doctor.” Spock replied, raising a sardonic eyebrow. “Might I suggest a cafe near my father’s house. I believe we visited it during our last shore leave.”

“We’ll see you at home,” T’Kar said quietly, “all right?”

Jim nodded, “I want you with me.” He said urgently and then did something that froze T’Kar in place, he took her face in his hands and stared into her eyes, “Please.”

McCoy looked over the top of T’Kar’s head and for a fleeting instant saw a look of shock pass across Spock’s face before the usual Vulcan impassiveness returned.

Kirk’s eyes closed and he bent his head to press it against her forehead, “Please.” He begged.

From somewhere beyond herself T’Kar found her voice, “Yes.”

A sigh escaped from the body of the man holding her and he murmured, “Thank you.” Letting her go he stepped back and managed a half-hearted smile.

Surprising herself T’Kar stepped forward and took his hands, “Let’s go home,” she said kindly, “we’ll talk there.”

Jim dozed in the ground car, T’Kar sat next to him, her

hand gently holding his own. Spock watched her from dark eyes, his lips tightening. Eventually they arrived at Sarek's and T'Kar helped Kirk from the vehicle.

"Come on," she said gently, "we'll have a drink and then talk."

The house was cool and quiet, T'Kar turned to see Spock gently take McCoy's arm and lead him away from the house. She managed a quick nod at him before she closed the door and then she was easing Captain Kirk into one of the chairs and poured him a glass of juice. "Here," she said, "Drink this."

He looked up at her and took the glass, she noticed that his hand was shaking and put her own over it until it steadied. "You understand why I want to do this, don't you?" he said urgently.

T'Kar poured herself another glass of juice and then sat opposite, "Yes. Believe it or not I do."

"I'm sorry for that display at the hospital, but Dr M'Benga had you in there for a long time and I thought he was trying to convince you not to be involved."

"He's not ecstatic," T'Kar replied, "but he's agreed – provisionally."

Kirk nodded, leaning his head back he closed his eyes, "I know that what I'm asking is dangerous, but I can't go on like this. I need to find out why I can't remember our last mission."

T'Kar stood up and took his hand, "You need sleep," she said gently, "we can talk later. I promise."

Reluctantly he nodded and then allowed her to lead him to the bedroom. He lay down on top of the bed and she stood up to leave, he reached out to take her hand, "Would you stay for a bit."

T'Kar sat down, keeping hold of his hand, "Try to go to sleep, we'll have a talk later."

Kirk nodded and closed his eyes. T'Kar watched him for a few moments and then attempted to stand up but Kirk refused to relinquish her hand. She was reminded of a little boy, frightened by nightmares. Sighing she sat down again, "All right," she said softly, "I'll stay."

The shadows in the room began to lengthen and she bent forward to light one of the lamps. Kirk shifted position on the bed and again she tried to disengage her hand but again his hand refused to release hers. Sighing she bent over him again and gently touched his forehead with the back of her hand. To her shock, his body seemed to relax further and he settled deeper into slumber. She lifted her hand and stared at it in consternation, *Whatever connection she and Captain Kirk had it was becoming increasingly disturbing.*

Gently she extricated her hand from his and then sat for what seemed a very long time staring at the wall. *What the hell was going on? How could she do this – and why could she do this?* Getting to her feet she walked through to the lounge to fetch another drink. As she was pouring it, the door opened. T'Kar looked up to see her adoptive parents walk in, followed by Dr McCoy and Spock. She managed

to compose her face but something must have alerted Dr McCoy because he was suddenly at her side, she vaguely recalled turning her head to look at him and then another pair of hands were removing the glass of juice from her own.

She swallowed and then a pair of gentle hands were helping her to sit down. She blinked and looked down into Dr McCoy's concerned face, a gentle hand was on her wrist, and she heard him speaking, "Could someone get me a glass of water, please."

T'Kar thought she could hear Amanda and Sarek speaking quietly but all her attention was focused on McCoy's face, he looked almost stricken and she couldn't work out why. He must have felt her gaze on him because he looked up at her and a smile lit up the blue eyes, "You spaced out for a bit there. Have you eaten today?"

Surprising herself she shook her head and had to smile when he rolled his eyes, "You may have more stamina than humans, but you're not superhuman."

Spock was suddenly standing at her shoulder, a glass of water in his hand, she looked up into his face and caught something of the same look, she frowned, puzzled, she felt a bit off-colour but nothing worth worrying about. She looked up and caught the same look of shock etched on Sarek's face.

Quietly her foster father drew Amanda aside and T'Kar watched disinterested as they spoke urgently. Amanda shook her head, quickly, abruptly and then just as

suddenly, her head fell. Then she was kneeling on the carpet at T'Kar's feet, taking T'Kar's hands in her own, "We had hoped that you would be spared this. You never showed any sign—"

"What is it?" Dr McCoy was drawing Amanda to her feet.

Amanda's voice dropped but T'Kar heard the words as clearly as if they'd been shouted across the room, "*Pon farr.*"

T'Kar saw everyone suddenly become very still and then Dr McCoy spoke suddenly into the silence, "I can handle this."

Spock looked at him quickly, "Doctor I don't think—"

"I know, Spock," McCoy said sharply, "I know."

T'Kar swallowed hard, her voice having deserted her,

Then McCoy was drawing her to her feet, "Don't worry about the Captain," he said quickly, "Spock and the others will take care of him, it's you we need to look after now."

Amanda touched his arm as they were leaving, "Are you certain, Leonard, once she enters *plak tow*, there will be no reasoning with her. I do not wish her to hurt you."

"Is there another choice?" McCoy asked, "and I trust her." *With my life*, he thought. He turned to T'Kar, "Ready," he asked softly. They were silent on the journey to her apartment, Leonard gently touched her leg, "I am sorry," he said, "but I see no other option."

"I could have gone into ShiKahr," she said in a small voice. "There are places for this. Another Vulcan would be

more prepared than you. I could kill you.”

“You won’t do that,” he assured her.

T’Kar managed a weak nod and then he was getting out of the car and coming around to open her door, “All right?” he asked.

She swallowed, “I’m afraid, I don’t know what’ll happen.”

“It’ll be all right.” Leonard took her hand and tucked it under his arm, T’Kar had to fight to suppress a smile, it was such a human gesture of reassurance.

Once inside he gently took her hands and drew her into the bedroom, she swallowed and looked up at him, “I know this will be strange-”

For an answer Leonard bent his head and kissed her, she slipped her arms around him and kissed him back, feeling his tongue snake between her lips. She moaned softly, the fever was rising now and she wasn’t sure how long she could control herself. To her surprise she was scooped up in his arms and his lips were hard on hers as he carried her into the bedroom. Before the fire took her, she remembered him laying her down on the bed, and then she was engulfed in flames.

Vulcans never spoke about the Pon Farr, for the male Vulcans she knew it was because it was uncontrollable, violent, an echo of their distant past and females she’d always thought because a violent woman was deeply unfeminine and scary to most men. She’d expected fire and heat and an overpowering desire to be one with the man

*next to her. What she hadn't expected was the mental bonding. His mouth on hers, and then their thoughts seemed to slide together and she was back in the hospital room, sitting next to Kirk's comatose body. **So this is how you did it.** She heard McCoy's laugh in her mind and then she was in his, standing next to him as he knelt next to a Horta, feeling his uncertainty as he stared at the gaping hole in the creature's side. The image of him using the same material as an emergency shelter to coat the wound and he felt a sudden burst of pride from her as she saw it. She was aware of his mouth on hers and then sensation took over. The feel of his hand on her breast, his lips on her mouth. He raised himself from her and for an instant the control was back before she lifted a shaking hand to cup his cheek, blue eyes stared into black ones and then his mouth was coming down hard on hers, she felt his hand slide down her side and then thought was lost in feeling.*

She came to herself slowly, she was lying on her side in her double bed an arm around her midriff. She rolled onto her side to see Leonard regarding her quizzically, "I'm sorry-" she began.

He leant forward and kissed her, "Don't be sorry. I've wanted to do this since I saw you in the desert."

"Circumstances could have been better," T'Kar commented.

"Circumstances could always have been better," McCoy laughed, he gathered her up into his arms and drew her close. "We should get up," he said quietly.

T'Kar reached up and took his face in her hands, "Did I hurt you?" she asked softly.

McCoy shook his head, "No. I was more worried that I'd hurt you." He reached up to stroke the damp hair away from her forehead, "We should get up, the others will be worried about us."

T'Kar laughed softly, "I have heard tales of women in the throes of *pon farr* who kept their menfolk chained to their beds for an entire week."

Leonard laughed and then pulling her closer, kissed her firmly, "Promise not to do that to me," he murmured against her ear.

T'Kar snuggled closer and stroked the hair away from his cheek, "Oh it might be fun someday," she murmured, before kissing him back. They parted and McCoy smiled,

"Are we bonded now?"

"Only if we had been promised in marriage," T'Kar said quietly, "we will have a residue of what we shared, probably for a lifetime."

"I could live with that," McCoy smiled, "it was not unpleasant."

T'Kar had a sudden memory of flipping him over, of her hands on his shoulders, holding him down on the mattress and kissing him fiercely as if possessed by demons. She blushed, an olive flush suffusing her cheeks.

McCoy eyed her thoughtfully, "Remembered something?"

She nodded and he gently stroked her arm, "Trust me,

you didn't hurt me. I was a bit taken aback by the ferocity of your 'lovemaking' but I've seen enough people in the throes of *pon farr* to realise that they have no control over what they're doing. I wouldn't have volunteered if I hadn't known what I was getting into. I promise."

"I think you very gallant, Leonard," T'Kar replied, her hand gently resting on the back of his neck.

McCoy smiled, "Well I could stay in bed with you all day, but I think that we better get back to Sarek's house."

"You said that Dr M'Benga was willing to let you sit in on Captain Kirk's sessions with provisos, what were the provisos?"

"He was concerned that the Captain might talk of confidential matters while under the influence of the drugs," T'Kar replied, "and he felt that I shouldn't be privy to that. I did have a solution, but he isn't keen, says that it would ruin my career."

"Enlist you as Starfleet personnel?" McCoy replied.

"How did you know?" T'Kar gasped.

"Because it's what I would have thought of," McCoy replied, "but I can understand his reluctance. Starfleet do tend to take a very dim view of people being sworn in on a whim."

"Not even for James Kirk?" T'Kar asked softly. "Trust me, he's special. When men speak of the *Enterprise*, they will speak of him in the same breath. All three of you in fact will not just be part of history, you will *write* history."

McCoy laughed, "You think so?"

T'Kar shook her head and for a moment her eyes had a faraway look, "No, I know so."

Chapter 5

McCoy drew the vehicle up outside Sarek's house and gazed at her, "Is it some sort of prescience at work? Do all Shatry'u have it?"

"I suppose," T'Kar sighed, "It's not a concrete ability. I know that you three are special but I can't pinpoint it to a specific year or date or time. And because the future is a fluid existence, even that is in some doubt. As is mine. As was said to me, 'there is also the possibility that I may not ascend to become Shatry'a'."

McCoy looked at her for a long moment, he could still see the wildness in her that had been there the night before during *pon farr* but there was something else, something powerful that reminded him of a panther, "I no longer doubt that," he said quietly, "I think you will rise like a Teresh-ka."

She laughed and he held out his index and middle fingers, "Attend me," he said softly.

A soft gasp came from her and she laid hers on his, "We'd better go inside," she responded.

Amanda was sitting reading when Spock opened the door to them, Kirk and Sarek were attempting to play tridimensional chess in a corner of the room. T'Kar was relieved to see that his colour had improved. He looked up and a smile of relief crossed his face when he saw

her, “T’Kar!”

“Good morning,” she said, “Are you feeling better?” Kirk stopped in front of her, “I am sorry for my behaviour at the hospital yesterday,” he said, “it was totally unacceptable.”

“There is no offence where none is taken,” T’Kar replied.

“What do we do now?” Kirk asked.

“I think we need to discuss the procedure Dr M’Benga wants to use to try and unlock that blank space in your mind,” T’Kar said, “and you will need to agree to it.”

Kirk looked at her for a moment, “You’re worried about it.”

“I need to read up on feromazone,” T’Kar replied, “You need training to use it, it’s a controlled substance and can turn your brain inside out like an empty paper bag.”

“You don’t like it,” Kirk said slowly.

“Will it work?” Dr McCoy brought them both a glass of juice and then brought his own across, he watched her face and then said gently, “talk to me, tell me your fears.”

“If the subject is not handled correctly then it can cause even more trauma resulting in psychotic behaviour.”

“Do you doubt Dr M’Benga?” Spock asked quietly, “or is it yourself you doubt?”

“I doubt that I am the right person to be present when he uses this drug,” T’Kar clarified. “What if I say the wrong thing? What if I react badly when the Captain is under the feromazone’s influence?”

“As I said before, I trust you,” James Kirk smiled and for a moment looked almost like his old self.

T’Kar looked across at McCoy, “Why do I get the feeling that I’m not going to be able to talk you out of this crazy idea?”

“Because you’re not,” Jim replied, the boyish grin reappearing on his face, “I want you by my side –”

“And what James Kirk wants, James Kirk gets,” T’Kar rolled her eyes and stood up, “one day that is going to backfire.”

Spock nodded, “I have attempted to explain this logically to him, T’Kar, but he is James Kirk.”

“I’ve heard someone else say something similar,” T’Kar replied, she smiled, “You are incorrigible.”

McCoy smiled at her, “That’s part of his charm.”

She just looked at him and shook her head, “Not this time. All right, I agree – but as Dr M’Benga has suggested there will be provisos and I shall abide by his word.”

“What next?” Jim asked.

“I’ll call Dr M’Benga and arrange for Jim to be admitted to hospital tomorrow and the treatment can begin the day after that. You’ll have to make yourself available.” McCoy said.

“Don’t forget I have a meeting with my lawyer that morning,” T’Kar replied.

“I hadn’t forgotten,” Leonard replied, “I was going to suggest that we just spend the remainder of today relaxing.”

Reluctantly, T'Kar nodded, "All right. If Spock's agreeable I'd like to take Jim out to the lava fields, show him a bit more of Vulcan than the hospital and of course this house."

"I think that would be perfect," Amanda replied, "I'll pack you a hamper."

"Leonard?" she turned to him.

McCoy smiled, "Go. I'll need to discuss everything with Jabilo anyway."

"Spock?" T'Kar turned to the man she always considered a brother.

His dark eyes held hers and he nodded, "I think that would be a good idea, T'Kar. I have some physics papers I have not finished reading. Don't stay out too late – and don't forget to use sunscreen."

T'Kar rolled her eyes, "We won't."

Twenty minutes later Kirk was helping with a large picnic hamper as Amanda saw them off, "Do try not to get into any trouble," she said quietly.

"We'll do our best," Kirk promised.

"I wasn't talking to you," Amanda replied with a sly smile.

When they were in the ground car, Jim turned to the woman sitting next to him, "Do you think Amanda knows about you?"

"I think that she might suspect something," T'Kar smiled, "Never underestimate a mother. Even if she is a foster-mother."

“Ah,” Jim smiled, “You know my mother was the same. She always knew if I’d been naughty, even if she didn’t know what. I think it’s a knack that mothers have.”

“Or some magic all their own,” T’Kar replied thoughtfully.

They reached the lava fields an hour later, T’Kar took a bottle of sunscreen and handed it to Kirk, “Put some of this on,” she ordered, “Spock would be furious with me if I was to allow you to get sunburned on top of everything else.”

Kirk smiled tautly and took the bottle from her, smearing the viscous, pearl-covered liquid onto his arms he saw that it was absorbed almost immediately. He handed the bottle back to T’Kar and watched as she did the same thing, “I thought that Vulcans were naturally sun-resistant?”

“Yes, but our skin can still be sun-damaged,” T’Kar replied, “I’ll set up the parasol anyway. Wait here.”

Kirk watched as she erected the large parasol and then spread a cloth beneath it. She returned to the ground car and opened the door, “You can help me with lunch.”

They sat beneath the shade and looked out at the scenery, T’Kar unpacked their lunch and Jim said slowly,

“What did Dr M’Benga say to you yesterday?”

T’Kar looked up from pouring the drinks, “You really want to know?”

Jim nodded and she sighed, “All right. He’s not all that keen on using a drug to unlock repressed memory – nor is he terribly keen on me being present.”

“Reason?”

“I’m not a trained psychiatric nurse, nor am I an enlisted member of Starfleet,” T’Kar explained.

“Well as far as I’m concerned you being a psychiatric nurse doesn’t matter,” Kirk replied, “and the situation with Starfleet can be remedied.”

“And what do I do when I’m enlisted as an Ensign?” she replied, “After it’s all over?”

Kirk took the cup from her and looked out across the burning landscape in front of them, “You don’t want to serve in Starfleet?”

“I’d prefer to do it the traditional way,” T’Kar replied, “journey to earth, enrol in Starfleet Academy – you know the usual drill.”

“But that can be remedied,” Kirk said slowly, as he sipped his drink, “and you can still attend the Academy – but I would have thought you would have preferred to go here, on Vulcan.”

“To join Starfleet one must go to Earth,” T’Kar replied, “and I wanted to join Starfleet – or I thought I did.”

Kirk took one of the sandwiches and looked out across the trails of lava snaking out across the landscape, “You don’t want to join Starfleet?”

“I don’t know,” T’Kar replied, as she took another sandwich.

Kirk smiled, “It is still worth considering you know. It gave me purpose and for that I’m eternally grateful.”

“Even if they take your command away,” T’Kar raised

an eyebrow.

“We’ll sort that,” Kirk replied with confidence, “with you by my side I can do anything.”

T’Kar shook her head, “You flatter me, Captain.”

“No, I don’t.” Kirk shook his head, “You brought me through the fire and if anyone can bring me through the shadow it is you.”

T’Kar laughed, “I am not that wonderful, Captain. And you forget, I have my own problems too. Not least of which is this strange power that erupted to heal you.”

“Yes I know,” Kirk sighed, “Are those Pla-savas?”

T’Kar looked down at the blue-black fruits she was holding and nodded, “Here.”

Kirk took it and lifting it to his lips bit into the flesh.

Taking the fruit away from his lips T’Kar saw the apricot coloured interior and suddenly felt her mouth water. She handed Kirk a napkin and then bit into her own Pla-sava.

When they were sated they sat looking out at the vista in front of them and T’Kar said gently, “Do you think we should start heading back?”

Kirk sighed and replied, “You live on an extraordinary world, T’Kar.”

“I am beginning to realise that, Captain.” She replied as she packed up the hamper. She stood up to put it back in the car and Jim heard a soft gasp, he turned to look over his shoulder and saw the creatures behind them. “Oh God,” he murmured softly.

To his surprise T'Kar set the hamper on the ground and then knelt down. Two of the creatures began pacing towards her. She held out her hand palm up and Kirk watched, speechless in shock as one of them rubbed its head against it. She laughed and then moved her hand to scratch behind its ears.

“What the hell-” he began swallowing hard.

“You can come and give her head a stroke if you like,” T'Kar half turned to smile at him, “just be careful of the claws and the tail.”

“I'd rather not,” Kirk said, blenching slightly. “How the hell do you do that?”

“I thought you'd have guessed the answer to that one,”

She turned to look at him and he swallowed before saying, “That's a le-matya isn't it?”

“She's the Alpha female of this particular group. I'm wanted for something.”

She stood up and held out a hand, “You're going to have to come with me.”

Kirk swallowed and stood up, “I was attacked by a le-matya once – nearly died. Sorry.”

“They scare you,” T'Kar said softly.

“Yes,” Kirk was surprised by the admission.

“You can sit in the ground car if you want,” she replied, “but I have to go.”

Surprising himself Kirk shook his head, “No, I'm coming with you.”

“All right,” she smiled, “Let me put this hamper in the

car.”

She closed the back door and turned to see Jim looking very pale, the le-matya had come up very close behind him and two were sitting either side of him, looking up into his face. “Here,” she said, “Give me your hand. It’ll be all right.”

She took his hand and he managed a wan smile, the le-matya spread out ahead of them and T’Kar and the Captain followed.

“The first time this happened they almost had to drag me to my destination,” she remarked conversationally as they walked down one of the sandy gulleys. “I think I spent most of that journey scared witless.”

“So how do you know now that they want you for something?”

“They found me when Dr McCoy got lost,” she said quietly, “I made it look as though I’d discovered him by accident but it wasn’t quite that simple. A small group of them found me and led me back to Dr McCoy.”

Kirk looked up at the green skinned creatures, some of them were pacing along the ridges above them and three or four were ahead of them, “How can you do this?” he asked suddenly.

“I don’t know,” T’Kar replied, “I am tempted to believe that it is part of what I will become but I have never heard of any Shatry’a ever being able to do this.”

“Have you heard of any Shatry’a ever being able to bring back the dead?” Kirk asked.

She glanced at him quickly, he looked better but his eyes were suspiciously bright, “You weren’t dead.”

“Close enough,” Kirk replied.

“There are legends of Shatry’a being able to do such things,” T’Kar said, she managed a half-hearted smile. “On Earth you have an enduring legend of a King Arthur, I believe you call him ‘The Once and Future King’. He is one man who will be reincarnated.”

Kirk nodded, “Yes. Is that what the Shatry’a are to Vulcans?”

“Shatry’ana,” T’Kar corrected, “In a way, although there have been many Shatry’a who have lived on Vulcan. I will inherit the memories of all of them if I choose this. But your King Arthur and the Shatry’ana do have one thing in common.”

“What’s that?” Kirk asked.

“We are both mythological figures who are supposed to usher in a new age,” T’Kar’s lips thinned, “not sure I believe that about Shatry’ana – and as for King Arthur, well I don’t know that much about him.”

“Arthur could be considered a completely different character.” Kirk said softly.

“We’re still mythological figures,” T’Kar gave him a rueful smile, “I’m sorry, Jim. It just worries me.”

“Try not to let it,” he said, gently laying a hand on her shoulder, “try to go with the flow.”

A soft laugh erupted from between her lips, “I shall do my best, Captain.”

The le-matya stopped at the entrance of the cave and stopped looking back their tails whipping back and forth.

“Careful now,” T’Kar said, “they’re somewhat agitated.”

“I can see that,” Kirk said eyeing both animals. I get the feeling that they don’t want me going in there.”

“Hmmm,” T’Kar replied, “but I need you, Jim. Stick close to me.”

He swallowed and took her hand again, “All right.”

“Be strong and of good courage,” T’Kar said softly.

“For the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.” Kirk smiled, “I didn’t know Vulcans read the Bible.”

“It’s always interesting to read old religious texts,” T’Kar replied. “I’ve read the Qur’an, most of the Mahabharata and even The Kitab-i-Iqvan. They are worth reading as literature.”

They ducked into the dimness of the cave and for a few moments they stood together, waiting for their eyes to get used to the dimness. Something moaned in the darkness and they both stiffened, “What the hell is that?”

“Another le-matya,” T’Kar said, “it sounds injured.”

Realization dawned and he whispered, “They want you to heal it.”

“Yes,” T’Kar said. He felt her hand squeeze his own and then she said, “I really need you to stay here this time. The ones outside will not hurt you, but this one might.”

“Wounded animal and all that?” he murmured.

“Yes,” she gave his hand another squeeze, “don’t worry, I’ll be back.”

Kirk felt her move away and then he heard her voice softly murmuring although he couldn’t quite make out what she was saying. Then he heard a soft rumbling and a soft chuckle in her voice, and then he saw the same blue-white light rising in the darkness of the cave. He stared, transfixed as the light rose, becoming brighter and brighter until he had to close his eyes.

“Captain,” T’Kar’s hand was warm in his own and he opened his eyes, “I’m done. Now keep still.”

Kirk felt something warm press against his leg as it exited the cave and he froze in place again. Suddenly T’Kar’s hand was at his waist. His knees buckled and he would have fallen if she hadn’t been holding onto him.

About thirty seconds later he lifted his head from her shoulder and muttered, “Gods, I’m sorry-” and slid into a dead faint.

Thanking all the deities that dwelt in heaven she half-walked, half-carried a semi-conscious Kirk from the cave and eased him down onto the desert floor. The le-matya watched her quietly, their orange eyes seeming to glow. The one she’d healed, the Alpha male lifted its head and whickered softly. She held out her hand and like a domestic cat it walked forward and butted its head against her palm.

About five minutes later Kirk’s eyes flickered and opened, T’Kar gently touched his forehead with the back

of her fingers, “Feeling better?”

“Ah hell,” he muttered as he sat up, “tell me when this will stop.”

“When you don’t have to go through this,” T’Kar replied, “and when you’re stronger.”

“But this isn’t like me,” Kirk replied, he ran a hand through his blond hair, “I’m a Starship Captain-”

“Strong, self-contained, brave, humane-” T’Kar began ticking off attributes on her fingers, and then his hand was closing over hers.

“I’m not quite that good,” he smiled.

T’Kar moved so that she was sitting next to him, “But you must appear to be. That’s the point. I should have made you stay in the ground car”

Kirk looked up, “No, I wouldn’t have missed this for worlds.”

“Now all we have to do is get out of here,” She sighed and looked around, “the le-matya have gone so we should be all right to walk back – if you feel up to it.”

Kirk nodded, “We’d better, otherwise you’ll be in trouble.”

“Otherwise we’ll both be in trouble.” T’Kar replied.

Sighing she stood up and helped the Captain to his feet, he brushed sand from his trousers and looked up,

“What is *that*?” he asked.

She turned and smiled, “That’s our ticket out of here. Come on, I’ll introduce you.”

As they approached Kirk managed a weak smile,

“What is it?”

“It’s called a Kenel,” T’Kar replied, “and all our books tell us that they’re extinct.”

“Mmm,” Kirk smiled, “Does *it* know it’s supposed to be extinct?”

“Now that’s the right question,” T’Kar laughed.

The creature stood while T’Kar knelt next to a foreleg and made a stirrup out of her hands for Kirk to mount, “Grab handfuls of mane to keep yourself stable,” she said, “It won’t like it much, but at least you won’t slide off.”

“Have you ever thought of a saddle and bridle?” he asked looking down at her.

“It’s a wild animal,” T’Kar pointed out, “I doubt I could get it to tolerate either – special animal skills or not.”

“Are you going to mount behind me?”

“I’ll run,” T’Kar replied.

He would always remember that afternoon beneath the blazing sun of Vulcan, the feel of the creature beneath him and the woman running next to him, her feet making little or no sound on the soft sand.

Eventually they stopped at the entrance to the gully and T’Kar looked up at him, sweat was beading her forehead and the dark eyes shone like jewels. He stared down at her totally entranced, “We walk from here, Jim.”

He nodded and dismounted from the Kenel. T’Kar held out a hand and said, “You’ll be all right to walk the last fifty yards to the vehicle?”

“I should think so,” Jim smiled, “any plans for tonight?”

“None that I can think of,” T’Kar replied, “You’re going back into hospital tomorrow and I must spend much of tonight in meditation. Because of what happened today. It gets harder to maintain my Vulcan persona.”

“The mask of non-emotion?” She nodded and he sighed, “you will be all right in front of your family, and others?”

“Yes, I think so,” T’Kar sighed, “Come on, before they send the dogs out after us.”

Spock eyed the Captain thoughtfully when they arrived back at Sarek and Amanda’s house. For the first time in eight days Jim looked more like his usual self. T’Kar on the other hand looked slightly frazzled.

“Did you have a good time?” Amanda asked.

“Your adopted planet is wonderful,” Jim replied, “I haven’t had such a good time in years.”

“I’m glad,” Amanda smiled, “you look almost human again, Captain.”

“Thanks to your daughter,” Jim laughed, “it was a good afternoon, Amanda.”

T’Kar managed a weak smile as she took the glass of water from her mother, “If you will excuse me, I must go and meditate.”

Sarek bowed silently and then she was quietly slipping out of the room. Once inside she leant against the door and let out a long, silent sigh.

“We will leave you in peace to talk,” Sarek said, “I shall come and find you for supper.” And then he was gone.

“What happened, Jim?” McCoy asked quietly.

“It was *enlightening*,” he said slowly, looking at his friend, “Bones, she’s amazing. Bright, brave, brilliant, beautiful.”

“I know,” McCoy said quietly, “you forget a similar thing happened to me. She’s finding it harder to retain control, to be a *pure* Vulcan isn’t she?”

“I’m beginning to get that impression,” Jim sighed and ran a hand through her hair, “she said it was something to do with the fact that if she takes on the mantle of a Shatry’a she will also inherit all the memories of the others.”

“One hell of a burden for a twenty-one year old,” McCoy remarked, “And the *pon farr* would not have helped matters.”

“*Pon farr*?” Kirk looked shocked, “when?”

“Last night,” McCoy smiled, “I volunteered. She did say she could go a place in ShiKahr that caters for such things but I wanted her first time to be with someone she liked and trusted. Spock was out of the question and you weren’t fit. It was me or no-one.”

Kirk stared at his friend perplexed, there had been very few occasions when he’d been speechless in front of McCoy, but this was definitely one of them. It didn’t help that he was beginning to find T’Kar exceptionally attractive too. He ran a hand through his blond hair again, “I’m out of action for a couple of days and the world goes to hell in a handbasket. Are you two bonded now?”

“She said it would only last a few days, but it is a slightly unnerving sensation.” McCoy admitted, “I can feel

her distress from here, although she is beginning to calm down now. Perhaps she can also feel certain emotions from me also.”

“Indubitably, Doctor,” Sarek was suddenly standing behind them, “although a bond made during *pon farr* just to relieve the symptoms of the condition is not binding, the two involved will continue to sense one another’s emotions for a while. It will fade-” he assured them when they turned concerned looks on him, “I promise. Did T’Kar not intimate the same?”

McCoy nodded.

“I saw how you obeyed our customs when you entered the house this morning,” Sarek said, “I know that the bonding was for the sake of ease and convenience but your desire to show her you cared and to do it in Vulcan fashion honours us.”

McCoy smiled, “I could do no less for the House of Sarek,” he replied.

“I came to say that supper is ready, gentlemen. I will go and tell my daughter.” Sarek bowed and left.

Jim cleared his throat, “Did you speak with Dr M’Benga, Bones?”

“I did,” McCoy managed a weary smile, “he’s still not best pleased about T’Kar being present. He feels that she could be a disruptive influence. But he’s acceded to your request.

“Are you sure that she could not be sworn into Starfleet?” Kirk asked, “it would solve most of the

problems.”

“Would that be the best thing for her?” McCoy sighed and went to sit on one of the lounge chairs, “you’ve seen her out in the desert, Jim. She’s special and if we take her away from this then it could kill her.”

“Unlikely,” T’Kar’s voice interrupted their discussion, “when I saw the Shatry’a last, she said that I still had choices and that she would be Shatry’a for a long while yet. I will have to return one day, but that day is far in the future and not set in stone.”

“What would happen if you did not become Shatry’a?” Kirk asked suddenly.

“I’d lose this ability I think,” T’Kar replied, her dark eyes thoughtful, “but it would also be a freedom of sorts, I would be free to pursue whatever life I wanted.”

“In Starfleet?” Kirk asked.

“Or here at the Vulcan Academy of Sciences,” she looked at both of them, “and whatever I choose will be right. I must have faith in that.”

“You won’t be able to do what you did for me,” Jim remarked thoughtfully.

“Perhaps you were a one-off,” T’Kar replied, “as I said, why this sudden power erupted in me now to heal you is still a mystery.”

“But what is the function of these Shatry’a?” Jim asked, Jim asked, “if you have all this power-”

“The word is Shatry’ana.” T’Kar corrected gently, “Again, a good question, the simple answer is ‘I don’t

know', or perhaps that should be, 'I don't know yet', I think it is more to do with keeping the universe in balance, I do not know of anyone who was healed by a Shatry'a although many of the legends relating to such beings are lost – unless they are stored in the collective memories of all the Shatry'a. Perhaps I shall find out, perhaps I'll never find out and never become Shatry'a. The future is a fluid creature, and what *may* be and what *will* be are two completely different things."

McCoy wanted to give her a hug, but simply extended his index and middle finger, Kirk watched as a soft flush crept up T'Kar's cheeks and she did the same, turning her hand palm upwards and then touched her fingertips to his. They stared at each other for a long moment and then McCoy gently broke contact.

"I want to begin treatment tomorrow," Kirk said shortly as they walked into the dining room.

"No," McCoy replied, "the day after tomorrow."

"I think that wise," Amanda looked up at him and smiled, "You seem better today, Captain, but another day's rest would not go amiss."

Jim took the salad bowl from her hands and helped himself, looking down at his plate he sighed, "All right. I'll wait even though I feel as though I should be doing something."

"I have to see the lawyer the day after tomorrow," T'Kar reminded him, "remember the proviso in my mother's will? Give it one more day, Jim, I promise I will

be there.”

McCoy nodded, “All right. Yes I think that would be a good thing. We’ll brief you when you get there – all right?”

Amanda smiled at her daughter, “Are you nervous?” she asked gently.

“A little bit,” T’Kar looked up and her eyes seemed clearer, “it is more frustrating than upsetting. I was afraid and because I was afraid I acted irrationally.”

“Fear does tend to cause that.” Kirk replied, thinking back to the time he’d stumbled into T’Kar’s apartment, his whole being consumed by terror that his friend was lost in the Vulcan desert and at the mercy of all the venomous flora and fauna that lived there.

“And now?” Sarek asked.

“I have problems divorcing myself from the fear,” T’Kar admitted, “but I have examined it and I believe that my fears are groundless.”

Sarek nodded approvingly and then bent to his supper.

Afterwards, Spock borrowed his father’s lyrette and played softly while Kirk and McCoy talked. Meanwhile

T’Kar finished washing up and picked up her bag, “I’ll see you all at the hospital the day after tomorrow.”

McCoy nodded, “I’ll stay here with Jim tonight. Mind if I see you out?”

T’Kar nodded, “I would like that, Leonard.”

At the door he leant forward and kissed her lips, “I know that’s not the Vulcan way,” he said, “but I’ve been

wanting to do that all day.”

She linked her arms around his neck and smiled properly, “You’ll get me in trouble.” She hissed.

“I like being with you,” McCoy said quietly, “and for the time we have together I want to spend as much of it with you as I can.”

T’Kar smiled, “Tomorrow I intend to do some reading and meditation. I suggest that you and Jim do the same. The day after I have an appointment with my lawyer, S’Jenes. If you go into ShiKhar and ask for him, anyone should be able to direct you to his offices.”

“I’ll see you for an early lunch, before we go up to the hospital.” McCoy said.

Surprising herself T’Kar reached up to lay a hand along the side of his face, “This won’t last you know.”

Leonard reached up to cover the hand with his own and then turned his head to kiss her palm, “I know that, but I see no reason not to enjoy your company. I’m not a fool, T’Kar. But I do like spending time with you.”

T’Kar let out her breath in a frustrated sigh, “Oh I give in. You three are all the same. All right, I’ll meet you for brunch.”

“See you later,” he whispered as she slipped out of the door.

Chapter 6

She was tired when she slipped into her apartment. Sleep wouldn't come so she opened the curtains and turning off the light sat and watched T'kuht sail across the heavens. She sighed again and thought back over the previous week. Too much was happening and too soon. *But you seem to be handling it well*, a soft voice whispered in her mind.

Shatry'a, she thought.

Yes, the voice was soft, I am proud of you, T'Kar.

You said we wouldn't meet again, she thought frantically.

We won't. Not in the flesh. I am withdrawing now into the mountains and from now on will not travel from my home.

What about my choice, my ascension? How will I know if I am right – how will I know anything?

I told you the last time we met that I would give you time. You must learn to have a little faith.

I will try.

Then that is all I ask. Be of good courage, T'Kar. And she was alone.

Eventually she closed the curtains and retired to bed. Her dreams were filled with fire and flame, of her walking beneath T'kuht in a desert that was oddly devoid of life, of

kneeling before the Shatry'a and the condemning words that she was the cause of all the devastation. She jerked awake, slicked with sweat and gasping for breath. She lay panting against the headboard for a couple of minutes and then wiping the back of her hand across her forehead sat up.

Although it was early morning, the sun had already risen. Sighing, T'Kar got up and stumbled into the sonic shower. Looking longingly at her bed she reluctantly dressed and went downstairs. She had told Leonard that she would rest and meditate but she hadn't exactly told the truth, she intended going to the T'Karath Sanctuary to partly meditate and secondly just to get out of the city. She dressed quickly in light, desert coloured clothing. Using the last two *kreila* she quickly made herself two sandwiches and filled a bottle of water. Then she pulled a brush through her hair and slipped out of the apartment. It was still early but the streets were fairly busy. Thankfully she didn't see anyone she knew, and she was able to slip out of the city unnoticed. She didn't particularly like taking the ground car but it was over thirty kilometres to the Sanctuary.

It was mid-morning when she arrived at the base of the mountain, the stair was still there but she knew that the Sanctuary was now abandoned. Climbing through the wrecked door she eased herself down on the block of stone. A shaft of sunlight poured in through what had once been a window straight onto a block of stone against the far wall.

She often came here for the solitude and to pray, she'd considered bringing crystal flowers to decorate what she considered the altar, although she confessed that it could just as easily have been part of a wall or a column that had fallen in such a way as to make it look like an altar. Besides, she was afraid that if she made any changes someone would seek to find out who was doing it. So she came to think, to meditate and to pray. Already, the air was warm. Sitting at the back of the ruined shrine in the shade, she eased herself into a comfortable position and closed her eyes. It took her about five minutes to ease into meditation, had anyone looked into the shrine twenty minutes later, they would have seen a dark-haired Vulcan deep in a meditative state.

She came back to herself an hour later. Blinking herself back into consciousness she stretched and uncurled her legs. She'd packed lunch in a small cold bag and she ate slowly, chewing thoughtfully. When she'd finished she stuffed her packaging back into her bag and took out a small sketchbook and a pencil. Flipping it open she resumed her seat on the slab and began working, the edge of her tongue sticking out with concentration. She worked for the remainder of the afternoon, stopping when the shadows lengthened.

Climbing down from the Sanctuary she dropped the bags into the car and climbed in. As she parked, she was surprised to see Dr McCoy waiting for her. "Leonard!" she said surprised, "I thought you'd be at the hospital with

Captain Kirk.”

“He’s resting,” McCoy replied, “Did you have a good day?”

“Please tell me that you haven’t been waiting all day?” T’Kar demanded.

“Only about ten minutes,” Leonard smiled, “Jim and I checked into the hospital this afternoon. The hospital will do some tests tonight and prepare him for the procedure for tomorrow afternoon. Are you still going to be there?”

“I promised,” T’Kar replied simply, as if that was reason enough, “now what can I do for you, Leonard.”

“Am I allowed to take you to dinner?” McCoy asked gently.

Surprised, T’Kar flushed emerald to the tips of her ears and McCoy chuckled, “I thought Vulcans weren’t supposed to suffer from embarrassment?”

“I’m not your typical Vulcan,” T’Kar managed a wry smile.

“That I know,” McCoy replied.

“Come upstairs while I change,” she said, “then you can take me to a nice little restaurant in the heart of ShiKahr.”

“I would be honoured,” Leonard replied, touching his fingers to hers.

She showered and changed into a short, teal dress, beige shoes and a matching clutch bag. When she emerged from the bedroom McCoy stared open-mouthed. She stared at him, her heart thumping, “Do I look all right? Should I go change?”

McCoy was on his feet, “No! Gods, no! You look gorgeous, I was just speechless.”

T’Kar flushed again and McCoy laughed, “You must learn to stop doing that.”

“You mean, I must learn to accept compliments better,” T’Kar replied

“That too,” McCoy replied, “shall we go?”

T’Kar took a sip of the water and looked across the table, “So, how is the Captain?”

“I hope that by now, he’s sleeping peacefully,” McCoy replied tersely, “I told the nurses to use a sleep inducing unit when the tests were complete – I want him well rested tomorrow.”

“We need to be well rested too,” T’Kar mused thoughtfully.

“I suppose that means I drop you at your front door and go home alone,” McCoy sighed.

“It does,” T’Kar smiled, “I need to be alone, Leonard, I have this meeting with my lawyer tomorrow and much I as I adore being with you, I need to get my head clear.”

“I know,” McCoy smiled, “But I will see you for an early brunch before we go up to the hospital?”

“Yes,” T’Kar promised.

Leonard took her hand when they stopped in front of her apartment building and gently kissed her fingers, at her look of surprise he laughed, “A human gesture of affection,” he explained. Then he was climbing out of the car and walking towards the hospital.

T'Kar stepped out of the car and slipped upstairs, her shoes making little sound on the stairs. Once inside she undressed and slid into pyjamas. T'kuht blazed across the heavens, but tonight there was no whisper of communication from the Shatry'a and she climbed gratefully into bed and fell asleep.

Although her dreams weren't filled with dust and fire, there seemed to be dark figures always on the edge of her vision, and a feeling of being pursued across red vistas. She woke feeling wrung out, stumbling into the sonic shower she dressed in a blue one-piece outfit and brushed her hair. Then she went down to meet the lawyer.

He was waiting for her in his office and she was surprised to see a number of boxes stacked inside. He nodded to her, "Please sit down, T'Kar. I won't be a moment."

He reappeared less than five minutes later carrying a small circular device which he set on the floor and a small box which he set on the desk. "I'll activate the hologram, and leave you alone."

"You're not staying."

"I am afraid that I am not permitted," S'Jenes replied.

He nodded to her, pressed a button on the device and swept smoothly from the room, his robes flowing behind him.

T'Kar swallowed as a holographic figure materialized above the device and it was with a shock she recognised her mother.

“My darling daughter,” Sarah began, “Today is your twenty-first birthday. Today you find out what all the fuss has been about – and all the secrets. Or rather, one secret.” She paused, “The very first diary is in the chest that the lawyer brought in. It was preserved in clear acetate some two hundred years ago after the contents were typed up and transferred to a PADD. Read it. It will answer many questions and raise others. I will tell you the story of our family, of your family. Then you must read the diary.”

Sarah appeared to take something from thin air and T’Kar realised it was a journal, not unlike her own. She looked up and smiled, but T’Kar had a feeling that she wasn’t smiling at her.

“My dearest daughter,” Sarah swallowed, “I wish I could make this easy for you, but the simple facts are these. Captain James T Kirk is your ancestor.”

T’Kar gaped at her, but Sarah continued, “My research of my ancestor’s diary has led me to this conclusion. There are many other things in the chest which you may find useful. Read her diary. Read our other ancestors’ journals. I have instructed S’Jenes to play the next portion of this when you have read our ancestor’s diary. Be of good courage.”

The hologram winked off and T’Kar walked across to the chest, releasing the hasps she opened the lid and stared down at the two objects sitting in the top of the chest. One looked like an old battered book, encased in a clear acrylic type material and next to that a PADD. Underneath them

were other journals and stunned, she closed the lid.

There was a soft tapping on the door and standing up, T'Kar cleared her throat, "Come in!"

S'Jenes entered the room and bowed, "Is the first recording over?"

Speechless, T'Kar nodded, S'Jenes bowed again and then said, "Take the chest, it is yours." He swallowed, "When you have read the first two journals your mother has requested that you return to this office."

"There's more?" T'Kar could barely keep the squeak from her voice.

"Indeed there is," S'Jenes replied. "I will expect your call, T'Kar. The chest is yours to take with you tonight, I will have the other boxes cleared from storage and expect your call when you have read the contents."

T'Kar nodded, "I'll take it out to my ground car"

She put the chest in the trunk and then sat in the car for a long time looking out across the city and wondering what to do next. She checked her timepiece and realised that she was meeting Dr McCoy in less than fifteen minutes. Taking a handkerchief from her pocket she wiped her eyes and checked to see that it didn't look as if she'd been crying.

He was waiting for her beneath an umbrella, a glass of liquid in front of him.

"Am I late?" T'Kar asked as she slid into a seat next to him.

"No, you're a couple of minutes early," McCoy smiled,

“What would you like to drink?”

“A cup of Vulcan coffee, please,” she replied, leaning her elbows on the table.

“Something’s worrying you,” he said suddenly.

T’Kar pursed her lips and nodded, “Yes, but I don’t think I can discuss it yet. I have a bit of reading and research to do.”

McCoy smiled and said, “All right. But you will come and speak with me if you’re worried.”

“I think that you have enough problems without me adding to them,” T’Kar replied thoughtfully.

McCoy frowned, “Perhaps, but I suspect that yours are more immediate.” He smiled and then gently touched T’Kar’s fingers with his own, “Promise me you will come and talk about it when you can.”

Her coffee arrived and McCoy withdrew his fingers, she swallowed and said quietly, “So, how’s Captain Kirk?” *My ancestor*. She thought slightly dazedly.

“Impatient, as always,” McCoy sipped his water, “but I wanted this quiet time to explain the procedure with feromazone. Have you read anything about it?”

“Only the basics,” T’Kar replied, “it’s a hypnotic and puts the subject in a light trance. It’s used by some psychiatrists to try and unlock repressed memory.”

“I have some reservations about using it,” McCoy admitted, “it has worked in the past, but it’s a dangerous drug. I’d have preferred to use something like cognitive therapy, or even consultations with a psychiatrist.”

“Do you think it’ll work?” T’Kar asked softly.

“It may, but I’m concerned about the after effects.” McCoy ran a hand across his face, “Feromazone has caused brain damage and it is possible that the mental block is such that this drug might not break through.”

“In which case what are our other options?”

McCoy shrugged and spread his hands, “I don’t know. Every instinct in me is screaming not to do this.”

“Why?” T’Kar frowned as she took a sip of her coffee.

“I just don’t think that the drug will open any doors in his head. He doesn’t want to remember what happened and that’s the main problem.”

“Whereas you and Spock know exactly what happened,” T’Kar raised a perfect dark eyebrow and McCoy nodded, speechless, “It’s all right, Leonard, I won’t press you for details. I probably wouldn’t get an answer anyway.”

McCoy sighed, “I told you that it was my fault. I thought that Jim was all right – depressed certainly, but I thought he was coping. Apparently not. So this whole thing is my fault.”

“I cannot judge,” T’Kar replied quietly, “although I think you take too much on yourself. This event that you prevented and then had to let happen, would it have happened anyway had you not been there?”

“I don’t know,” McCoy replied, “but for the timeline to remain intact, I had to allow Jim to make one of the hardest decisions of his life. Perhaps the hardest – I don’t know. I

do, however, feel that his condition has been caused by this last assignment.”

“You don’t feel that the feromazone will help Dr M’Benga to access these hidden memories,” T’Kar pursed her lips.

McCoy shook his head, and instinctively T’Kar reached out and touched her fingers to his own, he felt a wave of compassion from her which almost brought tears to his eyes. “Do I tell Jabilo my misgivings, or not?”

T’Kar sighed, “I think that if you do not and something goes wrong-”

“Are you suggesting that something might?”

“No, I’m suggesting that it’s better to be prepared?” T’Kar replied. “If this works and nothing happens then your fears were groundless. If on the other hand-”

“Something does happen, we can be prepared for it,” McCoy smiled, “will you come with me?”

“If you wish me to,” T’Kar looked surprised.

“I wish it,” McCoy smiled.

“Then I will come,” T’Kar responded, she looked down at her watch, “We should go. I must change into my uniform. I may not feel very professional, but I should at least make the attempt to look so.”

McCoy nodded and held out his fingers, she bowed her head and touched hers to his, a gesture of comfort. It was not lost on some of the diners. T’Kar noticed that some eyes widened but they said nothing.

She was grateful when he opened the passenger door,

“Can you still feel me?” she asked when he was inside.

“In a way, as you can feel me,” he replied, turning to smile at her. “You said this will fade. Will it always be like this?”

“For us I think we will be lucky and have the sweet and not the bitter,” T’Kar replied, “we will perhaps always be able to sense the other’s emotions. Over time and space possibly – I do not know. You were my first and it is likely that because of that, the sensations will be more intense.”

“It is strange,” McCoy mused, “you said that this bonding is not of a permanent nature, how so?”

T’Kar bit her lip thoughtfully and said, “Remember I said that I could go into ShiKahr and there were places there that cater for such problems. Most Vulcans do not like to admit it, but unless *pon farr* is addressed then the outcome is death for both genders. There are places in ShiKahr that cater to the unbonded males and females.”

“Brothels?” McCoy gaped, “I didn’t know.”

“Why should you?” T’Kar responded, “Sex is a most personal thing among Vulcans, Leonard. This is why no-one has questioned either of us about that night. It is considered a private matter between ourselves that we will work out. Sarek and Amanda would only interfere if they felt that either of us were becoming too involved.”

“Now you sound like an emotionless Vulcan,” McCoy scowled.

“I am sorry,” T’Kar replied, she looked away from him, her dark eyes deep and fathomless. “I am Vulcan though

and although the wild part of me longs to hug and kiss you I cannot. I am Vulcan.”

“I know.” McCoy smiled, and again laid his two fingers on hers, “shall I cook you dinner tonight and then take you to bed?”

“Only if you promise to hug and kiss me breathless Leonard,” T’Kar responded, looking up at him.

“With pleasure,” Bones smiled.

When they arrived at her apartment, T’Kar got out of the car and slipped upstairs to change. When she returned she was wearing her white nurse’s uniform. Bones gave her a cursory glance; she looked neat, cool and professional. He didn’t drive to the hospital, preferring to set the car on automatic drive and they talked briefly throughout the journey.

“Do you know anything about the feromazone procedure?” he asked.

“Not much,” T’Kar confessed, “or at least not enough to feel confident about it.”

“The patient is usually given a mild sedative,” McCoy explained, “or at least enough of one to take the edge off the fear – it’s better to have a calm patient. Then they’re wheeled into the treatment room, it’s usually painted in neutral colours, blues, greens. There’s a video camera set up behind a fake mirror, out of the subject’s view, which records everything the patient says. We go through a list of procedures with the attending nurse – which is the role you’ll be undertaking on this occasion and a copy of the

list of questions.” He paused and swallowed. T’Kar risked a quick look at him and laid her fingers over his, “You are worried about this aren’t you?” she asked.

McCoy started to shake his head and then managed a sheepish smile and nodded. She continued the contact trying to send him all her love and support for whatever he chose. Eventually he looked up and said, “I will tell Jabilo of my concerns, I am racking my brains to try and think of another solution and I do not have one.”

“You may be trying to think too hard,” T’Kar replied softly, “I have faith in you. You forget I have *seen* you, I know you are the best of Starfleet – Captain Kirk could not be in better hands.” She wanted to say more, to tell him of her own discovery that morning, but something in her throat closed up and she couldn’t speak.

McCoy nodded, “I hope so – I wish I did not fear so.” “I wish I could make you see the fear for what it is,” T’Kar replied, “a grey mist that clouds judgment; shadow without substance; a paralysing creature that has only the power we allow it to have.”

“Now you’re a philosopher,” he laughed.

“I am a Vulcan,” she replied, “but I have learnt that if one cannot divorce oneself from fear, then it is fear that provokes the action. You need to look at your fears and remove yourself from them.”

Leonard nodded, “I do not know how successful I can be.”

“You are human,” T’Kar replied as if that was the

reason. “Leonard, I tell you this because this fear that something will go wrong is crippling you – and if you allow fear to do this – then something may indeed go wrong. Dr M’Benga will not let you into the treatment room when you are like this.”

Leonard stopped the ground car in front of the hospital, “You could feel it couldn’t you – the fear?”

“I could,” T’Kar replied, she turned to face him and said, “If you wish I could mind-meld with you. We have already bonded in the *pon farr* – but it is your choice.”

“I need to be calm, T’Kar,” McCoy ran a hand across his face, “and the fear that consumes me over this procedure is making it impossible for me to view it with any objectivity. Help me.”

She stared at him, biting her lip in consternation, “I have had little formal training, Leonard, I could cause irreparable damage.”

“We bonded during your *pon farr*,” Bones replied, “I have experienced no damage.”

“That does not mean I will not cause damage now,” T’Kar replied, then seeing the amount of distress he was in nodded quickly, her thoughts drifted to the lawyer’s news and then she locked it away in a dark corner of her mind. There would be time to review that later, time when she was alone and could read the diary and meditate on its contents.

Gently as if she was touching an evanescent soap bubble she laid her fingers on Leonard’s face, “My mind to

yours,” she murmured softly, “my thoughts to yours.”

She was half-aware of their minds sliding together and his laughter fresh in her mind, she saw images, mostly of those things that he considered failures until finally she saw him bending over the biobed of an older man and knew with a stark finality that this was his father, Bones gave the older man a hypospray and the man gave a soft sigh and sank back onto the bed. Then she saw another image, a newspaper proclaiming a cure.

She turned him in her arms and they stood facing one another while everything around them faded away and they were the only ones left standing, *Is this what you fear? She asked, that you will make the wrong decision. Is this what freezes you – the fear that the decision you take today will follow you the rest of your days?*

A slight nod of the head and she reached up to touch his face, to stroke the hair away from his forehead, *You must let it go. She said softly, or it will consume everything you do. You strive for the best, the highest, the brightest. You have no cause to feel such guilt.*

It drives me, the thought was uppermost in his mind, *the guilt. Did I do enough? Did I fight enough, did I explore every avenue.*

Show me your fears, she whispered softly, and to her surprise he turned and before her she saw a myriad of pictures. Kirk being given the drug, M’Benga barraging him with questions until finally Kirk became a screaming, psychotic. Kirk being given the drug and simply drifting

back into a comatose state. The images came so thick and fast they left her breathless. She remembered turning him and laying her hands on his shoulders, *Look, she said, Look. They are phantoms, ghosts, mist, they cannot touch you, they cannot harm you. They are figments of your imagination, conjured up by your guilt and fear. Let them go.*

He half turned to look up at her, ***And what makes you so certain of this?***

The man I hold in my arms is one who dared to heal an injured Horta; who would gladly give his life to save a horrible little girl who carries a deadly disease; who braves his Captain's wrath time and again to see the right thing done. Your fear is just that, fear; see your fears for what they truly are. Mere illusion.

And with her touch the images around him of his Captain dying, of losing one of his best friends, his fear that even his touch would cause Jim damage began to fade. He opened his eyes just as T'Kar opened hers and he managed a slightly weak smile as she began to withdraw from his mind.

Blinking he took a breath and whispered, "That's some skill."

She managed a weak smile, "I just showed you that your terrors had no substance."

McCoy gently touched her fingers, he wanted to gather her up in his arms and bury his face in her shoulder, but he knew that was not the Vulcan way.

“Are you ready?” she asked softly, “we should go in.”

McCoy nodded and then stepped out of the vehicle. Dr M’Benga was waiting for them in the foyer. “I’ve administered a small amount of narcolan to relax him, although it doesn’t seem to have worked as well as I’d have liked.”

“I presume that he’s fighting the sedation,” T’Kar said quietly.

“I think he’s afraid,” Jabilo smiled at her, “although you’ll never get him to admit it. Would you go and sit with him please T’Kar, your presence might help to ease his mind.”

T’Kar nodded, Jim was lying on the biobed, his eyes closed. Vulcans did not touch but she took his hand anyway, feeling that it might give him some comfort if she did so. He opened hazy eyes and half-smiled up at her, “Feeling a bit woozy?” she asked softly.

He nodded and despite everything she reached out and stroked the hair from his forehead, “You don’t have to go through with this you know,” she said gently, “there must be other ways-”

“Not for me,” he replied slowly, “you know what’s worse?”

“Tell me,” she said, sitting on the stool beside the bed.

“My two best friends know what happened and won’t tell me.”

“I don’t think that it’s that simple,” T’Kar smiled, “I don’t think that it’s ever that simple. There are other

factors at work here, they're not telling you because they do not know how you will react to what has happened, not to prevent you from finding out about it." *Where did that come from?* She thought.

"But if they told me-" he began, fighting the drug to make a coherent sentence.

She was grateful beyond measure as the door opened and the two physicians walked into the room, M'Benga walked across to the bed and after quickly checking the monitors, smiled down at Captain Kirk, "Your vital signs have stabilized and you seem calmer. Now we'll go through the checklist one more time. All right?"

Kirk nodded slowly, his eyes closed, T'Kar watched him thoughtfully, emotions threatening to overwhelm her. M'Benga smiled at her and handed her a PADD with a copy of the questions on it. "We don't deviate from the questions here," he said firmly, looking into her dark eyes, "Do you understand?"

"Yes, Doctor," T'Kar nodded, her hand firmly holding the Captain's.

"Jim, are you ready?" M'Benga bent over his patient and smiled tightly as Captain Kirk nodded sleepily. "Right, let's get started." He pressed a hypospray against Kirk's neck, "Take some nice deep breaths now, Jim, this should take effect pretty quickly."

"Ha-hmmm," Kirk murmured as the feromazone sped into his system. His face relaxed and T'Kar was surprised at how young and boyish it seemed to become. Dr

M'Benga smiled at her, to her surprise he didn't speak, merely held up his finger and thumb in a circle to form the letter 'O', she knew that it was the 'OK' symbol. Surprising herself she gave him the 'thumbs up' signal and he nodded.

"Jim, can you hear me?"

"Mmm-hmm," Kirk replied drowsily. "And do you know who I am?"

"Dr M'Benga," came the soft reply.

"That's good, Jim," M'Benga replied, his eyes checking the instruments surrounding the bed, "you're perfectly safe here, nothing can harm you, all right?"

Jim nodded slowly, and T'Kar felt her heart clench. M'Benga didn't seem to have noticed. He was looking down at his PADD and then he cleared his throat and began to speak, "All right, Jim, I want you to tell me the last thing you remember."

Slowly, almost dreamily Kirk began to speak, "A Klingon warship, K't'inga class I think. She suddenly decloaked in front of us. Said that we were violating Klingon space. This is Federation Space – not Klingon – don't know what they're talking about-"

"All right, Jim. You're not on the bridge any more, I want you to cycle back to the mission before that. Where are you?"

"We're on a planet. McCoy injected himself with cordrazine, beamed down to the planet's surface – jumped into something – Guardian – Guardian of Forever-" his

voice died away and T'Kar could see the beads of sweat breaking out on his forehead. She covered his other hand with her own, every fibre of her being projecting calm and sympathy. To hers and Dr M'Benga's surprise he settled back onto the bed, his breathing easing as he did so.

M'Benga looked across at her and nodded slowly, he didn't speak but she could tell that the Captain's behaviour had worried him considerably. He nodded at her and she raised an eyebrow at him, then M'Benga turned back to his patient.

"Jim – I want you to tell me, what happened after McCoy jumped into this Guardian," M'Benga was looking down at his PADD so he didn't see the flicker of pain that ran across Kirk's forehead.

"Tried to contact *Enterprise*, not there, gone, McCoy changed history. Guardian – Guardian spoke to me – to us – " he swallowed and twisted his head away, a moan escaping from his lips.

Surprising herself T'Kar extricated one of her hands from Jim's and reached across to touch M'Benga's arm.

He turned in shock and she mouthed silently, *No more*.

He nodded and then she was bending over the supine man's body, gently stroking a wisp of hair away from his forehead, but she didn't see the puzzled look M'Benga gave her as she did so. He cleared his throat and laying his hand on the bed began to speak again, "Jim, you feeling okay?"

"I feel strange," he muttered, "warm."

Involuntarily, M'Benga cursed under his breath, T'Kar was sure that it was only her Vulcan hearing that caught it, composing his features he spoke again, "Jim, I'm going to count to three, when I reach three your eyes will open and you'll wake up. You'll feel wide awake and refreshed as if you've had a good night's sleep. Ready?"

"Mmmm-hmm," Jim nodded lazily.

"One, two, three," M'Benga said slowly, to his relief Jim's eyes opened, for a few seconds he blinked up at them and then the familiar smile curved his lips, M'Benga had picked up his tricorder and was running it up and down the Captain's body.

"I-I remember-" he whispered, "the planet, it was the Guardian of Forever. Something about McCoy and changing history."

"Anything else?" T'Kar asked gently, her hand still holding his own.

Jim frowned trying to push past the blank space in his head, finally he gave up, "No, nothing."

T'Kar nodded, "Fair enough."

Jim attempted to sit up, but it was Dr M'Benga who pushed him back down onto the couch, "And just where do you think you're going, you've got almost a full dose of feromazone in your bloodstream. You need to lie quiet for at least twelve hours."

Surprising both of them, he lay back down onto the biobed. Both T'Kar and Dr M'Benga looked at one another and T'Kar raised an eyebrow. Jabilo smiled, "I ask you to

stay with him, T'Kar." To Jim he said firmly, "Don't go doing anything stupid." He picked up a small black box and turning pressed a small red button. T'Kar breathed a sigh of relief, he'd turned off the recording device.

To their surprise Kirk nodded again, as if the drugs had removed his will. T'Kar looked down and realised that she was still holding his hand, her face must have paled slightly because suddenly Dr M'Benga was by her side, running his tricorder up and down her back, "Are you all right, T'Kar?"

She nodded, "Yes, a bit tired, but I'm all right." M'Benga ran his tricorder up and down her body and she resisted the urge to twitch, even though she couldn't feel anything. Eventually he put the device away and said, "Your triglycerides are elevated as are your hormonal levels."

"Probably all this," T'Kar waved vaguely at the room. "I've never been part of something like this before."

"Hmmm," Jabilo said slowly, almost as if he didn't believe her. Thankfully he didn't say anything else, merely smiled and said, "I know that it's no use asking you to go, but when he's stabilized I want you to go home and rest. Do I have your word?"

She nodded, "All right. I have things to do anyway-" "No, I want you to go home and rest," Jabilo told her firmly, "no reading or writing. Just go home and rest. Do you promise?"

Reluctantly, T'Kar nodded, *she promised. She wanted*

to read the diary, in fact her fingers were itching to read the diary but she also knew what Jabilo was saying, that she needed to look after herself too. Eventually she nodded and a warm smile lit the black man's face and eyes.

Kirk managed a weary smile at them, "Did you get anything useful?"

"Did you remember anything?" T'Kar asked gently.

He frowned, searching his memory, and then a rueful grin spread across his face, "Only that Bones managed to inject himself with cordrazine and we had to go after him." He sighed, "that's not much help is it?"

"Oh it could be worse," M'Benga replied, a smile lighting the dark features, "you might not have remembered anything at all. This method may be quicker than others, but it still takes a little time to unlock repressed memory."

"So you think it might succeed?" Kirk was grasping at straws.

"I think that with luck and this young lady," M'Benga gestured to T'Kar, "we may have a fighting chance."

He smiled and for the first time T'Kar wondered if this was how he had charmed her ancestor, she looked up at Dr M'Benga, "I think he praises me far too highly."

Kirk didn't reply, merely tightened his grip on her hand and T'Kar suddenly felt such a wave of unrestrained emotion it was all she could do not to cry.

"Right, I'll leave you to rest there for a few moments," M'Benga said firmly, "You'll keep him quiet while I

arrange his room?"

"Yes, sir," T'Kar looked across at him and M'Benga nodded, "Doctor, or Jabilo will do, T'Kar. You need not be so formal."

She nodded and found her lips curving upwards in what might have been a smile, Jabilo touched her shoulder, "Don't let anyone see your smile, they might start to think that Vulcans are not as emotionless as they've been told."

She nodded and then turned her attention back to Captain Kirk, his eyes were closed but she could tell from the intense grip on her hand that he wasn't asleep. "Do you want to talk?" she asked gently.

He half-opened his eyes, "About what?"

"Anything you like," she replied.

A soft chuckle emerged from Kirk's throat and he said, "I don't know what to talk about, so many images going through my head. You and that Kenel in the desert, these weird images of McCoy jumping through the gate, what did I call it, The Guardian of Forever?" she nodded slowly and he continued, "and there's something else, something I can't remember but it's vital."

"I could suggest that you don't try, but it's a bit like prodding a missing tooth isn't it," she said, "You are always touching the area with your tongue to feel that missing space."

A soft smile touched his lips, "Yeah, like a cut that's been dressed, you keep running your fingers over the dressing."

“You should try and sleep,” T’Kar said quietly. Kirk swallowed and nodded, “I’ll close my eyes.”

Chapter 7

He was still holding her hand as tightly as before when M'Benga returned. He surveyed them quietly and then shook his head, "I've got a room ready for you, Captain. We'll take you through now."

Once he was settled in his room T'Kar reseated herself beside Jim's bed and again took his hand, he was still highly agitated and she sighed softly, "You must try to calm down, Captain."

Kirk nodded, "You'll stay?"

"For a bit," she promised, "if you'll promise to try and sleep."

Their eyes met and he nodded, then he looked down at his hand and looked up sheepishly, "I'm sorry, I forgot--"

"Truly, it's all right, Captain." T'Kar replied, "you forget I am unlike any that Vulcan has seen before."

"But you must appear to be like all of Vulcan before them," Kirk replied, he shifted position and said, "oh well, chances are that it'll stay in the medical file and be ascribed to my amnesiac condition. Not as I like that either."

"I know the brave, bright, bold, Captain," T'Kar shook her head, "Inscrutable, immovable, inviolable--" she stopped when she saw his face, "sorry."

“In many ways, true,” he sighed again. I wish that my life were simpler.”

“No you don’t,” T’Kar shook her head, “you adore being a Starship Captain, it’s what you live for. This is your biggest terror.”

He looked up into her dark eyes and nodded, this inaction, this blank spot in his mind that refused all attempts to unlock it, the almost certain knowledge that his First Officer and Doctor knew what had happened but were constrained by Starfleet and circumstance not to tell him was taking its toll. He lay back onto the bed and asked, “So what now?”

“Well you rest for the remainder of today and this evening, and then tomorrow we start the procedure again.”

Kirk scowled and T’Kar had to suppress a smile, “Did you think that it would just be one dose and all your memories would come back?” She paused, “the brain doesn’t work like that, Captain.”

He turned and punched the pillow, “I wish mine was a computer right now,” he muttered, “that you could just change a transistor or a wire and I would work perfectly again – memory intact, the works.”

“Yes, I know,” T’Kar said quietly, “but there are reasons why the mind does this.”

“Yes, I know,” Kirk scowled again, “but it makes me look like a nutcase!”

“Is that a scientific term?” T’Kar raised an eyebrow again and Kirk was forced to smile.

“You know what I mean.”

“Yes, I do. But I also know you – well enough to know that you’re driving yourself too hard and that too can cause damage.” She sighed softly, “you seem to have forgotten the one rule you live by, but again I put that down to your state of mind.”

“And what rule is that?” he asked sleepily.

“That the safety of the *Enterprise* takes precedence over everything else. In fact one could argue that both your friends have disregarded that rule to bring you here. But I wouldn’t be too hard on them.”

Jim half-smiled and she could see that he was already drifting into slumber, carefully she reached forward stroked the hair away from his forehead. He sighed again and T’Kar gave his hand a final squeeze before rising to her feet and leaving the room.

To her surprise M’Benga was waiting for her, he smiled when he saw her emerge from the room, “He’s asleep at long last? Good. Now I have your word that you will go straight home and rest?”

Reluctantly T’Kar nodded and M’Benga frowned, “Your promise, T’Kar, because I know that Vulcans don’t lie and keep their promises.” T’Kar eyed him thoughtfully, it wasn’t strictly true that Vulcans didn’t lie, more that they didn’t tell the whole truth. Or perhaps they just told a part of the truth. However, on this occasion it would probably be best to go home and relax.

“I can see her home, Jabilo,” Leonard stepped forward

and touched T'Kar's fingers with his own, "I promised to cook supper tonight."

And M'Benga watched as McCoy laid his fingers on T'Kar's and watched the tension run from the woman's body. "See that she rests," M'Benga instructed, hoping that he was projecting enough forcefulness into his tone.

"I will," McCoy smiled at her and she felt the corners of her mouth curve up in a slight smile in return. "See? I knew you pointy-eared gremlins had a sense of humour," he teased.

Pointy-eared gremlin? She thought as they slipped out into the early evening. The sun was beginning to set and it cast a lurid glow across the desert landscape, she looked out away from the city towards the I-langon mountains, her mind elsewhere.

"Don't even think about it," McCoy warned as he opened the groundcar's door.

She turned and tried to feign surprise but the look in his bright blue eyes stopped her, "All right. How did you know?"

"We have a connection of sorts, remember?" he replied gently.

"And it shows no sign of dissipating," she frowned, "and that is worrying."

"Not necessarily," McCoy replied, "have you considered it could just be a shore-leave romance?"

"But it may affect my bonding with any other Vulcan," T'Kar stared at him perplexed.

“I think that’s unlikely,” McCoy replied, “it was an act borne out of necessity. So it shouldn’t affect any other relationships you have.”

“I hope you are right,” T’Kar responded.

“This is an unusual situation we find ourselves in,” McCoy replied, “so I feel that we have to ‘wing it’ on this occasion.”

“Wing it?” she raised an eyebrow, “I am not familiar with that term.”

“It means to ‘go with the flow’ just to do things as they come up and not to plan too much.”

“Ah,” T’Kar nodded, “So what happens tonight would be ‘winging it’?”

“Something like that,” McCoy replied, “but as I promised Jabilo, I am taking you home where I will cook you supper and then you will rest.”

“Is this the Doctor talking?” T’Kar frowned.

He nodded and if possible the scowl deepened, he opened his mouth to say something else but decided against it. *What was it about him that attracted the most stubborn of the species?* He wondered, he remembered the times when Spock had been injured and the stubborn Vulcan had forced himself to continue his duties until McCoy had given him a hefty dose of sedative.

Feigning a nonchalance he did not feel he managed a smile and then said, “I promised you supper, I presume you have some recipes in English-” when T’Kar nodded he smiled, “good, you can either sit with me and show me

what to do or you can lie down and rest. Even I can cook basic food.”

“How do you know all my recipes aren’t for Lobster Thermidor or John Dory,” she replied.

“I don’t, but you’ve never struck me as that type of person,” he explained, “oh I’m sure you’d like lobster if you ever had it, but I think your meals are the healthy, indigenous to Vulcan variety.”

“Flatterer,” she murmured, leaning back against the headrest and closing her eyes.

McCoy was gently shaking her awake, she opened her eyes and the first thing she saw was the huge bulk of T’kuht hanging over the car like a balloon.

“I’m sorry,” McCoy was saying, “I did call you but you were so deeply asleep-”

She waved his explanation away, entranced by what she saw. McCoy followed her gaze and smiled, “Does it call you?”

“Sometimes it feels like that,” she said slowly, “and on nights like these when it almost seems that you only have to stand up on your toes and you’ll be able to grasp the rim-”

“Please don’t howl at the moon,” he begged.

“Nights like these I’m more likely to go into the deep desert to dance beneath it,” T’Kar admitted, “although if you say anything I shall deny it.”

“It isn’t really a moon is it?” McCoy asked as they got out of the car and looked up at the planet.

“Not in the strict sense, no,” T’Kar replied, her dark eyes shining in its pale light. “It is almost entirely lifeless, although we have built bases there. It comes this close to T’Khasi every seven weeks or so.”

“T’Khasi?”

“Our name for the planet you call Vulcan,” T’Kar replied, “and for some reason you felt it necessary to rename T’Kuht, Charis.”

“We can be a bit like that,” McCoy agreed, “Come on, supper and then bed I think. Tomorrow is going to be a busy day.”

“The Captain will be on bed rest,” T’Kar explained, “and I will have duties at the hospital. It will not be as busy as you thought.”

“On the contrary,” McCoy replied, “he’s beginning to remember certain events, that means Spock and I need to talk about what he might or might not remember and be in a better position to face him when he does.”

“You think he might be angry that you chose not to enlighten him about your last mission.”

“I think at first he might be furious,” McCoy sighed and looked up at the planet hovering above them, “have you ever done something stupid?”

“I don’t know,” T’Kar replied, “define stupid.”

“Firstly injecting myself with the overdose of cordrazine,” he replied his eyes faraway, “I should have taken precautions with that drug, and secondly what I did when I was in the past. What I made Jim – Captain Kirk

do. I don't know if I can ever forgive myself for that."

"When I had to undergo the Vulcan trial of strength-" T'Kar began, she caught Dr McCoy's eye, "my father insisted, he said I would not be respected as a Vulcan if I did not. There was one episode when I had to fight a boy, he dislocated my shoulder-"

She paused and looked up at T'Kuht again, "I should have said something, I should have asked that the fight be stopped, but I refused, pretended that it was merely a strain."

She swallowed and then managed a slightly wan smile at him, "Eventually when all of ShiKahr was asleep I sought out a healer, but by then the damage had been done. I needed two operations on my left arm to repair the damage. It suffices as pretty much one of the stupidest things I've done. Quite apart from running off into the desert whenever things get difficult – not the safest or most sensible course of action."

"No," McCoy said quietly, "just promise me that you won't do that if something really bad happens. I'm serious, T'Kar. You can't run away from everything."

"Let's go inside," she said quietly. Her mind was in turmoil, *Should she tell him what she'd discovered?*

Despite her trust of him, every fibre of her being was screaming 'No' and having learnt over the years to listen to that little voice she reluctantly obeyed it this time. McCoy followed her into her apartment and then said,

"Go and lie down like Dr M'Benga told you. You need

to rest.”

“Can’t I at least read?” she begged.

“Lie down and close your eyes,” he ordered, the blue eyes flashing, “we don’t need two people in hospital.”

T’Kar’s lips thinned in a severe line and he had to fight not to laugh, but she did as he ordered, slouching off to the bedroom. He turned back to the small, clean kitchen and found a Vulcan cookery book in English. He set it on the counter and then opened the fridge. Most of the foodstuffs within it were labelled in both Vulcan and English a fact for which he was extraordinarily grateful. Eventually he found what he was looking for and began to prepare supper.

He put the food in the oven, and then wiping his hands went through to the bedroom. T’Kar was asleep on top of the bed. For a few minutes he stood watching the gentle rise and fall of her chest, the way her lashes made dark semi-circles on her cheeks. Then he shook himself and said softly, “T’Kar, T’Kar, supper’s ready.”

She stirred and opened her eyes, staring up at the ceiling for a couple of minutes, then she slowly sat up and managed a sleepy smile, “Did you say supper was ready?” “I don’t think that it’s as good as yours,” Bones smiled, “did you have a nice sleep?”

“Yeah,” she replied, looking up at him, “Didn’t think I’d sleep.”

“I’m glad you did,” Leonard replied, “you obviously needed it.”

“I’ll reserve judgment until I’ve tasted it,” T’Kar responded impishly.

McCoy chuckled and then let the door close. T’Kar splashed her face and then wandered through to the dining room and stopped dead. McCoy had laid the table and even found candles from somewhere, “Oh my,” she murmured softly.

“I thought a little celebration was in order,” he said softly, “Jim seems to be reacting well to the feromazone, you haven’t run a mile and I’ve learnt how to cook!”

“Now that’s a definite plus!” T’Kar replied, “it looks lovely.”

McCoy sat down opposite her and asked, “Now who serves who again?”

“I’m never going to get that etiquette right,” T’Kar couldn’t help herself as a smile curved the strong lips.

McCoy laughed, “See I knew Vulcans had a sense of humour. Here, I’ll serve as I cooked the damn thing!”

McCoy served the food and then serving himself sat down opposite, “I hope that it’s all right, I’ve never cooked with Vulcan ingredients before.”

T’Kar tentatively took a mouthful and chewed thoughtfully before swallowing, “Not bad, Leonard, you can come and cook for me any time.”

He looked surprised and then nodded, “Thank you, T’Kar, it was a pleasure.” He took a sip of his drink and asked, “So what did the lawyer say?”

“I have a small chest to go through,” T’Kar explained,

“and S’Jenes said that there would be others to go through when I’d finished with this one. I have no idea how many, he said that the boxes themselves would be self-explanatory.” She lied.

McCoy nodded, “But you will come and talk to me if there are any problems?”

T’Kar looked up into his blue eyes and suddenly felt really uncomfortable, she wanted to confide in McCoy, of course she did but she wasn’t sure that would be wise.

Her mother had known of this secret for over thirty years and she hadn’t breathed a word, there must have been a reason. But what? If her mother had known of her ancestry then it was a safe bet that her father had also known – how many people had known of her ancestry and why had no-one mentioned it?

Swallowing she replied, “I will, Leonard, but let me try and work it out myself.”

“All right,” he smiled, “but whatever it is won’t be solved by you running for the hills. Come and talk to me, or even Dr. M’Benga if you’re worried. Honestly, this is the twenty-fourth century, I am sure that we can work something out.”

Privately T’Kar wasn’t so sure, there was something odd about the secrecy surrounding her mother’s behaviour. Hopefully she would find out, although she had to admit that there was a part of her didn’t want to.

“I suppose you want to take me to bed and kiss me breathless,” she said quietly as they washed up.

“Actually I was going to leave you to rest tonight,” McCoy said gently, “I think you need the sleep.”

Reluctantly, T’Kar nodded, “You’re probably right.” She saw him out and just before he left he said quietly,

“You’ll keep your promise, you won’t go dancing beneath the moon?”

“No,” she smiled again, “I won’t. See you tomorrow, Leonard.”

“See you tomorrow, T’Kar. I want you at the hospital bright and early.”

When she was alone she walked back into the bedroom, the chest was lurking at the end of her bed and despite her promise to Dr McCoy she couldn’t resist kneeling down and opening it. The PADD and the acetate preserved journal stared back at her. Sighing again she picked up both the original and the PADD and went to sit on the bed. Turning on the light she turned on the device and began to read.

The Diary of Edith Anne Keeler

January 1st 1930

I have decided to use the old warehouse as refuge of sorts for the homeless. Since Father’s death last year I have been wondering what to do with my life. Charles has suggested that I come out to him and his wife, he says that with the Depression there’s nothing for me here. I

disagree, there's so much unhappiness, and despair, surely the money that Father left me can be used to alleviate that. Or at least try. Admittedly setting up a soup kitchen may not be what everyone would choose but I have to try, not to try is to fail before I have even started. Tomorrow I start making inquiries.

January 3rd, 1930

It hasn't been the easiest couple of days and the warehouse needed more cleaning than I thought. I have been lucky, a friend offered me a job as his Secretary.

The pay isn't much but it will keep body and soul together. We will come out of this, we must. But we must do it together, it would be so easy to go and live with my brother. I had a letter from him yesterday, he says that the factory will survive but that even he has had to lay people off. He's never told me how much he lost but I know from his wife, Eleanor that he had to close two of his factories in the larger cities. It's hard everywhere but we mustn't give up. A Philanthropist friend has suggested that we call it the South Street Mission and I'm inclined to agree with him. It's as good a name as any. I was contacted by the Priest at St. Joseph's he offered to come and preach homilies to the men, but I have a strong suspicion that the Church would be of no use to these men. And what makes me think that I can? All I know is that I have to try.

January 31st, 1930

It has been a busy month – which is the biggest understatement this century. I insist on serving everyone who comes to the door for soup although now I give them a ‘pep’ talk before they eat. A few don’t come back, perhaps they can more easily tune out the Priest’s homilies than they can my words. But someone must tell them that there’s no such thing as a free ride – or even a free lunch. I see all these men who have lost not just their jobs, but their dignity – I try to show them that they can rise above this, that this free meal is a stopgap, not the end of their usefulness. I need to show them that life is worth living that the world is worth fighting for, their lives are worth fighting for. I know that it is hard, I see it every day and sometimes I’m not sure I believe what I’m saying, but I have to believe that we will emerge from this, that America will be stronger.

February 4th, 1930

Another busy day at the Mission. I seem to have acquired some tailors in the back room, two men, Father and Son who at the moment mend and make clothes. Material is hard to acquire but they assure me that they can make a three piece suit out of old blankets. I’m not sure whether they were pulling my leg or not. I’m not sure

I believe in God, although I saw Father Michael from St Joseph's again today, he said that he'd heard good things about me. I am not good, but we must strive for more than one free bowl of soup per day. I know that it is hard, Lord I know it's hard. The nights I have sat alone in my room and looked out across the dingy city and wondered when things would change are immeasurable. I have read and reread my Bible almost every night – I admit that it is hard for me to believe in God, but I have found that the words of comfort written in these holy books have strengthened me and made it possible for me to go out every day and offer words of encouragement to the men who come to the mission.

February 13th, 1930

I met a man today, very well dressed and so polite! I wish I could have offered him more than a cup of weak coffee and a slice of cake – and even that wasn't very good! He ate both and pronounced them delicious although I knew better. Eventually he stood up and thanked me for a pleasant afternoon. I wish I'd been able to do more.

March 1st, 1930

I don't believe it! The man I encountered last month and who asked me why an elegant young lady was running

a mission in New York was Richard Edgar! He was well known in this city before the First World War, apparently he lost his son somewhere over France, I'm embarrassed by the way I behaved. I treated him just like everybody else! He might turn round and say that's what he wanted but I somehow doubt that. Anyway, a man arrived at the mission with an invitation to afternoon tea. I was shocked at first, I can't imagine why anyone would invite someone like me to afternoon tea but the man delivering it was most insistent that I should attend. I took the card and then he left, then the workers came in and began setting up for the evening Soup run. I wish I could pay more than 15 cents an hour but I must use the money Father left me wisely, if I pay more I won't be able to employ as many people and the money will go faster. Afternoon tea – I have absolutely nothing to wear.

March 3rd, 1930

I went to afternoon tea at Richard Edgar's. Still can't believe I actually went. It was unreal. All these people sitting drinking afternoon tea and discussing where they would go for the summer when all around them the world seemed to be crumbling around them. I tried to explain that I ran a small mission in the city but most of them weren't interested. I finally decided that I'd had enough and quietly left. Mr Edgar accosted me at the door and I explained to him that it was kind of him to invite me but I

really didn't feel quite right. I thanked him and was about to go when his hand on my arm stopped me. "I am sorry you felt uncomfortable, Miss Keeler, I had hoped to enlighten some of my friends as to the real state of the city. I managed a weak smile and suggested that maybe his friends should come down to the mission in person. He laughed softly and said that he would think about it. I arrived back at the Mission to find that the only things left to do were to wash up and wipe down the tables. I suspect that most of my regulars were very glad that they didn't have me lecturing them tonight about how life will get better. Perhaps most of them don't believe it will – I must believe it – otherwise to my mind there is little point in living.

March 10th, 1930

I encountered two very strange men today. They'd stumbled into my cellar, the blond one said that they were sheltering from the cold although I knew that was a lie and said that was a poor introduction. He smiled and said that he and his friend were running from the police for petty theft. Why didn't I turn them in? I don't know, he looked tired, his whole body tense with something I couldn't put my finger on and his friend, although he was standing in the shadows the colour of his skin made me think of someone who was dangerously ill. I told them that if they wanted work I could pay 15 cents an hour for ten hours

and they could start by cleaning up the cellar.

Then I returned to the Mission. Still don't know why I didn't turn them in – Lord knows the last thing I need here is a couple of thieves.

March 11th, 1930

I found another man this afternoon, curled up in an alleyway. He was wild-eyed and sweating profusely. I nearly walked past him, thinking that he was just a homeless vagrant, another one who's ended up in this city. I knelt next to him wondering how I could help, his eyes opened and he stared into mine. Looking down at him I wondered how I could help him when suddenly his hand grabbed mine and he whispered, "Help me." After that I didn't have very much choice, how I got him to his feet I don't know, I do remember half-shouting at him to keep his eyes open so that I could get him to his feet. I got him back to my room and put him to bed. I shall leave some water beside the bed and try to tend him as much as possible. I don't know if I can do much for the fever except to try and provide as much gentle care as possible. Hopefully he will recover.

March 14th, 1930

I heard the tall, dark-haired man call him 'Captain', he said that his name was James, James Kirk. There's something about him, something I can't put my finger on, but I like him very much. It isn't just that he's different, but he seems to have something I've never seen before.

The cellar gleamed when he and his friend had finished cleaning it, he even listened to my talk before supper with interest. First time that's happened, most men simply complain that they have to 'pay the piper'. He was wiping down the tables afterwards – his friend had gone to 'flop' in the lodgings I found for them. I wanted to ask if he was a deserter but somehow I couldn't bring myself to do so – I think I am afraid that if I did I would feel obligated somehow to turn him in. I was washing up in the kitchen when he came in behind me and offered to dry – it was while we were standing side by side that he suddenly kissed me. He apologised, saying that his actions were 'unconscionable' but I really wasn't that bothered. Then he excused himself and left me to finish up. The memory of his kiss is still with me, hard and strong, but tempered with something else. Something I can't put my finger on.

March 5th, 1930

I should not have done it. I was upstairs in the spare room, trying to sort out some mending when he knocked on

my door. I was miles away so simply called, 'Come in'. When I turned around he was standing there, his eyes bright with something. Then he kissed me again, but this kiss was full of something else and before I knew it he was pushing me down onto the bed. Afterwards he left quickly, I haven't seen him since although I caught a glimpse of him at supper. Perhaps he equates this to rape although I would be the first to say that it was consensual, at no point did I say 'No' or try to stop him. I regret it now but more perhaps because I do not think this is the man I will marry, not for the act itself.

March 6th, 1930

He seems to be back to his normal self. He was solicitous of me today, even stopped me falling down the stairs last night and again there was something in his eyes that made me want to reach out and kiss the fear away but I couldn't. Something froze me. I said that he could take me to a Clark Gable film tonight. Maybe we can talk – I will try to finish this entry later.

T'Kar swallowed hard, the pitifully thin journal ended there. Another entry caught her eye and using the stylus she selected it. The words leapt off the screen at her and she had to swallow again, it read simply:

My sister, Edith Anne Keeler was knocked down by a

truck on March 6th, 1930. In December that year she gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Unfortunately, my sister did not survive the birth. We christened the child Samantha and have brought her to live with us – perhaps we can honour my sister's memory somehow. I intend to set up a Scholarship in her name for Philanthropic Work. Perhaps leading to a college degree, open only to women.

Chapter 8

She laid the PADD down on the bed and was surprised to find that her eyes were filled with tears. Going to the chest she began taking the other items out. Some were extraordinarily fragile and she found notes from Edith's brother, Charles, reports from private investigators searching for a 'Captain Kirk'. All to no avail. Suddenly tired, she laid everything back in the chest and checked the time. *Good, she had time to do some meditation*

Settling herself in front of the window in the lounge she closed her eyes. Strangely enough she didn't feel anger, just an overwhelming sense of sadness that her ancestor had never known she was pregnant or that this Captain Kirk had never known *and probably still didn't know* her treacherous mind informed her, that he would be a father.

Eventually after a period of intense concentration, her mind stilled and she was able to *step outside herself* and examine her feelings. Two hours later she opened her eyes, smiled slightly and stretched. She felt better, the outright hurt and disbelief had faded and she felt more able to examine the rest of the chest. True she would have to return to the lawyer but she felt better equipped this evening than she had for the past three days.

Was this too part of becoming Shatry'a? She didn't know and she had a rather nasty feeling that she was the

only person who would be able to find this out.

Tomorrow, she thought wearily as she stumbled to bed, *Tomorrow I will look at it and then be able to see where I'm going*. She remembered turning the lamp off and then pulling the covers over her cooling torso before she sank into slumber.

She woke early again, just as the sun was a scarlet disk poking above the horizon. Yawning she stumbled into the bathroom and performed the usual ablutions, washing her face, brushing her teeth and hair. Then she returned to the bedroom to pick out her clothes for the day. Suddenly her stomach clenched as she realised that today was the second day they'd be trying the feromazone on Captain Kirk,

The prospect of breakfast no longer seemed appealing, but she forced down a cup of Vulcan coffee and a piece of *kreila* although her stomach threatened to rebel about halfway through.

Forcing down the last piece of bread she picked up her bag and slipped out of the door. Dr M'Benga was waiting for her by the nurse's station. "Did you rest at all?" he demanded when he saw her face.

"A little," she admitted.

"And how much is a little?" Jabilo asked. Sighing he shook his head, "You're incorrigible, T'Kar. It isn't just my patients I expect to behave, it's my staff too. When I tell you that I want you to go home and rest I expect you to go home and rest."

"I promise I didn't dance beneath the moon," T'Kar

insisted.

“Charis causes me more problems than any other planetary body,” M’Benga shook his head, “that blasted moon. It’s not even a moon at all!”

“But there’s just something about it,” T’Kar shook her head, “I can’t explain it Jabilo I just feel inspired when I go out and stand beneath T’kuht.”

“Well you’re one of the more sensible ones,” Jabilo said, “you go out with the tours and only stay out for a few hours. We had five people in overnight who decided that they wanted to go out and dance beneath the moon. Fools!”

“Are they all right?” T’Kar asked, her heart rising in her throat.

“They were lucky,” Jabilo replied, “they hadn’t strayed too far from the trail.”

“Thank goodness,” T’Kar replied.

“It’s the bloody moon,” Jabilo cursed under his breath and said, “You’d better come on through, you can talk to the Captain while he has breakfast. Have you had anything?”

“A quick snack,” T’Kar responded. “Didn’t feel like much this morning.”

“I’m sure that the Captain can persuade you to have something else,” M’Benga replied, “if I’ve told you once I’ve told you a hundred times! You must look after yourself too.”

Sighing he held open the door and swallowing, T’Kar entered the room. Jim was resting against the pillows one

hand holding a mug. His face lit up when he saw T'Kar, "Good morning!" Then he looked up into her face and put the mug down on the table, "or perhaps not. What the hell happened to you?"

T'Kar shook her head, "Just a rough night, that's all. I have them sometimes."

"Can she have a coffee with me?" Kirk looked up at Dr M'Benga.

"I was hoping you'd ask that," Jabilo replied, a smile breaking out across the broad face, "maybe you can persuade her to have some breakfast too."

"I have had breakfast!" T'Kar protested, "I just didn't fancy very much."

"What did you have?" Kirk asked softly.

"A piece of *kreila* and a cup of Vulcan coffee," she replied, "I couldn't face anything else."

"Is it this procedure?" he smiled.

"Partly," she lied, "but I have other things which concern me."

"In other words she's worried but she won't admit it," McCoy had just entered the room and Jim saw T'Kar turn and a half-smile touch her lips before she shook her head,

"Worry is a human emotion, Doctor."

"So?" Leonard raised an eyebrow, "if you do not worry then something concerns you – or is that a human emotion too?"

T'Kar sighed, "I am not worried Doctor, my thoughts are merely concerned with the Captain and of course the

boxes that my mother left with S'Jenes.”

“Well, you’ve convinced you – now convince me,” McCoy responded, “if you can.”

T’Kar opened her mouth to say something and then thought better of it.

“Good,” McCoy replied, watching her eyes carefully, “I’ll get you a cup of coffee and I suggest you eat something.” He turned to Jim, “Watch her.”

“He doesn’t trust you,” Kirk surveyed her quietly.

“Not to look after herself, no,” McCoy replied, he put the mug in front of her and said, “Drink.”

T’Kar looked down at the contents of the mug, “What is it?”

“A high protein vanilla-flavoured drink,” he replied.

Reluctantly she picked up the mug and took a sip finding it fairly palatable if a little bland. Kirk eyed her thoughtfully as he sipped his own coffee,

“Whatever it is it’s preying on your mind, you know you could come and talk to myself or Dr McCoy about it if it’s worrying you. Or even Dr M’Benga. You’re not alone.”

T’Kar looked up from her mug to stare into kind hazel eyes, “I appreciate that, Captain,” she said slowly, and thought, *No, I’m afraid that I couldn’t tell you about this – or I don’t know when I’ll be able to tell you about this.* Finding a strength she didn’t know she possessed she nodded quickly, “Thanks. I’ll think about it.”

Jim watched her as she drank from the mug Bones had

set in front of her. She did look washed out and he wondered how he could get her to open up. *Not something any Vulcan is good at doing*, he thought ruefully. Changing the subject he said, “So we’re going to try the feromazone again today? Do you think it’ll work this time?”

T’Kar surveyed him quietly and then raised an eyebrow in a gesture that was so reminiscent of Spock that it almost made him choke on his coffee.

He smiled and said, “And what is that supposed to mean?”

“It means that this is possible, Captain.”

“But you have misgivings,” Kirk looked thoughtful, “would you care to share your thoughts with me?”

“Oh I have misgivings about lots of medical procedures,” T’Kar responded, trying to lighten the subject, “this is just one of them.”

“Why?” he frowned and for one heart stopping moment she wanted to take both of his hands in her own and tell him everything that had been happening to her but instead she swallowed and said, “I don’t like things where the odds are too difficult to calculate.”

“And my odds are too difficult to calculate?” he eyed her.

“One could argue that with humans the odds are always too difficult to calculate,” another voice spoke and T’Kar saw Jim’s face light up, “Spock! I thought you were coming up this afternoon!”

“Dr McCoy asked me if I would come and see the

Captain this morning,” Spock replied, “he will be here for the procedure but he felt that Captain Kirk would appreciate the visit.”

She turned and for the briefest moment thought she caught a flicker of a smile on Spock’s lips. Then she turned back to Kirk and saw the relief in his eyes and his body, *Such strength and power*, she thought, dumbfounded, *such joy in one another’s company. Gods, how can they not know?* She swallowed the last of the protein drink and stood up, “Spock, I’ll leave you to talk.” *I need to get out of here now!*

Once in the corridor she smoothed down the front of her uniform, trying to maintain some semblance of Vulcan control when it felt as though her brain was going to come apart. She heard a muffled curse and turned to look at McCoy, “Leonard,” she murmured, grateful beyond all reason it was him who had found her and not M’Benga.

She was only half-aware of the next ten minutes, gradually she came to herself. She was sitting in one of the treatment rooms, McCoy’s hand on her arm. She blinked and his face came into focus, she noticed that there were beads of sweat on his forehead reminding her of tiny little blisters.

“Are you back with me?” McCoy asked softly, “you’ve been somewhere else for the last fifteen minutes.”

She closed her eyes and nodded, “I must apologise. I did not sleep well last night.”

“No that’s not the reason,” McCoy shook his head, “you

forget, I can sense your emotions. They're running almost as high as when you were experiencing *pon farr*. Can you tell me what happened?"

"The control is becoming harder to maintain," T'Kar opened her eyes and looked at him, "and when Spock entered the Captain's room it was like being held between two immensely powerful creatures. Would you be offended if I said that you love one another?"

McCoy blinked and then shook his head, "I don't think so. You can feel that?"

"From all three of you – and especially Spock just now. You three form a triumvirate, three powerful individuals-" She looked down at McCoy's hand resting on her arm, "who dominate the bridge of the *Enterprise*. A better way to describe you would be that of an equilateral triangle – and you all love one another. I could feel it boiling off Spock when he entered the Captain's room, and his joy at seeing Spock was indescribable." She sighed, "I'm not explaining it very well am I?"

"Something's eating at you," McCoy replied, when she opened her mouth to protest he shook his head, "You can't fool me, T'Kar. Remember? I know you don't feel that you can talk to anyone but I want your word that if you start to feel overwhelmed by the situation you won't go running off into the desert – come and talk to someone – do I have your promise?"

"Jim said that," T'Kar sighed, "We need to get him well Leonard – I told you – all three of you are important and if

we lose that then we lose the future.”

“Are you so sure that this is a good thing,” McCoy asked, “you say that when people mention the name of the *Enterprise* they will speak of us in the same breath but they may speak of us as they spoke of Kodos the Executioner.”

T’Kar raised an eyebrow and he chuckled, she shook her head firmly and responded, “No, I might have thought that two days ago but no longer. It is still not certain but you will not disgrace the uniform. You will shine in glory and everyone will know your names.” She swallowed again, “but as I said before the future is a fluid animal and can change on a coin spin.”

McCoy gently released her arm and for a moment she wished that he was still holding her and then he smiled, “I’m going to give you a shot of something to counteract the readings I’m getting. I want you here for the procedure but then I want you to go home and rest – once the drug wears off you’ll be exhausted anyway.”

Reluctantly T’Kar nodded and watched as McCoy pressed the hypospray against her arm. Within five minutes her heart rate and metabolism had settled down and her breathing had eased. McCoy eyed her thoughtfully and said, “Remember what I told you? After the procedure, you’re to go home and rest. I need you with me on this.”

“All right,” T’Kar nodded again and this time Bones smiled, “Good, now you’d better trip along to the Captain, he may not be an empath but he’s pretty good at picking up body language too.”

“‘Trip along’?” she raised a perfect dark eyebrow again and Bones had to suppress a smile, “it means to ‘get moving’. When she slipped into the treatment room Dr M’Benga was just giving him the relaxant. Spock was standing against the wall and T’Kar thought she could just detect an undercurrent of tension in the air. Jabilo turned and smiled, “Ah, T’Kar, I was wondering where you’d got to. Are you ready?”

As I’ll ever be, she thought, but replied, “As always, Doctor.”

She sat down on the stool next to the biobed and again he sought her hand, she felt his fingers, cool on her wrist as he sought comfort in her contact. She looked up briefly and for a split second saw the look of shock in Spock’s eyes before the impassive Vulcan reserve was restored again.

She looked down at the Captain again, “Hey, feeling sleepy?” she asked softly.

Kirk half-opened his eyes, “A bit, feel a bit sick actually.”

“That’s probably just nerves,” T’Kar replied, unaware of the eyes watching her she gently stroked his forehead,

“It’ll be all right, I’m here and you know I won’t let anything happen to you.”

If Spock had been perturbed by T’Kar holding hands with the Captain, her behaviour now left him flabbergasted. *Vulcans did not touch!* It wasn’t that they weren’t emotional beings whatever anyone said, it was merely centuries, millennia of practices had enabled them

to divorce their emotions from the situation at hand. Therefore they could look at a situation dispassionately and choose a path that depended on logic not on emotion.

Whatever humans might think it was never that Vulcans did not subscribe to emotions, merely that they chose not to allow their emotions to govern their course of action. Plus having some telepathic ability often meant that touch left them open to the emotions of others which if unguarded could be dangerous to the Vulcan mind. Swallowing hard, Spock gazed at the young woman he thought of as a sister and wondered at her actions.

Kirk managed a sleepy smile, “You always know the right thing to say.” He murmured, “Promise you’ll stay?”

T’Kar nodded, her throat suddenly closing up on her, she looked up at Spock standing against the wall and despite his self-control suddenly felt the wave of consternation emanating from him, *What the-* she thought, *This is Spock, the most self-controlled Vulcan I have ever met – how-* Then the man lying on the bed smiled up at her and then all her being was centred on him.

She was gently stroking the back of his hand with her thumb when Dr M’Benga entered the room carrying the latest dose of the drug. T’Kar felt him tense and leant over him, “What’s the matter?” she asked softly.

“I-I-” he began and his eyes flicked towards M’Benga holding the hypospray.

“Take some nice deep breaths, James,” she advised, her hand resting on his head, she could feel the terror building

in him although she couldn't pinpoint the source, what she didn't see was for an instant, a look of shock replace Spock's stoic mask as he saw T'Kar rest her hand on his Captain's head.

T'Kar looked across at Dr M'Benga and shook her head quickly. To her surprise and secret delight he nodded, she looked up at Spock and their eyes met, and she had a feeling that everything between them had changed in an instant.

Kirk's breathing eased and his eyes half-opened again, "Sorry," he muttered, "I feel torn – I want to find out, but I'm – I'm afraid-"

"I know," T'Kar replied, her hand gently stroking his head, "If you don't want to continue we won't today. This has to be your decision."

"Mmm," he half-smiled, "that feels nice. Feel a bit better, thanks."

Despite everything she smiled, shocking the Vulcan standing against the wall even more, "Good. Shall we proceed or do you want to leave it? We can do it another day if you wish."

To her surprise Kirk shook his head, "No, I want to find out. You promise to stay, whatever happens?"

"I promise to stay," she said.

To her surprise M'Benga deferred to her saying, "Ready, T'Kar?"

She smiled down at Kirk, "Are you absolutely sure, James?"

“Yes,” his eyes closed again but she felt him squeeze her hand.

“We’re ready, Doctor.”

“Jabilo,” he corrected smiling, pressing the hypospray to Kirk’s neck. Within minutes Kirk’s face had relaxed again into boyish youthfulness and Jabilo was selecting the questions. They started with the same procedure as before only this time M’Benga had added another element.

“Jim, do you know who I am?” he asked.

“Dr M’Benga,” came the soft reply.

“And do you know who’s holding your hand?”

“T’Kar.”

“That’s good, Jim. Now remember you’re perfectly safe here, nothing can harm you, all right?”

He nodded sleepily and again T’Kar felt a wave of compassion almost overwhelm her.

“All right. Jim, I want you to go back to your last mission, you’re standing on the planet. Do you remember, you were standing in front of The Guardian of Forever, can you tell me what happened next?”

“We were looking for Bones, he’d injected himself with cordrazine. Beamed down to the planet-”

M’Benga nodded, and made a note on his PADD that it tallied with what he’d said under the influence of the feromazone the last time and that he’d retained the knowledge without trauma which was a good sign. T’Kar knew that if he’d retained that knowledge there was a possibility that he could remember what else had occurred

and be able to come to terms with whatever had caused the amnesia in the first place.

She gently stroked the back of his hand with her thumb again, his hand holding onto hers as if for dear life.

“Easy, James, easy.” She murmured, “it’ll be all right.”

M’Benga flicked a quick look at her and cleared his throat, T’Kar blushed, an emerald flush creeping up her cheeks and then she bit her lip.

“What happened next, Jim?” He asked.

“We were scanning the area, seemed to be a long dead civilization and then McCoy appeared from nowhere. Spock and I tried to tackle him – missed and he jumped through – through the gateway and then-then-” he twisted on the biobed and M’Benga suddenly swore as all the readings suddenly jumped, “My ship – *Enterprise* – gone! History changed! No!”

T’Kar gasped as her whole being was suddenly swamped with despair. Fighting to regain control she took a deep breath and tried to soothe the overwhelming emotions flowing from him. She must have partly succeeded as Jim settled onto the bed and the fluctuating readings steadied. At some point McCoy must have entered the room because he was suddenly standing at Jabilo’s shoulder, murmuring something, she caught snatches of their conversation, “...don’t like those readings...ask another question...can we risk it...”

They appeared to reach some sort of agreement and then M’Benga was bending over his PADD again. He

swallowed convulsively and T'Kar saw the sweat gleaming on his dark skin, in the hollow at the base of his neck, he looked at her out of the corner of his eye and she nodded quickly, and then to reassure him that she was all right she raised her left hand giving him the 'thumbs up' signal. He nodded again to acknowledge her signal and cleared his throat.

"Jim, what happened after that?" he asked gently.

"Guardian – Guardian spoke to us – McCoy changed history – jumped through time gate. Enterprise - Enterprise no longer exists-" Kirk moaned and again clutched T'Kar's hand as if it was a lifeline.

"All right, Jim. What did you do?"

Ended up in New York – 1930 – met, met- Nooo!" Kirk twisted again and this time T'Kar could see the tears running down his face, "I can't – I can't – she didn't deserve to die – Edith!" His body arched and M'Benga watched in horror as the displays began to drop and Captain Kirk suddenly went into cardiac arrest.

T'Kar blanched and looked up, *1930? Edith?* She dropped Kirk's hand and her hands shaking tried to find the points on Kirk's face for the Vulcan Mind Meld. He was drowning in a pit of despair, sinking back into darkness and this time she could do nothing to bring him back....

Strong hands were around hers putting her fingers on Jim's face to establish a mind-meld and she half-turned to see Spock standing behind her, then one of his hands was

on the side of her head seeking psionic points known only to him, and the other one was on her shoulder, "Bring him back," he said quietly in her ear and she felt renewed strength run through her.

Barely aware of the two doctors on the other side of the biobed, T'Kar felt hers and Spock's consciousness drop into Kirk's. *James, I'm here*, she thought as she fell.

T'hy'la she heard Spock say and the love in his voice that he would never openly declare to his human friend reverberated through her. It was so powerful and strong it was a wonder that Jim could not know about it.

Suddenly they seemed to be standing in an Iowa cornfield again and T'Kar had to suppress a smile, he was standing in front of her, *You come here often in your dreams*.

He turned and she could see the distress on his face, *I only remember her name, but I can't remember anything else*.

Spock was standing next to her and she half-turned to see him as he was, all Vulcan stoicism stripped away, he blazed like a fireball and she had to turn her face away or be burnt to a cinder. *Brother*, his voice left echoes in her mind and for a moment she wondered how *he* saw her. Another image flitted through her head and she saw a flock of Teresh-ka and wondered where or who the images were coming from. Then she was stepping forward to take Jim's hands in her own.

Remember her name, she smiled, *there is nothing to be*

*ashamed of in that. Come back to us James. We love you. And then she spoke the word that had stayed in her memory since she had healed him **T'hy'la**.*

A half-smile touched his lips and then he was in her arms sobbing like a child, she held him, her hands on his head and his neck, *Whatever happened there is no shame involved.* She assured him, *All you need to remember is her name and that you loved her, when the rest needs to come it will.*

McCoy eyed Spock and T'Kar, they had been standing like statues for almost twenty minutes. They'd managed to stabilise the Captain but his life signs were still dangerously low. He eyed them both, T'Kar was dangerously pale even for a Vulcan and running a tricorder over Spock he could see that the healing was draining him also.

He eyed them both thoughtfully and wondered when he should stop them. Then Kirk's life signs stabilised and he opened his eyes. T'Kar took a deep breath and opening her eyes stared down into Kirk's. Spock removed his hand from her forehead and taking a deep breath touched the back of his first and index fingers to Kirk's temple, **T'hy'la**. He thought softly, the memory of his presence still strong within the meld and knew that Jim had heard him.

Kirk half-smiled and then T'Kar moved her hands and gently stroked his left temple with the back of the fingers of her right hand. He managed a weary smile, "That's twice you've brought me back – I owe you."

M'Benga looked at the biobed readings and closed his eyes in relief, "We were lucky," he said slowly.

"Extraordinarily so," T'Kar replied, turning to glance at Spock.

Jabilo smiled, "Do you remember anything this time, Jim?"

Kirk managed a wan smile, "A bit, Spock and I jumped through the Guardian of Forever to try and prevent a disaster. I remember a woman, her name was Edith but something terrible happened to her and I think I was involved."

T'Kar smiled, "Don't worry about that now, you need to sleep – no bad dreams I promise."

He nodded sleepily and closing his eyes drifted into slumber, McCoy swallowed and said thickly, "We can't use this drug again."

"No," T'Kar agreed, "but we may not need to."

"I think you may have some explaining to do," Spock said slowly, "you have skills and abilities I have never seen."

"I knew it would come to this sooner or later," T'Kar managed a rueful smile, "I am glad you know – I hated having to keep this secret from you."

"So, what exactly are you?" M'Benga asked, "and how did you do that?"

"Well the residue of my last healing helped," T'Kar explained, "I am that mythical being that Spock told you of, although I have not undertaken Kahinar."

“You’re a Shatry’a!” Spock said slowly and she thought she detected a sense of wonder in his eyes.

“Let’s get the Captain to bed and when he’s comfortable I’ll explain everything,” T’Kar promised.

McCoy nodded and said, “You two go and get something to eat, Jabilo and I will join you in the hospital’s restaurant.”

Spock brought her a Vulcan coffee and sat opposite her, T’Kar raised her eyes and to look at him, she wanted to say so many things but wasn’t sure where to start, “I am curious,” he said slowly, “when did you know?”

“About four years ago I was called to my first meeting with the Shatry’a.” T’Kar replied, “somewhere beyond the l-langon mountains.”

“She told you that this would happen?” Spock sipped his own drink and T’Kar had the feeling that he wished it was something stronger than coffee.

“Not exactly,” T’Kar sipped her own drink and wished that it was something stronger. “She told me that I might be the next Shatry’a and that she would know soon whether I was the correct choice.”

“And are you?”

“I do not know,” T’Kar replied, “I only know what happened on the night Captain Kirk was brought to the hospital at ShiKahr. After that things have become somewhat complicated.”

“How so?”

“Somehow, something erupted from me to save the

Captain's life. Then I went out into the desert to think-"

"You found Dr McCoy the night he went walking in the desert," Spock said slowly, his dark eyes thoughtful, "didn't you?"

T'Kar nodded, she waited for him to say something else but he remained silent, "You acted quickly to save the Captain."

"Thanks to your quick thinking." T'Kar replied, "and I may have done more damage."

"You denigrate yourself with no reason," Spock replied, he steepled his hands in front of him, "Your power grows."

How do you know? She opened her mouth to ask but swallowed and said, "It would seem so. Maybe it was always this strong."

"I do not think so," Spock replied, "I should imagine that you are finding it hard to maintain control. I would be happy to assist you and help you with some more advanced meditation techniques."

"I should be glad of that," T'Kar replied.

Dr M'Benga and Dr McCoy walked across to them and eased themselves into chairs, T'Kar eyed them both thoughtfully, both men looked utterly exhausted. Spock ordered drinks and then they sat waiting for them to recover, finally M'Benga looked up into T'Kar's face, "Don't take this the wrong way, but how the hell did you do what you just did?"

"She's a Shatry'u," McCoy said softly, he held out his fingers and as an olive flush crept up her cheeks, T'Kar

touched hers to his, “And I believe that once she has ascended-” he looked across at her and at her nod continued, “she will be able to command the power of the universe.”

“I would say that her powers are *pretty* awesome at the moment,” M’Benga said, sipping his coffee. “I’ve never seen anything like that in my life.”

“And you may never see the like again,” Spock said slowly, “I am privileged to have been here to see a new one.”

McCoy nodded and T’Kar lifted her fingers, “I don’t know that you’re seeing one now,” she said quietly, “nothing is set in stone, not even my Destiny.” She closed her eyes suddenly feeling a wave of weariness wash over her.

“Come on,” McCoy said, getting to his feet, “I think we need to get you to bed.”

“Can we not put a cot up in Captain Kirk’s room?” M’Benga asked, “I think he would rest better if he woke up and saw her.”

McCoy nodded, “All right. Come on, sweetheart, I know you Vulcans are stronger than humans but you still need your rest.”

Sweetheart? She frowned but allowed McCoy to escort her from the café. Another bed had been placed in Captain Kirk’s room and T’Kar looked at the cool crisp sheets with something resembling envy.

“I’ll get some pyjamas,” Dr M’Benga said quickly, “I’m

sure that one physician is enough to give you a dressing down.”

T’Kar turned to him and Spock and sighed, “I suppose this is as good a time as any to apologise.”

The impassive expression on Spock’s face did not change but he replied, “Perhaps. Your control over your emotions is well-maintained, even from other Vulcans. Perhaps it is your behaviour that you must guard – however you are still young and as such may need time to grow.”

T’Kar nodded her dark eyes thoughtful, “I find it hard to meld the two, Spock, it was easier before all this started.”

“I understand that,” Spock replied, “I will begin to show you these techniques tomorrow.”

“Thank you,” T’Kar replied, hoping that she wasn’t showing too much emotion.

The door opened and M’Benga entered again, this time carrying what looked like bedclothes, T’Kar regarded them silently and he said, “At least it’s not a surgical gown.”

She took the bundle and then said, “Could I have the lecture now, then I’ll get changed and I promise that I’ll go to sleep.”

McCoy nodded, “All right. You know what I want you to do, get some rest, don’t worry about anything. Don’t go and dance beneath the moon.”

For once T’Kar managed to maintain her composure. “Very well, Leonard.”

Surprising her he bent forward and gently kissed her

lips, “Are you going all Vulcan on me?”

“I should make the attempt while Spock is around,” she explained, “you saw how concerned he was in the treatment room. I could feel the waves of consternation boiling off him.”

McCoy nodded, “I have your word you won’t go into the desert. I know that you’re afraid – after what happened today I’m surprised you’re not sobbing your heart out in a corner.”

“Would you be?” T’Kar asked quickly looking up at him.

McCoy shook his head, “I’d be in my quarters with a bottle of Romulan Ale, trying to get drunk and not succeeding.”

She smiled wanly at him, “Or perhaps you just wouldn’t be sleeping. I can imagine you pacing Sickbay like a caged tiger.”

McCoy nodded, “I still maintain that you’re all repressed and that the release of emotions is a healthy and necessary thing to keep you sane.”

Kirk shifted on the bed and they both stiffened unwilling to wake the sleeping man. Then McCoy nodded to her, “Get changed and get some sleep. There’ll be lots of time to discuss things tomorrow.”

“All right,” T’Kar nodded and then McCoy slipped out of the room. Quickly she pulled her uniform off and changed into the pyjamas. Pulling the sheet back she climbed onto the bed and put her head on the pillow.

Within moments she was asleep.

Chapter 9

Kirk stirred on the bed and opened his eyes, the room was dimly lit but he could see T'Kar lying asleep on the other bed. Sighing in relief he closed his eyes, he had scattered memories of the last treatment session and something about another mind-meld, except that he was sure that Spock had been there this time. T'Kar shifted in her sleep and he stiffened, not wanting to wake her. She settled almost immediately and he lay back down on the bed. The door opened and a shaft of light entered the room followed by the figure of Dr McCoy.

“Bones!” Kirk whispered, trying to sit up.

McCoy was across the room and gently pushing him down onto the bed, “Lie down, you need to rest.”

“Is she all right?” Kirk whispered, gesturing across to the woman asleep on the other bed.

“When she’s had a good night’s sleep,” McCoy replied, “I’m surprised that you ask about her – we’ve been rather worried about you.”

Kirk managed a wan smile, “Why? What happened?”

“We almost lost you this time, Jim,” McCoy sat down on the bed, “you had a bad reaction to the feromazone.”

“I don’t remember much,” Kirk replied, “she was in my mind again – she and Spock. Some other memories too – you injecting yourself with cordrazine and jumping

through that Time Gate – Guardian of Forever wasn't it?"

"Should have taken more care with the cordrazine," McCoy admitted, "I don't remember jumping through the Guardian of Forever – sorry Jim."

"We got you back," Kirk replied, his hand resting on McCoy's arm, "Safe and well. There was no real harm done."

"Try to get some more rest," McCoy replied changing the subject.

"Good idea," Jim smiled at his friend and closed his eyes. McCoy watched until he was sure his friend was asleep and then checking to see that their conversation hadn't disturbed T'Kar quietly slipped from the room.

He remembered what he'd said about retiring to his room with a bottle of Romulan Ale and attempting to get drunk but decided that he wanted to feel human in the morning. For the first time he wished that he hadn't persuaded T'Kar to get some sleep as he felt he needed someone to talk to. An idea crept into his mind and getting up he turned the light off in his office and quietly left the room.

T'kuht was still a bright, shining balloon above them when he left the hospital. Running a hand through his dark hair he began to walk towards Sarek and Amanda's house. To his surprise Amanda opened the door to him before he had a chance to knock.

"I wondered when you'd come," she said quietly at his perturbed look, "would you like a coffee?"

Struck dumb, McCoy nodded and then sank gratefully into a chair. Amanda returned ten minutes later carrying two mugs. She handed one to Dr McCoy and sat down herself, "How did you know I'd come here?" he asked.

"T'Kar," Amanda said quietly, "she said that she thought you needed someone to talk to about what happened on your last mission."

"Smart lady," McCoy dredged a smile from somewhere, "It was all my fault what happened. A defective hypospray went off in my hand, gave me an overdose of cordrazine. I don't remember much about what happened next – apparently I beamed down to the planet's surface and jumped through a time portal called The Guardian of Forever. Managed to change history in one fell swoop."

"Was that such a bad thing?" Amanda asked gently.

"I saved a young woman's life –" McCoy said brokenly, "and because I saved her life the Captain had to come through to the same time period and let this woman die to restore the timeline. He fell in love with her. He had to let her die –" McCoy broke off and realised that the tears were sliding down his cheeks. Finally taking a sip of the coffee and gathering his thoughts, he continued, "And then the Captain was injured." He blinked back tears and looked up to see Amanda holding a tissue out to him.

"And you feel that the whole episode was your fault?" McCoy looked up at her and nodded, "If I had checked that hypospray then the whole incident would never have happened." He took a mouthful of the coffee, "It's my fault

that Jim almost died – twice!”

Amanda laid a cool hand on his arm, “I don’t think everything was your fault, Doctor, in fact I don’t even think that the defective hypospray can be levelled at your door.”

“It doesn’t really help the guilt,” McCoy replied sadly.

“I know,” Amanda smiled, “whatever happened out there James Kirk will not blame you for it.”

“How do I stop blaming myself?” McCoy asked, “because that’s all I can think of at the moment. And Jim has remembered Edith and the fact that he had to perform a terrible act. Sooner or later he will remember her surname and what he had to do to preserve the universe as it is.”

“And he will remember what you did.” Amanda’s voice was cool and soft.

“Yes,” McCoy swallowed the remainder of his coffee, “and I do not know if I can live with that.”

“Is my son experiencing this?” Amanda asked quickly.

“He knows that choice that Jim had to make and regrets it as much, although-” McCoy managed a half-hearted smile, “he would probably say that regret is a human emotion.”

“My son, who has to be the consummate Vulcan.” Amanda replied, she shook her head. “Do you feel better?”

“How did T’Kar know that I’d come to see you?” McCoy asked.

“My daughter has a sixth sense for such things,” Amanda replied, “she knew how you were feeling and

must have sensed some of it within the *pon farr*. She must have suggested that you talk to someone about your feelings.”

“She did,” McCoy agreed, “I just wasn’t sure who to go to-” he paused and then swallowed, “I’m sorry to dump all this on you, Amanda.”

“That’s all right,” Amanda smiled, “it gives me an insight as to why three of the bravest men I’ve met turn up on my doorstep looking like death warmed up. Did it help you to talk to me?”

McCoy nodded, “A bit. I still don’t know what I’m going to say to Jim though.”

“It’ll come,” Amanda said compassionately, “and you’ll find the words to say.”

McCoy nodded and as they stood up and although it wasn’t the Vulcan way he grasped Amanda’s hands, “Thank you for listening.”

“Anytime, Doctor,” Amanda replied, “think you’ll be able to sleep now?”

“Yes, I think so,” McCoy managed a half-smile. Wandering back to the hospital he found his thoughts seemed to be a little calmer. He was still thinking when he wandered into the hospital and nearly bumped into Dr M’Benga.

“Leonard!” M’Benga said in surprise, “where have you been, I was becoming concerned.”

“Sorry, Jabilo,” McCoy gave him a rueful smile, “I went to speak with a friend. I should have left word with

Reception.”

Jabilo sighed and then said, “All right. I would like to speak with you about T’Kar though. She saved our bacon today – I’ve never seen anything like that technique that she and Spock used-”

“Me neither,” McCoy replied, “Come through to my office, Jabilo, we can at least share a glass of Romulan Ale.”

Jabilo turned the glass of blue liquor in his hand for a few moments and then he looked up at McCoy, “She’s a Shatry’a?”

“She calls herself Shatry’u,” Bones qualified, “says that she hasn’t ascended yet whatever that means. Even so she’s performed some astonishing feats.”

“It was she who brought Captain Kirk back the first time, wasn’t it?” M’Benga said suddenly.

“Yes,” McCoy said embarrassed and then at M’Benga’s reproachful look he shook his head, “I didn’t know what had happened the first time either. I thought it was a miracle-”

“It was in a sense,” Bones replied, “you have to admit that none of our techniques would have saved him. Yesterday I don’t know that we could have done anything if she and Spock had not stepped in.”

“Are there many like her?” Jabilo asked curiously, taking a sip of the blue liquid.

“One every ten thousand years according to Spock,” McCoy replied.

“So if none of us knew the night that Captain Kirk was healed the first time, how did you discover her identity?”

“I got a bit annoyed,” McCoy admitted, “We were having supper at Sarek and Amanda’s and they were talking about some sort of ceremony that T’Kar would have to undergo with the family lawyer when she reached the age of twenty-one. Sarek admonished her for showing too much emotion at the supper table and she excused herself. Sometimes the Vulcans emotionless attitude gets on my nerves so I went out for a walk – got myself lost in the deep desert. T’Kar found me. That’s when I realised that she wasn’t just a simple nurse.”

“That’s an understatement,” Jabilo replied, “but what do we do with her?”

“Do we need to do anything *with* her?” McCoy asked, “can we wait and see what happens?”

Jabilo nodded, “Just a bit of a surprise that’s all. Still it would explain the odd things that have happened when she’s been around.” He smiled at McCoy, “oh nothing as spectacular as this – but things seem to run more smoothly. People were less prone to panic when she was there, funny I never thought it was because of what she was.”

“Perhaps it wasn’t,” McCoy replied thoughtfully, “after all it’s never been explicitly stated that she would become the next Shatry’a.”

“I think with everything that’s happened that’s probably inevitable now,” M’Benga said, he took a sip of the drink and then sighed.

“I don’t know,” McCoy replied, “I would like to reserve judgement.”

M’Benga smiled and drained his glass, “I’ll see you tomorrow, Leonard. Things may be clearer then.”

McCoy raised his glass to his colleague *Perhaps* he thought, *Perhaps*.

T’Kar woke slowly and blinked up at the ceiling for a few moments. Then she remembered she was in the hospital and sat up slowly. It was still night and she wondered for a couple of minutes what the time was and then her stomach rumbled. Sighing she swung her legs over the side of the bed. She looked across at the other bed and a half-smile touched her lips, *Was that when you had to let my ancestor die? She thought, your last mission. Did you love her – she loved you – or at least she had feelings for you.* Shaking her head she stood up and walked across to the food dispenser on the wall. She ordered a bowl of porridge and a soft voice said, “Coffee would be nice.”

She jumped and then turned to see Kirk sitting up and smiling at her.

“Don’t do that!” she hissed. “Scared me half to death!”

He looked marginally sheepish and murmured, “Sorry.”

T’Kar turned away and then she was carrying her bowl and the mug across to his bed. She placed them on the table and he said, “Sit with me?”

Easing herself down onto the bed she managed a wan smile, “How are you feeling?”

“Washed out,” he said, “did the procedure work?”

T’Kar eyed him thoughtfully, “I’m not sure. We nearly lost you a second time. If I didn’t know better I’d say that these memories don’t want to be unearthed.”

“And if I can’t face them-” he sighed and took a mouthful of his coffee, “then I’m back to where I started.”

“It’s only been four days,” T’Kar said slowly, “I think you have a little time.”

“I know enough about time,” he scowled, “and I don’t think I have as much of it as you might think. All I can remember is that her name was Edith and that something terrible happened to her.” He sighed again, “I wish I could feel happier about the whole situation – I mean maybe if I knew what had happened I could face it.”

Privately T’Kar thought that it was more serious than that but she didn’t want to tell him so. All she said was, “Drink your coffee.”

“That bad, huh?” Kirk smiled and for a moment looked like his old boyish self.

“Does it show?” T’Kar raised an eyebrow and Kirk laughed, “you have the same look that Spock does when he’s concerned about me.”

“Well technically we are second cousins,” T’Kar smiled, “although I would hardly expect you to know that.”

Kirk laughed, “Did you say that you and Spock were going to be joined at one point?”

T’Kar nodded, “Our Fathers felt that it would be a good match.”

“But you didn’t agree,” Kirk replied.

“Actually both of us came to that conclusion,” T’Kar said slowly, her dark eyes thoughtful, “I wanted more than a husband who served in Starfleet – I wanted to serve in Starfleet myself and I couldn’t do that if I was to marry Spock – so we met and decided that it would not suffice.”

“Sounds an awfully clinical way of doing it,” Kirk muttered.

“I know that we seem that way to you,” T’Kar finished her porridge and set the bowl and spoon on the table, “but it is the Vulcan way. I have seen how Terrans finish relationships and marriages. I’d rather not scream insults at someone because a relationship did not work out or was not quite right. The Vulcan way is better.”

Suddenly he found himself yawning and to his surprise the corners of T’Kar’s mouth curved upwards in a slight smile, “Go back to sleep,” she said, “you need the rest. We’ll talk later.”

Kirk nodded drowsily and then he said, “Are you going to stay?”

T’Kar looked down at the pyjamas she was wearing and caught his eyes, “It is unlikely that I could get out of the hospital dressed as I am.” She said slowly.

“Is that an attempt at Vulcan humour?” Kirk yawned again.

“Statement of fact, Jim,” T’Kar replied. “Get some sleep, all right? Things will look different in daylight.”

He nodded and closed his eyes. When she was sure he

was fast asleep again she took the mug and bowl and placed them back in the food dispenser. Then washing her hands at the basin she slipped back to bed. Sleep came easier the second time she vaguely remembered turning over and snuggling under the sheet before sleep closed over her like a cloud.

She woke slowly and noticed that it was broad daylight outside. Looking around she noticed that the Captain's bed was empty, just as the door opened and Dr McCoy entered the room.

"You look better," McCoy said gently, sitting on the chair beside the bed.

T'Kar nodded, "What time is it?"

"Mid-afternoon," he replied.

"I slept that long," she bit her lip, "I must have been tired."

"I'm not surprised," McCoy replied, "I suspect you've been subsisting on what I've been pumping into you and adrenalin."

"Don't forget the one or two hours of sleep I've been managing per night," T'Kar replied. "That won't have helped matters."

McCoy nodded, "Come and have some lunch, Jim's been asking about you. He was concerned."

T'Kar nodded and then said, "Would you mind leaving the room so I can get dressed? I don't think that I can go to lunch in pyjamas."

McCoy smiled and then she was alone. Her uniform was

lying draped over a chair and they were the only clothes of hers in the room. Dressing quickly she found a brush in the bathroom and pulled it through her dark hair, wincing as she pulled out the knots. Eventually she looked at herself in the mirror and despite not being happy with her appearance decided it was the best she could do.

Both men were waiting for her when she stepped outside into the hot Vulcan day. “T’Kar!” Jim’s voice was sharp and she found herself regarding him quickly, he seemed stretched, taut like a bowstring and she wondered if he was as stable as he was pretending to be.

“Jim,” she said softly.

“Come and sit down,” he said gently, “I’ll treat you to a Vulcan Coffee.”

“I think I’d prefer the equivalent of tea,” T’Kar replied.

They sat at one of the small cafe tables and she sat quietly while Bones ordered the drinks, while they were waiting she turned to Kirk and said, “Are you feeling any better?”

“As I said earlier this morning, just washed out.” He managed a wry smile and she thought *Charmer* and another thought poked its way into her head and she wondered if this is what her ancestor had seen when she looked at him.

“You ought to rest,” T’Kar said, biting her lip, “in fact I’m not even sure you should be outside.”

“I couldn’t stay in the hospital – I was beginning to go stir crazy.”

“After one day?” She raised an eyebrow and McCoy had to suppress a laugh, “I don’t think it’s a prison, Jim.”

“I just wanted to get out and feel the air, do something that was more enjoyable than having drugs pumped into me-”

“And as we know,” McCoy interjected, “what James Kirk wants-”

“James Kirk gets!” T’Kar completed the sentence.

McCoy rolled his eyes, “I think you know him too well.”

“I’ve touched his mind twice,” T’Kar replied, “and that definitely gives one special knowledge.”

Their drinks arrived and T’Kar picked up her teaspoon, stirring the dark liquid. “I have to go and speak with my lawyer and sort out the last of the paperwork to do with my mother’s estate and then – well who knows?”

“It still worries you doesn’t it,” McCoy said slowly and then held up his hands, “I know, I know, worry is a human emotion. Perhaps I should say that it preys upon your mind.”

“Perhaps,” T’Kar admitted, “but I do not know. It is just my mother’s actions which concern me. Perhaps I will find more answers in the remainder of the boxes – perhaps I will just find more questions.”

“We said that you could always come to us and tell us your fears,” Kirk said.

“You’ve already extracted one promise from me,” T’Kar replied, “I am not willing to give you two.”

“One promise?” Kirk frowned, “I don’t understand.”

“To me,” McCoy said, smiling at her, “I asked her not to go running off into the desert if she discovered something upsetting.”

“And have you?” Kirk asked, suddenly intrigued.

“I don’t know. I’ve discovered something mystifying, but that may not be the same thing.” T’Kar took a sip of her tea. “I have so much to think about and consider and sometimes I think my head might just explode.”

“I’d never let that happen,” McCoy replied extending his fingers out to her. Slowly, aware of Kirk’s eyes on her, she did the same to McCoy and their fingers touched. A soft blush crept up her cheeks and McCoy smiled devilishly.

For some reason Jim felt as though he was intruding on something very private and very personal and he looked away, suddenly uncomfortable. When he looked back they were no longer touching although he still had the same uncomfortable sense that he’d walked into a very private and personal moment.

T’Kar looked up and if possible her blush deepened, “I apologise, Captain, that was unforgivable.”

Kirk shook his head, “No, not unforgivable, unexpected.” He looked at Bones and smiled, “Good to see.”

T’Kar took another sip of her tea wondering what to say next, to her surprise it was Leonard who broke the silence, “What now, Jim? I believe that T’Kar told you that we can

no longer use the feromazone treatment. Your reaction to it-”

“Almost killed me,” Jim finished, “but what other treatment is there, Bones? Remembering part of our last mission is no help when I should be able to remember all of it and be able to deal with it.”

“Jabilo and I need to discuss some other strategies,” McCoy explained, “I’d like you to stay in the hospital for the next couple of days so that the remainder of the feromazone can go through your system. If any more memories surface we’ll be on hand to talk you through them.”

“I’d better get going,” T’Kar said quickly, “if I’m to see S’Jenes.”

“I’m sure that whatever the problem is it can be worked out, T’Kar,” Jim said slowly, “and you do have friends.”

T’Kar nodded, “I know that, Captain, but I still need time to think about it.”

Kirk nodded, “All right, since you’ve promised McCoy you won’t run away I suppose it’s the least I can do. Just be careful – all right.”

T’Kar nodded and finished the last of her tea. She stood up and said, “I’d better get going – S’Jenes will be expecting me.”

She looked down into McCoy’s face, and for a moment something else seemed to pass between them, he looked up at her face, “I’ll see you at the hospital afterwards, all right?”

“Yes,” she replied and then she nodded quickly and was gone, slipping through the city and disappearing into the crowd until eventually she was lost among all the pedestrians.

“You’re worried about her aren’t you?” Kirk asked softly.

“A bit, yes,” McCoy replied, “I know she’s strong but there’s only so much pressure someone can take before they crack.”

“You think that she’s going to crack?”

“I think that too much pressure and she’ll break – I mean she’s only twenty-one for God’s sake and suddenly she’s faced with a situation that would break a human, let alone a Vulcan. Jim – I don’t know what her mother’s lawyer has told her but that’s affecting her too.”

“You can feel that?” Jim looked astonished.

McCoy frowned, “I can feel a few things from her. Concern mostly. But something’s troubling her, something that she doesn’t feel comfortable discussing.”

“She doesn’t really want to be here does she?” Jim replied thoughtfully.

“I don’t think that’s it. She’s not had the time to assimilate everything that’s happened to her. I think her plan would have been to heal you and then assume that you would just leave Vulcan, leaving her to get on with her life.”

“And that didn’t happen,” Jim sighed and ran a hand over his face, “she’s been plunged into something totally

unexpected, all because of me.”

“I don’t think you’re the lynchpin,” McCoy shook his head, “I think that all this might have happened whether you were here or not. I think that it all revolves around the prospective Shatry’a’s and their becoming twenty-one.”

“Poor kid,” Jim said suddenly, “I think I’d be gibbering in a corner right about now.”

“Well you know Vulcans,” McCoy said, “their whole lives are bound up tight in this ritual of non-emotion.”

“No I don’t believe it’s that,” Kirk replied, thinking back to the conversation he’d had with T’Kar when they’d had breakfast in her apartment, “there’s more to it.”

McCoy smiled and took his friend’s arm, “Come on, Jim, let’s get you back to your room.”

S’Jenes stood up as she entered his office, “T’Kar! Good to see you. I assume that you’ve had a look through the first chest?”

“Yes, S’Jenes,” T’Kar cleared her throat, “It seems to have raised more questions than answers though.”

“Perhaps you will find more answers when I play the rest of the hologram.” S’Jenes replied, “there are at least another 3 boxes of journals that you may wish to see later. But I will set up the next part of your mother’s last Will and Testament and then leave you in peace. I’ll also leave the control with you this time so that you can ‘pause’ and ‘play’ when you wish.”

T’Kar nodded, swallowing suddenly and realising that she was suddenly more nervous than she was willing to

admit. “Why don’t you sit down,” S’Jenes suggested.

T’Kar nodded and then S’Jenes had activated the device and she was sitting down behind his desk.

There was a crackle and then the figure of her mother appeared, she still appeared to be holding the same journal.

“My darling,” the voice began, “I suppose that having read the very first journal you are even more confused than you were. You probably want to know why we never told him of our history – the simple truth is that we did not know when and how this encounter took place in our time. Edith Keeler’s family looked for a Captain Kirk but with no success – but you probably know that. It is only in the last twenty years that we have discovered who he is. If you’ve followed any Starfleet news reports you will know that he commands the best starship in the fleet, the *Enterprise*. I have considered many times sending a message through Starfleet to ask him for a meeting, but one thing has always stopped me – what if *we* were never meant to be? What if Edith Keeler was never meant to meet Captain James Kirk and we weren’t meant to exist?

If we stood up and declared ourselves then someone might return to the Guardian of Forever and change the timeline back. I decided that keeping us secret was the best way of keeping us safe. Perhaps it is the wrong way, I do not know. No doubt you will have your own thoughts, if there is someone you can talk to about this, I urge you to do so. I could not and therefore found myself very lonely. Goodbye, my darling.”

The image winked and fizzled out, T'Kar sat watching it for a while and then wondered *Now what the hell do I do?* She pressed a buzzer on the desk and S'Jenes opened the door and entered the room.

“Have you found out what you need to?” he asked.

“In a way.” T'Kar replied, standing up, “How many more boxes are there?”

“About ten,” S'Jenes nodded at her stunned look, “Three in my office, and the other seven in storage, your family have been most prolific in their writing.”

“Then I guess if you can help me with the first box, I can start with that tonight.” T'Kar replied.

S'Jenes nodded, “Very well. You must not push yourself too much though; the journals as I understand them are not a historic record. They are merely journals.”

“I know, but it should be interesting to read them.” T'Kar replied, “perhaps I may find that my human ancestors and I felt much the same way.”

“It may be so,” S'Jenes replied, “but I leave that to your judgement.”

T'Kar nodded slowly. She looked up at S'Jenes, “Did my mother say anything of the contents of these journals?”

“I am afraid not,” he replied, “she was most insistent that the boxes remain sealed and that the holographic recording be not touched until you came to see me. But if you do wish to talk I am quite prepared to extend the privilege of lawyer's confidence to you also.”

T'Kar raised her eyes to meet his and thanked him.

“You will see that the chest is delivered to my apartment?”

S’Jenes nodded, “I will. Where do you go now?”

“Back to the hospital for the nonce,” T’Kar replied, “and I will see if Dr M’Benga needs me for anything else.”

S’Jenes nodded again and opened the door as T’Kar stepped out into the city. She was deep in thought as she wandered back to the hospital, *Now what the hell did she do?* Certainly there was now no chance of being able to share the contents of the journal with anyone she knew. For one fleeting instant she was filled with the desire to leave the city’s environs, to run into the deep desert, seek out the Shatry’a and take up the mantle of her Destiny.

Except....except that you gave your word to Leonard that you would not do so. And..and I don’t think that you can take up such a Destiny if you’re running away from something else. She ran a hand through her dark hair.

“Are you all right, T’Kar?” she looked up into the face of Deborah, the ward receptionist.

“I am fine,” T’Kar replied, “I was just wondering if either Dr M’Benga or Dr McCoy needed me for anything?”

Deborah frowned and shook her head, “No, I don’t think so. Hang on-” She looked up at T’Kar and then smiled, “No, sorry. Want to know when you’re back on duty?”

“That’d be great,” T’Kar forced down her disappointment.

Deborah turned back to her screen and tapped on her keys for a few moments, then she smiled, “Tomorrow

morning. Operating Room duty.”

“Fine,” T’Kar nodded and then she had turned away and was walking out of the hospital. Her car was waiting in the parking lot and sighing she threw her purse onto the passenger seat and climbed in. She set the controls to take her home, her mind was in turmoil.

Chapter 10

A locked chest was sitting in front of her front door and she noted that it was from S'Jenes and realised it was the first of the boxes that he had told her about. Sighing she opened the door and dropped her purse onto the chair beside the drawer.

Then, propping the door open she turned her attention to the box. Turning the object she began to pull it inside. She had got the box halfway into her flat when she heard a voice, "Hang on, T'Kar, let me help you with that!"

She looked up, sweat beading her forehead to see James Kirk standing in front of her, his face full of concern. "What the hell are you doing here?"

"I've escaped," he admitted.

"Escaped?" she stared at him, "Define escaped?"

"Bones took me back to the hospital, thinks I need monitoring."

"I think you need certifying," she replied, "have I got to call the hospital again and tell them you're safe? What is it with you three?"

Kirk gave her a sheepish grin, "I'll take your box in."

She was in her kitchen when he came in, "Would you like a coffee?" She asked, "before I report you to the Headmaster?"

Jim managed a half-hearted grin, "I suppose. I've got

you into trouble again haven't I?"

"More trouble than I'm already in?" T'Kar poured them their drinks and brought them across to the table, "do you honestly think that kidnapping a starship captain," *particularly the Captain of the Enterprise*, she thought, "is going to count against bringing someone back from the dead and dealing with half the wildlife of Vulcan? Bearing in mind that when I say 'wildlife' I mean 'wild'."

Kirk sat down opposite her and managed a weak smile, "Didn't know what else to do, I wanted somewhere I could come and relax. I hate hospitals."

"Yes, I'd noticed." T'Kar replied, eyeing him thoughtfully, "look, Jim, you know you should be in hospital. I know that your system is pretty much clear now but there are still gaps in your memory that need to be addressed. I'm not the one to do that – you need to speak to a medical professional."

"Are you always this logical?" he scowled.

"I am Vulcan," she replied as if that explained it all. "Technically, half-Vulcan," she admitted, "but I grew up here – my father felt that I should embrace the Vulcan side – and in many ways he was right."

Kirk sighed, "Like I said, I've got you into trouble."

"No, I can handle this," T'Kar shook her head, "it can't be worse than channelling the power of the universe."

"You sure you want to risk it?" Kirk chuckled, "Trust me, Dr McCoy is worse than the wrath of the universe."

Remembering some of the things she'd seen in his mind

both during her *pon farr* and when she'd mind melded with him T'Kar bit her lip, and Kirk smiled, "I'm beginning to think you know exactly what I mean."

"I'll give the hospital a call," T'Kar replied, "and hope he doesn't want to flay me alive."

Leaving Jim drinking his coffee she stepped through the lounge and turned on the videophone, "ShiKahr General Hospital please."

"ShiKahr Hospital, Reception."

"Hi Debbie, is Dr McCoy there please?"

"He's in his office, T'Kar, shall I put you through?"

"Please." The screen went blank and then T'Kar was looking at a frazzled Dr McCoy, "Leonard," she said gently, "I've found your errant Captain."

"Thank God," she thought she heard the break in his voice and he said, "I'll be right over, T'Kar."

"I'll let him know." She replied, "see you soon."

Turning the viewscreen off she returned to the kitchen.

Jim was finishing the last of his coffee, "he's coming over isn't he?"

"You need to be somewhere other than here," T'Kar replied, "what if something were to go wrong. What if you were to remember and it caused another breakdown?"

"Do you think that it's that bad?" Kirk demanded.

"I honestly don't know," T'Kar lied, "but both the Doctor and myself would prefer it if you were somewhere else. Somewhere where medical treatment is on hand. If anything should go wrong-"

“You could be wrong,” he stated.

“I’d rather err on the side of caution,” she replied, “I may be overreacting but the simple fact is that if I did not and something went badly wrong then I would blame myself for the remainder of my days.”

Kirk looked at her and sighed, “I know. And truthfully I would not expect you to do any less. You would make a great doctor, T’Kar.”

“But a doctor of what?” she raised an eyebrow and he grinned. Biting her lip she sighed, “You’re incorrigible. Go and lie down on the couch, I have a bit of work to do and then I must meditate if I’m to get my mind in order.”

He nodded and slipped through to the lounge. She looked at the space where he’d been for a while and then walked across to her desk. Opening the drawer she took out her journal and a pen. Old fashioned instruments for such an enlightened age but she somehow felt that by using these objects of another era she was maintaining a lifeline with the other members of her family who had also written their journals.

Looking at the large chest sitting in her office she knew that sooner or later she would have to sit and read what had been written in those old, brittle diaries and claim all those who stretched back from her as her kin. Tonight she would write her own journal. Picking up the pen she smoothed the cream page and began to write.

Where does one begin? It seems an eternity since I

wrote my last entry and yet it is only five days. They say that a day is a lifetime to some animals – but this past week has been a lifetime. I have claimed my inheritance although that has left me with more questions. Where does one begin? I do not know. This power that runs in me leapt out to save this man who now appears to be my ancestor – at least according to the diary I was given at my lawyer's – and it would appear that the condition he is suffering from – an amnesia caused by his last mission is because of my female ancestor, one Edith Keeler. We were using a new drug, one that is supposed to unlock repressed memory and he had a bad reaction – an almost deadly one and nearly died. But this time Spock and I brought him back – I confess without Spock I would not have been able to do so. And I have found out the reason for all this secrecy until I reach 21.

Actually it wouldn't have helped if I'd been 31 or even 41.

So it would appear that the legendary James T Kirk is my ancestor and the reason that he was brought a dying wreck to Vulcan has everything to do with her and that he had to do something that he has blocked from his memory. But this was a fine time to discover that I am related to **the** Captain Kirk. You'll forgive me if I'm not ecstatic – he's a hero for goodness sake. How do I live up to his reputation? I'm more likely to disgrace him. Hell, it

would have been so much easier if he'd just recovered and gone straight back to his ship. I would have had more chance of keeping it secret – now things are spiralling out of control and I can't stop it. On another note, I was summoned into the deep desert to meet the Shatry'a and I still don't know if I'm going to be the next one! Great, huh? I'm sure that others didn't have this problem! The drug may have partly worked on Captain Kirk, he remembered that her name was Edith and that something terrible happened to her. Yes, I know something terrible happened to her, both Dr McCoy and Mr Spock know what happened to her, but either because of Starfleet Regulations or their own feelings neither of them can tell the Captain. But what did happen, I know that she died, but I cannot see how this would affect Captain Kirk so badly. I'm not totally sure I want to find out. I rather suspect that the only way I will find out is if James Kirk regains his memory. At the moment the mental block seems to be in place and he doesn't seem to want to remember. Which leaves me in possession of a dangerous secret and an amnesiac Starship Captain.

Oh joy. The Captain is understandably pissed off and wants to face the problem and doesn't know how to do it. To be honest, neither do I and he seems to gravitate towards me! How he thinks I can help I don't know. Can't write any more tonight, maybe by tomorrow I will be a little more focused. Or a little less lost.

Sighing she put the pen down just as someone knocked on the door. Closing her journal, she opened the drawer and slid the diary into it. Then she rose to her feet and walked to the door. McCoy was standing there, “He’s resting on the couch,” she said gently.

“Thanks,” McCoy managed a taut smile.

“Would you like a coffee?” she asked gently, laying a hand on his arm.

He nodded quickly and she managed a quick smile before slipping into the kitchen. She was just boiling the kettle when McCoy suddenly appeared at her elbow,

“He’s asleep,” he said softly, “I gave him a light sedative, but I’d prefer that he returned to the hospital in the morning.”

“I’ve told him that,” T’Kar replied, “but I’m beginning to feel that the only way to keep James Kirk down is to manacle him to the bed and even then the chances are he’d find a way out of it.”

McCoy laughed softly, “I think you have a fair idea of how his mind works,” he said.

“Just lucky I guess,” T’Kar raised an eyebrow and turned back to her drinks. She didn’t see the odd look that Leonard gave her. When the drinks were ready she carried them across to the kitchen table. “I’m rostered for OR duty tomorrow – or,” she looked at her chronometer, “I should say, today.”

“I’d rather you stayed with the Captain,” McCoy said

quickly, “he seems to gravitate to you for some reason.”

I can think of a reason, T’Kar thought fiercely, it would appear that DNA is stronger than anything else. Why me? And then a little voice within her whispered, Why not you?

“All right,” T’Kar took a sip of her drink and then she said, “Are you going to stay here tonight?”

“I would feel happier,” McCoy gave her a sheepish look, “but in the spare room if you don’t mind.”

She smiled and said, “No Leonard I don’t mind.”

He nodded, and then said, “I’ve just thought, you never did have that twenty-first birthday party did you?”

T’Kar set her cup down and then said, “A bit hard to do when everything’s going to hell in a handbasket.”

“I can see that,” McCoy said, “and I’m assuming that Vulcans aren’t much for celebration.”

“Now you know that isn’t true, Leonard.” T’Kar admonished, “everything seemed to be happening so fast that to demand that we celebrate my birthday seemed selfish.”

“Aren’t you allowed to be selfish for one day a year?”

“That depends on your perspective,” T’Kar replied, “surely it is the height of selfishness to demand everyone pay attention to you when other people are in pain?”

McCoy smiled, “When all this is over and sorted and before we return I’ll take you for supper somewhere.”

“You could always cook for me again.” T’Kar said, “you may have missed your calling, Leonard.”

“No, I’m a physician,” McCoy replied. “And to be

honest that's all I wanted to be."

"Hah," T'Kar snorted, "but I suspect that you fill a lot of other roles as well. You are not just an average physician."

McCoy smiled and sipped his drink. "It is nice of you to say so." He ran a hand across his face, "Any ideas about how we treat the Captain now?"

"Not a clue," T'Kar replied, "would it be worth you and Spock sitting him down and explaining your last mission?"

McCoy shook his head, "He needs to remember himself and come to terms with that. Until he does-" he left the rest of the sentence unspoken and T'Kar nodded thoughtfully.

"So we're back to square one?" T'Kar asked thoughtfully, raising an eyebrow.

"I'll talk with Dr M'Benga tomorrow morning and see what other options we have." McCoy managed a half-hearted smile.

"I knew he would never make it easy," T'Kar replied, "that would just be too simple."

McCoy laughed and then put his hand out to cover T'Kar's, "Wouldn't it just! Can you think of anything else – perhaps something that I haven't."

"I wouldn't know what to suggest," T'Kar replied, "We've tried feromazone – what about hypnosis?"

"That's a possibility," McCoy replied, "I wish there was a way of getting to his brain without him knowing. Half the problem has been that his conscious mind doesn't want to remember so it's blocking any retrieval of subconscious

memories.”

“Plus there has be reintegration of the memories from the subconscious and recognition of those memories into the conscious mind. I get the feeling that we’re both up a creek without a Paddle. Oh Leonard, what do we do?”

“We’ll find a way,” McCoy promised, “he has a strong mind and he wants to get well. I’m just curious about one thing.”

“Only one?” she raised an eyebrow and he smiled.

“Why did he gravitate here?” McCoy asked, “of all the places he could have gone why here?”

“Maybe he recognised the building from the last time he was here?” T’Kar suggested, and a treacherous little voice in her head murmured, *But how did he find his way here the first time?*

McCoy nodded thoughtfully, “Oh I don’t know, T’Kar. Fluke I guess, and a lucky fluke for us. I think we should get to bed. We’ll see you in the morning.”

T’Kar smiled, “Leave your mug, Leonard, I’ll put the cups in the dishwasher and then tidy up the kitchen. See you tomorrow.”

He smiled again, that lopsided grin that she knew she’d miss when he’d gone back to his ship and then she was alone. She turned back to the sink and stared out the window, she was beginning to think that she knew exactly why he’d ended up at her apartment – both times. The first time might have been fluke – but she was beginning to realise that the second almost definitely wasn’t. *Looks like*

we are drawn together, she thought across millennia. I don't know whether to be grateful or infuriated.

She eyed the box lurking in lounge and wondered if she should risk opening it. Then wiping her hands on a tea towel she decided not to. With her luck she would be the only person who would have all the diaries spread out in front of her and James T Kirk would walk into the room. She did not think he was ready for this revelation yet – *if ever* she thought.

Taking one last look around her kitchen she decided to call it a night. She slipped through to her bedroom and lay down on the bed. But sleep took a long time to come.

She was awake with the dawn and she wondered vaguely where she was going with this. Sooner or later someone would notice the connection – and she rather suspected that with her cousin he would notice sooner.

The bond between the two men was diamond hard and she doubted whether anyone could break it. But she was also aware that they'd shared a mind-meld on more than one occasion. There was a possibility that from the meld they'd shared Spock would divine the nature of hers and Captain Kirk's relationship – although even she had to admit that was unlikely. *A trillion to one chance* she thought, and then the whisper of her second thoughts murmured, *Yes, and trillion to one chances seem to occur far more often than one would like.* She stepped into the sonic shower still wondering whether to disobey Dr McCoy and run into the desert and then shook her head.

She'd given her word, she wouldn't break it.

She was making herself some breakfast when a familiar voice said, "Good morning."

She turned and smiled, "Good morning, Jim. Do you feel better?"

"Less frazzled." He managed a smile, "you still going to tell me to go back to the hospital?"

"I'm afraid so," T'Kar brought the drinks across, "I'll make us some breakfast in a moment."

Jim nodded, "Still can't remember much – her name was Edith I know that much and I think I cared about her. But I also remember that something awful happened and I was a part of it."

"I can only sympathise," T'Kar replied, "but it will come right in the end."

"You can see into the future?" he raised an eyebrow in a very Spock like fashion and she felt the corners of her mouth curving upwards.

"No, but whatever's happening to me has given me a sort of prescience which means that I get glimpses of the future and I know that you and your friends are too important to the Universe for it to end here."

"That presupposes that you can see into the future," Kirk wrapped his hands around the mug, "and I understand that you see the future as a 'fluid' animal. Something that isn't fixed."

"To a degree," T'Kar replied warily, "but there are some things that are set and I can get a feeling for those."

You will blaze like comets across the heavens and in doing so lay a trail for all those who come after. The name *Enterprise* will become the standard in Starfleet for all starships.”

“You don’t know that,” McCoy came through to the kitchen, rubbing his eyes.

“We might as well have shared a bed,” T’Kar remarked, looking at his drawn face, “if you slept as well as I did.”

He managed a rueful grin and then asked, “Is there any chance of a coffee?”

“Breakfast too if you wish,” she replied, getting to her feet and turning to her worktop, “I can at least make scrambled egg and omelette. Which would you like?” Both men looked at one another and then Jim said,

“Which would you cook for yourself?”

“Me?” She stared at both of them, “Omelette. I feel more confident with them.”

“Then three omelettes, promise you won’t poison us.”

“I use different frying pans,” she explained, “one for me and the other for you both. I have no desire to be put on trial for murder quite yet.”

They smiled and she managed a slight smile back.

McCoy gently touched his friend’s arm, “How are you feeling this morning, Jim?”

“Still weary,” he managed a weak smile, “I don’t know why I left the hospital, Bones. I was just feeling closed in, and how I found my way here, well I have no idea.”

“Mmmm, I know,” McCoy replied thoughtfully,

“maybe it’s morphic memory. You know you found your way here when I decided to go walkabout in the desert.”

“And I don’t know how I did that either,” Jim took another sip of his coffee, “I just seemed to follow my nose-” he looked across at his friend, “now that does sound ridiculous.”

“Maybe you’re just lucky,” T’Kar replied as she carried their plates across to the table, “you can start if you wish – I don’t want your breakfast to get cold.”

Turning back to her own frying pan McCoy watched as she made her own omelette and brought the plate across.

Seeing how she was looking at him she raised an eyebrow, “May I inquire as to why you’re staring at me?”

“You just seem different this morning,” McCoy said slowly, “more poise.”

“It’s a front,” T’Kar replied quietly as she cut into her own breakfast, “I’m still trying to gather my thoughts.”

“I don’t know,” McCoy looked thoughtful, “I just get a feeling from you that things have changed.”

“It’s probably the deep meditation sessions I’m doing,” T’Kar replied, “They seem to be helping.”

McCoy smiled, “I hope that they help to centre you.” Privately T’Kar thought the same thing, but didn’t have the heart to say anything. They finished breakfast and she stood up and gathered the plates. “Do you need any help with that?” he asked.

T’Kar shook her head, “You just get your Captain back to the hospital.”

Jim managed a wry smile and stood up, "I owe you, T'Kar."

"Don't worry about it, you'd do the same." T'Kar nodded and then she had turned away and was slipping dishes into the dishwasher.

McCoy laid a hand on his friend's back, "Come on Jim, let's get you back to your room. You get some rest and then I'll come talk to you later." He turned and smiled at her, "T'Kar we'll meet you at the hospital, all right?"

She nodded quickly and then they'd gone. T'Kar heard the door close and then she put the last of the dishes into the machine, closed the door and turned it on. She looked at the chest, sooner or later she was going to have to look at the contents and she didn't want to. Sighing, she wiped her hands and walked across to the it. She undid the hasps and then threw open the lid. As she'd suspected it was full of journals. Some seemed so brittle that she wasn't sure if they'd survive being handled.

Despite her Vulcan demeanour she felt tears come into her eyes, these were the records of her ancestors. Carefully she plucked the top one off the pile and walking across to one of the chairs, carefully opened it. The words leapt out at her, and she found herself sympathizing with the writer and realized that she had much more in common with her ancestors than she'd ever believed. Finally she closed the book and replaced it in the chest. She needed to think but Dr McCoy was expecting her at the hospital and she knew that she couldn't let him down.

Knowing that she only had time for a quick meditation session, she seated herself cross-legged on the floor in her lounge and closing her eyes took a deep breath in. It seemed to take forever for her to reach a state of calm where she could examine her feelings and disassociate herself from them. She seemed to be fighting her emotions and when she surfaced from her meditation session she felt as though she'd been fighting a battle with a *nor-sehlat*. She checked the time and then taking her purse slipped out of the door.

To her surprise S'Jenes was waiting for her in Reception.

"How can I help?" T'Kar asked.

S'Jenes took a PADD out of his bag, "The journals and diaries you have taken possession of and have yet to take possession of have all been digitized, I forgot to download them onto your PADD. Then you need not be afraid of destroying the documents themselves."

"Thank you," T'Kar replied, "I am grateful."

"It is I who must apologise," S'Jenes explained, "I have been quite disturbed by your mother's Will and her insistence that no-one but the recipient view the contents. It is not usual in Vulcan culture to have such secrecy and it concerns me." He paused, "is it something that would have wider ramifications?"

T'Kar looked at him and thought quickly, *Did it have wider ramifications? Oh yes. Would it bring Starfleet down? Unlikely, but it would certainly cause ructions and*

if she knew anything about Starfleet she also knew that it would probably be suppressed. Better on this occasion to use some discretion, but she had a horrible feeling that secrets like this, because of their very nature, did not stay secret very long. Managing to compose her features she replied, “I think my mother was very lonely towards the end of her life, S’Jenes and that may have spilled over into paranoia. I sorrow for her that she felt she could not go and speak with anyone, but the journals seem most intriguing.”

“Then I shall download them onto your PADD,” S’Jenes said, “Do you know what you will do with the paper ones?”

“Some of them seem too brittle to be touched,” T’Kar said slowly, “I am afraid that if I do touch them they will fall apart.”

“The paper can be treated in some cases,” S’Jenes looked thoughtful, “in others I fear that the damage may have already been done.”

“But we have the words anyway,” T’Kar replied, “perhaps I should just think about preserving them for posterity and my family when I am lucky enough to have one.”

S’Jenes nodded and held out his hand, T’Kar handed him her PADD and waited while he attached them and began downloading the documents. She felt the slight tickle of fear in her stomach and then he was disconnecting her PADD and handing hers back to her.

“I’ve deleted all the files that were on mine,” he

explained, “there is one other copy on data storage back at the office, but that’s it. All right?”

“Fine,” T’Kar nodded, “I’ll see about bringing the chest back to the office as soon as possible, then we can start discussing restoration or preservation.”

“A good idea,” S’Jenes nodded, “I shall make a note of it.” He took the stylus out of the side of his PADD and made a quick notation before returning it to its holder. “I will see you soon, T’Kar.”

“Soon, S’Jenes,” T’Kar promised.

She was slipping her PADD back into her bag when she heard Dr McCoy’s voice, “T’Kar! Thought we’d lost you. Come on through, I know that Jim will be glad to see you.”

“How’s the Captain?”

“Impatient as always,” McCoy smiled ruefully, “thought you might be able to keep him calm.”

“Nice thought, but I couldn’t keep a kitten calm,” T’Kar replied.

“Oh I don’t know,” McCoy smiled, “come on through.”

Kirk was sitting in his chair flipping through a magazine when they entered the room, “T’Kar!” he said his face lighting up.

“Captain,” she smiled, “The doctor tells me that you’re being irritating again.”

“I just want to be let out of this place,” He sighed, “come on Bones, surely there’s not that much wrong with me?”

“This is about the only place we can keep tabs on you,”

McCoy retorted, “and I’d like to monitor you for a little longer yet – you’ve had two close calls, Jim.”

Kirk scowled at his friend and then he turned to T’Kar, “So I’m stuck here?”

“For the moment, yes.” McCoy replied, “but I have brought someone with me to play chess with you.”

“There’s only one problem,” T’Kar turned to the doctor, “I don’t play chess. Poker, yes, but not chess.”

“I could teach you,” Kirk said, brightening up suddenly.

She glared at Dr McCoy who shrugged, “It’ll keep him out of trouble for an afternoon.”

“Pah!” T’Kar replied and then said something tongue-twisting in Vulcan that left both men nonplussed.

“What did you just say?” Jim asked, bemused.

“Something the V’tosh ka’tur scream,” T’Kar admitted, “It means *Vulcans without logic*. They are a sect who don’t believe in repressing their emotions. Sometimes they’re brought into the hospital when some of their rituals go awry and they get injured and they tend to scream insults at us. Sorry, it wasn’t very complimentary.”

“I gathered that,” Kirk replied, “Come on, sit down. We don’t have a three-d chess board but I’ll teach you on a two-d one.”

Two hours later he was beginning to regret his decision. Despite his best intentions he’d just won four games in a row. “It really isn’t your forte is it?” he asked.

“No,” she looked up at him, “I think you need a mathematician’s mind, and the ability to think four moves

ahead. I'm not sure I have that."

"Cards?" he looked up at her hopefully.

"Well I can play Gin Rummy," she said hopefully, "but mostly I just play solitaire."

"All right, Gin Rummy," he replied, "give it your best shot."

Thankfully she did better this time, winning three out of the six games they played, Jim smiled as he gathered up the cards, "You are better at this. Perhaps with a few years training you could get better at chess."

"The real question is 'Do I want to?'," T'Kar half-smiled, "Chess really isn't my thing, Captain."

Supper was brought in for both of them and T'Kar flushed emerald again when she looked at the dishes placed in front of her, "This is wonderful, Jim, rather decadent for hospital food."

"I made an arrangement with Bones," he said, pulling his plate towards him, "thought if you had to babysit me you should at least have some nice memories to go with them."

"Flatterer," she muttered, picking up her fork.

Eventually the plates were cleared away and Captain Kirk lay back against the pillows. "Did you enjoy that?" T'Kar asked gently.

"Yes, I did," he replied, "but the company was better. Thanks for putting up with me."

"It wasn't exactly strenuous duty," T'Kar replied, "you should rest now, Captain."

“Yeah, I know,” Jim scowled, “but how rest will help me remember I have no idea.”

“Perhaps if you really rested and didn’t try to force it you might get more results.” T’Kar responded, “but then I think I’m beginning to know you Captain, you’re not the type to sit back and let things happen.”

He started to laugh and then shook his head, “No, you know me too well, T’Kar.”

“We’ve shared a meld, twice and I’ve seen things in your mind that have shown me the kind of man you are.”

“So have I,” he replied remembering some of the images he’d seen in her mind.

“Yes, perhaps that bond will remain for always.”

“Possible,” Kirk replied remembering the times he’d bonded with Spock. Suddenly he yawned.

“I shall let you get some sleep, Jim.” T’Kar stood up, “no doubt with Dr McCoy as wolfhound we’ll have lots of time to continue this discussion in the next few days.”

Grimacing he allowed her to fluff his pillows and settle him on the bed. “Get some rest,” she ordered, “I promise, it will get better.”

He scowled but settled down under the covers. She dimmed the lights and quietly left the room.

Looking after her retreating back he smiled wryly and then snuggled under the covers and closed his eyes.

He was back on the bridge of the Enterprise. Bones was just administering the cordrazine when the hypo exploded

in his hand overdosing him with the drug. He remembered McCoy's frenzied face as the drug ravaged his system. Somehow the dream didn't follow the usual sequence, he was vaguely aware that somehow McCoy had beamed down onto the planet's surface but how he knew he couldn't recall. Then the landing party was standing in front of the Guardian of Forever – how did he know that was its name? Then McCoy was charging past them and jumping into the device. Then he and Spock and the woman – Edith, Edith Keeler! He remembered, he'd watched her cross the road, her face open and expectant as she saw him and then the van. The last image, the one that would remain with him for the rest of his life was of her broken body lying in the road before the Guardian whisked them back and they were standing in front of it.

“All is as it was...” the Guardian said solemnly and then he woke up.

He stared up at the ceiling, the snail tracks of tears still trickling down his face. Wiping the back of his hand across his face he sat up. He'd remembered what had happened on their last away mission and it had cost him his soul. A choked sob emerged from between his lips, he'd let the woman he loved die and he would have to live with that for the rest of his life. A memory tugged at him and he looked out of the window again. Something Spock had said, something about silver birds if he went out into the desert

to find them, then maybe he could wrest a kind of peace.

T'Kar was sitting in one of the many cafes that ShiKahr boasted, reading the PADD in front of her. She was so engrossed in its contents that Dr McCoy had to call her twice before she reacted."

"Leonard, how nice to see you!" she said standing up, and then she saw his face. "What's wrong?"

"Jim's gone missing," McCoy said tersely, "we thought he might have gone back to your apartment."

"You're welcome to check," she said taking out her keys.

"He's not there," McCoy replied, "I checked about ten minutes ago. If he's gone into the deep desert--"

"What do we do now?" T'Kar asked softly.

"I'm meeting Spock at Sarek's house," McCoy said quietly, "Would you come with me, you might be able to offer some advice."

I might be able to offer more than that, T'Kar thought wryly. Quickly she nodded and rising to her feet followed McCoy.

Spock and Sarek were standing in the lounge looking grim when they entered, T'Kar also noticed a number of other Vulcans armed with lethal looking phasers. Swallowing and realising the breach of etiquette she was about to make, she stepped forward and said, "Father, you won't need those. I can search for him far more effectively."

He turned and for one split second she seriously thought

that he would hit her but something in the dark eyes flashed and she realised that he thought she was mocking him!

“Father, please. I-I am not entirely Vulcan-” she began, trying to find the words to explain what had been happening to her. She swallowed again, and opened her mouth to try for one final time when she felt a strong, familiar hand on her shoulder giving her strength.

Spock spoke into the silence, “That is quite true, Sir, she is Shatry’u.”

Sarek turned and she thought she caught a hint of disbelief in his eyes, “You?”

“Me.” T’Kar replied, “I will be able to walk into the deep desert and find him and nothing will touch me.”

“Because she’s been doing it for years,” Amanda had just come into the room and T’Kar felt a blush creep up her cheeks.

“When did you- How did you?” she spluttered, and then Spock’s hand was firm on her shoulder grounding her again.

“I watched you sneak out of the house when you thought no-one was looking,” Amanda replied, “the first two or three times I confess I was concerned but when you always returned I realised that you were probably safer out there than in ShiKahr.”

T’Kar shook her head in disbelief, “I don’t believe it, I thought I kept it secret from everyone.”

“I’m a mother,” Amanda replied.

“And I’d have to get up very early to get one over on you,” T’Kar replied ruefully.

“No, you’d have to stay up all night.” Amanda replied.

“How do you know you’ll find him?” Sarek asked quickly.

“I don’t,” T’Kar replied, “but I do know that the lematya can travel farther distances than I can and they will bring me news.” She looked from one to the other and thought, *Plus I think our genes will bring us together.*

“Then it is decided,” Sarek said, “If you believe that you can do this, then go and bring him back. I can give you two days, no more. Take what supplies and people you need.”

T’Kar turned to look up into Spock’s impassive face, “Will you come with me?” she asked quietly.

“Yes,” Spock looked down at her and it was only because of the tense line of his mouth and the way he gripped her shoulder that she knew he was in distress.

“Leonard?” she turned to McCoy on the other side of the room, “will you come too?”

McCoy nodded slowly and then swallowed, “Am I going to have to ride one of those blasted horses again?”

“That is a distinct possibility, Doctor,” T’Kar replied, and wondered if it was a laugh she heard in her own voice.

Fifteen minutes later they were standing at the edge of ShiKahr. “We will bid you goodbye here,” Sarek said, “you have the communicators for us to get a fix on you if you have an emergency.”

Spock nodded and then he was shouldering his pack and

pulling on the soft, wide brimmed hat turning to join the others.

“We won’t have to walk too far,” T’Kar said quietly, “but le-matya don’t like coming close to the cities. They are justly afraid of man.”

They’d been walking for twenty minutes when McCoy said, “What’s that?”

There was a green haze on the horizon and T’Kar paused to wipe the sweat from her forehead, “That’s what we’re looking for. Those are le-matya.”

The animals didn’t approach them although all three were panting by the time they came into focus. Two of them came up to T’Kar and she held her hand out for each to nuzzle. “They’re the alpha female and male of this group.”

McCoy let his pack slip from his back and stretched, “Well this is very nice, but what else do we do?”

“Our rides are here.” T’Kar said, shielding her eyes with one hand.

McCoy looked up and scowled, “Those damn horses again.”

“Kenel,” Spock said wonderingly. He turned to T’Kar, “What do we do?”

“We ride, Mr Spock,” she replied laconically, “I am hoping that the le-matya will show us the way.”

She let her pack slip to the ground and then with grace and vitality walked towards the three horse-like creatures. Slipping a finger beneath one of the fangs she carefully

guided the first animal across to the two men. To her surprise the others followed.

“You mount this one, Doctor,” she said slowly, “Mr Spock and I will mount the other two.”

“You seem very sure of yourself, T’Kar,” Spock said slowly.

“I know where I am here,” T’Kar replied, “this is easy.”

McCoy scowled as he heaved himself onto the Kenel and then she was leading the other one for Spock. He nodded quickly and taking a handful of the animal’s mane mounted. Meanwhile T’Kar was leading the other animal across and then she too was climbing on the animal’s back.

“Did I ever tell you how much I hated this,” McCoy grumbled as he wound his fingers into the long mane.

“Not in so many words,” T’Kar responded. “Where do we go?” Spock asked.

“I think we’re being herded,” T’Kar said slowly, looking down at the carpet of le-matya around them.

Spock gave a quick nod and then they were moving off. The harsh desert sun made even breathing difficult so they concentrated on holding onto the animals and keeping their eyes on the horizon.

They’d been travelling for about an hour when T’Kar called a halt to take a drink. The Kenel halted and all three of them took a long drink, “We ought to find shelter soon,” T’Kar said quietly, “these animals usually don’t come out in daylight.”

“But Jim could be dying out here!” McCoy spat

suddenly.

“Yes, but if we don’t look after ourselves, then when we find him we’ll be in no fit state to look after him.” T’Kar replied. She turned to look at Spock. Sweat was beading his forehead and she could see how much pressure he was under from the tense line of his mouth and jaw. A stray thought suddenly occurred to her and she looked at Dr McCoy, “There is one last place we could try,” she said, “and there is water and shelter there.”

“What about them?” McCoy gestured to the le-matya.

“I think that they will come with us,” T’Kar said softly. She clicked her tongue and the tall horse-like beast wheeled below her.

It was Spock who noticed the silver birds as they approached the escarpment, “Teresh-ka,” he murmured slowly, “I mentioned them to Jim on the bridge after the away mission.”

“Then maybe we’ll get lucky.” T’Kar responded thoughtfully, she pointed to the slit in the rock face,

“We’ll go there, the cave extends back and there’s a small aquifer.”

“What about the animals?”

“I think we must keep them with us,” T’Kar replied.

“We’ll keep our options open.” Spock said. “I can always use my communicator for reinforcements if the Captain is badly injured.”

The le-matya were milling around the entrance, Spock dismounted and absent-mindedly patted the creature’s side,

to T'Kar's surprise it turned and whickered at him.

"You have a way with animals."

"Didn't you know he had a pet teddy bear," McCoy teased as he slid from the animal's back.

"Have you ever seen the size of a *sehlat*, Leonard?" T'Kar replied.

Spock was moving into the coolness of the cave, both he and T'Kar picked out the figure lying on the hard ground, a le-matya uncurled itself from his back and snarled at him, T'Kar took one look at the fangs and flattened ears and said gently, "Easy, there, easy. You've done a good job, now let us look at him."

But Spock had already hissed the word, "Jim!" and was on his knees next to the unconscious man.

T'Kar watched as the le-matya nuzzled Spock and then stalked right past her as if she didn't exist. She chuckled softly and gently stroked the animal's head. Then McCoy was moving past her and kneeling next to Captain Kirk,

"Some dehydration, stress, minor cuts and scrapes. Apart from that he's all right. Treat these when we get back and he'll be fine."

T'Kar watched as the other animals wandered in and began drinking from the small stream at the back of the cave, then she turned back to the man lying at her feet. He was beginning to stir and as she knelt beside him his eyes opened.

"For someone who's gone wandering in the deep desert you're in remarkably good shape."

“Not me,” Kirk managed a wry smile, “there was this horse-like creature-”

“A Kenel,” Spock said, “how were you persuaded to mount it?”

“A pack of le-matya,” Kirk grimaced, “I hate those creatures. It was either get on that damn horse’s back or get ripped to shreds.”

“I doubt they would have hurt you,” T’Kar said slowly as she looked at him, “I think they were trying to keep you safe and the best way of doing that was to get you on that Kenel.”

Jim sighed and looked up at his friends, “I know,” he said slowly, “I remember what happened on our last mission. That’s what brought me out here – I remembered when you talked about those silver birds-”

“The Teresh-ka,” Spock nodded, “Yes.”

Kirk nodded again and closed his eyes, in the dim light T’Kar thought she could see the shine of tears on his cheeks, “I remember her name,” he murmured.

“It was Edith Keeler,” T’Kar said suddenly, she looked at the shocked expressions on the faces of the two humans and the tense lines of the Vulcan’s.

“How do you know that?” McCoy asked, “I thought you didn’t have access to Starfleet Records.”

“I don’t,” T’Kar replied, “but it would appear that your Captain’s association with Miss Keeler was far more involved than it would appear. It would seem that Captain James Kirk is my ancestor.”

Both men looked at her as if she'd sprouted horns and she rolled her eyes, "Here, I have all the information on my PADD. See for yourself."

She dug in her bag and brought out the device, to her surprise it was Spock who took it first, "I would also like to see the other documents your family kept," he said quietly.

"The original journal had to be preserved in acetate as it was falling apart," T'Kar replied, "but the other information I will gladly let you see as soon as we get back."

Kirk stared at her, "How-"

"As far as I can make out," T'Kar began, "the night she was knocked down she was pregnant with your child. She didn't die that night, but nine months later she didn't survive the delivery."

Kirk blinked, "You're deadly serious."

"I have no time not to be," T'Kar replied, "I will let you look at all the information I have about this. But I ask for your word that you say nothing to anyone else."

"You are worried that it has affected the time stream." Spock's voice was surprisingly gentle.

"It has to have affected the time stream," T'Kar replied archly, "if he had not had relations with Edith I would not exist. To me that sounds like interference and there are bound to be some people who would seek to restore it."

"We will keep it to ourselves," McCoy promised. He looked at T'Kar "Is it possible that you two are connected to one another – he found his way to your apartment twice

and you found your way here. Your genes calling to one another perhaps.”

“I thought you didn’t believe in such mumbo-jumbo?” T’Kar raised an eyebrow.

“I have seen enough things in my twenty years as a doctor not to dismiss anything,” Bones replied, “so I don’t discount anything. Not any longer.”

Kirk eased himself up against the side of the cave, “My daughter?” he queried.

“Descendent,” T’Kar replied, “but I think that daughter will do. There does indeed appear to be a connection between us – how else do you explain you finding your way to my place, twice and then me knowing where you might be.”

Jim blinked twice and then impulsively T’Kar was pulling him into his arms and he was sobbing his heart out on her shoulder. Spock and McCoy exchanged a look over the top of her head.

T’Kar could feel all the emotions running through him like quicksilver, anger, regret, guilt, sorrow and on top of all the rest a deep seated sense of failure. Putting him away from her she shook her head, “You have no reason,” she said gently, “you failed no-one.”

He wiped his eyes with the back of his sleeve, “I loved her,” he said brokenly, “And I had to let her die. The moment she started to cross the road I knew what would happen – had Spock not stopped me I would have saved her,” he said brutally.

“I don’t think you had a choice,” T’Kar replied softly, “at least not the way you think. It was always the case that she died that night, she had to die for the Timeline to be restored. The difference this time is that she was carrying your daughter.”

Kirk regarded her quietly, “And you know this because?”

“Because that’s what I went to see my lawyer about,” T’Kar replied, “if it makes you feel any happier I’m a bit nonplussed about the whole situation myself.”

“I should have found another way,” Kirk muttered, “there should have been another way.”

“Jim,” Spock’s eyes were very dark, “I do not believe there was another way.” He looked at T’Kar, “Edith Keeler’s descendent? Fascinating, I look forward to reviewing the information.”

T’Kar regarded him quietly, her dark eyes sombre, “All the information is on the PADD,” she said softly, “and you’re welcome to go through all the written material S’Jenes is holding for me.”

“I will do that,” Spock replied.

“How do I deal with this?” Kirk asked, “I blame myself – I still think that I should have found a better way.”

“I am her descendant and I don’t blame you,” T’Kar replied firmly, “surely if anyone has a right to those feelings it is I?”

He gave a choked laugh, and then swallowed, “Perhaps. Tell me does it get easier?”

“I will speak with a friend of mine S’rell,” Spock said slowly, “he would be better placed to answer your questions and help you deal with the consequences.”

McCoy smiled, “Well this has been a day of revelations, now would anyone like a coffee, I’m sure I saw T’Kar sneaking a flask into her rucksack.”

Spock nodded, “I shall fetch it, Doctor. And then we must make plans to return to ShiKahr.”

McCoy nodded, he was regarding her quietly and finally T’Kar said, “What is it, Leonard?”

“Had this emergency not happened would you ever have told anyone?”

“I don’t know,” she responded. “Probably not, my mother kept the secret all her life. Whether her mother knew or not I don’t know yet, I haven’t had the chance to go through all the records. It is too explosive a secret to reveal I think, but on this occasion my hand has been forced.”

“Perhaps it was necessary,” Spock replied thoughtfully.

Kirk regarded his friend, “How so?”

“To aid your recovery,” Spock replied, “does it not help to know that although Edith Keeler died, she had your child and she had descendants? Her life was not meaningless.”

Kirk stared at him and then nodded, “Yes, yes it does. My descendent, can’t quite believe it.”

“Drink your coffee before it goes cold, Jim,” McCoy interjected gruffly.

They drank their coffee in companionable silence and then Spock returned her PADD to her, "I still wish to see the other records," he said quietly.

"I would not expect anything less," she responded. "How is the Captain?" Spock asked.

"I think he is ready to travel now," McCoy replied, packing his medical kit away.

"Back to the hospital?" Jim scowled.

"Jim can stay with me," T'Kar said quickly, "it might stop him running away."

"I won't be doing that anymore," Kirk promised.

"Then I will see to the Kenel," T'Kar rose to her feet and moved towards the group of horse-like creatures.

"Do you think that she's telling the truth," McCoy asked quietly when she was out of earshot.

"I think so, yes," Spock replied, "I wish to see the paperwork to verify her story, not to prove it. Had the Captain not been in such deep distress it is likely she would never have told anyone."

"So she really is my descendent?" Kirk asked.

"I believe so, yes, Jim," Spock replied. "As I have told you before, Vulcans do not lie."

"No," McCoy smiled, "but you don't always tell the whole truth."

T'Kar returned, "The Kenel are ready when you are. If you wish to ride, I can walk beside the creatures."

"Are they strong enough to carry two?" McCoy asked.

She nodded surprised and then raised an eyebrow when

he said, "Then you and the Captain can ride together, Spock and I will ride the other two."

T'Kar spread her hands, "As you wish, Doctor."

They dismounted about four hundred yards from the city and T'Kar patted the Kenel's sandy hide, "See you soon," she murmured, "and thank you."

"I'll check the Captain in at the hospital," McCoy said, "and then bring him round to yours. Spock, will you come with us?"

"I would like to start my research tonight if I may," Spock's dark eyes held T'Kar's and for a moment she was nervous and then she saw the gentleness in them. "I believe you have possession of two boxes of your ancestor's journals?"

"That's right," she replied, "do you want to get them now?"

"Please," he responded.

She led the way upstairs to her apartment and watched while Spock hefted the two chests and carried them downstairs to his ground car "You'll want this as well," she said, handing him her PADD again, "all I ask is that you look after it."

"I shall treasure it," he replied.

McCoy brought a weary Captain Kirk round half an hour later and after brief introductions Jim went straight to bed.

T'Kar looked at him, "How is he?"

"S'rell's willing to see him in the morning. Now that he

remembers what happened he'll be more receptive to therapy."

"That'll be good," T'Kar replied, she looked at McCoy and a tremulous smile crossed her face, "Shall we go to bed, Leonard?"

For an answer he bent and scooped her up in his arms, "I'd agree with that."

Later when they lay curled up in each other's arms her head pillowed on his chest T'Kar said softly, "I am glad he's remembered – even if my revelation was a bit of a shock."

"A bit of a shock?" McCoy laughed and she felt the rumble of his laughter through her head where it rested on his chest. "That's the understatement of the century."

Despite her best efforts to sleep longer, she was woken by the sun poking long, golden fingers into the room. Sighing she got up, dressed and then went into the kitchen to start making breakfast, she was eating cereal when Kirk walked into the room running a hand through his hair.

"Good morning," he yawned.

"Good morning," she replied, "You look better."

"We'll wait and see how the therapy goes," Kirk replied, "can I make myself some breakfast?"

"Go ahead," T'Kar replied, "you remember the colour coding?"

He nodded and was helping himself to human cereal when McCoy walked into the room, "Breakfast?" T'Kar queried, raising an eyebrow.

“Oh I’ll help myself,” McCoy replied, “What have you got on today?”

“I’ll check with Dr M’Benga,” T’Kar replied, “I’m sure that I’ll be needed somewhere.”

McCoy brought his breakfast across to the table, “Do you still want to join Starfleet?” he asked quietly.

T’Kar nodded, “Yes, I do.”

“I’ll write you a letter of introduction.” Both men said together and she had to suppress a grin.

“I still have some misgivings about that,” T’Kar replied, “I had applied to the Vulcan Council for their Scholarship Program which would enable me to attend Starfleet Academy.”

“You need not worry about that,” both men said quietly.

T’Kar looked from one to the other, “I do not deserve this-” she began.

“That’s our choice,” Kirk replied. “Isn’t it? And we will write your sponsorship letter.”

“I don’t mind who writes me a letter,” T’Kar protested, “but I’m not a bone, you don’t have to fight over me.”

Jim smiled and she was relieved to see that his charming, boyish grin had returned, “I’d better get to the hospital, my first appointment with Dr S’rell.”

“Give us five minutes,” T’Kar said, “and we’ll go together. Save on fuel.”

The next few days passed slowly, if T’Kar was hoping for some great, final epiphany she was disappointed. Captain Kirk returned from his sessions with S’rell looking

better every time and she heard on the hospital grapevine that he was responding well to treatment.

She was working in the Research Laboratory when one of the Reception nurses entered with a message. "Mr Spock called; he wonders if you'll meet him for lunch."

T'Kar nodded, "I'll give him a call back and confirm. Thanks, Sarah."

She felt the air of celebration as she approached the table, Spock was his usual, dark-eyed impassive self but she thought she could detect pride and joy in his demeanour, "You asked me for lunch," she said as she sat down.

"I have some news concerning T'Pel," Spock began, "The Vulcan Council were undecided about which candidate to sponsor, the three of us have decided to support your attendance at Starfleet Academy, so I went before them yesterday to explain the situation and withdraw your application. They have decided in favour of her."

A slight smile curved her lips, "I am glad, she deserves the chance, and she's an excellent nurse. But you do me too much honour."

"We only give you the tools, what you do with them is up to you," Spock replied, "I am returning your PADD," he said, pushing it across the table to her. "My research into your family's papers has led me to believe that you are indeed Edith Keeler and Captain Kirk's descendent."

“I never doubted it,” McCoy said, a broad grin creasing his face.

“Oh you did,” T’Kar replied, “and you were right to, which is why I didn’t tell you. But I’m glad that the records corroborate my family’s existence.”

“So am I,” Kirk replied, reaching across and taking her hand, “more than you know.”

“Are those deep meditation sessions helping to centre you more?” Spock asked.

“Yes,” T’Kar replied, “how are your sessions Captain?”

“Much better,” Jim smiled, “I’ll never stop grieving for her but I can remember her now without feeling crippled by the sorrow.”

“Good.” T’Kar replied.

“And you of course,” he said quietly, “it makes me glad that you exist, that her life was worth something.”

“How are your days at the moment?” McCoy asked, changing the subject.

“Full,” T’Kar replied, “I have to make a decision about entering Starfleet soon, if you still wish to write a letter of recommendation.”

“We will decide who will write it,” Spock interjected, “because I think all of us would consider it a privilege to do so. I believe since you wish to enter medicine that Dr McCoy would be the logical choice.”

“As do I,” T’Kar replied.

“We will decide together,” Spock assured her.

“What about your role as Shatry’a?” McCoy asked, “I

thought you would want to stay here?"

"The Shatry'a has given me time to choose which route I take to my Destiny," T'Kar replied, "And for as long as that time is given me, to paraphrase Tennyson's *Ulysses*, I intend to 'drink life to lees,'"

"You will learn much," Spock said, his dark eyes shining, "and, I don't doubt, teach much."

Three days later T'Kar stood at the edge of the city while the three men she considered family made their preparations to leave, she gave them the Vulcan salute,

Spock did the same, "Live long, T'Kar, and prosper."

"I shall do so," T'Kar responded, "Peace and long life, Spock."

The transporter shimmered and all three were gone. T'Kar looked up, as if somehow she would be able to see the *Enterprise* in orbit, about to warp into the blackest reaches of space. She let the corners of her mouth curl upwards in a slight smile, she would be taking another ship to Earth at the end of the week. Her letter of recommendation was safely filed and she had been provisionally accepted to Starfleet Academy. Her heart feeling lighter than it had for a long time, T'Kar walked back home.

THE END