

# LOG ENTRIES

STAR-DATE

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A S.T.A.G.  
ZINE

22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31  
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ANOTHER UNIVERSE by R.H.

Noname awoke from his non-sleep and probed the soup around him for signs of life. For life meant only one of two things - food or destruction. This was a cruel universe - eat or be eaten was the only law here. So Noname tried to eat whenever possible. He read the pulse of the all enclosing fluid around him, his taste spines sifting for recognisable chemicals, his little pseudo-legs turning him slowly in the feeble current. A green globe strayed a fraction too close and a deadly accurate claw seized and devoured it. He tasted chlorophyll. The thing must have been a plant - not that the presence of chlorophyll was an exact test. The gunk all life here swam in was rich in many things, the green photo-reactive compound being one of them. In such an environment even the larger animals had rather alarming concentrations of the stuff in them. No matter. It was food, and it hadn't killed him. There was no need in worrying if it hadn't proved fatal, no chance to if it had. Pleased with his logic, Noname pulsed forward in search of more prey.

There was no such thing as "beauty" or "ugliness" in this universe. Which was perhaps fortunate in Noname's case. True, he wasn't exactly ugly; on the other hand he wasn't likely to win any beauty competitions either. He was tall for his species, standing head and carapace over what brothers and/or sisters (his race was monosexual) he might have had. Of course, he had never seen his siblings. When his parent ejected him from the incubation capsule with his dozens of birthmates he had been in no hurry to check relative growth rates, his prime objective being to survive long enough to grow big enough to discourage anything but the largest co-inhabitants of this crazy world taking bites out of him. For all he was concerned, he was the last survivor of his entire race.

He flexed his propods, short chitinous rods jointed at intervals, with touch sensors at their tips. Held defensively behind were his port, then starboard, main claws, all but covering the soft head/eye plate under his head armour. Not that the eye was a recognisable device used for seeing. Nothing in Noname's world performed exactly as would be expected on another creature in another universe. Noname's eye was not much more than a sophisticated pressure sensor, evolved over the aeons to perform to the greatest efficiency in this goo that served as an atmosphere.

He flexed his back. A plate of (when viewed under polychromatic light) caramel coloured chitin glowed slightly in the reflected light. He did this to aid the tiny heart buried within him, pulsing life sustaining fluid over and through his body tissues, keeping the joints between his body armour moist and flexible. He tracked around with his propods, searching for more food.

A pressure gradient across his eye warned him of something near. Something big, at least as big as he was. Which meant a possible enemy. He craned his stubby neck round, following the source of the disturbance, his efficient little brain working like a battle computer plotting and triangulating the possible source of the intrusion.

Another green globe drifted past him. He snapped it up automatically, ignoring it as soon as he had decided what it was, leaving the details to his digestive tract. Then something sheared through a pseudopodium growing from his chest plate. Had he a set of vocal chords he would have screamed. Instead he arched his back, propods and claws searching for his attacker.

His eye was bombarded with signals, blind in the soup. He lashed out, his port claw contacting, gripping, then crushing

through a chitin stalk. There was another flurry of pressure, and the green gunk round him began to stain brown. One of his propods was sheared neatly at its socket. No consequence, he could grow another in a few days, and he still had the other to fight with. Something cleaved a side plate, and he felt life fluid oozing into the slime. His starboard claw locked onto something solid and moving. His port claw locked over it, and both squeezed. The object yielded, cracked, then collapsed, releasing a red stain across him. Most of the weight of the object lifted, and he was left with a vaguely triangular piece of organic material. He probed it gingerly with what was left of his propods, recognising the remains of a head of one of his fellow inhabitants. He shrugged a pseudo shoulder, tore a piece off the grisly trophy and pushed it into his mouth orifice, wondering where the rest of the body had got to. Someone would have a real feast on him. No matter, there would be plenty more where that came from.

He was congratulating himself on his survival, closing wounds and ejecting damaged body plates, when his universe suddenly gave a lurch, and all the lights went out. His para eye didn't tell him that at first - it was too busy reporting the crazy pressure changes going on all around him. He swung his claws around, ready for absolutely anything. He was still ready when the fire of a million suns burned him out of existence.

McCoy removed the acrylic slide from the autoclave and slipped it into its storage rack, the microscan sliding obediently into the lab table in front of him. He turned to Nurse Chapel, a rueful smile creasing his face.

"Y'know, I don't think I'll ever get tired of watching those micro-organisms. I sometimes even get the impression they can think..."

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AND THE GREATEST OF THESE by Margaret Bertram

Captain Kirk, about to leave sickbay, was stopped by Dr. McCoy.

"Jim, can you spare me a minute?"

"Sure, Bones. What is it? You look worried."

"I am worried. It's Spock. Do you remember when he had to get back to Vulcan, but wouldn't tell anyone why? Well, he is not quite so aggressive and unpredictable as he was then, but there is something wrong. Scotty tells me he sits in his quarters every minute he's off duty, playing that infernal harp of his in even more mournful tones than usual. Haven't you noticed anything?"

Kirk looked thoughtful. "Well, now that you mention it, he's not quite our imperturbable Spock these days; for once, he takes all his off-duty time, while usually, as you know, he loves his scientific instruments as much as Scotty likes his engines!" He smiled at the doctor. "Keep an eye on him Bones."

McCoy shook his head. "This is serious, Jim. You know how different Spock's metabolism is to ours - should there be anything seriously wrong with him, I'm not sure that I could help."

When Kirk got back to the bridge, he found, to his intense surprise, that Spock was absent.

"Mr. Sulu? Where is Mr. Spock?" the Captain inquired.

"Well, sir," Sulu said, "shortly after you left the bridge, Mr. Spock told me to take the con, and practically ran out."

"Ran?" Kirk exclaimed. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, sir." Sulu looked distinctly uncomfortable. "And if it had been anybody but Mr. Spock, I would say he looked...distressed."

"Keep the con, Mr. Sulu. I'll be in Mr. Spock's quarters."

Captain Kirk stood outside Spock's door, listening to the mournful sounds coming from the room.

"Mr. Spock," he called. "May I come in?"

The playing stopped abruptly, and Spock's voice, strangely breathless, said, "Please, Captain, I must be alone."

"Nonsense. Spock, if there is anything troubling you, let me help."

"No! No." There was human anguish in Spock's voice. "This is something I must work out by myself, I..."

But Kirk didn't wait for more. He entered, only to find Spock retreating from him as from an enemy.

"Please, Captain." Spock spoke very quietly. "You have honoured me at times by calling me your friend. Please, leave me to myself. My human half is doing battle with its Vulcan counterpart; for the first time in my life, my logic is deserting me. But all the many years of rational thought cannot just disappear - I will succeed in fighting this...this...affliction, but you, Captain, are the last person to assist me."

Kirk stared at his First Officer. Spock emotional...and he was emotional! What was going on?

He made his decision. "All right, Spock, I'll leave you now - but I'll expect an explanation if you don't feel better soon, very soon!"

"Thank you, Captain." Spock's voice had almost dropped to a whisper. "If I don't win through soon, I'll have to ask for a transfer to another ship."

Spock sat motionless, his head in his hands. He knew. At last he knew.

The way he lost interest in T'Pring when he thought he had killed Kirk, the time he had fused his mind with the Captain's to help him forget his deep unhappiness...had that just been the logical wish to restore the Captain's full capacity for the good of the Enterprise - or what? The emotion - emotion! which affected him when seeing Kirk with the woman called Ruth when on shore leave...now he knew. He loved James Kirk, loved his Captain - how could he live with that knowledge?

He went into a deep, self-induced trance, deep down into his subconscious, brilliant mind.

He jerked awake. So that was the explanation - but was it a solution?

Spock had always studied his planet's ancient history with burning interest. He knew that in ancient times his people had accepted love between males as a completely usual and everyday thing; only when they came into close contact with inhabitants of other worlds, especially humans, had this attitude changed. Vulcans still retained their remoteness, their almost aggressive pride in their supreme logic, but they had become accustomed to seeing men as friends, to like, even to admire, but nothing more.

Now Spock knew. It wasn't his human side he had to conquer; oh no, it was the old Vulcan blood which caused the bewilderment.

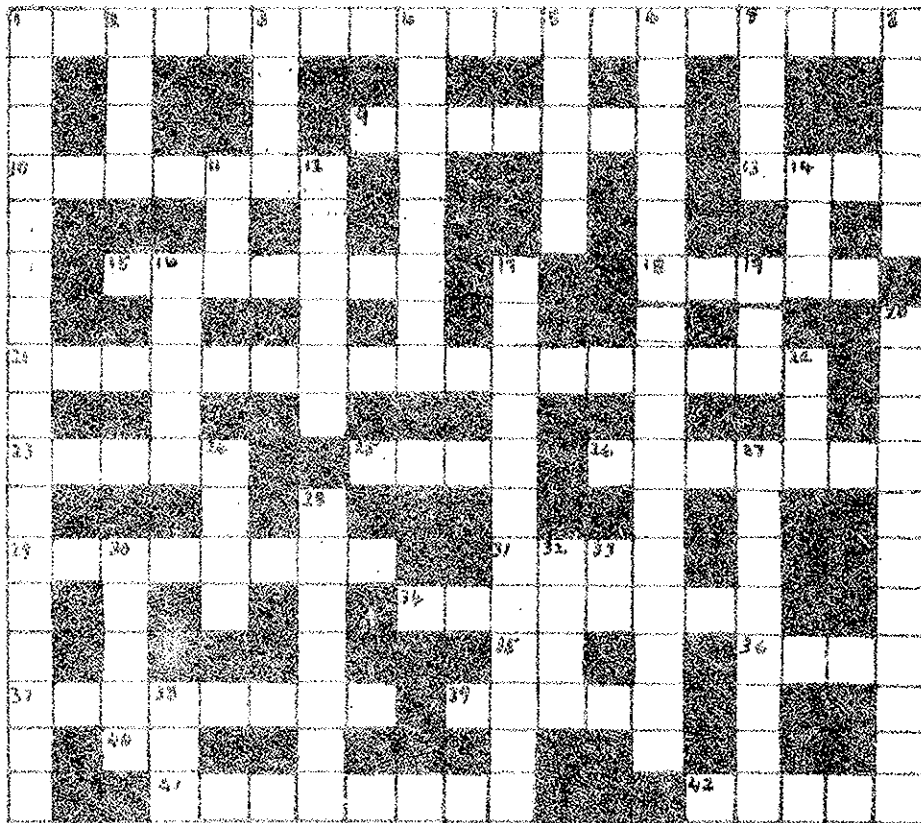
And then, with blinding certainty, he knew happiness; not the short-lived he had felt with Leila but a deeper, lasting happiness. He was a true Vulcan, after all. Now he would be able to be again what his Captain had sometimes called him, the best First Officer of the Fleet - and he would defend the Enterprise, and all who served in her, with his life.

When Spock arrived on the bridge, Captain Kirk looked up questioningly. "Everything all right, Mr. Spock?"

"Thank you, Captain. Quite all right."

And he bent over his instrument panel.

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CLUES

ACROSS

- 1. If this is Tuesday, Wednesday is Monday. (8,2,9.)
- \* 9. Deadly poison. (7)
- 10. Don't feed it! (7)
- \* 13. Listen and you will this. (4)
- 15. See 37 across.
- 18. Nasty colour from the Curtain. (5)
- 21. In which our heroes nearly got 'rubbed out'. (1,5,2,3,6)
- 25. Khan's choice. (5)
- 25. Has moved back on several occasions. (4)
- 26. The Creator. (7)
- 29. O.K. by James Blish. (8)
- 31. The last to go, but not the only one. (4)
- 34. See 28 down.
- \* 35. Small Edwardian. (2)
- 36. Kirk met it in 39 across. (4)
- 37 and 15 across. Last word in weapons. (8,7.)
- 39. Where Kirk met 36 across. (5)
- \* 40. Old you. (2)
- 41. Doel to the death. (4,4)
- \* 42. Whisper. (5)

DOWN

- 1. A neat and tidy war. (5,2,10)
- 2. Titled child. (4)
- 3. Genuine Doctor. (4)
- 4. It happened to the Enterprise. (8)
- 5. Kirk had to make a decision about her. (5)
- 6. Scotty's girl was nearly taken over by them. (3,6,2,5)

- |           |                                      |           |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 7.        | One of Harry's girls.                | (4)       |
| 8.        | They were deadly.                    | (5)       |
| * 11.     | Auntie wants a letter.               | (1.1.1)   |
| * 12.     | Girl's name.                         | (6)       |
| 14.       | As 7 down.                           | (3)       |
| 16.       | Woman in Kirk's life.                | (5)       |
| 17.       | The first, later halved and doubled. | (3.9)     |
| * 19.     | Vowels 2,3 and 4.                    | (1.1.1)   |
| 20.       | Blinker.                             | (4.2.2.3) |
| 22.       | Inverted propulsion.                 | (3)       |
| * 24.     | Round which all things revolve.      | (4)       |
| 27.       | Real nasties.                        | (8)       |
| 28 and 34 | scrps. Disease unknown.              | (3.4.2.6) |
| 30.       | The human half.                      | (5)       |
| * 32.     | You can't turn it.                   | (4)       |
| * 33.     | Another letter would make it odd.    | (2)       |
| 38.       | She was stopped in 1 down.           | (3)       |

Crossword by Helen Sneddon.

\* Denotes answer not directly connected with STAR TREK.

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DIFFERENCE IS A VIRTUE by Jinx.

The Enterprise was in turmoil, physically and mentally. The ship was severely damaged, and it seemed possible that they would have to wait for assistance before they could move.

Worse, their heart and soul, the Captain, was dying. Noone knew quite what had happened, but rumour and counter rumour ran along the corridors as they laboured to repair, renew, just keep holding on, keep the life within them. But each of them was distracted from time to time, as whispers spread.

In Sickbay, the three men were silent, for different reasons. Captain Kirk lay stiff, unmoving, his eyes open but seeing nothing. The hum of life support proved that he was alive, but he looked dead, and his mind was gone.

McCoy stirred; his hand went out to shut off the life support, but Spock's hand grasped his wrist.

"No, Doctor."

"He's dead, Spock."

"I do not believe it."

McCoy took refuge in anger. "He's dead, you didn't get him down here quick enough. It's not like you to refuse to face the truth." Spock lifted his head.

"I had the ship to see to first, Doctor. But I do not believe that he is dead."

The mention of the ship reminded him. He moved to the intercom on the wall, and asked for intra-craft. His next words boomed out all over the ship. The crew lifted its collective head to listen. Insensibly the familiar voice comforted them, made them realise that they were not alone.

"The Captain is still alive, barely. He has very little chance, but he will expect you to continue doing his duty. As soon as we know definitely you will be told."

He clicked off and turned back to the bed. McCoy watched him compassionately. "What happened, Spock?"

"The details are unclear. We came across a supposedly derelict craft. As we hailed it, it aimed a - psychic weapon at us. Each of us had a sudden hatred for the ship, and wanted to do as much damage to her as we could. Only the Captain and I seemed to be unaffected, He - resisted wholly, the beam focussed on him, and - burned his mind out.

I was able to subdue Mr. Sulu, and turn the phasers on the craft.

It was destroyed, but for a few moments I had to sustain life support manually, until the crew fought free of the influence. Only then was I free to attend to the Captain."

McCoy put a hand on his shoulder, gently. "You made the right choice, Spock. What he would have wanted. But you must accept that he is dead."

Spock moved away, turning to face the wall. "I cannot accept it, Doctor. I did not feel him die."

"Can you explain?"

The Vulcan's back stiffened, and for a moment McCoy thought that he wouldn't answer, but after a while Spock went on, coldly, evenly.

"I am a Vulcan. I would feel - Jim's death halfway across the Galaxy. I did not. He was overwhelmed, but he did not surrender his basic integrity,"

"But you said that his brain was burnt out?"

"Mind and body do not make up the whole being, Doctor. If I could somehow re-activate his mind..."

"Could you use the mind-meld?"

McCoy heard the bitterness clearly. "No, Doctor. I am crippled, how could I bring back a whole mind? I do not have his capacity for emotion, affection, humour. If I could pass my ability to meld to you, it might be possible."

McCoy turned away in turn. "Don't be a fool, Spock. You've closer to Jim than anyone in the universe. He trusts you completely. Me, I'm liable to go off half-cocked, get mad at nothing, make a decision with my heart, not my head, and often the wrong one. I guess that's my life story, I always made the wrong choice. If I'd been on the bridge, I'd have tried to save Jim first, and let the ship die."

Spock's voice was very gentle now.

"No, Bones, you would not. You would have done what you knew he would have wished, as I did. And you are far closer to him, in many ways. I have seen you and he often, sharing a joke I cannot share, sharing distress, sharing."

"Jealous, Spock?"

"I think not. Merely aware that I cannot give what you give to him."

They both went to the bed, looking at the still figure of their friend.

"How are we going to get on without him, Spock?"

"We will doubtless continue to exist."

"Exist, maybe, is that living?"

"I existed for many years - before he reached out to me."

McCoy looked up, seeing the Vulcan through a screen of tears. He forced himself into painful confession.

"Spock, I have been jealous of you and Jim. I don't know why. I can see now that it never mattered. We're different, and he saw and valued different things in us."

"To a Vulcan, difference is a virtue," Spock observed absently, his attention on the pale face on the pillow. Somehow his own words rang strangely in his ears. He lifted his gaze, to meet McCoy's gaze.

"Could we bring him back together, Spock?"

"I do not know. It is impossible in a normal meld, and I do not think that we could achieve Harlis together, even for Jim."

"Why not?"

"It means total melding; you would know all of me, and I all of you, and so we would know all of Jim, if we could find him. It is almost impossible to accept oneself, Doctor, and we would have to accept each other, our visions of life, our philosophies, our pettiness...and there are many things in me that I am ashamed of."

McCoy felt cold with fright, but he forced himself to speak.

"All of us have a lot to be ashamed of. I'm willing to try, for Jim."



Spock turned away; his voice was unaccustomedly hoarse.

"If - Jim knew us as we are, would he accept us, or reject us?"

McCoy was filled with sudden love for Spock. He leaned across the bed, and with gentle fingers turned the Vulcan's face towards him.

"Spock, can you really conceive of anything in Jim that might make you reject him?"

The Vulcan considered.

"No." After a pause, he continued, forcing the words out through rebel lips. "Nor in you, Bones."

The Doctor nodded. "I feel the same, and I'm sure that Jim will. What do we have to do?"

Spock took hold of Kirk's hand, and stretched his other across the bed. McCoy copied him, and began to feel a strange presence in his mind. He shut off his repugnance, reminding himself firmly that this was Spock, and tried to come closer.

Suddenly they were struggling in a mealstrom of memories and feelings - McCoy's first girl - Spock's pain at being tormented by his schoolmates - a mindless hatred and anger, mixed with painful lust - tenderness for his new-born daughter, so fragile - love - fear - hurt - joy - they swirled dizzily together, but each was aware of the other's hand in his, and each was steadied by the joint memories of Jim, seeing him now in stereoscopic vision. They were no longer sure which was which, but it didn't matter, and they knew it. They surveyed their joint lives together, each gently helping the other's wounds, or their own wounds, each knowing that the moments of shame were right, that they had blundered, forsaken their standards, but also knowing that they had learned from their mistakes.

Gradually they became one entity, sustained by the knowledge that they were crippled, lost, without their third, and they set out to find him.

There were so many places, galaxies of suns, and crevices in rocks. They were still looking at the universe with different eyes; one saw a daisy here, and the other a hideous monster, then a cold, dead star that to the other was a light fluctuating in a different spectrum. But all the time they drifted, through strange and familiar scenes, they knew that they were drawing closer to their goal. Their emptiness was seeking the one who could fill them, and now they found him.

He lay withdrawn, curled up tightly, rejecting the outside world, but he was living. They held him in their shared embrace, gently soothing him, calling, calling, until he woke slightly, and surveyed them sleepily, then smiled, and flowed into their grasp. Again they shared a kaleidoscope of experiences - the joy of diving into an ice-cold stream - the beauty of a mathematical equation - the horror of sharing a bed, a life, with hatred - the fear of being alone - the burden of duty. This halted them.

"The ship." Which one had said it? It didn't matter. Their ship; they must find it, return to their duties; they swirled for a moment in bewilderment, then found it, and hung in nothingness, considering.

Here they were whole, one person; there they were divided, separate. Could they go back to the loneliness? They knew that they had no choice. With a sigh, they separated, drew apart, found their rightful shells, and opened dull eyes on their universe.

Their hands fell away, and McCoy moved to shut off the unnecessary life support, as Spock walked unsteadily to the intercom.

"The Captain will live, will recover fully. Spock out."

He collapsed, sliding down the wall to the floor. Kirk and McCoy ran to him. He opened startled eyes.

"I have no strength left."

Kirk lifted him, and put him on the bed he had just vacated.

"I'm not surprised, you were supplying energy for both of us. Just sleep now, we'll need you to repair the ship."

Spock nodded, and looked at him frankly, waiting to see if these so warm humans were still prepared to accept him. Their smiles reassured him. He smiled back, faintly. Kirk laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Difference is a virtue, remember?"

Spock leaned his cheek against the hand for a moment, then dropped over the edge into sleep.

Kirk laid his other hand on McCoy's shoulder.

"Thanks, Bones."

He paused, but there was nothing else to be said. They went about their duties knowing that nothing else was needed.

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## THE SWING by Sheila Cornall.

Of all the new and scientific toys to be had of her age - the old fashioned swing was still her favourite. It was just a simple piece of wood, through which her Father had knotted stout, strong ropes. The other ends were fixed securely round the extending arm of the giant old tree that stood by the lake. She would spend hours just sitting there and swinging as high as the ropes would let her go - she was so near the sky then! But it was far better at night. She often crept unknown from the house into the warm summer night air to swing her way up to the stars. No one ever guessed her secret, for there was this tree that grew near the house; it afforded the house much needed shade during the hot sunny days. The top branches reached up to opposite her bedroom window, and being an agile child this was her stairway into the night. She would silently clamber down its most obliging branches for her trip to the stars.

As she swung, feeling the rush of the warm night air about her and listening to the gentle creaking of the old tree at the movement of the swing - she wondered about the stars. What would it really be like to sail among them and visit the far-off planets? Were there really still worlds and peoples yet to be discovered, when so much had been discovered already? It must be a very enormous place, the home of the stars, the Galaxy. The swing took her up so close to them, it seemed she could pluck them from the velvet mantle they rested on.

Already she was forgetting about the argument with her brother earlier in the day, when yet again she had been found uninvited in his room, where she had gone to ponder and marvel over his latest pride and joy - the very most up-to-date communicating and receiving set which had been his birthday present. He was an amateur inter-stellar radio operator. Once, long ago, such communications had been limited to just one world; now the amateur radio hams could contact and make friends with aliens on other planets.

She had a keen, intelligent and inquiring mind, and longed to find out how it all worked. Once she had sneaked the cover off and peered in increasing amazement at what her eyes beheld. She really did want to know how it all worked, but Brother just didn't understand. So it was always either "Keep out of my room!" or "Leave my things alone!" and like today, "Go sit on your swing, silly little girl." - Silly! Little! Indeed! - her dark eyes still flashed at the thought of these remarks. He was only four years older than herself, after all. Brothers! Someday she'd show him - girls can be just as clever too! Why, she might just become a communications officer on board a Starship, that would teach him, and how! What would Brother say then? She smiled and giggled to herself at the thought. And she sat on the swing contemplating the future and what it could hold in store for her. The stars rushed to meet her, then slipped away, then rushed back again. The warm sweeping air caressed her firm brown body, and she was as free as her Swahili name proclaimed - UHURA - Freedom.

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Take this whilst it lasts.  
Never again, perhaps, to be  
Air so untroubled and clean -  
Days warmed by peace -  
Nights secure in content;  
As trouble-free and innocent  
As the first day of rest  
From creation must have been.

D.S.M.



Mere words never enough...  
Ache...hurt...deep longing...need...  
Great loss, Sorrow invisibly worn...  
Instability to undo the pattern of the future -  
Utter futility to retain what is, or could be.  
Never master, always puppet...  
While you may, my friend, grasp life  
Unashamedly!...be near whilst opportunity  
Still affords.  
Vanity and pride make lonely, bitter memories...  
For once, be human!...Live!

D.S.M.

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DISTURBANCE by C.E. Hall.

The bridge crew tried, not wholly successfully, to avoid staring at Kirk as he stamped angrily into the elevator. Only Spock seemed to have noticed nothing wrong; as he moved easily to the command chair he looked as relaxed as he always did; as relaxed as if there had been no hysterical outburst from the Captain, and he himself its immediate target.

But in reality, Spock was not nearly as calm as he looked. He was forcing himself, by iron self-control, to move easily and slowly, and to appear calm and relaxed. Inwardly he was neither - his mind was full of confused and chaotic thoughts. But he knew, almost by instinct, that if he let go and lost control, discipline aboard the Enterprise would totally collapse.

But he had come very close to it, and this disturbed him! Captain Kirk's behaviour had astounded him - he had ranted on at him over a simple error, as if it had been a major catastrophe. That he should have spoken to him like that at all was a shock; that he should have done it in front of all the bridge crew was even more disturbing.

Yet almost as disconcerting to the accurate efficient First Officer was the fact that he had made such a silly simple mistake, and also the knowledge that it wasn't the first in recent days. He had caught himself out twice already, fortunately in time to correct and cover up before anyone else had realised his lapse. But he failed to understand why such errors had occurred - he could think of no reason why his concentration should have slipped so badly.

He sat there in the command chair, issuing the necessary routine orders as if nothing had happened, and pondered over the whole business. It was not only Captain Kirk and he himself who were behaving abnormally! Uncharacteristic behaviour was rife all over the ship - the once-harmonious Enterprise was fast losing its stable friendly atmosphere. The co-operative attitude which made everything run so smoothly had now disappeared. There was grumbling and bickering everywhere - and now it was no longer concealed. Arguments and quarrels were frequently to be heard in the recreation room, and there were even a few men in the 'brig', who had allowed their animosity to develop into actual fights.

Thanks to their training, the bridge crew had, up till now, managed to maintain their self-discipline while on duty, but how long would that last after the scene Captain Kirk had made? That was why Spock was trying so hard to keep up his calm attitude. But he was extremely disturbed by the realisation that Kirk had aroused in him anger and protest such as he could only remember having felt once before. His thoughts went back to that time, when Kirk had deliberately taunted and insulted him, in an effort to free him from the euphoric spores of Omicron Ceti III. Then he had given way to anger, and had actually fought his Captain; and he knew that once again he had come near to similar action.

It was almost time for him to go off-duty for a spell, but he made no attempt to go yet. He did not intend leaving until Captain Kirk returned to relieve him, and he had a chance to see what state of mind he was in.

At this point the elevator doors opened, and Kirk came back to the bridge. All the bridge personnel suddenly found it necessary to check the instruments in their charge, and gave their attention assiduously to them. Kirk's expression was serious, almost grim, as he strode towards the command chair. As Spock made to rise, Kirk put a hand on his shoulder and stopped him for a moment. He spoke quietly, though several of the others close by could not help but overhear.

"Spock," he said. "I want to apologise. I should not have

gone on at you like I did. It was inexcusable."

"I was in the wrong, Captain," replied Spock mildly, his dark eyes studying Kirk's frowning face.

"Yes, I know that," agreed Kirk, "but it wasn't nearly as serious as I made out. I can't think what possessed me to behave so badly, and in front of everyone on the bridge. I'm sorry about it, Spock."

Reassured that Kirk was now in a calmer frame of mind, Spock nodded his acceptance of the apology, and left the bridge. As he went down in the turbo-lift, and walked along the wide corridors, his mind still toyed with the problem. What had come over Kirk, and indeed, many others of the crew, to alter their behaviour so violently? It was not as if they were particularly tired, at the end of a long trip, or after an especially exhausting mission. In fact, their recent work had been fairly routine - a basic check on some Federation outposts, and nothing unusual had occurred at any of them. Also, it was only two weeks since they had spent a few days at Space-Rec. 4, a recreational space-station. All of the crew in turn had had a spell aboard the vessel, meeting old friends, and spending some of their back pay on the various delights it had to offer. It had a very good store, with items of interest from all over the galaxy - he himself had picked up some interesting old manuscripts there, well-preserved for their age. Many had bought gifts to take home on their next visits, or to decorate their own quarters. It had seemed a pleasant relaxing interlude, and yet, the more he considered it, the more he began to realise that the trouble aboard the Enterprise had developed since then! Why? he wondered. A possible answer crossed his mind. Could it be that they had picked up some sort of disease or infection at Space-Rec 4? With this thought in mind, he changed his objective, and made for Sickbay, to put the idea to Dr. McCoy.

He found the Doctor busy at his desk, with some records he was bringing up to date. As Spock approached, interrupting him, he looked up and scowled at him. Undeterred, Spock attempted to enlist his help.

"Dr. McCoy," he began. "I would like to discuss a problem with you."

He got no further before McCoy snapped at him, "You do pick the most inconvenient times, Spock! Can't you see I'm busy?"

To him amazement, Spock felt irritation rising in him, a feeling he had rarely experienced before, and before he could stop himself, he was answering back.

"Very well, Doctor," he snapped. "I'll see to it myself."

He turned away, and strode towards the door, but before he reached it, Bones was there, grabbing at his arm.

"Stop, Spock," he said. "I shouldn't have spoken like that, and it's most unlike you to answer me back so angrily. We are all doing it, I've noticed. What is happening to us?"

"That is what I wanted to discuss with you, Doctor," said Spock, calm again, and returned with him to his office. "I, too, have noticed that a percentage of the personnel have become increasingly irritable. There has been quarrelling and even fighting among the crew. I am affected too. I have been feeling irritation and even anger - it is most unnatural!"

"It seems to have developed in the last fortnight," mused McCoy, "since we left Space-Rec 4."

"Yes, I realised that," confirmed Spock. "Could we have picked up some disease or infection there?"

"Maybe - I'll do some quick tests," replied McCoy. He quickly got out the necessary equipment, and made several tests on both Spock and himself, but all were totally negative.

"Well, on first sight, that doesn't seem to be the answer," he said at last. "Could it be something that came aboard the ship from the space-station, and is hidden somewhere?"

Thoughtfully Spock considered this suggestion.

"That is a possibility, Doctor," he said. "I suggest we go to the Captain, and ask permission to institute a search."

Ascertaining that Kirk was at present in his own quarters, they made their way there. They knocked on the door, and in response to Kirk's "Come in," entered the room together.

Kirk had a sheaf of papers spread out on a table, and didn't look too pleased at the interruption.

Spock started to explain why they had come.

"Captain," he began, "the Doctor and I believe there is something wrong aboard the Enterprise. We would like..."

He got no further. Kirk turned and scowled at him angrily, saying, "You know, Mr. Spock, I'm getting a bit fed up with your officiousness." Then, totally without warning, he clenched a fist and swung a punch at the Vulcan. Taken completely by surprise, Spock made no attempt to defend himself, apart from an instinctive recoil. The blow caught him on the chin, and knocked him off-balance. He fell heavily to the floor, narrowly missing striking his head on a fitment.

After a moment's open-mouthed astonishment, McCoy dashed to help him. Spock sat up rather dizzily. There was a slight trickle of green blood from the corner of his mouth, where the blow had cut his lip, and he dabbed at it gingerly.

Kirk dropped on his knees beside them. He looked white and shaken, and his eyes were troubled. He grabbed Spock's arm, and spoke remorsefully.

"Spock, Spock, I'm sorry!" he gasped. "Whatever made me do that - I don't understand it."

Spock started to get to his feet again, and the other two helped him up, in spite of his protests that he was all right.

Kirk turned to McCoy.

"Bones, is he really O.K.? What came over me?" he asked, still looking bewildered and upset.

"That is what we wanted to talk to you about," replied Spock, now recovering rapidly. "Something seems to be affecting a large proportion of the crew - causing irrational irritability and temper."

"We want to search the ship," added McCoy. "It seems to have started just after we left Space-Rec 4, and we wonder if anything unusual came aboard then."

Kirk readily agreed, and under his orders extensive searches and checks were carried out. McCoy made a special check to see whether anything new had been added to the food stores, but the result was negative. Nothing out of the ordinary came to light anywhere. It was very puzzling.

Kirk, Spock and McCoy met again to consider all the reports as they came in, but could find nothing unusual in any of them.

"You know what it feels like," said McCoy thoughtfully. "Do you remember when all the crew went ashore on Omicron Ceti III, affected by those 'happy' spores? You two rigged up some sort of sub-sonic irritant sound that affected us all. Could there be something like that going on?"

"I can soon check that," replied Spock, interested in the idea, and departed to the Science Department. Aided by the scientists there, he soon had some equipment set up, and somewhat to his surprise, found a positive reading. He went to the intercom and called Kirk.

"Dr. McCoy was right, Captain," he explained. "There is some sort of sub-sonic vibration on the ship. It is very diffused, so I cannot as yet pin-point the source. I shall work on it, and report back."

He returned to the equipment and studied it carefully. The various indicators showed that there was no one source, but that the effect was spread all over the ship somewhat haphazardly. However, the strongest concentration seemed to be in the living quarters, both of the officers and the crew.

The Vulcan's alert gaze roved thoughtfully round the laboratory, as he considered this fact. As McCoy had established that there had been no infection picked up, what could it be that so many of the crew seemed to have brought back with them from Space-Rec 4?

And then suddenly he saw it! On a shelf in the Science lab. stood three 'Glo-crystals'. These had been an outstanding novelty at the recreation station. They were beautiful irregular-shaped crystals, very large for crystals, and set very delicately in fine metal settings. Under a light they pulsed and glowed with a kind of inner fire. They were extremely attractive, and not expensive, and many of the crew had bought one or more as gifts. He himself had one, which he had planned to take home for his mother on his next visit. It was sitting on a shelf in his quarters, and in his mind's eye, he could see the one sitting on McCoy's desk in Sickbay, and the three on the table in Captain Kirk's quarters!

Quickly he fetched them down from the shelf, and tested them, proving his theory instantly! The crystals gave out a very weak vibration, which was augmented by the metal settings. He quickly set the amazed scientists present the task of fitting a small store-room with equipment to kill the effect, and placed the culprit 'Glo-crystals' in there.

Then he made his report to Captain Kirk and Dr. McCoy. Kirk immediately activated the ship-wide intercom, and instructed that everyone who had one of these crystals was to bring it to the Science lab. immediately. On McCoy's suggestion, he added the instruction that each should be identified with an owner's name label.

As the crystals began to be delivered to the lab., and placed in the prepared room, it was seen that the readings on the sonic equipment were steadily diminishing. McCoy and some helpers stood by, listing all the names of the crew-members as they brought their crystals, and the list added confirmation, as it contained the names of those men who had spent a night in the cell for fighting, and also many who had been heard quarrelling.

As the last crystals were brought in and placed in the room, the readings on the detector dropped steadily down to zero. There were 368 of the crystals altogether, so it was not surprising that their cumulative effect had been so very disruptive. Everyone began to feel a great sense of relief as the news spread about what had been happening and its cause. They were very pleased to know that the trouble had been discovered and neutralised.

McCoy came up to Spock with his list in his hand, wearing a slightly puzzled look on his face.

"What is wrong, Doctor?" asked Spock, well satisfied with the way things had gone.

"Just a little odd thing," replied McCoy. "Uhura brought in two crystals, but I haven't noticed that she's been behaving oddly at all."

"She is an intelligent woman," replied Spock, who had considerable respect for the Bantu Communications Officer. "Perhaps her self-control was stronger."

"Stronger than yours?" queried McCoy. "I doubt it. Only one was getting through to you, so why should she be immune to two?"

As if she had known they were talking about her, Uhura chose this moment to return to the lab.

"Mr. Spock," she said. "I thought I had better come and tell you something, in case it is important."

"Go ahead," said Spock, ready to listen, and McCoy smiled encouragingly.

"Well," said the coloured girl, "I have a friend at Starbase 4, who bought something similar to these crystals some years ago. But she told me that hers didn't last. It seemed to dry out in the atmosphere and eventually crumbled away. I didn't know for sure

whether these would do the same, but I thought I would try to prevent it happening. So I painted my two all over with clear nail varnish. It made no difference to the look of them."

"That might just be it," said McCoy exultantly. Spock was already taking action. He was searching the room for the two crystals bearing Uhura's name. He brought them out and tested them with the equipment on the bench. Even when the detector was turned to its highest strength, there was still no reaction.

"Some of my friends followed my suggestion," added Uhura eagerly, and gave their names. When their crystals were added, there was no flicker of a reading.

"This is great," said McCoy. "I was afraid you would have to say we'd have to destroy all the crystals, and they are so very beautiful. But now we can apply to the stores for some varnish, and they can all be made safe again."

And that is just how it was. It took a little time, for Spock insisted on making extensive tests to make sure the effect of the varnish was permanent and total, but eventually he was satisfied, and one by one the crystals were treated and returned to their owners. Only the three bought to be studied in the Science Department were left untreated, but they were carefully placed in a neutralizing container for future study. Captain Kirk was given a full report which he studied with interest. Thanks to his efficient trained staff, and especially Spock and McCoy, the Enterprise had been saved again, from what could have developed into something very destructive.

Later, Spock was reading quietly in his room before retiring, when he heard a soft knock on his door. He responded, and much to his surprise, saw Captain Kirk enter and come towards him. The Captain's expression was odd, almost sheepish, and Spock wondered what was wrong. Trying to cover his embarrassment, Kirk came straight to the point.

"Spock," he said, "about me striking you, and knocking you down before a witness - you have the right to prefer charges."

"I hardly think that is necessary, Captain," replied Spock, "and I waive the right."

"Thank you," said Kirk, relieved although he had expected Spock to say something like that. "But I still feel badly about it. Would it help if I let you have a free swing at me?"

"It would afford me no gratification whatsoever," replied the Vulcan, his eyebrow shooting up in surprise. Really, how oddly these humans thought sometimes!

"No, I don't suppose it would," said Kirk. "But it might make me feel better."

Spock considered this for a moment - what odd reassurance these humans needed, the strange need to make amends when they felt guilty, even when the wrong was not intentional.

"Well," he said at last, "if it will please you, perhaps I can show you something you may not have seen before." Carefully weighing up the space and the proximity of the furniture, he advanced on his Captain, and using a hold and a throw totally unknown to Kirk, deposited the Captain gently, but unceremoniously, flat on his back on the floor.

Kirk, somewhat astonished, pushed up on his elbows and regarded the Vulcan ruefully.

"I like that," he said. "Very effective, but I hope you don't ever use it against me in anger."

"I sincerely hope the occasion never arises, Captain," said Spock fervently, and reached out a strong hand to help Kirk to his feet again. He would never fully understand these humans, but he had come to realise what their friendship meant to him; he valued it highly, and would do much to keep it unspoiled.

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Captain James T. Kirk did not particularly like Ensign Rev Harbi...and he did not know why.

It worried him.

Harbi had only joined the Enterprise a few days previously; he was courteous, obedient, efficient, punctual, tidy...there was nothing, nothing at all, that Kirk could put a finger on and say, "This is what's wrong."

Kirk had shipped annoying crewmen before this; men who had been less than fully competent, or who were lazy or careless - he usually managed to get rid of them fairly quickly - but he had never shipped one that he had completely disliked - until now. And there was no obvious reason why he should dislike the Dorian. The being was, perhaps, a little more extrovert than Kirk, personally, appreciated, but that was no reason to dislike him...nor was it any comfort to Kirk to learn that no one in the crew liked Harbi. Not that he was actively disliked; he just wasn't liked. And that in itself was odd, too; every Dorian Kirk had ever known had been popular, liked by everyone aboard ship, without exception.

Kirk found himself wanting to punish - or at least reprimand - Harbi for any and every minor thing that he did; things that he would overlook in anyone else, at least until the new crewmen found his feet and learned Kirk's ways. Realising this, Kirk was deliberately lenient with the Dorian, even when Spock mentioned to him that several of the crew had complained about the Dorian Service Medallion that Harbi wore.

This medallion had been annoying Kirk, too, but knowing as he did how proud the Dorians were of their medallions, he had deliberately waited, hoping that once Harbi had got over the first raptures of being entitled to one, he would wear it inside his shirt, as all the other Dorians Kirk had ever served with had done. The trouble with the medallion was that, because the Dorians' optic system was different from the human one, what they considered a thing of beauty was, to humans, highly, very highly, psychedelic, and visually very disturbing, causing a condition that, in extreme cases, led to dizziness and loss of balance.

"Even I find Mr. Harbi's medallion disturbing," Spock said, having delivered the general complaint.

"I know," Kirk said. "I keep wanting to drag it off his neck. The trouble is, the thing's a status symbol."

"So I have heard," Spock commented. "But I have never before served with a Dorian. In what way is it significant?"

"Well, you know the Dorian system," Kirk replied. "Gravity only 85% of Earth normal. By Terran standards, Dorians are mostly far too weak to meet the physical requirements of Starfleet. The handful who are strong enough to get through a physical and eventually get on to a ship...they're regarded as something special. Once they're assigned to a ship, they get a Service Medallion from their Government. This is Harbi's first assignment, so he's only just got his medallion. Of course he wants to show it off. I can understand that. But understanding doesn't make it any easier to live with. I probably would have spoken to him about it days ago, only I was scared of picking on him..."

Spock nodded. "I understand how you feel," he said, surprising Kirk considerably. "I do not like him - I find I am continually wanting to correct him unnecessarily, so much so that when I do have reason to correct him, I am reluctant to do so."

"I'm glad I'm not the only one," Kirk commented drily. "But I think I'll have to speak to Harbi about it now that there are complaints."

He sent for the Dorian, and when Harbi reported to him, he merely pointed out that since most of the crew were humans, and humans found the medallion disturbing, it would be more courteous

to his crewmates if he wore his medallion under his shirt, where most of his race did.

Harbi agreed to do this; but within twenty-four hours, the complaints had started again. Harbi was again wearing his medallion in full view.

This time McCoy came to Kirk.

"Jim, that medallion of Harbi's has got to go," he said. "Half of the crew are suffering from general dizziness and lack of concentration because of the crazy colour pattern on it. Even Spock's affected. And I couldn't give him a proper physical because of it. I kept seeing double. If you can't persuade him to keep it out of sight, you'll have to confiscate it."

"I don't want to do anything that drastic," Kirk began reluctantly - more so because it was what he wanted to do.

"It's that or have no one on the ship apart from Harbi working at full efficiency. The ones who aren't affected yet aren't affected simply because they haven't come in contact with Harbi yet. But they soon will. And as soon as they do...No, Jim, you'll have to stop him wearing it, and if the only way is to confiscate it..."

"I suppose you're right," Kirk said unhappily. "But he's going to feel that I'm picking on him. And he'll be right."

"You're not, Jim. You gave him a chance. He didn't take it. You have the rest of the crew to consider...Jim, if you liked him - would you hesitate?"

"No, I don't suppose I would...all right, Bones. I'll order him to stop wearing it, and warn him that if he disobeys this time, I'll confiscate it. I hope I don't have to."

The warning was sufficient, however. Harbi stopped wearing the medallion, at least where it could be seen, but Kirk sensed that the Dorian was resentful. On the surface, he was still the same courteous, inefficient, obedient officer; on the surface, there was no sign that Harbi knew he was disliked, especially by his Captain; but Kirk felt that he knew...and returned the dislike with outright hatred.

It would have afforded him no gratification to know that he was right.

Kirk was definitely right.

Harbi didn't like the Captain. But then, Harbi didn't like anyone.

He had always been regarded as unusual on Dor; he had grown up knowing that everyone expected him to join Starfleet Command because he was so big and strong; he was pleased that he was big enough and strong enough to be accepted - yet paradoxically he resented it, resented the assumption that so many of his race, his family among them, made, that only the big and strong Dorians should be of value to the Federation. (No one else in the Federation made this assumption; there were many things Dor produced that the Federation valued, and there had been great advances in the treatment of psychiatric illnesses since Dor joined the Federation because of them. Only the Dorians themselves underestimated the many benefits they had given to the other races who were allied to them.)

No, Harbi didn't like anyone - his defiance in continuing to wear the medallion, the one disobedience he had allowed himself, and that only because it hadn't been a direct order, had been symbolic of it - but Kirk he now hated, as the symbol of the detested Federation that decreed that his younger brother, who would have given anything to be entitled to wear the medallion, but who was too slightly built to pass the preliminary medical examination, should be useless to the Federation. He himself didn't want the hated symbol of strength, but he found he bitterly resented not being allowed to show it off.

He began to wonder how he could be revenged on Kirk...and suddenly realised that he had an innate weapon that he could use, without anyone being any the wiser. The fact that Kirk himself wouldn't know who was causing him distress didn't matter; all that mattered was the fact of being able to distress Kirk - and gain personal pleasure at the same time.

For Dorians were unique in that they had developed from a parasitic life-form. They had existed on the emotions of the other life-forms on Dor, preferring the more pleasant emotions, and had developed intelligence as they sought to cause pleasant emotions in their hosts. Although Kirk didn't know it, it was one reason why the other Dorians he had known had been so well liked; they had provided a telepathic aura of happiness, which had provided them with feedback to satisfy their now rudimentary parasitic cravings. Noone suffered, everyone was happy, and noone was any the wiser. It was also the reason why Dorian treatment for psychiatric disorders was so successful; but they had never seen any reason to mention their ability to the Federation.

But Harbi was not a normal Dorian.

Unlike most of his fellows, Harbi was capable of resentment.

Harbi was a throwback - and a throwback of the worst kind. The emotion he preferred to feel in others was unhappiness. The aura he projected was one of dislike. For a parasite, it was anti-survival, and most of his kind had died out long before the race had gained intelligence. It was rarely that a Dorian like Harbi was born.

On Dor, he had been cunning enough to hide his aberration; here, he saw no need to. And since it was a telepathic condition, it didn't show up on any of his personality profiles. Since he came on board, he had been feasting on dislike, unhappiness and disorientation. And he had now been forbidden to wear the medallion that had given him much parasitic food - a double reason for resentment.

But he could replace what he had lost, from Kirk. He could make Kirk miserable.

He watched Kirk carefully for several days, before insinuating a parasitic thread of thought into Kirk's mind. He saw Kirk's deep affection for Spock and McCoy; and decided that he could cause Kirk great distress if he could somehow alienate him from them...preferably one at a time. And he would feed fat from that distress.

He knew the theory of the ancient technique, no longer commonly used, of causing dreams in the host; and began to experiment with the technique.

He probed Kirk's memories carefully, searching for one that he could use. He knew he couldn't create dreams for Kirk - not yet. He had to gain experience in controlling his host's mind first, and the way to do that was to take memories and manipulate them.

The surface memories were all pleasant ones, and Harbi's nose wrinkled as he experienced them, finding them sickly to his depraved tastes. Memories of laughter, of friendship; memories of assistance in times of danger; memories of a look or a word or even a touch exchanged, a rapport greater than even Harbi's parasitic mind could appreciate. And worst of all to the Dorian's warped mind was love... Kirk's love for his friends, his certainty that they loved him in return - even the Vulcan from whom Harbi had been able to obtain very little reaction.

There was nothing that he could use!!! Even the more unpleasant memories were smothered in a thick layer of suffocating gratitude for help received...

Wait though...wait...could he use some of them? There was one... the help given had been so little...could he use it? He probed the memory, absorbing all the details...

Then recalled it to Kirk's sleeping consciousness that night. He watched, standing in the background of Kirk's mind, absorbing Kirk's emotions...



"WELL, THERE GOES THE NO CLAIMS BOND!"

It was a beautiful planet. Gravity, temperature, atmosphere, all perfect, with no seasonal fluctuations anywhere - eternal summer. Then a flower, a beautiful, large flower, fired a cluster of darts at one of the landing party, and he fell, dead. McCoy bent over him...he could do nothing. Kirk glanced round. There were more of the flowers...but none near enough to do any damage. Then Spock came up behind him - and deliberately pushed him towards one of the flowers. Still off-balance, he tried to get away from it, and failed. He felt the darts hit him, like so many stabs of fire, and fell, unable to move, unable to speak...still conscious, he heard McCoy say, "He's dead," and Spock's reply, a mocking, "We're well rid of him." McCoy laughed too; and they walked away together and left him lying there, still alive but unable to show it...long tendrils snaked out from the plant then, fastening themselves round him...he felt them sucking the blood from him, pulling tiny pieces of flesh from him and knew that the flower, so beautiful to look at, was eating him alive...he thrashed about, trying to get away from it, but knowing that for all his efforts he wasn't moving an inch...

Full-fed, Harbi allowed the dream, an amalgam of two experiences, to fade, but remained watching, probing for another memory he could use, another memory he could manipulate as easily...odd that it had been so easy after all, but of course they had been simple memories, nothing complicated about them...Ah, there was another one...

The survivors of the escaping band of genetic giants faced the crew of the Enterprise, who had proved unable to stop them.

"You can join us," Khan said. "We need servants...as our slaves, you will be permitted to live...and you, Mr. Spock. We would be glad to have you join with us, as an equal. You are our equal, much superior to these puny creatures that Earthmen have become since they overthrew us by their treachery. Will you join us?"

"Yes," Spock said clearly. "You are by far a better leader than Kirk... You do not want Kirk, Khan. Let me have the pleasure of destroying him. Otherwise, you will be eternally in danger from his trickery."

"Do what you will with him," Khan said. "He is yours."

Spock gripped his arm and dragged him out. Once outside, Kirk said, "That was a good act, Spock -"

"Act?" Spock said mockingly. "It was no act, Kirk. Khan is your superior I serve him now."

He opened the door of the decompression chamber and forced Kirk in. The door slammed shut; the air pressure began to decrease...Kirk gasped for breath...gaspd...gaspd...and everything became black...

He opened his eyes to find himself in a space-suit, drifting in empty space. Where?...Nearby, he could see the Enterprise. He struggled to reach

her, trying to swim through the vacuum of Space, and finding that he could. He only had air for such a little while now...he had to get to the Enterprise...

He reached out to touch the ship, and found that his hand went through her. He pushed his way through the hull, and moved down the corridor.

The bridge...he had to get to the bridge...and he was there, on the bridge, with no idea of how he had got there. Spock was sitting in the Command chair, McCoy at his side, and Scotty nearby.

They saw him, stared at him. He tried to call to them for help; Spock shook his head. "No, gentlemen, Kirk is dead. That is only a ghost. Forget about him. He is dead. Lost with the Defiant."

Desperately, he tried to speak to Spock, to beg him for the help that a corner of his mind knew Spock should give him, but he had not the breath to do it. He gasped for breath again, feeling his senses going, sinking into blackness...

He jerked into wakefulness, and sat up sharply. He looked around the familiar cabin, and drew a deep, thankful breath. Only a dream - no, three dreams...but so vivid - and so wrong, so terribly wrong. Why had his subconscious mind insisted on having Spock betray him, when he knew Spock had saved him each of those times? Deliberately, he thought over the actual incidents about which he had dreamed. Spock had pushed him away from the flower; Spock had risked everything to retrieve him alive; Spock had not sided with Khan, but had defied him...

He was worming his way into your confidence, a thought said, deep inside his head. He wanted you to learn to trust him...so that he could betray you later...

"No!" he gasped aloud.

To distract himself, he glanced at the chronometer. Time to get up, to return to duty...he yawned, still sleepy, but hauled himself out of bed.

He found himself watching Spock cautiously from time to time during the day, and each time he forced his eyes away. He trusted Spock...of course he did! A few bad dreams couldn't alter that... if only that treacherous little thread of thought would stop remembering the mockery in Spock's voice during the dreams...

He went to bed early that night, hoping for a good sleep to make up for the lack of rest the night before. Harbi watched as he settled down.

He fell asleep quickly; he was very tired.

Which memory tonight, Harbi thought. That me? Or that?...

Gary Mitchell's eyes gleamed silver as he looked at Kirk. "You always wanted me to think, didn't you, James? Well, I'm thinking now. You can't stop me, James; I'm stronger than you...you should be kneeling before me; I should be the Captain, not you..."

Spock moved into the line of Kirk's sight. He walked over to Mitchell's side. Then he turned to face Kirk.

His eyes also were gleaming silver!

"We're taking over this ship, Kirk," he said. "We're the rulers of the Galaxy. We're stronger than any of you puny Earthmen...you wanted to leave us stranded on Delta Vega. But it's you who will be stranded there, Kirk, you and the rest of the weak insects that we could crush under our feet. We could survive down there; how long will you live?" And he laughed, scornfully.

Somehow, without any transition, Kirk found himself on the surface of Delta Vega, several of the crew at his side. Facing him were Mitchell, Spock, McCoy, Scotty, all with their eyes gleaming unrecognisably. Then they were gone. They had been his friends, and they were gone...leaving him, and the handful of the crew who had not been affected by the barrier, to die a lingering death from starvation...He looked round at the near-barren planet, seeing plants sprouting miraculously; he glanced towards his crew - and found that they had mostly disappeared. Only one or two, all

studying tricorders, were left.

"Jimmy, boy!"

He whirled to face the remembered, the hated, voice.

Finnegan!

"Do you think you can survive here now, Jimmy boy? You have to beat me first, you know - and you can't beat me, Jimmy. You never could. You never will."

Kirk lunged forward, wanting to batter Finnegan into unconsciousness, irritated beyond bearing by the detested, gloating voice. He thought he had seen the last of Finnegan when the Irishman left Starfleet Academy; it seemed he had been wrong. And he had never envied the unfortunate Captain who had had to put up with Finnegan in his crew.

Finnegan danced backwards, away from Kirk's threatening fists, and round behind a rock. As Kirk followed him, he stopped.

Finnegan was no longer alone. Spock stood beside him.

Kirk stopped dead. "Spock?"

Finnegan burst out laughing, a horrible mocking laugh that Kirk remembered only too well; it spelt humiliation for him, indicated that once again he had fallen victim to one of Finnegan's tricks; and this time, Spock laughed with him. He turned away, unwilling to let Finnegan see how hurt he was that Spock, Spock of all people, should laugh with Finnegan at him; and knew that Finnegan was not fooled.

He turned to face a stone wall and whirled again.

Finnegan no longer stood there; Garth did, with Spock still at his side. And Spock held an open communicator.

"Spock! No!"

"Yes, Kirk," Spock said coldly. "Lord Garth is the natural leader of the Galaxy. He must be allowed to leave here, and take up his rightful place."

Kirk lunged at Spock, trying to stop him. With one hand, almost contemptuously, Spock held him off while he spoke into the communicator.

"Spock to Enterprise. Two to beam up."

Scotty's voice spoke. "Queen to Queen's level three."

"Queen to King's level one," Spock said deliberately.

"Scotty! No! No!" Kirk screamed. "No!..."

"You did kill Ben Finney," Spock went on, as if none of the previous exchange had happened. "You panicked, Kirk, never gave him a chance to leave the pod. You murdered Finney, Kirk. You murdered him. You murdered him. You murdered him..."

Kirk closed his eyes to shut out the sight of the accusing face. The voice slowly faded into silence; Kirk reopened his eyes.

He was lying on the floor of his cabin. A glance at the chronometer told him it was again morning.

He got to his feet, slowly dressed. He had never felt less like going on duty.

That night, he fought his tiredness, trying to stay awake as long as possible, afraid to sleep in case he dreamed again. He sat at his desk, trying to keep his mind occupied with paper work, but his eyes drooped shut despite all his attempts to remain wakeful. At last he gave up, and staggered to bed, hoping against hope that this time he'd be tired enough to sleep without dreaming.

He faced Spock, a strip of leather in his hands, wondering how to use this weapon to best advantage. It seemed so unlikely a weapon!...And he didn't want to kill Spock...even though there was killing fury in the Vulcan's eyes. He was half conscious of McCoy at the side, beside T'Pol, watching. Spock lunged, getting his thong round Kirk's throat, He felt it tighten, and struggled for breath, unavailingly. He felt consciousness slip from him; as it did, he heard McCoy saying, "He's dead. Well done, Spock."

The voice was truly congratulatory; Kirk knew that McCoy was offering a sincere comment. He felt his body being thrown into a pit; and heard the gathered Vulcans, McCoy with them, leaving. They weren't even bothering to take his body back to the Enterprise...

He struggled back to conscious thought, to find himself lying on a bed - facing himself! He stared in horror at the face, so familiar from his mirror, as it looked down at him, a vicious expression on its face. Then it left him, and he lay, unable to move because of the restraints that held him.

Spock came in, to look down at him.

"Spock! You must help me. I'm Captain Kirk. Janice Lester changed bodies with me..."

Spock's fingers on his face..."I believe you...but I believe we will be better with a change of Captain. She will depend on me more, since she has no experience...and she will not have the delusions of grandeur that you so often have...If you tell anyone that I admitted that you told the truth, I will say you are lying, Dr. Lester.

I hate you, Captain..."

Kirk's attention was drawn from his aching head to Spock's statement. Somewhere in the background, Kevin Riley was still singing 'Kathleen', very badly.

So the ailment, whatever it was, had affected Spock too...and now he knew the truth. Spock hated him...He had hidden it cleverly, but the disease had betrayed him...he would know never to trust the Vulcans again...

He closed his eyes in misery, and when he opened them again, it was to look up at the roof of his cabin. It was morning again, and for the third night he had obtained no rest from his night's sleep...

Sitting in his Command chair that day, he had a momentary impulse to confide in Spock. Despite the dreams, he still trusted Spock... he did, he told himself.

Inside his mind, Harbi sensed the thought with near panic. He mustn't allow Kirk to confide in anyone...but could he influence Kirk's waking mind? Really influence it, as opposed to putting a stray thought into it?

The dreams can't be wrong, the thought came subtly. They can't be wrong. Why have there been so many of them, if they are? Spock is just biding his time. He wants to be Captain. He must want to be Captain. If I tell him, he'll tell McCoy, and get me declared unfit for duty...maybe even insane...never to command the Enterprise again...and then Spock would be Captain...

He gave an involuntary shiver at the thought of losing the Enterprise.

"Are you all right, Jim?"

He glanced round. Spock was standing beside him, an expression of some concern on his face.

It's a trick, the thought said. He wants you to admit to feeling ill so that he can have you removed from duty. He's cunning...

"I'm perfectly all right, Mr. Spock," Kirk said coldly, formally.

Rebuffed, hurt, Spock retreated into cold formality himself. "Very well, sir. I regret having bothered you unnecessarily."

He returned to his station, and gave his attention to his sensors.

Kirk watched him for a moment. I was right, wasn't I? the thought said. If he really cared, he wouldn't have gone back to duty so readily. You beat him this time.

From his place at the navigation console, Harbi glanced back at Spock. A new flavour had crept into the parasite's mind...he realised that he was getting some feed-back from Spock as well as

the now-permanent emotional feast he was getting from Kirk. This was wonderful...he had never been so well-fed, even as a child basking in the love and care of his parents, for that emotional aura had been the sickly-sweet one of affection, and he preferred the bitter one of hatred, fear and distrust, the tart one of hurt.

After Kirk went off duty, however, Spock made his way to Sickbay to see McCoy.

"Well, Spock?" McCoy asked airily. "What can I do for you?"

"For me, Doctor, nothing...but I do not think the Captain is feeling well. He is looking tired. He claims to be feeling perfectly all right, but I am not convinced. I think you should give him an examination."

"Are you saying you think he's unfit for duty, Spock?"

"No, Doctor, I would not go so far. I do say he is not looking well. I think he is tired; unnaturally so. And that unless something is done soon, he may then become unfit for duty. I think it better to see to him before that stage is reached."

"I'll go and see him."

McCoy made his way to Kirk's quarters casually, as if he had nothing more important on his mind than a gossip. He pressed the buzzer at the door; and on hearing the invitation to enter, went in.

Kirk looked at him a little suspiciously.

"Bones. Did Spock send you here?"

"Spock? Why should he? I just looked in for a chat."

"Oh. Sorry, Bones, I'm a bit edgy..."

"You're looking a bit tired too," McCoy said, privately shocked at how right Spock was.

"Oh, that. I'm not sleeping too well, that's all."

"Any idea why?" McCoy struggled to remain casual, half afraid that Kirk would resent so direct a question. After all, Spock must have asked, to know that Kirk claimed to be feeling all right.

Kirk shook his head. "No, not really. I've had a nightmare or two, that's all."

"Come on, Jim. You're coming to sickbay with me, and I'll give you a check over. Maybe all you need is a tonic."

The checkup proved that Kirk was surprisingly badly run down, and definitely underslept. McCoy gave him a shot and a couple of sleeping pills.

"Take these when you go to bed tonight," he said. "And go early to bed. Then I want to see you again in the morning."

Kirk took them and left. He had no intention of taking the pills; he had no intention of going to sleep if he could possibly avoid it. He didn't want to spend another night dreaming about being betrayed by Spock...

He sat at his desk working, forcing his eyes to remain open. Harbi sent him sleep thoughts, but he fought them, not knowing what he fought. Eventually, he could fight no longer, and slumped forward over his desk.

Joanna was on board the ship. She and McCoy were avoiding him... Well, he thought, they don't see much of each other...He was walking down the corridor when he heard laughter coming from Sickbay. One of the voices was Spock's.

"It's better like this," he was saying. "We don't need Kirk."

We don't need Kirk.

We don't need Kirk.

WE DON'T NEED KIRK.

The voice echoed round and round in his head, the cruel laughter from McCoy and Joanna providing a background to it.

Suddenly Spock was standing before him. He was holding a whip. He struck out at Kirk with it; Kirk dodged and turned to flee. As he did, the lash caught him across the face; across the eyes. He



tried to see where he was going, and couldn't...the lash had blinded him.

The ship seemed to have gone now. He was walking on a partly-yielding surface, one that dragged at his feet. He tripped and fell over a rock; he rolled and came to rest against a larger rock, the impact winding him. He lay for a few moments gasping for breath, then tried to get up. His skin seemed to be adhering to the rock... he pulled himself away, and felt the pain as some of his skin tore away. His shoulder was beginning to ache too; somehow, he had damaged it. He tried to move on. It was so hot; he would give anything for a drink. He tried to call out, but his throat was far too dry, and he could only croak. He heard rustling behind him, and turned; the rustling stopped, to be resumed to one side of him a few seconds later. He tried to ignore it, but kept wondering if the animals of this crazy world were as bloodthirsty as he had discovered the plants to be...he tripped and fell again.

Then he heard Spock's voice, and knew that the Vulcan was somewhere near.

"Spock!" he croaked, and knew that he'd been heard.

"There's no one here," Spock said clearly. "We might as well move on. He isn't here."

"Spock!" He tried to call again, but only a hoarse sound came. Someone caught his arm in an unfriendly grip.

"Mhlar spy!"

He was hustled along. Involuntarily he opened his eyes and found that he could see again. He was being forced towards a huge rock. He was made to stand with his back to it while his arms were tied by a rope that went round the back of the rock. Spock was standing there, watching.

"Spock!" he cried desperately. Even yet, somehow the instinct to trust Spock had not died completely.

The Vulcan smiled cruelly at him, and picked up a bow. He fitted an arrow to it, took aim carefully, and fired.

The arrow pinned one shoulder.

Spock took another arrow; fired it. It pinned the other shoulder.

He took yet another. This one, Kirk was sure, would be through the heart. He closed his eyes. He didn't want to watch Spock killing him...

Nothing happened. He opened his eyes.

He was slumped over his desk, his neck stiff from his uncomfortable position.

He was washing when McCoy came in without buzzing. The doctor took one look at him and said accusingly, "Jim, you didn't take those sleeping pills."

"How did you know?"

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#### CROSSWORD ANSWERS

ACROSS: 1. Tomorrow is Yesterday. 9. Aconite. 10. Tribble.  
13. Hear. 15. Machine. 18. Green. 21. A Piece of the Action.  
23. Marla. 25. Time. 26. Roykirk. 29. Gunfight. 31. Atoz.  
34. of Gideon. 35. Ed. 36. Gorm. 37. Doomsday. 39. Arena.  
40. Ye. 41. Amok Time. 42. Aside.

DOWN: 1. Taste of Armageddon. 2. Miri. 3. Real. 4. Incident.  
5. Edith. 6. The Lights of Zetar. 7. Ruth. 8. Tears. 11. B.B.C.  
12. Elinor. 14. Eve. 16. Areel. 17. The Menagerie. 19. E.I.O.  
20. Wink of an Eye. 22. Ion. 24. Axis. 27. Klingons. 28. The  
mark. 30. Nimoy. 32. Tide. 33. Od. 38. Mea.

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"Because if you had, you'd still be out cold. Jim, I didn't give you them for fun. You need a good sleep. Either you promise to take those pills tonight, or I come in and sedate you. Now make up your mind which it's to be."

Kirk looked at him from bloodshot eyes. Maybe, he thought, in a drugged sleep I won't have those nightmares. "All right," he said. "I'll take them tonight."

"Did you have another nightmare last night?" McCoy asked. Reluctantly, Kirk nodded.

"Jim, why not get Spock to meld with you, see if he can find out what's causing them?"

"No!" Kirk rejected the idea with revulsion - Harbi's revulsion. "I'm not having anyone crawling around inside my skull, least of all Spock!"

"But Jim, you've been in mind-meld with Spock before, and you never minded - if you'll excuse the pun."

"Well, I mind now! I won't agree to it."

"All right, Jim, just forget it." He glanced at Kirk. "I think you should stay off duty today, and rest. Try to get some sleep."

"I'm perfectly fit and able to do my job," Kirk answered sharply.

"You're tired out and liable to make a mistake."

"Doctor, are you in league with Spock to declare me unfit?"

McCoy stared at him in amazement. "No," he said. "But if you go on the way you're doing, I will be declaring you unfit, temporarily at least, and I'll keep you in Sickbay, under restraint if necessary, until you're fully rested."

He turned and left without another word. Kirk stared after him, aware that he had hurt him by his attitude, not fully understanding his own behaviour himself.

In a corner of his mind, Harbi smiled, savouring the flavour of McCoy's hurt. It had a different taste to Spock's, for it was mixed with anger...delicious!

Somehow, Kirk got through the day. He was desperately sleepy, and there was a terrible temptation to take the pills as he had promised and go to bed. Harbi was feeling hungry...the gluttonous hunger of the compulsive eater. Harbi had become addicted to his parasitism...he projected sleep thoughts at Kirk...sleep...sleep...

Kirk fought the temptation until mid-evening, ship's time; then he took the pills and lay down.

The pills weren't working! He had never been so wide awake. Restlessly, he got up again and made his way to the bridge. They were near Romulan space; soon it would be time to enter it in obedience to Starfleet's sealed order. They had to discover the secret of the Romulan cloaking device.

Yes; there was the Romulan ship.

"You will beam over, Captain, with your First Officer."

The woman commander...Spock staring at her.

"You should join us, Spock," she said seductively. "Your place is here with us, your distant cousins...these humans do not appreciate you as they should."

"I agree, Commander," Spock replied.

"This is a spy trip, is it not?" she asked.

"I do not know," Spock said. "But Kirk will know. He can be made to talk."

Kirk stared at Spock in horror... Romulan guards approached; he was seized and stripped, fastened to a wall. He twisted his head round to look at Spock. The Vulcan had picked up a whip and was approaching with it.

"I have tolerated you too long, Kirk," he said, coldly, harshly. "I have supported your illogic too long. But now we will see which of us is the stronger."

The whip lashed down across his back, with the full force of

the Vulcan strength cutting the skin. It fell again, again...Kirk bit his lip against the pain, struggling to remain silent. At last it stopped.

"Will you tell us, Kirk?" Spock's voice was cold, cruel, full of sadistic pleasure.

With an effort, Kirk shook his head.

The woman rapped out a sentence in Romulan; Kirk didn't understand what she said, though he felt that he should have done. The ropes fastening him were untied; he was dragged across the room to a table and thrown down onto it, roughly, on his back, the impact jarring all the whip cuts.

Four guards held his arms and legs; he closed his eyes for a moment to shut out the expression on their faces, and felt the smoothness of the table change under his back to a rough, uneven surface. He blinked his eyes open again.

The Romulan ship had vanished; in its place was an uninviting landscape. But one thing hadn't changed; Spock still stood there, whip raised; then he brought it down, full force, across Kirk's unprotected stomach.

He twisted in agony, tearing his lacerated back still further on the rough surface of the boulder on which he was lying.

"I wonder how long he can remain silent under this?" Spock said, calculatingly. Then he brought the whip down again. Again Kirk writhed, silent under the fire that shot through his body. The whip came down again...again...a tiny corner of his mind knew that ten lashes was the sentence; though when at last the whip ceased to fall, it felt like many more strokes than ten.

Harbi, watching, licked his lips delightedly, savouring the spicy tang of remembered agony. This was the best taste yet; better than hate, better than hurt, better than anger or fear. He wanted more...

"Will you tell us?" Spock's voice insisted. Kirk was beyond speaking. He dared not open his mouth for fear of losing the fragile control he had over his desire to scream...and scream...and scream...

The lash fell again...again...

Spock came out of his cabin as McCoy passed on his way to Kirk's quarters.

"How is the Captain, Doctor?"

"I don't know yet, I'm just going in to see him now. He should still be asleep, though; I gave him a couple of extra-strong sleeping pills, should knock him out for about fifteen hours, and he promised to take them. You know, it's funny, Spock; he's...well, I gave him the pills the night before, and he didn't take them; he's badly underslept, and he seems to be fighting going to sleep, or he'd have taken them. He admitted having one or two nightmares; but when I suggested that we should get you to meld with him to try to find out what's causing them, he refused point-blank. Didn't seem to want -"

He broke off as an agonised scream, piercing for all that it was muffled by the closed door, came from Kirk's room. As one, they leaped for the door. McCoy pressed the button to open it; they went in.

Kirk was writhing on the bed, his face a twisted mask of agony, as he screamed...and screamed...

Spock reached him first, and gripped his arms roughly, shaking him.

"Jim! Wake up! Jim!"

McCoy reached into his bag for a hypo. "He's too deeply doped by the sleeping pills to waken," he said. He pressed the hypo against Kirk's shoulder, and Kirk subsided from sleep into unconsciousness.

Harbi wrinkled his face in distaste at the honey-sweet taste of concern that reached him from their minds, and withdrew contact,

maintaining only the tenuous link that held Kirk a helpless prisoner of his greed.

Spock and McCoy looked at each other.

"If that's the extent of one of his nightmares, no wonder he's fighting sleep," Spock said quietly.

McCoy nodded. "What I don't understand is why he refused to let you meld with him...could you trace the origins of the nightmares, as I suggested?"

"Probably...but if he is unwilling, he would fight my influence in his mind."

"Whether he fights it or not, Spock, you're going to have to do it," McCoy said slowly.

Spock nodded. "It does seem to be the only solution," he agreed reluctantly.

They looked at each other again, then, by mutual consent, sat down to wait for Kirk to regain consciousness.

Kirk lay quiet for a little while, but then he began to toss restlessly again. McCoy bent over him anxiously.

"What is it, Doctor?"

"I don't know, Spock. I just don't know. It's as if...remember on Deneva? The people affected by the parasites showed strong reactions even when they were unconscious. He should be out cold after that shot I gave him; but he seems to be in the grip of another nightmare..."

Spock reached out to touch Kirk's head; but before he could, Kirk's eyes opened. He stared up at them, pain and horror showing clearly in his eyes.

"It's all right, Jim," McCoy said soothingly. "You're awake now...that must have been some dream."

Kirk shuddered. "It was...pretty bad," he admitted. He became aware of Spock beside him, and, almost without knowing he was doing it, he moved fractionally to get further away from the Vulcan.

Spock noticed the withdrawal, slight as it was, and moved away himself, his face wooden. McCoy noticed it too.

"Jim - what's wrong with you?"

"I...nothing, Bones."

"No? What was your dream about?"

"It was just...reliving one of my...my less pleasant memories," Kirk said hesitantly.

"Go on."

"I'd...rather not."

"And the rest of your nightmares?"

"Were much the same..." he said unwillingly.

"All right, Jim. Now, there must be some reason for them; I said that already. The only way we can find out what's causing them is for Spock to mind-link with you."

"No!"

"He's prepared to do it," McCoy told him. Surely that was why Kirk was refusing...his knowledge of how unpleasant it would be for Spock.

"No," Kirk said again. "I told you, Bones, I don't want anyone nosing around inside my skull."

McCoy glanced at Spock, apologetically. "Jim, either you agree to it or I declare you medically unfit for duty, sedate you and have Spock do it anyway. It'll be more pleasant all round if you submit voluntarily."

Kirk stared at him, gauging the extent of his implacability. Then he sighed.

"All right," he said. "Get on with it."

Spock came back almost reluctantly. He reached out to touch Kirk's face; and sent a tendril of thought into Kirk's mind.

At once he became aware of a stranger there, standing in a shadowed corner of Kirk's mind, watching. He moved towards the



*Dream sequence*

stranger; and found Kirk standing in his way, facing him.

"You must let me past, Jim," he said quietly.

"No!" Kirk gasped. "You want to get behind me, to stab me in the back..."

Spock stared at him in amazement, amazement that lessened when he realised that he was holding a knife in his hand. Now where had that come from?

"You must let me past," he repeated. "I am not any danger to you, Jim. But he is." He nodded past Kirk to the shadowy stranger.

He tried to step past, tried to move round Kirk; but his Captain moved with him, turning to keep facing him, and the stranger moved too, keeping behind Kirk.

"Look behind you, Jim. There's your enemy - not me. Jim, I hate to remind you of it, but how often have I saved you in the past? Would I do that, then seek to stab you in the back now? Look behind you."

The inner struggle showed on Kirk's face. He wanted to trust Spock...so much, so very much...but that horrible little thread of thought still whispered inside his head, "He's tricking you...he hates you..."

With an effort, a terrible mind-wrenching effort, Kirk gasped, "Spock...help me!...help me!"

He held out his hand. Spock gripped it, and pulled him to his side, turning him to face the shadow.

"Who are you?" he asked.

The shadow moved slightly; a man-shape, its face a featureless mask, it was completely anonymous.

Spock lifted the knife he was still holding and moved towards it.

"If you destroy me, you destroy Kirk," a hoarse, sighing, unidentifiable voice whispered. "If you destroy me here, you destroy his mind; if you do discover who I am and destroy my body, you destroy his body..."

The figure thinned, became transparent, and vanished.

Kirk became aware of McCoy standing there, watching anxiously, and realised that the doctor had heard none of the exchange. It had all been inside his head. Beside him, Spock said quietly,

"We were partly successful, Doctor. There was someone else inside the Captain's mind, influencing his thoughts...he is gone now, at least for the moment, but unless we can find out who it is and somehow disable him, he will re-enter - and continue to give the Captain nightmares."

With some difficulty, Kirk said, "Spock...What I said about the dreams...they were all things that did happen...but he twisted them somehow, so that you...you were the one trying to harm me..."

"Have you no idea of who it could be, Captain?" Spock asked briskly.

Kirk shook his head. "I didn't even know he was there, Spock... Bones, who on board, apart from Spock, is telepathic?"

McCoy shook his head. "Noone, as far as I know."

Kirk glanced at Spock, who also shook his head. "Anyone who is, is hiding the fact."

"If you melded with him, would you know?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Spock, I hate to ask it of you, but we have to find him. Even if it means you linking with everybody on the ship."

Spock nodded. "Yes, Captain."

"It isn't as bad as that," McCoy put in. "I think we can forget about the humans on board; and we can forget about most of the aliens too. The ones to investigate are the aliens who joined the ship recently, and there are only one or two of them." He saw Kirk's puzzled look, and went on. "Don't you see, Jim? Your nightmares are so recent, it can't be anyone who's been on the ship for a while

that's responsible, or they'd have started long ago."

"Yes," Spock said. "Of course. Now why didn't I think of that? However, Doctor, we can take the matter one step further; which of the new alien crew-members would have any cause to dislike the Captain enough to give him nightmares, nightmares in which I am the villain?"

"There's only one of them that I've had anything to do with yet," Kirk put in.

They looked at each other.

"Ensign Harbi?" Spock asked.

"I stopped him wearing his medallion. He would certainly resent that," Kirk replied. He glanced at McCoy. "Bones, what information have you on the Dorians? Are they telepathic?"

"If they are, it's never been reported," McCoy said.

"Let's find out." Kirk reached for the intercom. "Ensign Harbi, report immediately to the Captain's quarters."

Harbi, when he arrived, was the polite, courteous, non-obtrusive, unlikable officer they had come to expect him to be.

"Yes, sir?" he asked.

Kirk nodded to Spock. "Ensign, will you permit Mr. Spock to mind-link with you?"

"For what purpose, sir?"

Kirk looked searchingly at him. "I think you know that, Ensign."

Harbi's face twisted with rage. He reached out with his mind; Kirk cried out in pain as the Dorian's mind crashed into his with brutal force. Harbi glared defiantly at Spock.

"If you try to hurt me, you kill the Captain," he gasped.

"We're wanting to help you," Spock said reasonably, quietly, gently, even though his mind was a seething mass of anxiety for Kirk's safety - for Kirk's very sanity. Kirk's only chance lay in not frightening Harbi. He reached out to touch the Dorian, even though his mind shrank from the black hatred he already sensed in the other's thoughts; and Kirk screamed again, in sudden agony, as Harbi sent a red-hot thought spiking through his brain.

Balked, Spock retreated slightly. He caught McCoy's eye, and moved sideways; Harbi turned with him, to keep facing him. Cautiously, McCoy moved the few steps that separated him from the Dorian, and thrust the hypo against his neck. Harbi gasped; Kirk screamed again; then the Ensign fell unconscious while Spock leaped forward to support the staggering Kirk, who reeled from the effect of the white-hot dagger-thrust in his mind. Kirk clutched at Spock, gasping, while Spock projected soothing thoughts.

Meanwhile, McCoy, leaving Kirk to Spock, bent over the Dorian, his diagnostic scanner busy. At last he straightened.

"Well, Bones?"

McCoy shook his head. "His brain waves are showing definite abnormalities, Jim. In my opinion, this man is insane."

Kirk shuddered again. "He's still affecting me," he said. "I can feel him; now that I know about him, I can definitely feel him."

Spock moved now, to touch Harbi's head. He concentrated; his face twisted with distaste as he felt the lust for unpleasant emotions that boiled in the Dorian's head. His eyes closed in the effort to separate Harbi from Kirk; then Kirk cried out again as he felt the thread of thought pull out of his mind, hurting like a pulled tooth.

Spock glanced at McCoy. "You must kill him," he gasped. "Now, while he is unable to fight back. You must...or he will kill Jim..." His face showed the strain of holding the link while talking.

McCoy said slowly, unwillingly, "Is it essential?"

"Yes..."

If Spock thought so, it had to be. Unwilling, but resigned, McCoy gave Harbi the appropriate shot. The Dorian's body went completely limp; Spock pulled his mind free at the last possible

moment.

"I'll take his body to sickbay," McCoy said quietly. "Jim, you should try to get a proper sleep now. You should be all right."

Kirk nodded, with a weak smile. But after McCoy had gone, he turned to Spock.

"Spock...can I ask you a favour?"

"Certainly, Captain."

"Harbi...he is dead, isn't he?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Even so...I'm...afraid to sleep...those nightmares were... were pretty bad. Spock, would you meld with me again...so that I know you're there to help me?"

Spock reached out without replying to touch Kirk's face. Then he whispered, "Our minds are one..."

He sat on the edge of the bed, holding Kirk's hand. Kirk smiled as he closed his eyes. Spock concentrated. Peace... tranquillity...comfort...

Kirk walked through an open meadow, relaxing in the peaceful atmosphere. Spock came forward to meet him, and without speaking, turned to walk beside him. At the edge of the meadow they stopped and looked back at the beautiful panorama behind them. They smiled at each other; and together, they walked on. There was more beauty ahead...and they were together...and nothing could ever come between them.

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A tribble is a lovely thing  
But heaven, how it multiplies!  
Why don't Vulcans do the same?  
For fans that would be paradise!  
There would be little Spocks galore  
We all could have one to ourself -  
But help! There would be more and more -  
Put the idea on the shelf!

Margaret Bertram.

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SPOCK'S SONNET by Kathleen Glancy.

Living with humans isn't quite, to use  
One of their strange expressions, always jam,  
Given their tendency their wits to lose  
In certain situations, when I am  
Calm and serene. Now let us take Jim Kirk.  
Sometimes he is a man that one respects  
Though e'er beneath the surface does there lurk  
His lower self. To bring out its effects  
Easily done. Just show a female form  
To him, and he will lose his sanity,  
His wild emotions swiftly from him storm.  
I'm not like that, am I? Oh no, not me.  
Now if you'd know what constant thought is mine  
Go down the letters first in every line.

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