

you don't get angry at strangers

by mazaher

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Third written in the "Why?" series. Takes place chronologically before Alternative uses for apples and A good reason for breaking regulations., but can be read separately. Heartfelt thanks to athens7, who made time to beta among more pressing matters and from whose comments I shamelessly stole the geometrical imagery.

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I am watching the Captain while he sleeps.

We are on the Enterprise, on deck 5, in his quarters, in his bed.

He is curled on his right side, arms folded across his chest, lips slightly parted, and his breathing has the slow deep cadence of non-REM sleep.

I am stretched along his back, head propped on my elbow. I take care not to disturb him.

We made love for the first time tonight.

It is difficult for me to integrate the sensations and the feelings which have been stirred by such an unaccustomed activity. My previous frequentations did not adequately prepare me for this. I believe I can draw the conclusion that the difference does not reside in the gender or indeed in the species of my partners, as much as in their personality, expectations, and talents.

I am less certain of how I can come to terms with this latest development, which, while not unexpected nor sudden, is having an unforeseen impact on my mental organization.

Dr. McCoy would probably define my current state as "head over heels in love". Illogical imagery, as artificial gravity on the ship is functioning perfectly.

It is however certain that I am uncertain; therefore I watch my Captain, in order to glean some input about how best I may deport myself from the way he does.

He sleeps.

He appears completely relaxed. I am familiar with how some Humans as well as some Vulcans frown in their sleep, their faces older, more lined in relaxation. It is not his case. His young face looks even younger in his rest.

He looks... contented.

I am slowly flooded with a sense of warmth and the desire to hold him safe like this, always. I know it is impossible: he thrives on the challenges of command. He never backs down, not even...

Not even as I was choking him in my anger, when he accused me of being lacking with regard to feeling love for my mother.

The thought startles me.

It was illogical that a relative stranger, as he was at the time, could arouse my anger with such an accusation. He knew nothing at all about my relationship with my mother. He was not there while I grew up at her side. He was not there when she was lost either. I am used to being treated with contempt by casual acquaintances. I have cultivated an automated non-response at accusations and slanders directed to my person. Even more important, I have detached myself from the need to find validation in the opinion of strangers. In truth, since I made my choice to enlist in Starfleet, I have been compelled to extend such detachment also to my clan, my extended family, and my own father.

Yet the personal accusation, irrelevant as to the current situation of the ship, shouted by one James T. Kirk, a cadet under process for cheating on a class-A test in the Command track, a stowaway on a Starfleet vessel, and liable to be prosecuted for mutiny, made my blood boil as it never had before.

Why?

Why the sense of frustration I felt at the pervading feeling that I could never make him understand, that all was useless, that *I* was useless-- unless I was of use to *him*?

And was it a similar sense of futility he experienced when I confronted him about his hacking the Kobayashi Maru test?

It had been such a quixotic endeavor, even for as reckless a cadet as he was. Even his friends appeared doubtful as to the reason why he tried again, and again a third time, when the requisite in order to forward his academical career was not passing the test, but only taking it. Much less they understood why he needed to beat the simulation so much that he hacked it, when it was obvious that he would be detected and prosecuted. But in front of the whole assembled teaching staff and students' body he did not look ashamed of what he had done. He could do without their understanding. Yet the dejection I read on his face at my own accusations spoke loud and clear that he could not do without mine. And now, *now* I see. I see like in a dark mirror when the light is finally turned on. I was angered because he was not a stranger. I needed him to understand: him only, not my father, my family, my clan, or the decimated remains of my race, because... Because he is t'hy'la. As much as he wanted for me to understand his pride in hacking the test, I wanted him to understand my effort at remaining functional in the face of unthinkable loss. We had been making our own way straight ahead in the dark; then a flash of light, our course is revealed, and lo, the thin pale lines we have been tracing on the face of nothingness are parallels. We look at each other then and we *see*. At the same moment we change course, we bend the lines and weave them together in an arabesque of joy. And here we are, in his bed. Happy. In my surprise at this realization, I must have made some small movement, because he wakes up with a slight start. He turns to look at me, his eyes still heavy and unfocused. He stares for a moment, and then he smiles, a slow, warm, sleepy smile. Then he turns again facing forward, snuggles closer to me with a small sound of contentment, and falls asleep again. I slide my left arm around his waist, just above his hips, until my hand rests flat on his belly. I lay down behind him and close my eyes. As I also fall asleep, my face buried in the short hair at the nape of his neck, I am not certain I do not hear a muted sound of purring.

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