



Star Trek: The Original Series: Unspoken Truth

By Margaret Wander Bonanno



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Not knowing where to turn, not knowing whom to trust, Saavik must find her own answers, and discover who she truly is.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Margaret Wander Bonanno is the bestselling author of *Star Trek: Burning Dreams*; *Star Trek The Lost Era: Catalyst of Sorrows*, *Star Trek: Dwellers in the Crucible* and *Star Trek: Strangers from the Sky*, as well as two science fiction trilogies, *The Others* and *Preternatural*. Born in Brooklyn, New York, she now lives on the Left Coast.

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One

Captain's Personal Log, Science Vessel Chaffee, Galina Mironova in command. Twenty-eight days ago, we made orbit around Vulcan with the intention of restocking and getting our final orders for what was to have been a simple mission—a month or so of cataloging rocks and trees on an out-of-the-way world in the Deema system. That was before a spacefaring Probe looking for whales came marauding through the quadrant on its way to Earth and effectively grounded all nonessential missions until we got sorted out. Better late than never, we are finally cleared for departure, but now I'm short a science officer. Or perhaps not. Today I interview one Lieutenant Saavik, whose reputation precedes her.

If I were impressed with surfaces, I'd hire her on the spot, but I was a scientist long before I was a command officer, and consequently I've a tendency to treat each mission like a chemistry experiment. The proper mix of reactants is essential. We're a small vessel with a handful of crew, little more than an extended family, and everyone has to get along. Sibling rivalry is to be frowned upon, but a little friendly competition can yield the best results.

• • •

Mironova stopped writing her personal log in her head and pretended to study Saavik's service jacket on her desk screen, though she'd committed the important parts to memory before the young Vulcan officer had arrived.

Stop being clever or you'll trip over your own metaphors! she cautioned herself. *Bottom line, you want someone sober, sane, and unshakable to balance your lead civilian scientist's peccadilloes, and here she is sitting across the desk from you. Get on with it!*

"Ordinarily, Lieutenant, I'd refuse your request," Mironova said. "What happened on Genesis had to have been traumatic, yet you've taken no leave time in which to process those events, despite Command's rather strong suggestion that you do so."

"There were extenuating circumstances, Captain," Saavik pointed out.

Mironova looked up sharply, expecting sarcasm but finding only Vulcan logic.

"Yes, bloody Probe! Half the quadrant's busy cleaning up after the damned thing, which leaves me without a science officer. And since you're not only one of the best candidates for the job, you're here instead of

halfway across the quadrant participating in the cleanup, and Starfleet has debriefed you and deemed you fit, I'm strongly tempted."

Even as Mironova studied the Vulcan, Saavik was studying her. Mironova hailed from the Iadara Colony, as her crisply accented Standard suggested. The colony's proximity to Cardassian space had rendered its inhabitants tough, resourceful, and not easily rattled. Slim and slightly smaller than average height, Mironova gave the impression of being taller than she was. Her silver hair was cut to military precision, her tone and manner were no-nonsense, and her gray-green eyes could be penetrating, but the occasional twinkle suggested she was not averse to a bit of fun when the occasion warranted.

She'd met Saavik in the *Chaffee's* transporter room in person, rather than having a junior officer escort her to the ready room, then had to order her to be seated in the single chair on the other side of the desk. Saavik sat, but at attention, her posture ramrod straight and inches from the back of the chair, resisting the urge to compare Captain Mironova's taste in decor with the late Captain Esteban's.

Chaffee was an *Oberth*-class vessel, a sister ship to the *U.S.S. Grissom*. *Perhaps*, Saavik thought, *it had been unwise to request an assignment on a sister ship so soon after the loss of Grissom and her crew.*

Mironova might have been thinking the same thing. She found the look in the young Vulcan's eyes unsettling.

"You seem in an awful hurry to get out of Dodge," Mironova suggested, keeping her tone light.

"It is my understanding, Captain, that *Chaffee* is cleared for departure in three days' time—"

"—and you're so eager to go off cataloging rocks and leaves on a dull little planet in a newly charted sector that even the fact that your crewmates from *Enterprise* and the entire planet Earth along with them nearly perished hasn't slowed you down."

"With all due respect, Captain, I have been stationed on Vulcan for almost four months, assisting Captain Scott with the refit of the Klingon vessel *Bounty*—"

"*Bounty*?" Mironova frowned.

"I believe Doctor McCoy was being ironic."

"Yes, he would be, wouldn't he?" Mironova said wryly. "But, to the point, Command granted you extended personal leave once *Bounty* left Vulcan, leave that you did not take. Forgive me if I keep harping on that, but the Probe's been talked to, Lieutenant, everything's back in its proper place, yet here you are requesting reassignment when you ought to be lying on a beach somewhere instead.

"Screen off," the captain said crisply, her chin in her hands, elbows on the desktop, as she searched her would-be science officer's face for something that wasn't in the record.

"So here's everybody else breathing a sigh of relief and remembering to stop and smell the roses, and then there's you. Running toward or running from, Lieutenant?"

"*Que sera, sera*," Amanda had said as they stood together at the foot of Mount Seleya and watched the *Bounty* bank and turn and disappear just to the left of 40 Eridani, as if swallowed by its corona, an omen

Saavik's Romulan forebears might have found portentous. Saavik herself had dismissed such a superstitious notion for what it was by running through her mind the equations that made it possible for a vessel designed to look like a living thing to propel itself into space with far less effort than the bird it strove to emulate. Amanda's words had disrupted her reverie.

"I do not understand, Mother," Saavik said.

"Whatever will be, will be."

The human had turned away from the vista of the valley floor, striding purposefully up the path to the waiting aircar that would return them to ShiKahr, eager to get out of the sun before it rose much further in the sky. Saavik considered taking her elbow to assist her on the incline, but Amanda was still light on her feet despite her age and the thin atmosphere and needed no assistance.

"You're understandably concerned about the trial," Amanda said as the air car lifted off in a spray of red Vulcan dust, and she set the autopilot to the correct altitude and direction. "But there's no point in fretting about it. What can either of us do? Certainly not feel guilty for not accompanying them."

The crew had stood up for her. Saavik thought there must be some way she could reciprocate.

"She's a Vulcan!" was Doctor McCoy's argument to the powers that be as soon as his head cleared from the *fal-tor-pan* and before someone decided to ship her off on enforced leave or transfer her to another ship. "Work is therapeutic for them. Besides," he'd added, giving Scotty a mental poke in the ribs, "Mister Scott tells me he needs her expertise."

"Aye!" Scotty had piped up. "That Klingon ship's guidance system is a rats' nest. The lass would be instrumental in the refit. Don't know how I'd manage without her, frankly," he'd finished lamely, never a good liar but earning points for sincerity.

"She might also be able to help us reintegrate Spock's *katra*," McCoy had thrown in as a last desperate ploy, and even Starfleet Command couldn't argue with that.

Yet after granting her permission to help with the refit, Command had balked at her request to accompany Kirk and his crew back to Earth. Saavik was not implicated in the theft of *Enterprise*, it was argued; her testimony about the events on Genesis was all that was needed, and she had a promising career ahead of her that ought not be overshadowed by any association with Starfleet's chronic miscreants.

Still, as *Bounty* was preparing for departure, she had all but abandoned her years of Vulcan discipline in a moment of sheer Romulan impulsiveness when Admiral Kirk took her by the shoulders and said, "Saavik, this is good-bye."

She wanted to plead with him, *Let me go with you, Admiral! I have seen Spock wandering the highlands—confused, bewildered, lost. Like you, Admiral, I owe him my life, and like you I cannot bear to see him this way. I know it's against regulations, but at this point, does that matter? Let me help!*

Instead, she had clenched her jaw, wrenched her control into place, and replied as calmly as she could, "Yes, Admiral," and, as much to distract herself as him, told him how bravely his son had died. Let him learn about the protomatter from others; he would not hear it from her.

Was it possible to contain so many unspoken truths and roiling emotions and still walk upright? She had turned on her heel, crisply, professionally, prepared to make a dignified exit, walk away without looking back, and suddenly *he* was there.

What else was there to say but, “Good day, Captain Spock. May your journey be free of incident”?

If she'd had a human heart to break, the puzzlement on his face (*Have we met before? Do I know you?*) would have broken it. But she was nothing human, and no one, not even her mentor—especially not her mentor, though the being before her might be only a shell of what he once was—would ever see her shame.

Yes, she had wanted to go with them. Yes, it troubled her profoundly that she could not. And now that they were on their way, Amanda was reading her mind, something she had been able to do, even with her limited telesper skills, since Saavik was a child ...

Oh, you precious thing! Amanda had thought at the first sight of the little bundle of arms and legs with her mop of unruly curls and eyes that had seen what no child should ever see. It was all she could do to keep from gathering her into her arms and holding her close.

Instead, her hands clasped nonthreateningly in front of her, the human had inclined her head and allowed herself the smallest of smiles, before saying very softly, “Vulcan honors us with your presence, Saavik. Welcome.”

Spock had spoken to his mother weekly during the extended leave in which he'd attempted to foster his foundling himself. The other Hellguard refugees had been relegated to a facility in the far reaches of one of Vulcan's polar regions, far from mainstream sensibilities, their arrival unannounced except to those whose kinship had been established, and who might choose to claim their own. Most would not.

Saavik's refusal to submit to an antigen test to determine her ancestry (having attained more than seven years of age—the first stage of adulthood by Vulcan standards—she was permitted to make that decision for herself) meant that if Spock had not claimed her, she would have remained at the facility until her education was complete and a suitable occupation found for her. Not a tragedy, considering where she'd come from, but Spock had had other plans for her.

The time he had been able to spend with her had been sufficient to replace her hypervigilance with something resembling control. They had worked together to transform the pidgin RomuloVulcan she'd spat at him at first with the rudiments of conversational Vulcan, though she still often tangled her syntaxes. He had taught her to read and to study—easier, given her insatiable curiosity, than teaching her to wear shoes and not gulp her food. But when his leave time was up and he had to return to duty, Spock had known where to turn for assistance.

All things considered, he had managed remarkably well, Amanda saw. The child was clean and well fed, though the ravages of the starvation years were still evident in her coltish appearance—small for her age, all arms and legs, ribs visibly rising and falling, a little too fast, beneath the practical clothing. (Starfleet issue? It was completely unadorned. That would be remedied shortly.) She wore shoes, though clearly unhappily; Amanda could see the small toes curling and uncurling restlessly inside them, as if she couldn't wait to cast them off.

Her chestnut ringlets had been cropped to a practical few inches in length all around, forming a soft aura around an elfin face which, as Saavik was studying her own feet when Amanda first spoke to her, seemed

from this angle to be little more than cheekbones and a sharp little chin.

It was hard to find a Vulcan child who wasn't aesthetically pleasing. But this one would stand out even among this most beautiful of species.

All of this flashed through Amanda's mind in the breath or two between her words and Saavik's answer.

"Hon-or is mine," the child said carefully, as if she had rehearsed it for the entire journey here. Her voice was husky—naturally so, or was that fear? For a moment longer Saavik studied her imprisoned toes. Then her chin came up, and her overlarge eyes met the human's, unblinking. "Lady A-man-da."

From that day forward, the bond was forged.

"I know you wanted to go to Earth to show your support. So did I," Amanda said now, more than a decade later, as the air car rose and set course automatically, turning in a slow arc until Mount Seleya vanished from view, only its desultory plume of smoke rising languidly above the surrounding mountains. At this speed, they would be at the outskirts of ShiKahr in a little more than two hours. "But the trial is closed to all but essential personnel, and we'd only be in the way." When the girl said nothing, she added, "I'm listening,"

Saavik thought of how to frame the words.

"The trial seems ... unjust," she began carefully, but then the words tumbled out of her. "It is true that Admiral Kirk violated Starfleet regulations, and for that he should—objectively—be punished. Yet the outcome of this ... illegal action was a dual good. It prevented the Klingons from potentially using Genesis as a weapon, and it restored Spock to life."

"Moral choices are black and white only in theory, Saavik," Amanda suggested.

"So I have observed."

The car skimmed on in silence for a time, above modern cities and ancient ruins. Saavik considered her future.

Starfleet had not reassigned her. Instead Command had reiterated its suggestion, little short of an order, that she take extended leave, including either counseling or a course of meditation with the Vulcan savants, which, in view of her heritage, was considered an acceptable alternative.

But the last thing she wanted, after what had transpired on Genesis, was anyone else's mind—human or Vulcan—poking about in hers. She had temporized, asked if she could wait until the trial was over to make a decision, and in light of the unusual circumstances, Command had acceded.

What would happen to her once the Federation Council reached its verdict was as uncertain as that verdict itself.

"They'll be all right," Amanda said.

Saavik frowned. She did not necessarily share her foster mother's confidence in either the future or the wisdom of the Federation Council. Spock would no doubt have said something about the universe unfolding as it should. At least, the Spock who had been her mentor would have done so. The Spock who had greeted

her aboard *Bounty* just before its departure had looked at her without recognition. The Spock she had known might be lost to her forever.

Que sera, sera, she thought, yet, “How can you be so certain?” she asked.

“Because everything you’ve mentioned will be weighed into evidence. Besides”—Amanda did not so much as try to repress a smile—“you have to concede that the crew of *Enterprise* have the best possible advocate on their side.”

Sarek had been a different kind of presence in Saavik’s young life. While Amanda was there to ease the nightmares and tolerate her sometimes regressions into the small child she had never been allowed to be, his influence was more subtle, Saavik’s approach to him more oblique.

His study door was never closed, and often when he was away—and he was away frequently—she would tiptoe inside and, not touching anything, look at the awards, the artwork, the volumes of law and polity and linguistics and music and a dozen other subjects available on his personal computer and in a few antique paper books. When he returned, he seemed to intuit somehow that she had been there, and if he caught her hovering in the doorway, he would say without glancing up, “You are always welcome.”

There was no question she could ask that he would not answer, and until she decided she was too old for such behaviors, she often sat at his feet, simply watching him work, listening to him speak to the leaders of planets she knew only as dots on a starmap about subjects she couldn’t begin to understand. And when she sometimes caught a brief glint of something affectionate in his hooded eyes—quickly extinguished, of course, and deniable if questioned—she basked in it for days.

Amanda was warmth, comfort, safety; Spock was challenge and role model; but Sarek was wisdom. She’d have died for any or all of them.

So when it was clear that the repairs were almost done and the Federation Council’s summons must be answered, Saavik had left Mister Scott to putter about in *Bounty*’s engine room without her for a day and returned to ShiKahr to say her farewells. She found herself lurking in the doorway like a hesitant child as Sarek prepared to depart for Earth well ahead of Admiral Kirk and the crew in order to speak in their defense. Even with his back to the door, he sensed her presence and, out of habit, said, “You are always welcome.”

“Father ...” She had rehearsed her words carefully. “I came to bid you a safe journey and ... hope for an optimal outcome.”

“Had you not, I would have sought you out,” Sarek said, slipping the brief he had prepared into a small carry case, along with the research materials he would study on the journey. Anyone else might have relied on the onboard computers, but the ambassador wanted his references to hand. “We have some unfinished business, you and I.”

She had been dreading this since she had first come to live on Vulcan, but all the more since Genesis.

Her arrival on Vulcan at the age of eleven had presented a dilemma: She had not been betrothed in childhood as was traditional. But there were always a few casualties during the *kahs-wan*, leaving some eleven-year-olds unbonded, and tradition allowed for that. After a suitable period of mourning, it was deemed appropriate for families whose child had been widowed by a mate’s demise on Vulcan’s Forge to approach each other

and form new bonds.

Amanda had put the kibosh on the notion as soon as Sarek suggested it.

“It’s too soon, husband! Little more than a year ago she was still a wild thing. She has so much to learn! Surely it can wait until she’s older.”

“I agree the circumstances are unusual, my wife, but if a suitable mate is not found for her—”

“—she will be free to choose her own, well before she needs to.”

“To leave such a thing to chance is not only illogical but dangerous. There is a reason that childhood betrothal is our way.”

“Of course,” Amanda said lightly. “After all, it worked so well for our son!”

Whatever else Sarek might have intended to say, there was no argument to counter that. He had simply waited until Saavik was preparing to leave for Starfleet Academy and broached the subject then. As an adult, he explained, she would have more discretion than she might have had as a child. He would screen several potential candidates from suitable families, and as soon as she had graduated and before accepting her first assignment, she would be free to choose from among them. Well aware of the tradition, grateful for all that her foster parents had done for her, Saavik had agreed.

Once again, as if toying with her, circumstance—the “minor training cruise” and Genesis—had intervened. And now here she was, wondering how that circumstance might affect her future. She could not meet Sarek’s eyes, but found herself instead studying the intricate and familiar patterns of the carpet, remembering the feel of the pile beneath her fingers as a child, stroking it, never having seen a carpet before, marveling at its softness and how the patterns moved like grass when she touched them.

“Untoward circumstance need not endanger tradition,” Sarek said gently, erasing a universe of doubt. “Upon my return, we shall do what we intended to do before.”

Before. Could it be that simple? Saavik found she had been holding her breath and remembered to breathe again.

“Yes, Father,” she said, trusting him in this as she did in all things.

Why, then, as she helped him into his travel robe and watched him stride purposefully down the corridor toward the waiting air car, did she experience a shiver of dread?

She had not even had the presence of mind to ask if he had preselected any candidates for her to consider ahead of time, perhaps some personal histories to peruse, some holo-images to study, some family lineages to consider. That thought had not occurred to her until after he was gone, and she dared not trouble him with her trivial concerns while he was immersed in the Council’s preliminary hearings, much less during the trial.

Damn! she thought, remembering just in time not to say it aloud in Amanda’s presence. Sarek would have arrived on Earth by now, *Bounty* would follow. The future was as unreadable as ever.

The air car adjusted altitude over whatever terrain they traversed, from flat desert floor to jagged foothills to

lush agricultural valleys and serene urban clusters, compensating for the other vehicles sharing its airspace as well. Saavik tried to take comfort from Amanda's words. Surely there was no better advocate for her crewmates than Sarek of Vulcan.

"Indeed," she said at last, daring to hope for that much at least, and trying not to think of what would transpire once the trial was over and Sarek returned home.

Neither woman spoke again until the familiar parkland ring surrounding the city of ShiKahr passed under their wings, and they were almost home.

"In any event," Amanda said as the car slid beneath the familiar portico and powered down, "there is nothing you or I can do while we wait but keep ourselves occupied. I have a conference to prepare for. And you? What will you do now?"

In all the time she had assisted Mister Scott during the refit, she hadn't considered any alternatives. She had no thought now except to await the outcome of the trial.

"Perhaps a course of study, a time of meditation, travel?" Amanda suggested much later that day as they walked in the garden after the evening meal. The desert beyond the city ring had plummeted into darkness with a sharp drop in temperature; the stars in the moonless sky were so bright it seemed one might almost reach up and touch them. The breeze carried scents of cardamom and sandalwood, and the far-off cry of a *le-matya* was answered by the echo of a nearby temple gong announcing an ancient tocsin preserved by ritual more than a thousand years after the war it commemorated, lest Vulcans ever forget their violent past. "At least a sojourn at one of the shrines, to gather your troubled thoughts."

"I have no need," Saavik said softly but with determination.

There was a stubbornness to the set of her jaw that Amanda recognized all too well. The sister planet T'Khut skirted the horizon, casting just enough light so that the shadows from the trees overhead played across Saavik's face, reflecting the shadows behind her eyes.

"Saavik," Amanda said carefully, "I know that you, at least as much as Admiral Kirk and the others, were instrumental in saving Spock's life. I do not need to know more to know this much."

Mercifully, Saavik thought. What was there to be said about *Pon farr*, especially the circumstances under which it had occurred on Genesis?

"Can I not do something for you in return? I can speak to the savants at Amarak. A place can be set aside for you."

"Mother—"

"At the very least"—Amanda cut across her objection with a smile—"go and enjoy the hot springs."

This evoked a bittersweet memory, and Saavik might have smiled. When she was a child, running water had fascinated her. She would stop and stare at the numerous fountains that graced the streets of ShiKahr, the play of the sunlight on the spray as fascinating to her as it might have been to a toddler. The urge to dabble her fingers in the water proved almost irresistible. The desert hot springs had been an indescribable luxury to someone who knew what it was like to live in filth so ubiquitous one no longer remembered what the skin

beneath the layers of dirt looked or felt like.

To recapture that sense of wonder, to be alone with one's thoughts, perhaps to find the courage to uproot and confront the traumatic events of her very first deep space mission—Spock's death, the destruction of *Grissom* with the loss of all aboard, David Marcus's unethical conduct and his violent death, the possibility that they all might have died on Genesis, the bizarre effect of discovering the reborn Spock as a small child evolving into adulthood by the hour, and her need to help him through the throes of *Pon farr*, Spock's ultimate rebirth through *fal-tor-pan* and the possibility that his mind would never truly be restored ...

The trilling of a pair of mating lizards in the nearby shrubbery cut through the maelstrom threatening to engulf her, and she gathered herself. She could not continue in this way without respite.

"I shall consider it," she said at last.

But with the dawn came word that an alien probe was cutting a swath across the quadrant, silencing comm on planets and deep space stations, leaving ships in its path adrift without life support, heading toward Earth. The trial of the *Enterprise* Seven was set aside in this time of crisis, and Saavik reported immediately to Starfleet HQ Vulcan even before the official summons came. Meditation, and the hot springs, would have to wait.

Or perhaps be forgone altogether.

The crisis was over, the crew of *Enterprise*, even without *Enterprise*, having once more saved the day. The trial had ended just as Amanda had predicted it would: Spock was safe, and Sarek was on his way home. Now all that was left was quite literally the mopping up.

Saavik remained at her post, assisted by a Denobulan by the name of Lieutenant Eyris, in charge of contacting Federation worlds that had been in the Probe's path, determining what assistance they might need and how critically, cross-referencing with any available vessel, Starfleet or civilian, that could be dispatched from unaffected systems with the needed supplies. Eyris didn't need much sleep, but Saavik's ears were beginning to ring from fatigue, overlapping multiphasics at various frequencies, and orders being shouted across the command center itself.

Despite the background noise, she heard Captain Mironova before she saw her, shouting into a personal communicator ("Because all the official channels were overloaded, weren't they?" she would explain later) at someone apparently doing the same at his end.

"... bollocks, if you ask me. A day later and we'd have been en route to Deema III and fare-thee-well, but now we're stuck here. Asked Command to let us out of spacedock to go help or at least get out of the way, but they've effectively told us to stay put ... Yes, darling, I know, but that's what they've told me ..."

"O Captain, my Captain!" Lieutenant Eyris said merrily. "Galina Mironova, shy as a Klingon on prune juice."

"Your commanding officer," Saavik supplied, recalling that Eyris was science officer aboard *Chaffee*.

"The same." Eyris nodded cheerfully. "We were assigned to preliminary geological and biological survey on Deema III. Resupplying when the Probe put all ships in Vulcan space on standby. Mironova's been in an uproar ever since. She seems to think if she keeps yelling, Command will release her ship just for the sake of

the silence.”

“Yet you seem unperturbed by the delay,” Saavik suggested.

“I can’t go with them now, anyway.” Eyris sighed. “I’ve been summoned home. Family issues.”

Saavik knew better than to ask. The interrelationships of Denobulan extended family members were more complex than the calculation of *pi*, and no Denobulan ever said no to family.

“Want to keep my seat warm for me?” Eyris asked, and Saavik gave her a puzzled look. “It’s a short mission. Interim science officer, until I get this family *mishegoss* untangled.”

Que sera, sera, Saavik thought. The universe would unfold as it should.

Several days later, sitting across the desk from Mironova and as uneasy as she was with some of her questions, Saavik understood why the captain was asking them. An *Oberth*-class vessel was little more than a science lab with warp nacelles, with a small crew complement and accommodations for a handful of civilian scientists, living and working at close quarters because the labs took up most of the ship. Their missions took them to unexplored and often uninhabited regions far from aid or support, and the crew needed to be self-sufficient, able to get along with one another and to work synergistically. Captain Mironova wanted no surprises. She seemed to be doing her utmost to tell Saavik she was not needed.

“The mission parameters are within my areas of expertise,” Saavik said carefully, hoping she sounded persuasive, “and the opportunity to study an unexplored planet—”

“There are plenty of unexplored planets, Lieutenant.” Mironova wasn’t buying it. “Skip this one, there’ll be another along next week. Off the record, I think you’re being pursued by ghosts, and you’re trying to outrun them. You’re apt to find that they travel at warp speed.

“Let me level with you, Saavik. I’ve read the official report on Genesis; everyone in the Fleet has. How you and Doctor Marcus followed a mysterious energy reading that turned out to be a reborn Captain Spock, Klingons killed your crewmates, hunted you down on a planet that was destroying itself beneath you, Admiral Kirk and *Enterprise* came to the rescue—all very heroic and larger-than-life, which of course anything involving James T. Kirk is apt to be. But it’s what isn’t in the report that interests me more, particularly as it relates to you. I’ve known a few Vulcans in my time.”

Saavik waited for the inevitable questions and wondered how she would answer.

“What really happened on Genesis?”

“It is all in the report, Captain.”

“Is it?” Mironova mused. “So you found Captain Spock’s burial tube and discovered he was alive. How, exactly? Brushed the giant microbes off and felt compelled to take a peek at what ought to have been a moldering corpse? Or did he knock on the lid like a vampire? Sit up and ask for breakfast?”

Saavik broke eye contact, looked down at her hands. “Not precisely.”

There was a very long silence. Mironova seemed satisfied.

“That’s all I’m going to get from you, isn’t it? You’re discreet; I like that. All the same, if I weren’t shorthanded, I’d throw you back in the pond. But if you must go back out again this soon, this promises to be a very tame mission. You’re correct; I do need a science officer. And my civilian scientist needs a babysitter. You’ll do just fine in both capacities.”

Before Saavik could ask what she meant, Mironova stood up abruptly, causing her to do the same. The interview was apparently over, and Mironova had made her decision. Based on *what* precisely, Saavik did not know.

“Right, then. We’re cleared to leave orbit in three days. Welcome aboard, Lieutenant!”

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