

[See Chapter 1/title page for disclaimers and rating](#)

Mist, thick as soup, surrounded her. It was so dense that she couldn't even see her feet, though she could feel the solid ground beneath them. Each breath inhaled the mist, and though there was no scent, she could taste it. It tasted damp and unfamiliar, and with each breath her chest hurt with the effort to inhale. She stumbled forward, certain only that continued movement was all that was keeping her from drowning in the stuff. Finally it began to clear, yet as she looked around, she almost wished it back. She was alone in a room with high, gray walls. As the mist faded, she noticed the shine of the panels. Moving forward, she touched one. It shimmered like a pond with a pebble thrown in the center, moving in slight ripples from her fingertips, ever widening, until all the walls felt the effect. She followed the farthest wave as it cascaded over the wall until it met its companion, causing another set of ripples, as it made a full circle. She had left the mist and entered an odd room, with no sign of a door and no opportunity for escape. Again she touched the barricade, and again it caused a cascading effect, though it seemed too solid to be able to do so. The walls were darkening, filling to a glossy black, and as they did so, she saw her reflection surrounding her. By all rights the black surrounding her was such that she shouldn't be able to see anything, but she could. The walls and her reflections stared silently back at her, nothing but the pattern of the waves to suggest a hint of life.

Panic began to bubble inside her. She was lost and alone, trapped in a world of darkness with no one to help her out. She turned, breath leaving her in a sob as the mirror girls turned too. With halting steps she headed back the way she thought she had come, only to thud solidly into a wall. Breathing became even harder as panic tightened her lungs. She stumbled along, her hand flowing over the walls, ripples shooting out in frantic directions as she sought escape. The shadow girls mimicked her movements. As she focused in on their movements, she stumbled to a halt. Their gaping mouths seemed malevolent masks of laughter. Collapsing to the floor, she buried her head in her knees, arms coming up to cover her as if the ceiling were going to fall. She stayed there, knees to chest as she struggled to breathe. As air became easier to pull in, the panic receded somewhat. Cautiously she lifted her head, flinching at the mocking reflections. Glancing up, she saw herself once again, only this girl, this reflection seemed more real, truer. Her eyes blurred as tears began to fall. The images began to disperse until nothing but black gleamed back at her, nothing but black, and the image above. She stood slowly, lifting her arms in supplication. The mirror girl stared back at her solemnly, not moving. "Let me go!"

The shadow creature shook her head, and disappeared.

T'Lin snapped awake. She took a moment to take in her surroundings. The familiar snores and snuffles of the boys comforted her, and she drew them in for

a moment before slowly sitting up. She moved cautiously, careful not to disturb them as she slid free of the bedding. After tucking the blanket back over them, she moved across the small room to the bar covered window. A quick glance showed her it was still dark outside, but the subtle stirrings in the courtyard of the compound told her it was nearly dawn. Her fingers traced lightly along the window casing until they encountered a loose brick. She lifted it carefully, ferreting underneath it until she found what she was looking for. Pulling out the small knife her uncle had given her, she clutched it desperately for a moment. Then, with a small sigh, she opened the blade, and pressed the thin tip against the wall. It only took a moment to carve a thin line, and then she was lifting the brick and hiding the knife once more. Her fingers traced over the lines, her only way of marking time in this place. There were nine of them, nine thin, barely noticeable lines, representing nine days that already seemed an eternity. With another sigh, she turned away from the window and grabbed her boots. As she headed for the bathroom, she avoided looking at the bed. She had discovered her first night at the compound that Vek made use of his slave. It bothered her, but she had learned quickly not to say anything. She hadn't understood all the dynamics, but she understood enough. She and the boys had slept in with V'Lar since that first night, though Vek's visits were sporadic.

She washed her face and hands and braided her hair. Her days were spent helping Grace in the kitchens. She knew more about cooking and cleaning up after others than she ever wanted to know. After her second day of kitchen duty she had resolved to make a point of thanking chef and the stewards for all they did to make life more comfortable on Enterprise. That is, if she ever got home. Finished with her clean up, she got dressed. The boys would spend the morning practicing different fighting techniques with Vek. Their afternoons would be spent learning similar skills from Sorka, and the Andorians if they chose to participate.

For all that he was Vulcan, Vek was like none she had ever met. He could be all that was calm and patience one minute, and flyaway temper the next. Though unpredictable at best, Vek had developed a keen interest in both the boys. He made a point of encouraging them in a variety of fighting styles from Vulcan to Satorian, as well as different types of weapons. The boys would leave right after breakfast and wouldn't return until well after lunch. She worried about Zack during this time, for he had become quieter and much too solemn for a little boy, but her brother never complained. After the dinner meal was served, they all would troop back to their shared quarters. It was during these quiet times that the boys would replay their lessons, encouraging T'Lin to join in. Despite the headache that never seemed to go away, T'Lin threw herself into learning the different fighting techniques. What once had been a chore, was now a hope for escape.

As she walked back into the main room she noticed the pale light of dawn slipping through the windows. She shot a quick glance at the bed, relieved to find it empty. Grace was already up and about, most likely dragging the boys from

their sleep. T'Lin nodded at V'Lar as she headed back to help Grace and the boys get ready. The silence, like the pain, was something she was getting used to, but she didn't like it. She was too used to hearing Zack that it made her feel even more lonely, though she rarely had the time for it. She wondered briefly how her parents were and what they were doing, and when, if ever, they would come for them.

Zack stared at the pattern of weak moonlight playing across the ceiling. The rain had stopped again, though temporarily. He was tired and achy, but he couldn't sleep. It was unusual for him, as all the exercise wore him out. Perhaps it was because Grandmother was gone, and the safety that she seemed to provide was missing with her. He wondered if they would return her to the Vulcans. He had overheard the Satorians talking about killing her and though he had wanted to object he knew better than to speak up. Faith was all that was keeping him going these days, and the belief that Arven and his people had a better use for V'Lar kept his hopes alive. Shifting slightly, he tried to get more comfortable. The small bed the three of them shared was cramped, but there was something comfortable and secure about snuggling into two other people. In these quiet moments, he could imagine things were as they had always been and that Pixie was watching over him. There were many times in the past when he had been frightened by a dream or some other such nonsense. Pixie had always heard him and come to him, or called him to her and allowed him to snuggle close. If the Satorians knew how much comfort he drew from being with her, they would take him away, or her. It terrified him to think on it, but each display of emotion toward his sister, or Grace for that matter, earned him and Aidan both a sharp slap. It was a tough lesson, one both Sorka and Vek seemed determined to teach. He wondered if it were out of meanness, or simply the belief that softer emotions, especially where a woman was concerned, would be their downfall. He shifted again, wondering if perhaps he should meditate, but he didn't want to disturb anyone. He started as a soft hand stroked over his ear. His voice was a soft whisper. "I didn't mean to wake you Pix."

"I know. What's wrong?"

"Too quiet maybe. Can't sleep."

Aidan stirred next to them, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. "Wha?"

Pixie pushed herself up until she was in a sitting position, her back against the wall. She drew both boys to her, encouraging them to rest their heads on her shoulders. Her hands stroked slowly up and down their arms, the moves steady and repetitive. "Shhh now. Sleep." The voice when it began to sing, was sweet and soft, reminiscent of a dream. "Thank the stars in heav'n above for sending me my boys to love. Bless them keep them from all harm, and protect them all

night long. Help me watch them as they grow, help me teach them all I know. Thank the stars in heav'n above for sending me my boys to love..."

Tears pricked Zack's eyelids. He squeezed his eyes tightly shut, his little heart breaking. It was one of Daddy's lullabies, sang with just his inflections, and it made him miss his father desperately. As the tears fell, Zack rubbed his face in his sister's shirt. "Will he really come for us Pix?"

T'Lin continued to sing. She didn't know if her parents would come or not. V'Lar had seemed so certain, and so had Grace, but she just didn't know. Even as the doubt remained, she knew she had to do something to keep them all strong. Pushing it aside, she snuggled the boys closer. "Of course he will Sprite. Daddy loves us." With that, she went back to the lullaby, using it to hold the hope in her heart. She continued singing long after the boys fell asleep.

Even as the mist surrounded her, T'Lin recognized it for what it was. It was uncomfortable and frightening but she had been here before. This dream, and she recognized it as such, was becoming a common fixture in her nights. In her more lucid moments she recognized a message here, but she couldn't quite figure out what it was trying to tell her, other than she was alone. She pushed the fear aside and continued to place one foot in front of the other. Regardless of where she went, it always led to the same place. She was determined not to panic this time. As before the mist began to thin and the mirrored room encircled her. She turned once, a perfect circle, just to be sure, and nodded as her eyes confirmed her suspicions. There was no exit from this place. Taking a deep breath, she glanced up automatically, trying not to flinch as the reflected girls mirrored her movements. Sure enough, the shadow girl was staring down at her, only something akin to approval shined in her eyes. A smile flitted across the shadow face, and as T'Lin watched, the girl reached out a hand, touching one of the walls. T'Lin blinked and glanced back at her reflections. She studied them a moment, seeing more curiosity than anything on their faces. Taking a deep breath she moved forward and pressed her hand against the mirror in front of her. As before, ripples eddied from the contact point and traveled around the room spawning answering waves and currents. Frustration welled up inside her, but she bit her lip and remained still. Glancing up, she was surprised to see the shadow girl disappearing through the wall. T'Lin waited, and slowly the ripples faded out of existence. The image in front of her sharpened briefly. She jerked, but instead of pulling away, she continued contact. Though the mirror blurred at her movement, the waves did not return and within moments it cleared again. Her breath caught as the image sharpened. Instead of a reflection of herself, T'Lin recognized her father's ready room.

A soft cry of joy escaped her as she pressed her face to the wall. She ignored

the blurring effect, squinting to keep the image, both hands pressing solidly against the surface. Her fists clenched but she stilled, allowing the image to clear once more. The man that entered looked enough like her father to lighten her heart, but there were enough differences to frighten her as well. Jonathan Archer looked pale and gaunt as though he had not eaten or slept in days. Dark circles bagged under his eyes, and streaks of white stained the hair at his temples. She knew instantly he was grieving. Remaining as still as possible, she focused on him, willing him to look up, to see her. He did look up, but his eyes looked past her, and she knew he was seeing the stars. Pushing against the window, she screamed in frustration. "DADDY!!!"

She blinked, startled as his head jerked up. His eyes locked on hers and she could see the disbelief in his eyes. He raised a hand slowly, and then dropped it. His words came to her as though through a tunnel. "Even the stars taunt me now." His head dropped and silent tears slid down his cheeks.

"No! Daddy! Daddy look at me! I'm here! You have to find me!" Her words seemed to reach him as he looked up once again, but the sadness there was nearly palpable.

"Don't haunt me Pixie-mine, I can't bear it. I miss you so much."

*He thinks I'm dead. He's grieving for me,* she thought. She tried again, desperate to reach him. "I'm alive Daddy. We need you! Help us!" Again it seemed as if she had reached him, for he stared at her intently for several moments, then he shook his head and turned. The image blurred as she pounded on the walls, desperate for his attention. "DADDY!!!" The image faded completely as she collapsed against the wall in tears.

It could have been minutes or hours before she noticed the emptiness of the wall in front of her. There was no ready room and no reflection, just a black wall that seemed dull, as if its light had gone out. T'Lin stood slowly, bracing herself on the blank surface. She leaned her back against it as she turned to take in her surroundings. The room she was in still had no exit, but the walls reflected her image back at her, all of them, except the one she leaned against. "Mirrors, glimpses into different worlds and places... things that may or may not be... possibilities?" Her words seemed hollow, even to herself, but real, much more real than the images surrounding her. Her breath caught as she pushed away from the wall. She crossed the room and placed her hands against the opposite wall. The mirror girl shimmered in a series of waves, and as they settled, she found herself staring into the eyes of a woman. The stance on the opposite side of the glass was exactly like hers, hands flush against the surface. She could almost feel the heat of them against her own. At first, she thought it was her mother, so similar the features, and then she realized the height wasn't right, nor were the eyes, or the long fall of hair. She bit her lip in confusion, surprised as the woman did the same.

The words tumbled forth, and she realized they had both spoken. "Who are you?"

The words were clear, with none of the tunnel effect of before. As the woman smiled, T'Lin could have sworn she felt fingers interlocking with her own in a gentle squeeze. Her breath stopped as she noticed she could no longer see her hands. They had sunk into the mirror, as had the woman's. Her moment of concern fled as the woman spoke. "I remember you. "

T'Lin shook her head. "But who are you?"

"A friend I think. Be strong Pixie-girl and have faith."

T'Lin blinked in confusion. She heard the echo of her name, as if from a great distance, and was surprised when the woman turned and answered, "Over here." Then she gave T'Lin one more comforting squeeze of her hands and pushed away from the wall. As the child watched, the image began to blur. Two men joined the woman, but the image had already begun to fade and she couldn't tell who they were.

Small hands clenched into fists once more. "Don't leave me!"

Though the wall was nearly blank, the light leaving it, the response was still clear. "It's just a change Pixie. Don't be afraid. It's a good thing, this change."

T'Lin pushed away from the mirror as tears started to fall once more. "I can't help it!"

"I know... I'm sorry..." And then the voice, like the image was gone.

T'Lin slammed her hands against the dark mirror. Frustration rolled through her. What was the point of these glimpses. Why here? Why now? Tossing her head back she scowled at the image above her. "Why me?" The face staring solemnly back at her had no answers. With a low growl she pushed away from the wall and moved back to the center of the room. Her fists clenched and unclenched as she tried to control her anger. A low litany of "wake up, wake up now," followed her as she made a slow pirouette around the room. Her eyes narrowed as her reflections copied her every move in a sickening parody. Infinite echoes of herself taunted her from every angle except from the two dark panels. Stopping, she closed her eyes. "Windows... each one a window... Real... or possibilities?" Her mind was frantic as she tried to connect the pieces of the puzzle. She made a quick circle, hands outstretched. With a silent prayer she moved toward another image and made contact with the surface. This time the surface seemed to glow as heat shimmered off the glass. As she watched, the glow sharpened until she recognized the bright orb of a sun. She couldn't place

why it seemed familiar. Heat, sun, red desert sands... Vulcan. Her hands clenched in an unconscious move, and suddenly the barrier was gone and she was tumbling into the sand. Her eyes widened as she took in her surroundings. It seemed so real, the grit of the sand between her fingers, the warmth of the sun on her face. She stood slowly, turning her face to the sun as if in supplication. It seemed she had been cold and damp for so long. All she knew in that moment was that she was content to stay there. It was warm and safe and so much less confusing than the rest of her dream. If not for the whisper of a lullaby floating around her, she would have absorbed it completely.

Try as she might, she couldn't ignore the sound that called to her. The lullaby was a memory she had nearly forgotten, reminiscent of a time when all in her world was secure. It held the love of her mother, the memories of the subtle ways that love was expressed, and reminded her of how much she was truly loved. It was an echo of something she needed desperately and she followed it, full of hope. As the song became louder she stopped and rubbed her eyes. It wasn't wishful thinking. There sat T'Pol in a typical meditative position, but instead of chanting traditional Vulcan mantras she was singing. T'Lin stumbled forward, tears sliding heedlessly down her cheeks. Her arms reached toward her mother even as she called out. "Mommy?" She tripped, landing on her knees, her hands fisting in the sand. She was afraid to touch for fear of finding her mother wasn't real.

The singing stopped. "Why are you crying?"

T'Lin's breath stopped for an instant, her eyes opening back up. "You're not real Mommy and I really wish you were."

The serene face looking back at her seemed too controlled somehow. "I was just thinking the same thing." A moment of sadness slid into T'Pol's eyes. "I am more real than you, Pixie-mine. It is strange is it not, that I would understand how important you and your brother are to my existence when you are no longer a physical part of it?"

T'Lin's brow furrowed together as she tried to make sense of her mother's words. She couldn't. "Mommy?"

T'Pol continued as if she hadn't spoken. "This is something anyway. My Katra and yours, sharing this place."

"Katra?" *Soul, spirit...* Her head tipped to the side. "Oh no, I'm not dead Mommy, neither is Zack. We are alive and we need you. You have to find us! You have to convince Daddy to keep looking."

A single brow rose in response. "If you are not a spirit then how is it you share this place with me? We are in my mind and even here I cannot find peace from

the senselessness of your loss, but I would keep you with me."

"I want to be with you. I don't know how I'm here, or why. Maybe it is a dream for both of us and means nothing but comfort, and maybe it's real, but you have to go back. You have to find us, before we really are beyond your reach." She shuddered as T'Pol raised a hand and stroked her cheek.

"I can't bear the thought that this may be a dream. At least I have you here. I can touch you, talk to you."

T'Lin caught her mother's hand, marveling at the strength of it, before shuffling forward and curling into the woman it belonged to. "I don't want to leave this place either Mommy, but I have to. I have to protect Zack until you come for us, and you have to take care of Daddy. He needs you just as much as we do. He's grieving too." After indulging in one more moment of comfort, T'Lin stood and backed away. "You once told me you were stronger together. I have to believe that, have faith in it, and so do you. He needs you and you need him. You have to tell him we are still alive. Find us Mommy, please."

Panic flashed over T'Pol's face. "Wait! Stay with me, just a little while..."

"I want to Mommy, but I can't. Zack needs me, and Daddy needs you. Find us Mommy, please." She turned then, and ran across the sands, blocking the sound of the voice calling to her. She ran until the voice was gone and the sweat poured down her face, heat beating her down. Exhaustion swamped her, tripping her, sending her tumbling into the sand. As her body made contact, her eyes snapped open, and absorbed the reality that surrounded her days. The heat from the sun was nothing more than the boys snuggled against her, and the dream, wishful thinking. She glanced out the window and noted the steady fall of rain. That was all the planet seemed to do. The constant patter of rain, or strum of storm, and the endless gray that came with it made time seem unending. It was only the sound of movement in the next room that hinted at the coming dawn. With a silent prayer that the images in her dreams were more than wishes, T'Lin slipped free of the boys and dressed.