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“Another Piece of the Action”
by
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with love,
always
john erik

“Another Piece of the Action” is book two in a completed trilogy. Editing versions of book one, “A Touch of Greatness,” book three- “Both Hands Full,” and book four- “Necessary Evil,” may be attained by contacting the author.

PROLOGUE

Tammas Parkin Arblaster-Garcia closed his eyes. He noted the time on his chronometer, provided by his neural implant, and ran some quick calculations. Admiral Leonard H McCoy would be dead just over seven hours now, which meant he had a window of about thirty more minutes in which he could still use the Kelvan technology to resuscitate and restore him to perfect health. The Kelvan ship was in the hangar bay and the control interface he required was in lock down. The technology was basically a computer console woven into a cloth bracelet. The bracelet's fabric was a metallic-gold color which highlighted the only other noticeable feature, the silver button. When touched, the button became a conductor of a sort, connecting the computer to the nerves in the fingertip and from there establishing a direct connection to the brain of the user. An intellectual component was necessary to access the computer, a threshold below which one couldn't access it at all. The minimum intellectual component might establish a connection but that person risked permanent brain damage. The person with sufficient intellectual capacity could access the computer and do miracles. Garcia met and exceeded this attribute, and it was not due to genetic manipulation, good luck, good nutrition, or even a proper education. He was Kelvan, not by birth, but by design. He was descendant from humans who were once Kelvan, and in an attempt to make him more Kelvan than human his neural structure had been modified. The neural map for the Kelvan physiology had been impressed on top of his human neural structure over a period of time starting from conception and ending five years after he was born in a series of procedures, each one building on the previous session's work.

The procedures hadn't been perfect, but it had sufficiently changed his psyche so that he could, through the use of Kelvan technology similar to a transporter, be converted into a Kelvan. The final test was actually transforming him into a Kelvan. Not only had he survived in Kelvan form, but he had full control over his Kelvan physiology. Converting a non-modified human into Kelvan form was a death sentence. The most obvious benefit of his being Kelvan was that he could use Kelvan technology. Wishes could instantly be manifested like magic. To the untrained eye it might seem as if a telepathic connection to the computer had been made and the will of the user was simply carried out.

But it was neither miracle nor magic. It was science. Science driven by pure intellect.

In this particular instance Garcia's brain would link to the computer in the bracelet, and then that computer was connected to the main computer on board the Kelvan ship, currently stowed on Hangar Deck 4. Information would swirl virtually around him, providing him with thousands of options, and then, at the push of that one button, his choice would be instantly transformed into work. And the work Garcia wanted done was McCoy brought back to the living. An easy enough task, from the Kelvan perspective. No more difficult than dehydrating an organic creature to its essential ingredients and then the following reconstitution of the same entity. The creature never missed a beat or realized that anything had happened to it. To save McCoy all Garcia had to do was get the wrist control mechanism that was currently under lock and key and put it on. No, he didn't even have to put it on. All he had to do was touch the button, allow his mind to interface with the Kelvan computer system, tell it to repair McCoy, and then press the button. It would be easier than making a wish and blowing out the candles on a cake.

The button was a fail safe. Total chaos would no doubt ensue had there been no button, no barrier between thoughts and reality. If all his thoughts were instantly manifested, every person in his sphere of influence would be in jeopardy of having Garcia's will imposed on theirs. That wasn't a good thing, especially if one of his fleeting thoughts happened to be inappropriate. As it was, Tammas was often prone to wild fantasies, tangents that kept him distracted, and the first time he had used the Kelvan device he had revealed some things about himself that he would have preferred to have kept secret. In particular, the Kelvan device amplified his OCD, obsessive compulsive disorder, and ADD, attention deficit disorder. There had been so many options made available to him, so many possible details cluttering his mind, that he hadn't been precise enough when he had used the Kelvan technology to save Riker's Away Team. Sure, he had restored the team that had been reduced to their essential elements, minus the water, turning the polyhedra back into their original form. But the exception came when he rehydrated Lt. Commander Shelby. He brought her back wearing an outdated Star Fleet Uniform, specifically a mini skirt, tight blouse, and Go-Go boots. And he let her hair down. These were liberties he would not have taken had he been in his right mind.

Thinking of Shelby now, in the uniform McCoy would have recognized from his service days aboard the Enterprise, nearly took him too far a field. He had to struggle to stay focus. OCD and ADD were just two of the side of effects of the procedures that were performed on him to impress the Kelvan mental map over his developing human brain. Great intelligence often came with a price.

Tammas shook his head to clear the fantasy from his mind and forced himself to focus on his goal of saving McCoy. He opened his eyes and continued down the corridor. He was no stranger in the corridors of the Enterprise D. He was rarely stranger anywhere, given his celebrity status, but even more so now that he had recently been deemed a hero by some, including Picard, and a minor nuisance by others, including the likes of Riker. There was no argument that Garcia had recently made a name for himself in Star Fleet and touched a few lives in the process. He picked up his pace so as to avoid the potential for idle chat as he made his way for the armory where the Kelvan control bracelet was being kept. He didn't have time for the interruptions. Still, he made an effort to acknowledge the people who met his eyes, offering a faint smile or nod.

Lt. Jenna D'Sora was on security detail to the armory where the Kelvan bracelet was being kept. She looked up from her desk as Garcia entered, the door closing behind him. She smiled. They had met once, briefly, passing in the corridors of the Enterprise. She had asked if he had needed assistance and had thrown him a casual invitation to be social together. He, of course, remembered the meeting. He remembered everything. A photographic memory had been another side affect of the Kelvan imprinting procedures, and contrary to popular opinion, having a perfect memory was not a pleasant thing because one rarely recalled just one particular detail. When trying to recall any specific item, a flood of information would accompany any one bit of data. It was not enough just to recall D'Sora; his brain gave him everything about that first moment as if he were still standing in that exact same moment of time. There was the smell of the perfume she had chosen that day, the quality of her voice, the people that were in the corridor at the same time, and the way she had looked at him. In addition to the background sounds, like doors opening or closing, the hum of life support, and the quality of the air, there was also the internal dialogue he had been thinking, his emotional state, the grumbling of his own stomach, which caused him to consider if he was presently hungry.

"Tammas," she said, getting up and coming around the desk to greet him. "How are you doing?"

"Honestly?" Tammas asked. He had remembered he hadn't liked her on that initial meeting, and as he studied her he realized his feelings for her hadn't changed. He didn't know why he didn't like her, and he didn't know if his memory from the first encounter was influencing that, but he pushed his subconscious objections away. He had to deal with her if he wanted to succeed in his mission.

"Always," Jenna said. Her expression suggested that she was surprised by his question.

"I was feeling a bit lonely," Tammas said, shuffling his feet. "I was wondering if I might buy you dinner, if that's the correct colloquialism for asking you out."

"Well, yeah," Jenna said, brightening even more, smile lines leaving her eyes. "Sure! I'm off duty in a couple hours."

"Oh," Tammas said, seeming sad. He let his gaze fall to the floor.

She chuckled. "It's not that bad. You're welcome to keep me company until then. I've finished my paper work. Just sort of waiting out the clock."

"May I?" he asked, stepping closer to her.

"Well, sure, Tammas," Jenna said.

"Call me Tam," he said, stepping even closer to her. He was close enough to feel her body heat radiating off of her. "May I ask you something personal?" he asked.

Jenna nodded, leaning back against her desk. He was so close to her now that she wanted to hold her breath, but settled for restricting her breathing, redirecting it for fear of bad breath. "I would like that," she admitted. She became aware of her hands trembling and gripped the edge of the desk.

With a finger on her chin, he turned her head gently back, his eyes locking on hers. His question came in the form of a kiss, his hands going to either side of her face. Her left knee came up a little, and her right leg moved to allow him to come closer to her. After kissing her, he pulled back just far enough so that she could breathe. They were sharing air and she no longer worried if her breath was bad. His wasn't. It smelled and tasted like Spearmint. Her eyes remained closed as she absorbed the moment.

“What was the question?” Jenna asked, breathlessly.

Tammas kissed her again.

“Oh,” Jenna said.

Tammas kissed her, pushing her back towards the desk.

“Yes,” Jenna said. “I can see that.”

Jenna sat on the desk, not resisting Tam’s advances, lying back on the table, her legs coming up to hug him. He ran his left hand up her side, across her chest, her neck, and paused on her shoulder. His right hand was behind her neck, his fingers combed through her hair. He held her head tightly against his.

“Computer,” Jenna said, breathlessly. She had to turn her head slightly to speak, and she moaned a little when he bit her ear. “Lock the door so no one can enter. D’Sora, kilo prime.”

“Acknowledged,” the computer responded, and on that Jenna began to return Tam’s eagerness seven fold. She became so hot so fast that Tammas almost couldn’t resist following through with this tangent. It would only be a delay of a few moments at best considering how hot they were, and how fast things were developing. But every moment counted. Tammas pinched the nerve in Jenna’s shoulder and she fell unconscious, as limp as a rag doll. He had executed the Vulcan nerve pinch flawlessly.

“Sorry,” he said, regaining control over his breathing. He took in the quiet, intimate details of her face before easing her head to the desk. He stood, straightening his uniform. He looked at Jenna’s unconscious body sprawled out over her desk and shuddered. He still didn’t like her for some reason. Not that that would have stopped him from sharing time with her under different circumstances, he realized. He then went to the Armory door and studied the lock. Clipping an illegal assistant to the side of the door, he was able to unlock the mechanism quickly enough, but when it opened it set off alarms. He was inside the armory before the force field popped into place and he had the bracelet on before the sleeping gas was released. His finger slipped to the button and he counteracted the drug in the air, turned off the force field, and left the armory all with a single push of the button. He could have just beamed himself to Sickbay where McCoy’s body was being kept in stasis, but no, he had to do it the dramatic way. Security guards met him in the corridor, phasers armed. He reduced them to their essential elements and walked on by. After that the rest of security got out of his way. Force fields came up and went off as he passed through them as if pushing through wet tissue paper. The lift didn’t respond, so he drew a circle around his feet, describing the circumference of a hole he was about to make. A hole that took him directly to the next deck when he pushed the button on the bracelet. He bent his knees as he landed on the next level, stood, and repeated the process until he was on the floor he wanted, plus four manhole size sections of the four decks he had cut through, stacked like pancakes. He paused to look up several decks. A security officer two decks up peeked over the edge and down at him, phaser ready, and gave a report via his com. badge.

Garcia turned and entered Sickbay. McCoy was in the exact same place. No one had moved him. No doubt McCoy’s coffin was still being prepared.

“Stop,” Worf said, stepping out into the open.

Garcia laughed and pressed the button. Worf’s phaser became a sword. Garcia held a similar one. “I’ve been waiting a long time for this,” Garcia said, growling.

“So have I,” Worf said and charged.

Garcia blocked and twirled his sword as Worf passed, maintaining his orientation towards him. His confidence with the blade was evident in the way he forced Worf to retreat, up until one of his hallucination entered the room. She shook her head in dismay. She was dressed in her usual, shades of grey: a dark skirt, a lighter blouse with black trim, opaque but textured hose, and black boots. She called herself Duana.

“You have the power to destroy the turtle head, but instead you play games with him?” Duana asked.

It was enough of a distraction that Worf ran him through the chest with the sword, all the way to the hilt. Tammas gasped with pain. So did Duana, looking as if she were gripping an invisible sword that had impaled her chest. Blood filled Garcia’s mouth and spilled down his chin. He began to aspirate, drowning in his own blood. Worf lifted on the sword, drawing Tammas up and closer to him. Worf roared triumphantly in Garcia’s face.

Garcia screamed, coming full awake. He jumped to his feet as if the pain had been a charley horse that had woken him as opposed to the nightmare. His hands went to his chest, sweat pouring down his face. He sat back down on the bed. Jaxa Sito woke, assessed the situation, and began to comfort him.

“Shhh, it’s okay. It was just another dream, you’re okay,” Jaxa said, rubbing his back.

CHAPTER ONE

The probability of there being two planet Earths, exact duplicates, is so close to being nil that no one, except perhaps for one particular Vulcan who was bored with his statistical analysis of the growth rate of competing bacteria in a lab class, had ever bothered to do the math. Until that is, a second Earth was discovered. Miri's planet, named by Captain Kirk for the young lady he had the fortune of meeting, was found to be indistinguishable from the planet Earth. The inhabitants of the planet had sufficiently similar genetic structure that they could not even be deemed a new species. After a huge debate and years of research, the conclusion was a bit ambiguous. Some suggested that the race known as the Preservers were responsible. Others suggested a race even more powerful than the Preservers were responsible. After all, this was an exact duplicate of the Earth, all the way down to the same continental drift, as if Earths were being knocked out via a factory style replicator.

Some suggested that the duplicate Earth was a spill over from a parallel universe or an alternate time line. A few even suggested it was just a coincidence, even at the risk of violating all the known rules governing modern theories on Divergent Evolution. And fewer still called for a return to a deity paradigm, for finding two Earths was a scary enough event that it could only mean one thing: there was a God. Whatever the explanation, it was most definitely a cause for wonder. Shades of Adam Douglas wonder.

Unfortunately for the coincidence people, there were other examples of "mere" coincidences. Forget for a moment the odds that it was Captain Kirk who found Miri's planet, as well as the planet now called Omega Four. (Technically, Kirk hadn't discovered it, but he was there.) Forget for a moment that both planets had sought the development of a biological means for prolonging human life. And forget for the moment that these cultures developed so similarly that they had somehow created an exact copy of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States of America. (And you almost have to forget that one, unless you believed in that old joke of throwing a million monkeys and typewriters together and with sufficient time one of them would reproduce the works of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was one thing, but two groups of monkeys knocking out a Preamble to the Constitution? Even on Earth the Constitution of the United States had been a rare event simply due to the fact it was difficult to achieve consensus between any two groups of people, much less two individuals. That was one reason why the European Union had so much trouble drafting a Constitution.) At any rate, finding Omega Four, and the Coms and the Yanks, compounded an already heated debate. Did this suggest that perhaps we, as complex individuals, even as isolated as we are as entities, were more common than randomly generated snowflake? (And maybe even snowflakes patterns were repetitious, but no one knew because no one had ever analyzed a large enough sample. (The argument against that being you might as well keep looking for a repeating pattern in pi.))

One scientist finally stepped forward to suggest a reasonable theory. Doctor Richard Galen, who disliked being referred to as Doctor, even though he had at least five doctorates, and several Masters to boot, one day put to print what many scientist had been too afraid to say: "Knowing what we know about biology and planetary evolution, a process we have proved beyond a shadow of doubt through various fields of research and endeavors, even going as far as reproducing such findings in the laboratory, it is unreasonable to believe that evolution alone can sufficiently account for the high number of humanoid species encountered in such a relatively small part of our galaxy." He was simultaneously praised by some and denounced by others. As one of his examples, he offered the Iotians, a species that were so similar to humans in appearance that it is impossible to tell between them without a genetic sample.

After the submission of Galen's paper, another student, sitting in a biology lab on Vulcan and thinking things incompatible with his lab goals, decided to cross reference the Iotians. In the cursory viewing he found highlighted "tags," names like James T Kirk and Spock, which to him suggested perhaps coincidence was an unlikely choice of word. Coincidence was also a strange word that might mean more than even he might suspect, which prompted closer scrutiny. Apparently, a hundred years before Kirk, the Starship Horizon had visited the Iotian planet, leaving behind some cultural contamination. By the time Kirk had appeared on the scene, the Iotians had completed a total makeover on themselves. They had modeled their society to resemble the gangster lifestyle of twentieth century Earth. (Could that mean Omega Four's population had been visited by travelers who had left a draft of the Constitution?) Why any intelligent species would do such a thing as model themselves after gangsters was a curiosity. The Iotians were bright people, perhaps even a good deal

smarter than the average human, their distant cousins. Smart enough, in some ways, to resemble idiot savants. Sure, savants could spit out huge prime numbers on request, and compute incredible sums at the blink of an eye, but when faced with applying it in a practical way they more often than not fell flat on their faces.

After thinking about this for a while, and based on his observations, this particular student wrote a paper, attached it to a Star Fleet application, and submitted it.

The paper was subsequently lost. Coincidence? Perhaps not, but when it finally resurfaced, it prompted another research mission necessitating another visit to Iotia prime to observe what had transpired since Kirk. The USS Minnesota, a Constellation Class Starship, under the command of a Captain George Heller was dispatched. The ship arrived at Iotia Prime three and a half weeks after being sent and took up a parking orbit on the opposite side of the planet's only space station.

It was a primitive space station, and not an unreasonable thing to find in orbit, seeing it was just shy of a hundred years after Kirk's visit. After all, they knew the Iotians were bright. In a hundred years after the Horizon encounter they had reformed their society from an agrarian culture to one of a gangster culture, with all the trappings of early twentieth century American culture, so it seemed reasonable that since Kirk's visit they had figured out how to put people in orbit.

What Captain Heller and his crew didn't expect was that the Iotians had developed working transporters and that they had been waiting for Star Fleet's return. The first wave of intruders arrived on the deck of the Minnesota just prior to the Captain officially hailing the planet's leader. The Iotian's President appeared on the view screen just as the intruder alert klaxon began blaring.

Captain Heller grimaced, signaling for the communication officer to put the President on hold while turning to his security officer to receive an explanation. A second wave materialized out of thin air, in a manner not unfamiliar to anyone with transporter technology. Three of these people appeared on the bridge, in full space gear, carrying explosives.

"Wait," Heller said. "We come in..."

Captain Heller never finished his sentence because at that very moment most of his ship evaporated due to an uncontrolled mixing of matter and anti matter. This was the direct result of an intruder in engineering, also wearing a space suit, who decided a suicide was better than getting caught. He had figured that blowing him-self up would puncture the deck, venting the atmosphere and crew into space, and his comrades could study the ship afterwards. What he hadn't known was that the illuminated tube behind him was a warp core, or what that warp core contained. He was gone before the searing white light registered on his eyes. There were some splintery fragments of the starship remaining in orbit, which would continue to spread until a very thin ring of debris circled the planet. The particles and fragments were of such insignificance that even the Iotians wouldn't be able to backwards engineer any new technology from their recovery.



Four Star General, Louis Hammon came to a halt in front of the President's desk. He casually inhaled through a cigar and blew smoke towards the ceiling. "You wanted to see me, Mr. President?" he asked, not bothering to remove the cigar, speaking out the side of his mouth

"Put that out," the President commanded. "Haven't you heard, smoking kills?"

"I happen to know the Sergeant General," Hammon said. "It hasn't stopped him from smoking."

The President shook his head sadly. "Well, what do you have to say for yourself?"

"Oops," Hammon offered, flashing a smile, consistent with his general air of sarcasm and lack of concern about most things in general.

"Oops?!" The President shot back. "The first Federation ship to come within transporter range in a hundred years and all you can say is Oops?!"

"We're viewing the tapes, Mr. President," Hammon assured him. "We're pretty sure it was an accident."

"Do you think we got enough information on those tapes to backward engineer warp technology?" the President asked.

"Probably not," Hammon admitted. "We only managed to get fourteen people aboard, and none of them came back with technology. At 1245, Houston time, we observed via satellites the approach of the

Starship. At 1248 we had trained all available ground based telescopes on the ship. The first wave beamed in at 1313 Houston time. At 1315, the whole thing disintegrated. We're about to launch two capsules to sift through the debris for anything salvageable, but given the extent of the damage, it's not very promising."

The President threw a pen down on the desk and cursed. "Without warp technology, we'll never break out of this Starfleet enforced quarantine. And by the time we figure out warp drive on our own, there won't be any planets left to colonize. Damn Kirk. Damn his New Deal. And damn Starfleet."

"With all due respect, Mr. President, you're speaking blasphemy and treason. I'm sure it's not all that bad," Hammon said.

"All that bad? The Federation has been abducting our people for experiments over the last hundred years, plundering the galaxy of all its resources, and it's not all that bad?" the President asked. "Can you tell me something that might make me feel better?"

"I doubt it will make you feel better, but I think you should know that I don't think the Federation has been abducting our people," the General said.

"What do you mean you don't think the Federation has been abducting our people?!" the President asked. "Of course they have been abducting our people. Kirk clearly said that the Federation wanted a percentage, and they obviously weren't talking money because no one's come asking for it."

"Haven't you wondered why there is never any evidence left at these UFO sightings and abductions?" the General asked.

"Because they use transporters!" the President said.

"Well, yes, Mr. President, I believe transporters are used in the abduction cases," the General said. "But we seem to be dealing with two different technologies, which possibly means two different aliens. The ship that we boarded in orbit resembled the Starship Enterprise that Kirk arrived on. They appear to have made some advances, if our telescopes are any judge, but they are still using technology that isn't so far advance that we can't comprehend it. Now, the UFO's on the other hand, we can't even get a good photograph of one. And if we accept the stories of these little gray aliens, then, I really think we're dealing with two different sets of entities."

"And what do you propose to do about this?" the President asked.

"Nothing," the General said.

"Nothing?" the President repeated, forcing himself to take in a deep breath. He stood up, leaned on his desk till his knuckles went white, and then in a surprise burst of emotions he tossed everything that was on his desk to the floor. The dial tone on his phone became the prominent sound following the crash, and he reached down and picked up the phone, jerked the line free from the wall, and tossed it at a book shelf. In his rage, he failed to notice a loop in the line that had snagged his hand, jerking the phone back at him so that it hit him in the gut, before falling towards the floor, dangling just at his shins as he tried to extricate himself from the line. He kicked the phone away, nearly tripping on the notebooks that had only recently lay on his desk. He surrendered his anger and dropped to his chair, sulking.

"Mr. President, with all due respect, there is little that we can do. Whether it is Star Fleet or a new visiting alien, we simply do not have the technology to go up against them at this time. And quite frankly, if they really wanted to wipe us out as a species, well, there's nothing we could do to defend ourselves," the General said. "All we can do is to continue with our research. Perhaps we can figure out what went wrong with our boarding of the Star Fleet ship when we've analyzed all the data."

"I don't like this. I don't like not having control. What do I tell the people? Just lay back and enjoy the probe, because there's nothing you can do about it?"

"I say we stay with the general line," the General said. "There are no UFO's or alien abductions taking place. The media will continue their misinformation campaign about sleep paralysis theories and mass hysteria. Meanwhile, Star Fleet maintains minimal contact while we continue to advance our technologies."

"You know, we can't wait another hundred years for a Star Fleet contact. We're running out of resources," the President said. "We have enough oil reserves to last thirty years, and after that, this world will grind to a halt."

"I find that hard to believe," Hammon said. The president didn't try to alleviate his concern. "What about alternative energy? Wind? Solar? Hydroelectric? Nuclear?"

“Oh, we’ll be able to keep the elite of our nation comfortable for some time,” the President agreed. “But when you have at least one billion spoiled, middle class and want-to-be elites, and fourteen billion poor, you can expect the transition to complete poverty is not going to be a pleasant one. War, famine, pestilence, chaos... Imagine your worst nightmare and multiply it by a factor of ten, and you’re still off by a thousand.”

“The Federation will never let it come to that,” Hammon said.

“Please. Don’t tell me you are one of those Kirk groupies, are you? All Utpoia, all the time? Kirk will save us?” the President said, mockingly.

“No, Sir,” Hammon said. “I believe in hard work. We knew transporters existed, we put our brains and resources to the task, and we built transporters. Granted, they still need some fine tuning, but we wouldn’t have gotten a toe hold in space if it weren’t for them. We certainly wouldn’t have got our space station built without it. And, we have our brightest minds working on warp drive. I believe we’ll figure it out. I do admit that I believe the Federation is going to help us, or maybe has been secretly helping us all along. There must be a reason for the Long Silence.”

“I’ll explain the Long Silence. We’re on our own down here. It’s sink or swim, survival of the fittest,” The President said. “Don’t you read and understand The Book?”

“Yes, Sir. But if you will permit me some speculation,” Hammon said. “I bet it doesn’t take them another hundred years to discover what happened to their latest ship.”

“You better be right. For all our sakes, you better be right, and you better figure out what went wrong up there, because we can’t afford to be stuck on this little planet much longer,” the President said.

“Dismissed.”



Tammias was unable to return to sleep. He lay there, in the dark, listening to the silence. It wasn’t utter silence. “Space would be even more silent.” It was an obsessive compulsive thought that he immediately recognized and squashed with the words, “Cancel that.” He took an audible inventory of his surrounding. There was the hum of life support, the ticking of an antique clock, and the snoring of a companion sleeping beside him that were noticeable without effort. Less noticeable, to most people, was a high pitch hum which was possibly an energy conduit running the length of the far wall. He focused on the most obvious sound coming from the companion. The rhythm of her breathing was anything but a calming influence. Her name was Jaxa Sito and she was not a quiet sleeper. Both her inhalation and exhalations were accompanied by small, little squeaky noises. Anybody else might have considered the whimper like sounds cute, but to Tammias they were annoying, and almost as distracting as his own thoughts. In between each different set of noises was a rhythmic silence that kept him alert in anticipation of the next auditory event. Had she been drumming her fingers on a desk he would have asked her to stop, but how do you ask someone not to make noises in their sleep? For all he knew, he made noises in his sleep, but then, he didn’t keep himself awake with those noises so it was irrelevant. He tried listening to her from a medical perspective. What was it about her anatomy and physiology that produced these sounds? Were they idiosyncratic, or did all Bajorans make these noises in their sleep? He wondered.

He tried to focus on other things. He could feel her body’s heat radiating away from her. She was warm, which was a pleasant sensation considering that the air temperature of the room was a bit chilly for him. It was chilly enough that he had given in to his temptation to tighten down the edges of the blanket and hide his head. He didn’t like re-breathing his own air, so he kept his mouth and nose free and took the cool air into his lungs. He could feel Jaxa’s breathing against his neck but he couldn’t smell her breath. She was under the sheet. He could feel her arm draped over his chest. The linen had the fresh, clean smell that all Star Fleet linen had after being replicated. Various scents could be added on request to fill aromatherapy needs, and in this case there was just a hint of lavender. Jaxa suggested it might help him relax, provided everything else she did to help him relax was insufficient to bring on sleep.

Jaxa rolled over to her side of the bed, putting her back to Garcia. She took the covers with her, pulling them tightly around her. Tammias stared towards the ceiling. Not that he could see the ceiling. There was no window in this room, which belonged to Ensign Kellogg. She and Jaxa had doubled up, and Kellogg had offered the bed to Jaxa so that she could get some quality rest. Tammias was technically assigned to Selar’s quarters, but given their questionable status he hadn’t returned. How could he, he asked himself, still

be technically married to Selar, but biologically bound to Princess Simone? It drove him crazy wondering which one of them would draw him into a Pon Farr ritual first, or if one bond superceded the other, or if their clocks had been reset when Selar had transferred his bond to Simone in order to save his life. It was all Vulcan craziness!

How did life get so complicated? How did he end up here? he asked himself and then had to define what “here” meant. Did it mean here with Jaxa? He had been walking aimlessly and had bumped into her. One thing led to the other and... Perhaps “here” meant on the Enterprise. He and Jaxa had been on a training exercise on the USS Chance, which had been destroyed. He and the surviving crew had been rescued by the Enterprise. Or maybe “here” was more abstract, such as in the sense of what he was feeling and thinking. He was lonely, even though he was with Jaxa. He was mourning several losses: his sister Jovet and his biological father McCoy. Was he really feeling loss because McCoy died, or because it was the idea of McCoy being dead? They had had a relationship, but it hadn’t been a father son sort of relationship. What were they? What could they have been? The question was now irrelevant. No one lived forever. “So, why prolong it. Just step into an airlock and...CANCEL THAT!”

“You know, if you put a pillow over her head, we could get some sleep,” came a voice from the dark. He hadn’t heard the voice since Simone had used the Kelvan technology to teleport him to the Enterprise. He couldn’t see her face in the dark to confirm it was who he thought it was, but he was confident it was Duana, one of his recurring hallucinations. He felt her snuggle closer to him, opposite side of Jaxa. He unconsciously moved away from her. That act caused Jaxa to fall out of bed.

Jaxa sat up groggily. “Computer, lights.”

Her eyes adjusted. Tammias was at the end of the bed, urgently dressing. She didn’t see the two other women in bed with Tam, since they were his hallucinations. Duana was the dark one, in dress and hair. Ilona, wore shades of white and had blond hair.

“What’s wrong?” Jaxa asked.

“I got to go,” Tammias said, ignoring his two hallucinations that were stretched out on the bed to either side of him.

“Why?” Jaxa asked, standing. She draped the sheet around her, more to keep warmth in than to avoid exposing herself. “Did they call you for something?”

As Jaxa sat next to him, the two hallucinations moved to accommodate her. Duana put her chin on Garcia’s shoulder, flashing a smile at him. “And I thought she was annoying when she was sleeping,” Duana said.

“I told you he was with her,” Ilona said.

Ilona was Duana’s alter ego. Or were they his alter egos? He didn’t know what to think, but he was going to go be medically re-evaluated. He sat back down on the bed to put on his boots. Jaxa dropped a side of the sheet in order to put a hand on his back.

“You’re acting strange. I’m worried,” Jaxa said.

“Strange?” Tammias asked.

“Did I do something wrong? Are you angry with me?” Jaxa asked.

“This isn’t about you,” Tammias said, standing.

Jaxa grabbed his arm. “Tell me something.”

Tammias paused. What should he tell her? That he’s crazy? Tell her that he is hallucinating? If that rumor got about it would spell the end of his career in Star Fleet. He took her hand and placed it on his chest near his heart.

“Jaxa,” Tammias said, hunting the right words. “I’m sorry I woke you...”

“Woke me? You pushed me off the bed!” Jaxa said.

“I did?” he asked, trying to recollect. He did. “Oh, I’m sorry. It must have been another nightmare. And, I really need to go to do something physical to walk it off so to speak. It’s not you.”

“I could help you with the physical part,” Jaxa offered.

“Tramp,” Ilona muttered.

He sighed. “Maybe later. I just need to walk. Alone,” he emphasized looking at his two invisible side kicks. He turned back to Jaxa. “Okay?”

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