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Jonathan Archer stared blindly around sickbay. The difference in the room between the night shift and the day shift amazed him. It also made an impression on how different the atmosphere was during those times. Doctor Phlox kept the place alive, jovial, most of the time, and efficient in emergencies. It was one of the most comforting places on the ship, normally, but now it seemed to exemplify all that was lost to him. Exhaustion weighed at him, dragging at his steps as he moved toward the biobed. The tiny girl in the sling around his neck seemed to gain a hundred pounds as he moved forward. His eyes blurred and for a moment the lights of sickbay seemed the endless stars, and the sounds diminished to nothing. With a quick shake of his head, he continued forward, carefully unstrapping the infant and laying her in the crib next to her mother. Content she would continue to sleep, Archer climbed carefully onto the biobed. It was narrow and he clung to the edge, but it didn't matter. T'Pol was next to him and he desperately needed sleep. For the briefest of moments, he closed his eyes, pretending they were in their bed and she was asleep next to him. His arm banded loosely around her waist, and he held her close to him. The words when they started, were a hushed whisper, as if they would wake the sleeping woman. "The Vulcans have found an Andorian ship. Its a renegade according to Shran, one of the rebels who insist on keeping this skirmish open. Just a shuttle really from a much bigger ship. There was no one inside save Soval. He was unconscious, beaten. They don't know when or if he'll come out of it. The Vulcans believe Soval was a message of some sort but the fools were unable to keep from harming the messenger. Logic dictates that he was spared for some sort of political statement, but we won't know for sure until he wakes." His breath slid out on a sigh and for the hundredth time that day he wished she were awake to deal with the Vulcans. She would understand so much more than he.

His head ached with the strain and the hopelessness of it all and he switched subjects, the words becoming a plea. "Come back to me, T'Pol. I'm so lost without you. I can't bear this alone. You promised me you wouldn't leave me, well you have. The doctor thinks the choice is yours, a mental thing you are doing to yourself. How could you leave me like this? I need you! We need you! T'Mir... I don't remember what to do and I need you to remind me. Please sweetheart, come back to me..." Silent tears slid down his cheeks. T'Pol was his world. "It's not supposed to be like this. We were meant to be together always. The children were meant to grow up. T'Mir needs her mother. I love you..."

He buried his face against her shoulder and breathed in the scent that was uniquely T'Pol. Taking several deep breaths he calmed himself. "She's beautiful you know? It hurts every time I look at her. I see you and Pixie. There doesn't seem to be any of me in her except in temper. She has a fierce little temper, and

yet... when she's sleeping, or looking up at me with those big green eyes of hers, I see your serenity. She needs you to guide her, love." Breath puffed out slower as his body relaxed some more. "Phlox makes me carry her with me. Says we both need something constant to hold on to. I think he's trying to make her my focus so I'm not so lost, and he's right for the most part. She is such a good baby, really. She eats and sleeps and coos at everyone, but they are all leery of holding her. I don't blame them. She reminds us of what we have lost and we don't want to get attached again. Can't help it though, she's just so damn cute. Trip asked me if she had a nickname yet. I can't seem to find one for her. Anything that comes to mind reminds me of Pixie and Sprite and that fantasy world, that magical place. I just can't seem to find it. Nothing there seems to fit."

His fingers twined in hers and he snuggled closer. "Malcolm calls her the prettiest little Poppet on the ship and he reserves that phrase for her. I like the sound of it. She reminds me of a beautiful little doll, but still... Trip and Hoshi help me with the care of her, as does Phlox. Hoshi tucks her right in with Sammy. She's the only one of the Tucker brood to have blond hair. Malcolm calls her the prettiest little bit of Sunshine on the ship. Poppet and Sunshine, where do we come up with these names anyway?" Exhaustion pulled at him, dragging him under. He shifted, drawing T'Pol closer still. "Perhaps you should wake up and explain the logic of it all. Come home sweetheart, please..."

Phlox stood off to the side and watched the Captain for several minutes after he fell asleep. It had been on the tip of his tongue to object when the Captain had crawled onto the biobed with T'Pol, but he hadn't been able to. The Captain was as incapable of harming his wife as he had been of ignoring his infant daughter. Besides, the man needed sleep desperately. It had been nearly a week since this had started, and as far as he knew the Captain had barely rested, only doing so while he was in a chair in sickbay. Perhaps this way he would sleep more than a few hours. Phlox waited a few more minutes before pulling out a blanket and draping it over Archer. A soft whimper from the crib caught his ear, and he scooped up the baby, cuddling her close. The Captain was right, she did resemble T'Pol and Pixie and yet was uniquely herself. Expertly holding the baby in one arm, Phlox prepared a bottle and carried the little girl back to his quarters. While she ate, he traced the pointed little ears, sharp Vulcan brows, and the silky cap of soft brown curls. "Poppet hmmm... I think Malcolm is right. You are the prettiest one on this ship, and don't you forget it."