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Archer stared down into the little face before him. Despite his grief, his little daughter had managed to get to him. She was irresistible, his little Poppet, just like her siblings had been. His heart ached anew at the thought of this darling girl never meeting or playing with her brother and sister. At a giggle, he focused in on the oldest of the Tucker girls. Charlie was playing on the floor with her newest sister. She was an energetic little girl with Hoshi's coloring and Trip's mischievous streak. Jonathan couldn't help but smile at her. "What do you think of your new sister Charlie?"

"She's a girl."

"That is why they call them sisters."

She nodded as if he had spoken great words of wisdom. "Yup. Woulda liked a boy though. Got enough sisters."

He bit back a chuckle. Leave it to kids to say the funniest things. "Someday you will appreciate them more."

"Maybe." She paused a minute to play with the baby's toes. "Uncle Jon?"

"Yeah?"

"When are Zack and Pixie coming home? When I asked Mommy, she started crying. I woulda asked Doctor Phlox, but he's been so very busy with Aunt T'Pol and baby T'Mir. I miss them."

Archer's eyes closed and tears burned behind them. He flinched when a tiny hand covered his. "Uncle Jon?"

As he looked into those sad little eyes he wanted to scream. How in the hell was he supposed to explain to a seven year old that her closest friends were never coming home? How was he supposed to explain their senseless death when he couldn't understand it himself. It was bad enough the dead were haunting him. He imagined they would for a lifetime. "Charlie, I..."

Breeop... "Doctor Phlox to Captain Archer."

Relief swamped him, followed quickly by guilt. Phlox had saved him for the moment. He stood slowly, cradling T'Mir close. "Archer here."

"Ah Captain... My patient has awakened and would like to see you."

His knees nearly buckled, and he leaned against the bulkhead. His eyes met Hoshi's, and at her nod, he fled the room. As eager as he was to see her, Archer was almost afraid to face T'Pol. How much did she remember? As he slid into sickbay, he approached her bed cautiously. He was surprised to see T'Pol sitting up. A smile of relief ghosted his lips and then he was holding her in his arms, the baby against his chest nearly forgotten in his need to hold her. For the briefest of instants she held him back, and then she was cupping his face to get his attention. "Jonathan? The children..."

"Sweetheart, please. Just give me a minute."

"It's true then." She glanced down at T'Mir as the baby let out an indignant squeak at being squashed between her parents. "I was hoping it was just a horrible dream, but this little one makes it real." Her hand came up to gently stroke the baby's cheek. "She is well?"

Breath huffed out in a sigh. "Yeah. She's doing fine." He began to unfasten the harness, drawing the infant free. "Do you want to hold her?"

T'Pol could only nod. The warm, solid weight of the little girl was a comfort to her and for the briefest of moments she allowed herself to be absorbed in the wonder of her new daughter. Time passed slowly, comfortably as she counted fingers and toes. Her eyes skimmed the child. "She looks as Pixie did at this age."

Jonathan swallowed back the lump in his throat. "Yes, some. She has a lot of you too." He lifted the little girl and turned her gently. As he did so, he pulled up the corner of her diaper, exposing the lower part of her left buttock. "She has the Archer birthmark too, like Zack...and me." His thumb brushed lightly over the small crescent shaped mark.

T'Pol watched as he righted the child, grateful when he passed her back. "She has bits of all of us." Her voice was husky with grief.

Jonathan couldn't speak. His hand rested lightly on her knee and he leaned forward until their foreheads touched. "I'm glad you came back, I've missed you so much."

"How long..."

"It's been nearly two weeks, eleven days..." He drew back suddenly, all business. "The Vulcans located Soval. He is unconscious, but alive. The bastards that destroyed the ship kept him that way, barely. They sent him back to us in a damned shuttle."

Hope brightened her eyes. "If Soval is alive then the children..."

“Honey, you know I wish that were possible as much as you, but what point would there be? Soval is a political figure. The children were just... children. Until he wakes up, we don’t know who, if anyone, else was taken.”

“But it is possible?”

Jonathan raised his hands in a shrug. “Anything is possible, but why would they? I wish it were true. Hell, I’d rejoice in it. Anything would be better than this nightmare, but frankly there is no logic to it.”

“Jonathan... I know I’m not being logical, and logic is what I live by, but... this grief... the reality is such that I can’t bear it.” Her eyes locked with his. “I have to hope, despite the silence in my head. I didn’t want to come back. As much as I love you and as much as I wanted our baby, I didn’t want to come back. No parent...” She choked on the words and had to stop to calm herself. “No parent should have to suffer the loss of a child. I can’t...” She shook her head, to gather her thoughts and shake away the excess of emotion. Her voice was whisper soft when she spoke again. “I wasn’t going to come back.”

His eyes teared as he digested her words and meaning. His hand came up to cup her cheek and when he spoke his own voice was hoarse. “Only the thought of knowing you needed me kept me sane.” He gave a wistful smile. “You would have come back eventually. I wouldn’t have let you go without a fight.” His eyes narrowed. “What made you change your mind?”

She pressed her face into his palm. “I was lost in a dream of Vulcan, trying to meditate, but the grief was too strong, even there. The words of my chants kept slipping into the words of a lullaby, their lullaby. Finally I just let it come. I closed my eyes, and tipped my face to the sun, and sang, imagining them near me. There was this moment... I actually smelled T’Lin.” Tears hovered near the surface as she brought it forth, but she swallowed them down. “I kept my eyes closed and kept singing. If I didn’t open them, I didn’t have to admit there was nothing there. Then I heard this sob, and it was one of the saddest sounds I had ever heard. There she was Jonathan, our beautiful little Pixie, and she was crying. She looked so sad and so very lost in that moment. I thought to myself this is a dream and she shouldn’t be crying. I spoke to her, asked her why she was crying. She said it was because I wasn’t real.” Her eyes took on a glazed look, as if she had disappeared into herself. “It was my dream, and she thought I wasn’t real. I dared to hug her and talked of spirits and such. And then she pushed away from me. She insisted that she was alive, she and Zack, and that we had to find them.” Her eyes cleared as they met his once more. “She insisted they needed us. She walked away from me Jonathan, crying. I tried to make her stay but she wouldn’t let me. She said you needed me and Zack needed her and we had to hurry. It seemed so real.... I had to come back.” Her eyes implored him. “We have to keep looking.”

He closed his eyes. "Honey I want to believe they are alive, that there is the slightest chance. I've dreamed of her too. She just seemed so real. I thought she was a sad, bruised little ghost."

T'Pol's head snapped up. "Bruised?"

"Yeah."

"Right cheek? Split lip? Dressed like a boy?"

His eyes narrowed. "Yeah..."

"What if it wasn't a dream Jonathan? Why would we both see the same image of her? Why battered and bruised? If she were a spirit would it be possible she carry the scars of her death? And why wasn't Zack with her? Why would one cross that plane and not the other?"

"What you're suggesting is just..." He shook his head.

"I know, but what if? Pixie has abilities we can't possibly begin to understand. She's unique. Don't you see? I can't get past the what if?"

"But the silence you hear? You were so certain."

"As were you... You were certain you would know, would feel it if they were gone. What does your heart tell you Ashal-veh? What does it hurt to believe until there is proof otherwise?"

Jonathan rubbed his chest where it had been aching for days. What if? Was it possible that his beloved children were alive somewhere? Could he chance walking away, abandoning them? A soft mew from his baby daughter caught his ear and he studied her for a long moment. He could no more give up on his eldest children then he could walk away from his newest child. He stroked a finger along the baby's downy cheek, smiling at her instinctive suckling response. "If you feel there is a chance, any reason at all to hope, then how can I do any less?" His eyes met hers and he gave her a wry smile. "It would be a miracle."

She nodded. They both turned as Phlox coughed to their attention. "It seems to me you two are pretty good at overcoming the impossible... and at making miracles." With a Cheshire-cat grin he passed T'Pol a warmed bottle and walked away.