

Pixels

By Kat

R

Disclaimers: Mostly mine thank you! Of course the Universe is Roddenberry's and Trek belongs to Paramount, but the rest belongs mostly to me. Please do not replicate without permission. Wish I could get paid for it...but I'd still be broke...

Author's Note: R to be on the safe side, story deals with sexual situations and extreme violence.

Beta work by Monica and Mana.

Chapter 1

Twelve year old T'Lin Archer stared out the view port as the stars passed by. She allowed herself to leave the worries of her mind and float out with them. The stars were constant to her. When everything around her changed and her world crumbled, the stars were always there. She used to think that her parents would always be there, but they had sent her and her younger brother away. Even after nearly six months she didn't understand it, and the Vulcans didn't help. There were times when she wondered if she were destined to be stuck with the Vulcans forever.

The opening of the door caught her attention and she pulled back into herself. She barely had time to turn when a solid body collided into her. Her hands came up automatically, hugging the form to her. As she registered the sobs coming from the boy, she continued to cuddle him in a soothing tone, a soft lullaby coming to her lips. Patience had never been one of her finer qualities, but six months on a Vulcan ship had changed that. She had discovered an amazing capacity for both patience and logic even though she preferred to ignore them both. She could wait for the storm to pass before she quizzed the boy in her arms. Her brother's mind was chaotic in his upset but it would eventually clear. She held him and waited and finally the boy lifted his head. Troubled eyes gazed up at her and T'Lin had to fight back the anger that rolled through her. Her hand stroked over his cheek and her mind touched lightly to his. *What happened now Sprite?*

The boy shook his head. *Grandfather scolded me again. He said I have no discipline and that I should be sent to the monks for training.*

T'Lin turned back to the view port and pulled her brother in front of her so that he too could see the stars. At seven Zack was a tall, slim boy that came to her chin. Her father often joked that Zack reminded him of him when he was a boy in that he was all arms and legs. T'Lin on the other hand was destined to be petite like her mother. Her arms curled around him and she rested her chin on his shoulder. The mental connection between them was strong and had been since Zack's birth. They kept the telepathic link for both privacy, though there was no one else around, and because it seemed to irritate most of the Vulcans. *Grandfather is not usually so harsh with you. What happened exactly?*

Zack's head dropped a little and she felt a twinge of guilt fluttering from him. *I tried Pix! I really did!* She sighed and waited. *We were going through the routine of Tak Nar. You know how I hate that stupid routine. I don't mind the other martial arts, they are all kinda cool, but Tak Nar is stupid. I think Grandfather made it up just so I'd have to sit still for hours on end.*

T'Lin shook her head and cuddled her brother closer. They both had extensive exposure to Vulcan martial arts. Neither one of them liked the Tak Nar, for it required hours of stillness. It was an art that honed stealth. For a seven year old boy who was used to roaming a starship it was torture. *And?*

Zack's head dipped lower. *Grandfather caught me fidgeting and scolded me. He added 10 minutes to my evening meditation Pix! That's almost an extra hour today.*

If you hadn't stuck itching powder in Sub-Commander T'Vir's robes, and you hadn't put pepper in the Captain's Plomeek soup, and run through the ship in your underwear screaming like a loon, then you wouldn't have gotten the rest of the extra meditation time.

The boy turned and scowled up at her. *That's not fair Pixie and you know it. The itching powder was your idea and so was the soup. And if you hadn't chased me with that spider I wouldn't have run into the hallway.*

It wasn't real Zack, and I got in trouble too.

Only once, for the powder. I didn't tell about the rest. He leaned his head against her chest. *I wouldn't tell on you Pix. You're all I've got.*

T'Lin stroked her hands over her brother's head. Her words were soft when she spoke. "I know Sprite. I know. I'll go talk to Grandfather and see what I can do to fix it."

He stepped back and took her hand. "I don't want you to get into trouble."

"I won't." She started for the door. "Perhaps I can get him to let me supervise your meditation." She sighed, wishing for the dozenth time that her parents had chosen to send them to their human grandfather rather than their Vulcan one.

Zack tugged, causing her to stop and look at him. "Pix? Why did mommy and dad send us away?"

"I don't know Zack. I just don't know." The answer was extremely sad.

T'Lin rang the chime. As the door slid open she schooled all expression from her face. She released Zack's hand with a reminder for discipline and tucked her own behind her back. She nearly smiled as Zack followed her example. Entering these quarters still had the ability to stun her. For as long as she could remember her parents quarters had been neat yet personal. Her mother's style had always been more spartan, where her father's had been full of flare. Somehow the two of them had managed to mesh their lifestyles and compliment each other. Her grandfather's quarters were bare to the point that were he not in them she would have thought them empty. She took a moment to study the man she called Grandfather. Unlike the humans of her acquaintance, he seemed ageless, much like her mother, for such was the way of Vulcans. For an instant she wondered if she too would remain ageless for an eternity and hoped not. As much as she loved her family, she much preferred the character lines on her father's face to the emotionless mask of the Vulcans. She came to a stop, Zack beside her, when the older man stood. For the briefest instant he seemed every bit the tough ambassador she knew him to be, then the most subtle softening of his features occurred and she saw her grandfather.

Soval moved toward the two children. He had thought when he had volunteered for their care that he would be able to separate himself from the wild, human half breeds, but they touched him just as his own children and grandchildren had, exactly as T'Lin had when he'd first gotten to know her. He could see her trying to hide her emotions behind a shield just as he had been coaching her. While he was proud of the effort, part of him missed the smile she often gave him whenever she greeted him each day. He glanced first at T'Lin and then Zack. "You came to see me?"

T'Lin nodded. "Yes sir. I came to apologize for our behavior earlier and Zack's last transgression. I... I would like to supervise our meditation for tonight Grandfather and ask that you remove Zack's latest punishment. He is just a little boy. It is so very hard for him to be still."

Soval admired the young lady standing before him. "Zack Henry must learn to be still and silent. It can mean the difference between life and death."

T'Lin tamped back the flare of temper. "I agree Grandfather, but Zack is used to running the corridors of a starship. He has an abundance of energy and is used to having other children to play with. It is so very hard for him here. He does try."

Soval knelt in front of the children and waited until Zack met his eyes. "Even on your father's starship there could be a need for you to be still and silent. It could save a life."

"But Grandfather... I don't like the Tak Nar. It is so very dull."

"Indeed. The Tak Nar can be tiresome, but it teaches you patience, stealth and discipline. These are things you will always need in life."

Zack sighed. "But it is so hard. I can't do it."

Soval stood and looked down at the boy. "Never say you can't do something Zack Henry. Every task can be achieved with discipline and effort. What would your father say if someone told him he couldn't do something?"

The boy glanced at his sister, who answered. "Daddy would show them it could be done as he was doing it."

"Exactly. Your father might be a human, but he is very determined and has often shown us that anything is possible."

Some little imp bit at T'Lin and she couldn't resist asking. "Even Vulcans having emotions?"

Soval raised a brow as he studied her. "You and your brother exist do you not?"

She chuckled before quickly schooling her features back to blank. "We will both try harder Grandfather." She nudged her brother. "Won't we Zack?"

Soval studied them both as the boy nodded. Finally he responded. "On your word then. I still believe meditation would enhance your calm but perhaps this once we shall see." He nodded to Zack before returning to his seat. "Your latest addition to meditation is removed Zack Henry and I will trust your sister to hold you to the rest." His eyes locked with T'Lin's. "On your honor then?"

T'Lin's eyes widened. "Yes sir." She was just about to respond when Soval's communicator went off.

"Ambassador Soval?"

"Yes?"

"We are receiving a transmission from the Vulcan ship P'Tarrol. Their shuttle will be docking in ten minutes."

"Thank you Captain. I will meet them in the shuttle bay." He gathered his outer robe and pulled it on.

T'Lin stepped forward. "Who are you meeting Grandfather?"

"Ambassador V'Lar will be joining us for the rest of our journey. She is traveling to Earth for the upcoming counsel with Starfleet."

T'Lin nearly bounced with excitement. "We are going to Earth?"

He glanced at the children, both seemed unusually excited, and then he realized why. "Walk with me to the shuttle bay, and if you mind your manners you can help me greet V'Lar." T'Lin took her brother's hand and followed Soval from the room. The pace was quick and efficient, but not a difficult trek for the youngsters. Soval continued. "There is a great deal of conflict with the Klingon empire and the Andorians. The High Command and Starfleet are pulling in necessary resources to deal with the situation. V'Lar and myself have been called to Earth to advise."

"Is Ambassador V'Lar as good a negotiator as you Grandfather?" Zack asked, with innocent hero worship.

"V'Lar is one of the oldest and best Ambassadors to come from Vulcan. She is very efficient."

T'Lin bit her lip. Vulcans in her opinion were quite arrogant when other Vulcans considered them efficient. Most of her contact with Vulcans tended to be tense once they realize she was half-human. "Perhaps Zack and I should return to our quarters. We would not want to inconvenience the Ambassador."

Soval glanced at the child as he opened the door to the shuttle bay. He understood precisely where she was coming from. "Avoidance of a situation does not make it go away child. Besides, I think V'Lar would like to meet you."

T'Lin chewed her bottom lip as she watched the shuttle dock. Zack stood still and silent beside her, fascinated with the idea of meeting someone new, even if it was a Vulcan. T'Lin was just pleased that he was able to be still. Grandfather had given them a great honor by allowing them to be present, and she hoped

they were both up to the task. She watched as the doors opened and an older Vulcan female exited the ship. The woman was older than any Vulcan she knew except her Grandfather and the first female her age she had ever seen much less met.

The children stood back as Soval approached her, hand held in a traditional Vulcan greeting. The two seemed to know each other and spoke in Vulcan for several minutes. Finally the Ambassador's eyes turned to them and T'Lin held her breath. She moved forward even as the Ambassador did and held up her hand. The words slid easily from her tongue, the language as easy to pronounce as English from her time on the ship. "Welcome aboard Ambassador. I am T'Lin Archer and this is my brother Zack Henry."

The Ambassador glanced at Soval before gazing back at the children. Then she did something that T'Lin had never seen from another Vulcan. The woman smiled and extended her hand. Her words switched to English and the children greedily absorbed the sounds they had not heard in what seemed a lifetime. "You are the children of Jonathan Archer, are you not?"

"Yes. Our father is Captain Archer. You know of him?"

"Yes yes, and your mother too. Captain Archer is quite an emotional human, but he is an honorable man. Your parents helped me out of quite a mess once." She tipped her head as she studied them. "You have the look of your mother, and your brother takes after the Captain."

Zack lacked the tact of his older sibling and clasped the woman's hand. "You don't mind that we are half-human?"

V'Lar raised a brow. "Why should I child? Your parents are both dedicated and honorable and I consider them friends, even if I haven't spoken to them in years." She squeezed Zack's hand.

The boy grinned at her, thrilled at the contact and the praise. T'Lin tucked her hands behind her back. "You'll have to excuse him ma'am. Zack and I have found most Vulcans don't like us because of our human blood."

For a moment V'Lar looked disgusted, but she quickly covered it. "Then they are fools children, for how can there be infinite diversity in infinite combinations, if there is no tolerance for anything different." She took T'Lin's hand as they headed for the door, shocking the girl with the contact. "The last time I saw your mother I told her that I sensed a growing friendship and respect for her captain. I never imagined they would marry and produce children, but I am pleased. I did not realize your parents were onboard."

T'Lin slowed, causing V'Lar to stop as her sadness transmitted itself. "Mother

and Daddy aren't here Ambassador. They are on Enterprise."

V'Lar's brow rose. She glanced at Soval. "Why then are the children here?"

Soval gestured her forward. "The children are visiting with me for a while."

Zack nodded. "Grandfather is teaching us more about Vulcans."

T'Lin couldn't stop the anger that welled up inside her. She released V'Lar's hand. "They sent us away. They don't want us anymore."

Zack's eyes widened at the comment and his lower lip began to tremble. Tears filled his eyes. "Pix?"

T'Lin wouldn't look at him, or the others who had stopped to stare at her. V'Lar glanced at Soval who knelt in front of the girl. "I don't know where you got that idea T'Lin, but it's not true. Your parents want you very much and miss you too. Your father told me so in his last communication."

Anger flared and spilled out, followed by tears. "Then why did they send us away? Why haven't we talked to them for almost a month? Why can't we talk to Mommy? They don't want us anymore!"

V'Lar surprised all of them by pulling the girl into a hug. She held her tightly and rocked slowly. "Child I am sure there is much going on that needs to be explained. It's true I haven't spoken to your parents in a very long time but I know they wouldn't just abandon you."

Soval placed a hand on T'Lin's shoulder. "Take your brother to your quarters. I will join you there in a moment. It seems we have more to talk about than I thought."

V'Lar released the girl and as the children walked away she glanced at Soval. "If possible I would like to be present. I too would like to know why Jonathan Archer would send his children away."

"Of course." Soval realized instantly that he was going to need this ally for the children. V'Lar seemed to understand them so much better than he did, and she had never met them before. "Let us take your things to your quarters, and then we will talk to the children. I will explain on the way."

V'Lar wasted no time in depositing her bags. Once finished she turned to Soval with a raised brow. "What is going on?"

Tucking his hands behind his back, Soval gathered himself. "How much do you know about T'Lin Archer?"

The look she gave him suggested that she knew it wasn't enough. "Captain Archer and Sub-commander T'Pol got together and had a little girl around the Earth month of December in 2152. They were married by Vulcan ceremony and had a son nearly five years later. I assume that is the official version?"

"Indeed. During the beginning of Enterprise's second year in space, the crew came across a planet held by the Javians. You are familiar with them?"

"An odd race who has practically managed to drive themselves into extinction."

Soval nodded. "The Javians contacted Enterprise with some information they thought would be interesting. It seems they were running an experimental lab on the planet. Genetics. When the command team went down they found the majority of the inhabitants dead, and the lab overrun by large ant-like creatures. They also came across a series of genetic experiments. In essence large canisters filled with infants in various stages of fetal development. Many of them were hybrids of human and Vulcan DNA, specifically Archer and T'Pol. Their DNA was sampled and sold by the Andorians according to the files. Most of the canisters were damaged and their inhabitants dead, all except one, a female."

"T'Lin."

"Yes. The child was sent up to the ship and it was discovered that she could in fact survive. Despite everything against them, Archer and T'Pol decided to keep the child and raise her. There are so many things about T'Lin and Zack Henry that we don't understand. In fact all our tests show that it should be unlikely that they even exist. Though T'Lin is a genetic manipulation, Zack was born the normal way, though he nearly killed his mother. While possible, there are a lot of problems with a mixed pregnancy." He turned and rotated his neck as if to stretch out the kinks. "We think it is because of something the Javians did when they created her, but we are not certain. T'Lin is highly telepathic. It seems restricted to touch most of the time, as is normal for a Vulcan, but she and her brother can actually speak telepathically whether they are touching or not. She has a similar ability with her parents, though her connection with them is more empathic."

"There is a point to this Soval, get to it."

He faced her, one brow arching into his hairline. "I was. Because of her connection with her mother, T'Lin was actually affected by her mother's pregnancy with Zack. T'Pol had to shield the child from experiencing too much and the toll on her was difficult to say the least. It does however seem to be affected by proximity. The farther away the child is, the less she is affected."

"T'Pol is ill then? That is why they sent the children away?"

The look Soval gave her was one of irritation. "T'Pol is pregnant."

V'Lar blinked. "What?"

"T'Pol is pregnant. Apparently this one is going even worse than when she carried Zack."

"Surely they know better? What were they thinking?"

Soval gestured her toward the door. "Even in our day and age it seems the only sure method of birth control is abstinence. I believe Archer's comment when I suggested it was something along the lines of 'could you walk away from her if she were in your bed every night?' As if that were all there was to it."

V'Lar had to bite back a chuckle. She could see the jaunty Archer making such a comment. "Human males are highly sexual creatures from what I understand." She cut Soval a look from the corner of her eye. "Even Vulcans appreciate their mates more than once every seven years."

The look he gave her suggested fondness. "Indeed. From what I understand, both of them were using contraceptive boosters but it seems that they failed them and a couple others on their ship as well."

"Defective medication?"

He motioned her to the door. "No. It seems there was a planet they visited. Something there affected the contraceptive boosters. In fact, the doctor believes that it acted as a fertility booster."

"So they sent the children away to protect them?"

"Yes. As soon as they discovered T'Pol's pregnancy Archer arranged for the children to be removed from the ship. He didn't want to take any chances with T'Pol's condition affecting T'Lin or Zack, and he didn't want T'Pol to have to deal with the strain of having to put up shields to protect the children. As I mentioned, this pregnancy is much worse than her previous one." As they entered the hallway he continued. "Before you ask, we all suggested abortion, even Archer to protect T'Pol. She wouldn't even consider it."

V'Lar shook her head. So much conflict, what a shame. "What are you going to tell the children?"

"I don't know. Their parents do not want them to know about the baby in case T'Pol is unable to keep it. They don't want them suffering that heartache."

As they approached the door to the children's room, she nodded. "Perhaps then we should just explain that their mother is very ill?"

"I only wish I had time to talk to Archer about this."

"Why don't you contact him, and explain what is going on and have him sort it out? We could then go from there?"

Soval glanced at her. "Of course. That is an excellent idea."

"Of course it is." V'Lar tossed over her shoulder as she rang the chime.

As she entered the room, Soval tapped the comm panel and requested contact with Enterprise. Just as he entered the children's quarters, the ship rocked with the force of an explosion.

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