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T'Pol's first thought when she opened her eyes was how empty her arms were. The ache there was steady, as if someone had amputated a vital part of her. She wrapped her arms about herself in an effort to ease the pain, and closed her eyes, wanting desperately to fall back into the dream. Reality intruded, in the form of her husband as he sat beside her. Not wanting to give up her brief connection with T'Lin, but unable to return to her, T'Pol sighed and leaned into her husband. It was a quiet moment, one of comfort. "I found her, Jonathan. At least I hope I did." His grip tightened slightly, but he said nothing. "She was so angry... so scared. I didn't want to leave her and yet I couldn't stay. She was so certain it was a dream, and maybe it was, but...she looked different from when I saw her last."

"Tell me." He shifted slightly, drawing her into his lap, surrounding her.

"She seemed older somehow, not just in form. Her eyes seemed ancient, as if she had learned all the dark things in the universe and knew she couldn't change them. I could barely see our little girl in them. She was covered in bruises and scrapes. She wouldn't let me hold her. I had to make her. She felt so real. Do you think she was real?"

Jonathan nuzzled his face in the curve of her neck and began a gentle rocking motion. "Yeah. Yeah, I do. I have to believe she's real too."

T'Pol closed her eyes, trying to force back the emotion flooding her. "Each day is harder Jonathan. Each day we search, following an ever winding trail and we get nowhere. Each day I seek her out only to find nothing and wonder if I'm giving us all false hope. What if this connection I made to her was only a dream?"

"I don't know. You were so certain a week ago, you made me believe. Every day is harder, but every day also brings us closer. It took us nearly a week to find Soval, and almost another for you to wake. We are going to find the ones who hurt him, and when we do, we will find the children. You just have to hold on a little longer."

She nodded, rubbing her face against his arm. "That's what I told Pixie."

"See, you believe. You just needed to be reminded. I..." The rest of his words were lost as he was paged over the comm.

"Bridge to Captain Archer"

Reluctant to release his wife, he drew her up with him, keeping a solid arm around her as he responded. "Archer here."

Hoshi's voice fairly hummed with excitement. "Sir, the Vulcans have sent a transmission. They have found V'Lar. She's alive and asking to speak to you."

Jonathan nearly sagged in relief. He flashed T'Pol a hopeful smile before answering. "Send it through to my quarters please."

"Yes, Sir."

He didn't bother to respond. His hand curled tightly in T'Pol's as they headed for the monitor. As the screen flashed to life, his heart beat faster. V'Lar's face filled the screen, the compassion in her eyes filling him with hope. Two alive from a ship that should have been dead. If there were two, was it possible for there to be more? He raised his hand in greeting.

The woman mimicked it with a nod. "It is good to see you again Captain, though I wish it were under better circumstances." At his nod, she continued. "Let us put the pleasantries aside, shall we. I wanted to talk to you as soon as possible. I would like to give you assurances, but I cannot. What I can tell you is five days ago I left a planet held by mercenaries. As of the morning I left, your children were alive."

Jonathan caught T'Pol as she sagged against him. "Alive? Both of them?"

V'Lar nodded in understanding. "Yes. They were both alive at the time. The children, Soval and I were the only survivors of the attack that I know of. We were held at a compound. There were approximately twelve Andorians, an unknown number of Satorians, and a Vulcan. I will file an official report shortly, but I wanted the opportunity to talk to you. I knew you would be concerned about the children. We have to find them quickly Captain, for they are in grave danger."

Jonathan struggled to focus on her words. He wanted to shout for joy. They had confirmation; his children had been seen alive. It was only a matter of time now. "What else can you tell me?"

"The group is run by an Andorian by the name of Arven. He claims his agenda follows the growing unrest among the Andorians and Klingons. The Federation makes him uneasy. However, the attack on the T'Barra was personal. He is keeping the revolutionaries happy by claiming to trade hostages for weapons, but Arven has another goal. Your children have no role in the overall power play except for their connection to Soval and Forrest. Their connection though, is only superficial. Arven has a vendetta against you, Captain. And he plans to use your children against you. I believe he is just biding his time until he has you in his trap."

Jonathan's brow furrowed. "Why me?"

"Arven believes you are responsible for the death of his sibling. He was ranting about P'Jem and your part in helping negotiate a new treaty between the Vulcans and Andorians eleven years ago."

He frowned. "If I dealt Arven some wrong, why would he not just call me out? Andorian honor has a code after all, and I am aware of it."

"I cannot say except I do not believe Arven all that rational a being. I would not put it past him to take his anger and frustration out on the children. I believe his second in command, the Vulcan, Vek, retains some logic and keeps them out of his sight for the most part. But he too is a capricious character. Throw in the Satorians, and it becomes an unsavory mixture."

T'Pol clenched her husband's hand. "Why are the Satorians involved? They haven't been an issue in years, preferring their own sector of space."

V'Lar shook her head. "Unfortunately, the Satorians are a volatile and unpredictable species. There has been an increase in activity along the Satorian borders. For the most part they generally fight amongst themselves, but they are also known for their mercenary skills. They are most likely hired muscle, nothing more." She took a deep breath, as if centering herself.

As Jonathan digested the information he had been given, he studied the woman on the view screen. V'Lar looked tired, worn about the edges. His concern for her well-being pushed to the front. "Are you alright, Ambassador?"

V'Lar nodded. "I am afraid I am a bit weary. The journey here was not an easy one. Captain Taruk has his people working on the shuttle I was sent back in. They are also searching for additional warp signatures in the area. By my estimation, I was only in the shuttle for about twenty hours. That should narrow our search perimeters. It is only a matter of time before we locate them." She shared a long look with T'Pol before continuing. "There are two humans with your children, a young woman and her son. It is my understanding they were captured by the Satorians. The woman, Grace, has taken on the care of Pixie and Zack Henry. She guards them as fiercely as her own child. I would consider it a personal favor if you return them to Earth with you."

"Of course." Jonathan's throat tightened. "Your help has been invaluable. You have given us more than we can ever repay."

V'Lar's expression softened. "There is no debt. Your children have become precious to me." She paused then, giving them a moment to digest everything. "Be careful Jonathan Archer, and good luck. Bring my grandchildren home

safely.” With that, the screen went dark.

Jonathan stood staring at the blank screen for a long moment as he held T’Pol. Hope welled up inside him, overflowing. Unable to contain it, he caught T’Pol close and swung her around in a small circle, a whoop of joy echoing through the room. “Alive T’Pol, they are really alive!”

Relief surged through T’Pol and she clung to him, his emotions flooding her. She drew them in, allowing them to mix with her own, until there was separation. As he set her feet on the floor, her hands came up to cup his cheeks. “Alive...” It was said on a breathless sigh, embraced fully as was his mouth on hers in a joyful, celebratory kiss.

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