

Star Trek: Perseus

Most Illogical

By David Falkayn

T'Pren gasped in astonishment as her eyes fell upon the Andorian woman wearing the blue trim of the sciences branch standing next to the *Independence's* captain. "Larissa..." The stunned security chief mouthed wordlessly as she took in the Andorian's appearance: Her short white hair and lithe graceful figure at once brought back images of another woman into the young Vulcan's mind as she began to relive not so distant memories.

Starfleet Academy, San Francisco, December 2370

"I fail to see the logic in my being required to attend this function." A stoic T'Pren stated to her roommate as the Vulcan First Year Cadet set down her padd containing her just completed introductory astrophysics assignment. "Engaging in these meaningless social interactions is a waste of productive time."

T'Pren's roommate, Atris Nylysa, a green skinned Troyian woman who was also a First Year Cadet chuckled with amusement as she sat before a mirror brushing her long white mauve tinted hair. "Perhaps it's because they think you should be able to...I don't know...maybe communicate...with the people around you. Some of us **like** laughing and talking with each other about stuff other than work, you know. Believe it or not, we actually like to have fun!"

"It is most illogical." T'Pren responded, her raised eyebrow immediately drawing an irreverent snort from her earthy roommate.

"This from the same people who came up with the idea of IDIC!" Shaking her head, the young Troyian teased, "You know...for such a logical people, you Vulcans are the most paradoxical—not to mention repressed—people I've ever met." Vacating her chair, Atris added as she made a few more adjustments to her uniform, "You better hurry and get dressed—the party's due to start in thirty minutes and I don't know about you, but I don't want to

be late.”

As the pair approached the entrance to Sato Hall, where the Winter Dance was being held this year, Atris took a deep breath, exhaling, she smiled, “Don’t you just love that smell?”

Wrinkling her nose, T’Pren responded in a flat tone, “It is too overpowering.”

“Aw...what do you know?” The sensuous Troyian remarked and then inquired, “I wonder what sort of flower it is?”

“I believe it is night blooming jasmine.” T’Pren answered back as the pair climbed the steps up to the front door, the Vulcan woman keeping her eyes focused straight ahead while her roommate’s eyes wandered as she took in the white Doric columns, the meticulously maintained flower beds, and the gold plaque bearing the famous *Enterprise* communications officer’s face affixed to the brick wall next to the main doors. “If you’re quite through gawking...” The Vulcan cadet admonished in a slightly disapproving tone, “...we can enter.”

Shaking her head, Atris sighed, “You know, T’Pren...you really need to learn how to stop and just take in the scenery. It’d do you a world of good.”

As the pair entered the large hall, Atris grinned in delight as she recognized a fellow cadet, “Hey, Jack!” She called out, immediately getting the attention of a dark-haired human male standing next to a crystal punchbowl talking to an Andorian woman wearing a black mini-skirt with tights and a midriff top. Walking over to the couple, Atris called out over her shoulder to her roommate, “See you later, T’Pren...and try to have some fun, ‘kay?”

Shaking her head at her emotional roommate’s antics, the young Vulcan spotted a Vulcan cadet whom she knew standing near a banquet table. Approaching her fellow cadet, T’Pren nodded her head in greeting at the first Vulcan, a female approximately equal height, but with slightly darker complexion who had attended school with T’Pren as a child and adolescent. “V’lar. I must admit to some surprise at seeing you here. Did you not say that you would be unable to attend?”

"T'Pren." The Vulcan cadet replied, acknowledging her long-time acquaintance with a slight nod of her head. "Commander Styvan..." she said, referring to one of the Vulcan cadet advisors, "...recommended that I attend. His argument was..." the young cadet grudgingly admitted, "...flawlessly logical. And you? Did you not also state that you were not planning to attend?"

"Like you..." T'Pren confessed, "I was convinced to attend by Commander Styvan. As you have said, he has a way of presenting his case that is most...compelling."

"In other words..." a sensuous, husky voice interrupted with just a hint of impishness, "...your advisor told you that you had to come or else..."

Raising an eyebrow in a gesture of disapproval, T'Pren coolly regarded the newcomer, the same Andorian woman who had earlier been talking with Atris's friend, now standing alongside her roommate. "Oops..." the blue-skinned woman smirked mischievously, "I've been around enough Vulcans to know what that look means..."

"Excuse me?" T'Pren asked, maintaining a straight face in spite of her growing confusion.

"Your eyebrow..." the Andorian smiled, her gently swaying antennae indicating that she was gently amused, "...if you raise it any higher, it's going to become part of your hairline..."

"T'Pren..." Atris grinned, "...this is Larissa. She's a student at the Terran Interspecies Institute."

"Hello, T'Pren. I'm a visiting student actually." The Andorian woman interjected with a smile as she extended her hand in greeting. "Transferred from the School of Letters at Andoria, but I study transitional era and modern Terran and Federation history...so...I landed a fellowship here." Seeing the Vulcan woman hesitate, the Andorian woman apologized as she began to withdraw her hand. "I didn't mean to...I forgot...Vulcans don't like...I'm sorry. Tell you what, why don't I let you and your friend go back to your conversation?" T'Pren could barely make out the Andorian woman's whispered words to the Troyian woman standing next to her, "I told you this was a bad idea, Atris..."

Acting impulsively, T'Pren took the slender blue-skinned hand in hers. Ignoring V'lar's raised eyebrow, The young cadet caught her breath as she felt

the warmth coming from Larissa's hand. "Stay." She said as her mind banished the faint stirrings it was beginning to feel. Her eyes meeting the Andorian woman's for the first time, she implored Larissa without even understanding why, "Join us."

Her lips turning up in a genuinely warm smile as her eyes gazed into T'Pren's, Larissa responded with a simple, "Love to."

USS Perseus: 2377

"I said..." The central figure on the transporter pad, a lithe petite dusky skinned woman wearing the red of command and the four pips of a captain, uttered, her voice tone carrying more than a hint of impatience, "...request permission to come aboard."

"I'm sorry..." The lovely Vulcan apologized, her face turning olive green with embarrassment, "Permission granted. Welcome aboard the *Perseus*. I'm Lieutenant T'Pren, in charge of security."

"Captain Sintina Aurelia." The dusky skinned woman replied, "And this..." she said, gesturing with a slight tilt of her head in the direction of the man standing to the right of her, "...is my first officer, Commander Karim bin Nadal. And this..." she said as she gestured at the Andorian woman who had so taken T'Pren by surprise, "...is Lieutenant Kimula..."

"Soma." The Andorian quickly interjected, giving her commanding officer an apologetic look. "Kimula Soma. Communications officer and ship's counselor."

As the three officers stepped off the transporter pad, T'Pren apologized, "Commander Rysyl sends her apologies, but she was temporarily detained by ship's business. She requested that I tell you that she will be here momentarily."

As the Andorian woman drew closer, T'Pren felt her heart race as her nose took in the delicate bouquet of her perfume combined with Kimula's natural scent, creating a heady mixture for the young Vulcan that once again brought her back to the past...

StarfleetAcademy: Winter and Spring 2371

Breathing deeply, T'Pren took a moment from her stretching exercises to take in the crisp morning air.

"Surprised to see you out here."

Turning about rapidly, the young Vulcan fought down the impulse to smile as she recognized the Andorian woman approaching, wearing shorts and a midriff halter top in spite of the chilly weather. "Larissa." T'Pren, wearing a much more sensible—and warm—sweatshirt and pants, acknowledged simply as she returned to her stretching. "I always take my morning run at this time."

"I know. I've watched you doing your exercises from my room." The Andorian woman shyly admitted as she began her own exercises. "You're very graceful, you know."

"Thank you." The young cadet replied as once again unwanted stirrings once again stirred within her. Silently chanting a mantra she had learned as a child, T'Pren regained control over her emotions. Changing the subject, the Vulcan inquired, "How are your studies progressing?"

Chuckling gently at her new-found friend's quick change of subject, Larissa replied, "Not bad. I'm having a problem with the primary sources though—I'm having some difficulty with some of the Vulcan sources I've been wading through..." Shaking her head, the Andorian commented in a teasing manner, "With Vulcan official documents...you have to try to determine what the document says and then what the document **really** says. While Vulcans might not lie...you do have a way of...phrasing things...so that a reader can very easily misinterpret the text. No offense..." she quickly added as she saw her Vulcan companion raise an eyebrow.

"None taken. It is often difficult for a non-Vulcan to fully grasp the intricacies of Vulcan logic." T'Pren assured and then added somewhat haltingly, "I can assist you with the documents...if you wish."

"I think I'd like that." Larissa responded with a smile as she finished her exercises, "I don't know about you..." the lovely Andorian woman quipped, "...but I'm ready to run. Race you to the Pike memorial!"

Strange feelings surfacing once again as she gazed at the sprinting blue-

skinned woman ahead of her, T'Pren quickly exhaled. Her pace picking up as she began to catch up with her friend and as her sensitive nose caught Larissa's scent, the Vulcan youth didn't even notice that her lips were beginning to turn up into a smile. A tentative smile, but a smile just the same. Without even realizing it, T'Pren had just taken the first steps on a long tortuous journey.

Both runners winded after their long run, Larissa smiled as her eyes fell upon her Vulcan running mate, the sweat glistening on her olive skin. Picking up a towel, she wiped the sweat off her own cobalt-blue skin as she tossed another fresh towel at T'Pren. "I'll see you later this afternoon, T'Pren..." the Andorian historian grinned, brushing against the Vulcan cadet as she walked past.

Wiping the sweat off her body, T'Pren again gazed upon the retreating form of her Andorian friend. So lost was she in how graceful the blue-skinned woman walked...in how electric her touch felt when Larissa's hand briefly touched hers, that she at first didn't notice that someone was addressing her.

"T'Pren? Did you not hear me?"

"Wha..." Wheeling rapidly about, T'Pren at once recognized V'Lar standing next to another one of her Vulcan classmates. "Excuse me, V'Lar." The young Vulcan apologized, her stoic mask in place. "I was concentrating on a problem..."

"I see." V'Lar responded with a raised eyebrow. "It is nearly time for reflection and meditation. When we came by your quarters you were not in..."

"My apologies." T'Pren replied, "My run lasted longer than I had anticipated."

"I see. Shall we go."

"Very well." T'Pren responded with a single nod of her head. As T'Pren walked away with her fellow Vulcans her mind remained troubled. Even through her meditation period her thoughts would not settle—something her advisor noted as he observed the young Vulcan cadet along with her fellow students. At the end of the period, as T'Pren, along with her fellow cadets began to file out of the meditation room, she heard her advisor's voice.

"Cadet T'Pren? A moment of your time, please."

Turning back to her instructor, the young Vulcan dutifully responded, "Yes, Sir."

"Your thoughts seem troubled, Cadet. Is there any way that I might be of assistance?"

"I am merely...concerned...about a problem." T'Pren replied, responding with a half-truth. "But I think the time spent in reflection has helped me to resolve it in a satisfactory and logical manner."

"I see." Commander Styvan commented, his voice not betraying any doubts that his mind might be harboring regarding the young cadet standing before him. "Very well, carry on then, Cadet. Should you need my counsel, however—please know that you are always free to contact me. Young Vulcans such as yourself away from the homeworld for the first time can feel...adrift...when exposed to the cacophony and chaos of a universe often bereft of logic and order. One of my purposes here is to assist those in need in sorting out these conflicting...signals."

Pausing at the faux-wood door to Larissa's non-cadet Academy apartment, T'Pren's finger hesitated at the enunciator button. Turning to walk away, the young Vulcan found to her surprise that her feet, acting almost of their own volition, refused to move. *This is most illogical.* The young Vulcan thought. *There is no reason for me to act in this manner.* Pressing the enunciator, T'Pren felt her heart race just a touch as she heard Larissa's voice.

"T'Pren? Is that you? Come in! Sorry..." The Vulcan youth then heard the sound of gentle laughter, "The door isn't automatic. I'm afraid you're going to have to open it the old fashioned way." Opening the door, T'Pren entered what was apparently the Andorian's living space. A small mahogany wood coffee table strewn with pads and even bound books rested on a multi-colored Persian rug. A plush sofa sat behind the coffee table. A delicate scent of roses filled the air as did the soft sounds of a piano playing. "Hi..." Larissa, wearing a cream colored terry-cloth bathrobe that accentuated both her blue skin and her white hair, entered from another doorway.

"I am sorry if I arrived too early." The young Vulcan said, again silently reciting her mantras as once again the sight of the Andorian woman stirred up strange feelings within her. "I can leave and come back later if you'd like."

"No..." Larissa smiled as she made her way to a replicator niche in the wall. "I like feeling casual and free when I'm alone. To tell the truth..." she remarked with an impish grin, "I'm only wearing this because I have company." Motioning for her guest to take a seat, the Andorian asked, "Have you ever tried Formosa Oolong tea? It's an Earth drink. It's got a very nice aroma and taste..."

"Thank you." The Vulcan woman replied shyly as she sat down on the sofa.

After handing a cup to her guest, Larissa sat down on the floor in front of the sofa. Taking a sip of her tea, the young historian sighed gratefully, "That is good. So..." she asked inquisitively, "How does it taste?"

Taking a tentative sip, T'Pren found not just the taste of the tea, but its delicate fragrance as well, appealing. "It tastes...good." She replied in a level, yet quiet, tone.

"I knew you'd like it." Larissa smiled. Picking up one of the padds, the historian remarked, "Shall we get started? This is T'Pol's account of the events leading up to the fall of the High Command and the ascendancy of Syrranist Surakism. It's this passage here..." she said as she highlighted the portion of the text in question, "...that I'm having problems with."

Arching her eyebrow as she recognized the Vulcan script, T'Pren asked, "You are reading this in the original Vulcan?"

"Of course." Larissa replied with a grin, "How else am I going to be able to get the true meaning behind words and context?"

"It seems straightforward to me." T'Pren stated. "I do not see any shadings in T'Pol's reasoning here."

"Are you sure?" Larissa asked as she reached her hand up to retrieve her padd, her arm gently brushing up against T'Pren's leg. "This article...I've noticed in texts of this period that when it is used before the noun it denotes surety, but after the noun, ambiguity. But here...it's separated by an adjective. Do you think T'Pol might be attempting to shade her doubts through splitting the article from the noun?"

"Why would she not then just go ahead and place the article after the noun?" T'Pren inquired with genuine curiosity.

“Mmmm...” Larissa pondered her guest’s question as she consulted one of the bound books on the coffee table. “Maybe the answer’s here. At this point in T’Pol’s life, she was undergoing something of a crisis in faith. Added to that, the effects of her Trellium-D addiction were still with her affecting her ability to control her emotions...and then there was the whole issue with Commander Tucker and Terra Prime...”

“I believe I am following your logic...” T’Pren interjected, visibly impressed by the display of reasoning exhibited by the Andorian woman seated at her feet. Sliding off of the couch and on to the floor, the youthful Vulcan proposed, “Assuming your analysis is correct, then we can postulate that her interpretation of Surak’s First Axiom is actually much different than traditional Vulcan historiography would indicate...”

The evening went on with both women bouncing ideas off each other, drinking oolong tea and genuinely enjoying each others company until, T’Pren, looking at her chronometer, barely repressed the urge to gasp in astonishment, “I am sorry, Larissa...but I must take my leave. It will be lights out in thirty minutes.”

“Oh...ok...” The Andorian smiled, “Tomorrow morning then? On the green? Maybe we take a morning run into the Old City?”

Nodding her head, T’Pren responded, “Yes. I think I would...enjoy...that.”

During the next few months, T’Pren came to look forward more and more to her morning runs with Larissa, followed with her going to the Andorian’s quarters later in the evening. The ostensible reason of helping Larissa with her research fading away as the two women bonded ever more closely over tea and conversation. And then one evening—it happened. The pair had just finished analyzing the potential ramifications behind first Jonathon Archer becoming a host for the *katra* of Surak and then Leonard McCoy temporarily housing that of Spock’s when, T’Pren, looking down as Larissa reached to pick up a book, caught a brief glimpse of her naked blue breast through the folds in her bathrobe. Her skin turning green as improper thoughts rushed through the young Vulcan’s mind, T’Pren felt Larissa’s hand on hers and then heard her quiet reassuring words, “It’s all right.” She then felt warm blue lips on hers.

Reveling in the contact, the young Vulcan returned the Andorian woman’s kiss until, her mind finally catching up with her racing emotions and body,

T'Pren broke away. Standing up, the Vulcan youth beat a hasty retreat to the door stammering, "I'm sorry...I have to...I must...go!" And with that she darted out, fleeing just as she did once as a child when frightened by the holographic image of a *sehlat*. Watching from her window as she saw the young Vulcan woman run away, Larissa daubed her eyes as she sobbed.

As she ran back to her dorm, T'Pren remembered how displeased her father was at not just her show of fright, but at her emotional display as she ran crying to his arms, only to have him turn her away, admonishing her for her disgraceful exhibition.

USS Perseus: 2377

"Excuse me..."

Snapping out of her reverie, T'Pren started, flashing a shy grin that took the three *Independence* officers by surprise, "Oh...I'm sorry...I did it again, didn't I?"

"Are you ok, Lieutenant?" Kimula asked solicitously. "You seem...distracted."

"No..." The young Vulcan responded, shaking her head, her long auburn hair tied into a ponytail brushing against her shoulders. "I'll be fine..."

"Are you sure?" Before Kimula could continue, the door slid open to reveal the *Perseus's* Deltan first officer.

"I'm sorry I was detained." The alluring olive-skinned Deltan woman apologized. "Captain...Commander...If you'll accompany me, I'll escort you to the conference room. Lieutenant, if you'd like, Lieutenant T'Pren can go with you to sickbay?"

As the pair made their way down the corridor, Kimula turned her head towards the Vulcan woman waking beside her. "You're *V'tosh ka'tur*, aren't you, T'Pren?"

"Yeah..." T'Pren affirmed, her eyes reflecting both pride and pain as memories once again raced through her mind.

StarfleetAcademy: Spring—Fall 2371

“What’s wrong, T’Pren?” A surprised Atris exclaimed, startled by her obviously discombobulated roommate dashing into their room. “What happened? Is Larissa ok?”

“I...don’t...want to talk about it.” The young Vulcan stammered as she tried to regain control over her emotions.

“T’Pren...” Atris responded as he placed a supportive hand on her friend’s shoulder, “What’s wrong? Please...tell me...”

“Larissa...she kissed me.” The young woman blurted out.

“Oh...” Atris uttered in a quiet voice.

“And I kissed her back.” T’Pren added, the words rushing out as unaccustomed tears rolled down her cheek.

“Ohhhh...” Her Troyian roommate cooed softly as she gently hugged her friend

It had been two weeks since she had last seen Larissa as T’Pren. The young Vulcan had deliberately scheduled her daily runs for a time when she knew the Andorian historian would not be able to join her. In turn, Larissa had made no effort to contact T’Pren other than a heartfelt and tearful apology recorded on the cadet’s computer. Judging now that her crisis had passed and with her emotions now back under proper control, T’Pren walked with V’lar and the other Vulcan cadets on her dorm floor to their usual morning mediation session when, on the way, she witnessed an...interesting...sight. A Vulcan male standing next to a statue of the ancient Greek goddess Athena was talking with a human woman. Nothing unusual about that, until, much to T’Pren’s surprise, the Vulcan laughed—a deep, hearty laugh.

“*V’tosh ka’tur!*” V’lar remarked, her voice dripping with contempt at those who, embracing their emotional selves, had turned their backs on the pure logic of Surak. “Ignore him...he is outcast.”

Outcast. T’Pren repeated wordlessly as the coterie of Vulcans passed

wordlessly by the heretic, their eyes focused straight ahead, not even giving him the dignity of a look. From the corner of her eye, the young Vulcan cadet caught the dismissive shrug of his shoulders as he spoke to his human companion. Without thinking, T'Pren deliberately lagging behind turned her head when she was sure none of her companions were looking. The man, catching the young cadet's eyes, gave her a sad smile and nod of his head. Ending their unspoken communication, T'Pren nodded her head in return as she picked up her pace, returning to her companions before they had noticed her absence.

An hour or so later, as her meditation session ended, the troubled young cadet approached her advisor. "Commander?" She asked hesitatingly, "May I speak with you?"

Seeing that his charge was concerned about something or other, Commander Styvan replied, "Of course, Cadet T'Pren. Come into my office." Taking his seat behind his desk, the Vulcan advisor nodded his head at a vacant chair. "Be seated. Now, what is the problem?"

Taking a deep breath, T'Pren proceeded to unburden herself about everything—Larissa...their discussions with each other over Surakian interpretations and other topics...their kiss...her turmoil over it...and finally her encounter with the *v'tosh ka'tur* male.

"I see..." The commander remarked; waiting patiently until the young cadet had finished talking before speaking. "This is not an unusual situation to have happen, Cadet." The advisor counseled. "As I told you once, many young Vulcans experience situations similar to yours when they venture away from home for the first time. You must remember that logic is pure...it cannot lie. Keeping that basic axiom in mind, you can then see the flaws and inconsistencies of the Andorian's interpretations. It is illogical to assume that one not of Vulcan can fully grasp the intricacies of the logic of Surak and T'Pau. And as for T'Pol...remember...because of her experiences, her words and thoughts have traditionally been taken with a degree of...skepticism. And as for your other problem..." Styvan paused for a moment as, understanding that he was treading in very sensitive territory, he carefully considered his words. "...that also is not unknown to us. Surely you can understand the...illogic...of your attraction towards this woman—and its potential ramifications if not resolved in a satisfactory manner. Very often cadets your age benefit from a brief leave of absence to return home. Then, after the proper time has passed, they return and resume their careers. If you wish, I can arrange for you to take such a leave."

Appreciating his circumspection of speech, T'Pren replied, "That will not be necessary, Commander. That particular situation is not presenting a problem. And as for the others...your words of advice and wisdom have been...most informative. I shall keep them in mind." Standing up, the young Vulcan stated before making her exit, "Thank you for your time."

"As the humans say..." Commander Styvan remarked, not completely assured that his charge had in fact made her peace with her situation, "...my door is always open. Remember Surak's words: The mind controls the body...control the mind and the body will follow."

Returning to her quarters, T'Pren pondered her advisor's words. Seeing that Atris was absent, the troubled young Vulcan took a padd from her desk. Calling up the Books of Surak, she began to read. She was still reading when her roommate finally returned.

"Watch yourself, Jack! Remember, we've got unarmed combat tomorrow!" Noticing her roommate at her desk studying, the slightly inebriated Troyian woman exclaimed, "Oh...I'm sorry, T'Pren! Hey..." she asked, her voice edged with concern, "Did it go ok with your advisor?"

Exhaling deeply, the young Vulcan responded, her voice laden with doubt, "No...he just said the same things I've heard since I was a child. But...when I read Surak's words..." she moaned, bowing her head, "I don't see the same things that Commander Styvan...and before him my teachers and parents and grandparents...tell me I should see."

Taking a chair and placing it next to her friend, Atris sat down on it. Then, putting her arm around the tormented Vulcan's shoulders, the young Troyian said with remarkable sagacity, "Maybe you're going about this all wrong. Instead of seeking a traditional answer to an untraditional problem...maybe you should see if there's a nontraditional solution that might work better." Getting up, Atris uttered as she made her way to the bathroom, "At least think about it."

The night was a sleepless one for T'Pren as she pondered over first her advisor's words and then those of her roommate's. Tradition or the unknown? The safe and sure path or the one with danger and risk? Her family's hopes and aspirations for her or her own hopes and desires? Was she

being selfish thinking of her own needs and wishes or honest? So many questions...questions that pure logic just could not answer. Waking up with a start. The young Vulcan made her decision as she dressed. *Maybe...she prayed to herself as she walked out of her dorm...she will be there. Please be there!* T'Pren pleaded silently as she exited Pike House to make her way to the Green. Arriving at the open space only to find herself alone, the young Vulcan's shoulders sagged as she sighed dejectedly. *Why should I have expected her to have waited? I've been such a nirak.*

"Hey, stranger..."

Wheeling rapidly about at the sound of the voice that she had missed so much, T'Pren's face broke out into a warm smile as she rushed up to her, kissing her full on the lips, "Larissa!"

"Well..." The young Andorian exclaimed, taken aback somewhat at the Vulcan woman's surprising response, "I didn't expect that sort of a greeting. Not that I'm complaining." Her sardonic grin vanishing, Larissa said in a softer voice as she took the other woman's hands in hers, "I think we need to talk, T'Pren."

"I agree..." The Vulcan replied, giving the other woman a meaningful look as she uttered her next words, "Should we go to your place?"

"Are you sure? Is that what you really want?" Larissa answered back, her antennae twitching in a manner that belied her racing emotions of hope, anticipation, confusion, and fear.

"Yes." T'Pren replied, her last remaining doubts dispelled by the hopeful look in the young Andorian's face and eyes. "I'm sure."

Reluctantly stirring to wakefulness, T'Pren snuggled up closer to the warm body next to her.

"Hey sleepyhead." Larissa grinned as she stroked the short auburn hair of her Vulcan lover, "You've got beautiful hair...you should let it grow out."

Feeling for the first time in a long time comfortable and...at peace...T'Pren smiled back, "I'll think about it."

You know...if you want..." Larissa offered as she continued to stroke her

lover's hair, "We can keep this secret. That way you won't have to worry about what your friends and family will say..."

Momentarily tempted, T'Pren shook her head, "No. It wouldn't work. I couldn't keep up the fiction—and I don't think I want to."

"So...what are you going to do?"

"I think..." The young Vulcan responded, "There's someone I need to talk to."

A few days later, T'Pren again spotted the Vulcan man that she had seen, along with V'lar and the others, several days earlier. Taking a deep breath, she approached. "Excuse me..."

"Yes..." The man responded, nodding his head in recognition. "I remember you. But where is the rest of your little group?"

"I need...I need to talk with you."

"About what?"

"I need you to tell me about *v'tosh ka'tur*." T'Pren finally blurted out.

Momentarily taken aback by the younger Vulcan's request, the Vulcan man responded with a sigh, "That'll take some time. If I might ask..." he began, "...what brought this on?"

Closing her eyes as she bid farewell to her old life, T'Pren answered in a quiet voice, "A crisis of faith."

USS Perseus—2377

"This is sickbay..." T'Pren said as she motioned towards the door. "Dr. Nor should be inside."

"Thank you, T'Pren..." Kimula responded with a grin. Then, before the young Vulcan security officer turned away, the Andorian counselor added, "Look...I don't want to poach on your counselor's territory or anything, but...if you

want to talk...just give me a call, ok?"

"Thank you." T'Pren smiled back, "But I think I'll be all right now."

StarfleetAcademy—March, 2372; before the events of Leyton's Coup

"I hate goodbyes!" Larissa cried as she hugged T'Pren close to her.

"So..." The young Vulcan answered back as Larissa once again stroked her fine auburn hair that had now grown longer to the point where it was touching the top of her shoulders. "Don't go..."

"I have to." The Andorian replied as she reluctantly broke from her embrace. "My fellowship's expired and I have to put all this stuff I've collected together into something of a paper so I can graduate." Her lips turned up in a sad smile, Larissa caressed her lover's cheeks. "I'll never forget you..."

"Nor I you." T'Pren answered back as she returned the Andorian's caresses. Leaning forward, she gave her lover a kiss, "I love you."

"I love you too." Larissa responded as she returned T'Pren's kiss. "Remember one thing..." The carefree Andorian urged as turned to walk away, "Always be true to yourself and..." she added as her lips turned up into an impish grin, "Sing while you're doing it."

USS Perseus—2377

Licking her lips as she took in the lovely curves of the Andorian counselor walking away from her, T'Pren shook her head in mild regret. *She's not Larissa and she'll never be interested in you...but...that doesn't mean you can't dream.* Walking down the corridor, she began to hum a tune that her old lover had particularly enjoyed. As she walked, her humming turned into gentle singing as she met Commander Rysyl escorting the captain and first officer of the *Independence* to their own meeting...

When you arouse the need in me
My heart says yes indeed in me

"T'Pren..." Anara greeted with a grin, "I see you're in a better mood now."

"Yes, Sir." The Vulcan security officer smiled back, "Much better."

"Well..." The Deltan first officer responded, "Carry on."

"Count on it, Sir." The emotional Vulcan answered back as she continued on her way.

Whispering to her first officer, a bemused Sintina Aurelia declared, "This is the strangest ship: A captain carved out of ice...a Deltan first officer...and a singing Vulcan..."

"It could be worse, Captain." Karim replied with a lopsided grin, "Our hail could have been answered by the *Sutherland*." As the door to the briefing room slid open, the visiting officers could vaguely hear from the corridor the gentle soprano voice of the *Perseus*'s security officer still singing...

*But one I wouldn't switch,
cause there's no nicer witch than you ...*

The End