

# LOG ENTRIES

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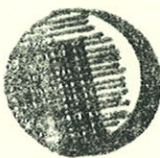
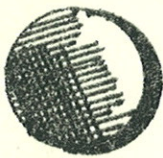
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The sun is rising  
 over the horizon  
 and the stars are  
 fading away. The  
 atmosphere is  
 becoming clearer  
 and the stars are  
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 stars are becoming  
 more distinct.

## A S.T.A.G. ZINE

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NIGHTMARE by R.H.

The shuttlecraft lay crushed against the sand scoured cliff face. He watched as Kirk helped a limping McCoy from the blown out hatch cover, one finger ever ready on the trigger button of his phaser. This was Klingon country, and they were intruders.

"Any signs of life, Lieutenant?"

Scotty's voice jerked him back to reality.

"Uh, no sir. Think the Klingons are close?"

"Their anti-aircraft fire shot us down, laddie. They know where we are all right."

"How's the Lieutenant?"

The engineering officer's face clouded. "Bad, laddie. Verra' bad. Doctor McCoy says she'll be lucky to last the night."

He nodded, and glanced towards the scrubland at the edge of the desert. Count one more to the Klingons. Chekov on re-entry, and now Uhura on landing - if it could be called a landing. He looked again at the smashed pressure shell, a shudder of remembering thudding through him as he recalled the sudden appearance of the Klingon fighter, the burst of fire and the head over heels tumble through the heat barrier of re-entry to crash on this out of the way ball of rock parsecs from the trading routes.

And with the possibility of a whole campful of Klingons over every hill.

McCoy, a red stain seeping over the left leg of his uniform, was talking to Kirk. Spock, efficient to the last, had hefted a pack of supplies and equipment onto his back, and help another for the captain. The conversation finished, they turned, motioning for Sulu to follow, and headed up the shallow rise towards him.

"We're going to try to set up a beacon on the bluff beyond this valley." Kirk's voice was harsh and strained, his face streaked with smoke and sweat. A track of blood from the corner of his mouth and from his left ear bore witness to the ferocity of the landing impact. Spock seemed to have fared better, yet even he bore the traces of injury. His shirt, torn and grimy, revealed many bruises and cuts, and a wicked burn across the back of one hand gave evidence of the control panel fire shortly before landing. Kirk was speaking again.

"I'll take the point, Spock behind me, then Sulu. You bring up the rear and keep an eye open for Klingons. Scotty."

"Aye, Captain?"

"Take care of Bones and Uhura. We won't be too long."

Scotty nodded. "Will do, Captain. I..."

"Yes, Scotty?"

"Nothing, Captain. Good luck."

Kirk nodded, then, adjusting the pack over wrenched shoulder muscles, started a powerful walk across the parched ground. They walked in silence for several minutes, all aware of possible attack. Kirk glanced at his phaser, was about to speak when Spock pulled up.

"Spock?"

"A moment, Captain."

His head turned slowly, keen eyes scanning the deep blue sky.

"Aircraft. Listen."

His keen Vulcan ears - those pointed anomalies - had proved their use. Now all could hear it, a deep, whistling rumble - air breathing engines of an atmosphere craft.

"Down!" Kirk dropped into a gap between two boulders, bruised fingers clawing for his communicator. "Kirk to Scott. Come in, Scotty." Then, to himself, "For God's sake, Scotty, come in."

The tinny speaker yielded his voice. "Captain?"

"Cover, Scotty. We hear an aircraft. Can only be Klingon."

"Aye, Captain. Scott out."

The juddering shock of explosion came as he closed the top of the communicator. From the direction of the camp, oily black mushrooms of smoke, lit from inside by chemical hellfire, spouted into the still, hot air. Eyes wide with shock, Kirk opened the communicator.

"Scotty. Bones? Anybody?" The light hiss of airborne static was his only reply. He slumped back against the sandstone boulder, eyes closed. The silence was as tangible as marble. Suddenly he threw the device hard against the cliff face opposite him. Granting him not even the satisfaction of seeing it shatter into a dozen pieces, the communicator clattered uselessly to the ground.

"Captain, May I remind you..."

"Dammit, Spock! I don't need reminding..." He caught himself with an effort. "Sorry, Spock. You're right, of course."

He got woodenly to his feet, looking sightlessly towards the thick pall of smoke rising from the camp. Spock took over the role of point, and he fell automatically into step behind him.

The little group walked with heavy steps towards the planned site of the beacon. They were destined never to reach it. A black, bat-like shape thundered over the rise in the ground before them. In a moment it was over them, the thunder of its engines lagging behind its faster than sound overflight. A second device, wallowing in the slipstream of the first, keeled over towards the group, the triple spined insignia of the Klingon Empire painted in fiery paint across its shark-finned fuselage. Spock dropped his pack and shouldered Kirk to the ground as a row of explosive shells stitched across the arid ground. Chips of stone clattered about them as they fought for cover in the black landscape. The first fighter, its overflight taking it far from the scene of combat, looped back in a lazy arc towards them. Windowless, the device was apparently pure machine, her pilot invisible to the ground, flying through the unblinking television monitors clustered round the weapons bay in the craft's belly. A trio of black eggs detached themselves from the craft, rolling lazily over in the still air. Kirk, galvanised into action by the sight of the hated machines, had shed his pack and was standing, phaser drawn, waiting for the fighter. Ignoring the deadly eggs as they burst in flames some distance beyond him, he steadied the phaser in both hands, aiming at the craft as it turned to repeat the run.

It dipped below the rock cliff, then suddenly burst into view, its engines trailing fine wisps of vapour as it tore through the sky. A line of blue light connected the snub nose of the phaser with the ship's port wing root. Seeing his danger, the pilot wrenched the craft over to its right, pulling a terrifyingly high G turn as it did so. Too late; the chunks of wreckage streaming

behind it, the wing peeled away from the fuselage. There was an immense bang and the cockpit section rolled free as the rest of the ship dissolved around it to a cloud of separated components. Almost too late, Kirk saw the second ship, roaring like a banshee, loop over the sandstone butte to his right.

A row of explosions raced towards him as the snout of the craft blazed with pinpoints of fire. He hunched down as the twin trails passed either side of him. Three lines of light followed the ship from three Federation hand phasers. The atmosphere craft jinked in the air, rolling over to port in a low - dangerously low - maneuver that carried it out of range.

Kirk ran towards them, breath rasping in his throat, eyes wild with elation. The others sensed his triumph at avenging the deaths of his friends and his crew. He nodded towards Spock, brushing chips of stone from his hair and uniform.

"Let's take care of this beacon before they come back." He accepted the pack, trying to stop his adrenalin charged hands from shaking.

Suddenly the death-wail re-echoed across the valley. The fighter had returned.

"Scatter. Stay under cover!"

Kirk pounded across the ground to a stack of boulders as Spock aimed across the top of his phaser. A beam of energy sank above the ship as it released more of the black eggs. Sulu was running for a natural fissure in the ground when the floor erupted beneath him. When the smoke and flames cleared nothing moved but falling shards of stone. Spock dropped into the newly formed crater. The lieutenant watched as Kirk, his face ashen with shock, stared at the hole. The oh-so-familiar banshee wail snapped his head round, his phaser automatically turning with it. There was a roar, and Spock's refuge was filled with flame.

"SPOCK!"

His voice carried even over the keening engine note. Phaser still clutched in his right hand, the knuckles whitening around the butt, he broke from cover, running towards the place he had last seen his first officer alive.

He spun on his heel as the craft rumbled over the cliff at the end of the valley. Dropping on one knee, he raised both hands to steady the phaser.

The craft dipped its wings. Kirk waited until it was point blank range.

There was a light, insignificant crackling sound. Chips of stone lifted around the kneeling figure, his pose held as if he were carved from granite.

As the shadow of the plane passed over him, James Kirk pitched forward onto his face, to lie motionless as the red stain spread across his back.

The lieutenant, blood racing in his temples, stared with rising horror at his captain. Dropping the phaser, he rushed blindly from his place of concealment. His boots slapped against the sun heated ground as he raced somewhere - anywhere - to get away from the carnage, while behind him the fighter turned slowly, efficiently, fatally, towards him.

In a whirl of orange and red light, the ground vapourised around him...

His eyes snapped open. He waited for his racing heart to subside. A dream, a bad dream. He rolled off the bed, feeling the perspiration running down his forehead. He stumbled towards the bathroom, hand fumbling for the light switch. He blinked as the harsh white light flooded the somewhat cramped room.

A dream. A dream of a lieutenant. In the Federation, no less. He wince as the cold water touched his face. He brushed the droplets from his eyes and glanced up at the mirror above the basin.

The face of Commander Kang, of the First Klingon Battle Fleet, smiled ruefully back at him.

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TERRA FIRMA by Ann Wigmore.

I left this place  
a million years ago,  
a younger, frightened man.  
It was a time for dreams then,  
soft-spun, wild-blown dreams,  
that somehow all came true.  
The joy that touched me then  
never left me  
made me whole.

But there are times when this place  
is the only place I want to be.

I remember their voices,  
laughing they were,  
making a home for me,  
sending me out into the wide, wide universe.  
Well, here I am,  
back again.  
I've missed them all,  
all those sights and sounds from long ago.  
I've longed for the sight of a sky that was blue  
and not green of scarlet.

I've been homesick... look at that grass!...  
Welcome home, James.

\*\*\*\*\*

KIRK (to recruit): Now, Mr. Smith, perhaps you can tell me how, in the old-time rockets, they started de-orbit burn.

SMITH: With de matches and De Forest, sir.

\*\*\*\*\*

Is Uhura a heavenly body?

\*\*\*\*\*



regard to Stratos Ci...  
ty were not there fore...  
conclusive.

# Oxford Union Debate

The Oxford Union debate last night carried on the excellent record of this society in inter-species relations. As always, the debate took place in the magnificent medieval debating hall of the University. The motion was ; 'This house believes that the Vulcan ethic is untenable in Human society.'

The most interesting feature of this lively assembly was the choice of speakers. The main defender of the motion was Clarence Heffer, Prof. of Earth History at the University, he was seconded by T'Pet, an undergraduate and the first Vulcan to accept a place at one of Earth's oldest seats of learning. The guest proposer was Sir Canto Piebalm, Chief Astronomer on United Research Satellite 111s/6. Opposing the motion was Carlton Stringverg, Prof. of Xenobiology, seconded by undergraduate Michael Higgins. As guest opponent Prof. Stringverg invited a former student of his Ms. Amanda Greyson. Ms Greyson is the wife of the ex-ambassador from Vulcan.

The debate opened with a speech by Prof. Heffer, he expounded on the relative histories of the two planets, pointing out the effects of environment on cultural mores and behaviour patterns. The speech was well thought out, although the premise on which it was built is a little shaky as Prof. Stringverg was quick to point when he

rose to reply. The Xeno-biologists speech was a competent and comprehensive exposition of the laws of biological inheritance, pointing out the basic affinities of the two cultures. Of the two leading speeches his was decidedly the most persuasive.

Although the next speaker, Sir Canto Piebalm, is a man of superb oratory and ability, I for one did not find the content of his speech inspiring. Sir Canto's contention was based on his practical experiences in inter-species research stations. I found it full of ambiguities and bigotry.

A pleasant contrast therefore was the speech of Ms Greyson. Her words were light and full of affection for her adopted home.

There were two memorable moments in her speech, the first was Ms Greyson's defence of the Vulcan ethic in which she said, 'A Vulcan is the perfect breakfast companion, neither granting ir ritably when asked to

pass the butter, nor assaulting one's semi-conscious ears with a stream of senseless conversation.'

The other incident occurred when Ms. Greyson's six year old son, speaking in a loud whisper, questioned a doubtful premise in his mother's contention. This incident caused the meeting to break up into laughter; the boy had already proved a center of interest, as we so rarely see Vulcan children on Earth.

The last two speeches were excellent considering they were both given by first year students. Of the two I think that T'Pet had the edge. This attractive young Vulcan is becoming quite a well-known personality around the University, here, she has been christened 'Kitten' due to her diminutive size and the coincidence of her name. Altogether an enjoyable and stimulating evening was spent at the Union. The result? The motion was defeated by a margin of fifty.

THIS REPORT APPEARED IN THE MAGAZINE DIPLOMATIC INTERVIEW, STAR DANCE INTERVIEW.

## Honorary

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## New

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' THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME ' ? by Beth Hallam.

The Lady Amanda was relieved that the day had come to an end. She had not thought that travelling with her small, solemn-eyes son would be easy. She had expected problems resulting from free-fall, space-sickness, and inevitable boredom. What she got was a succession of daring adventures and a plethora of unanswerable questions. Spock had taken to space-travel as if it were the only life he had known. He was enthralled by the engineering of the space-cruiser, to-day the turbo-lift had kept him occupied. Amanda smiled as she thought back to the incident, until now she had not found it amusing. She had been consumed with worry; feverishly considering all the disasters that could befall an inquisitive five-year-old on ship-board. What had actually happened was that Spock had entered the turbo-lift with a party of Terran tourists, he had worked his way to the back of the elevator, planning to ride up and down with the visitors. What he had not reckoned on was being left alone in the lift. A mischievous twelve-year-old human passenger had pushed the down-button when leaving, and the tiny Vulcan child was trapped, the controls eighteen inches above his head.

It had taken five hours to locate him and Amanda had needed every ounce of the training she had received from her husband's people to keep herself from screaming.

One consolation of the incident was that Amanda had gained a friend. The passengers were humans mostly, returning home from vacations and jobs on far planets. There were passengers of other races, including a party of Vulcan scientists destined for S.A.G.T. (Sustained Anti-Gravity Investigations) on Earth/Moon base. Amanda had felt 'odd', as a human mother of a 'Vulcan' child; the humans looked askance at her, they didn't understand who she was. The Vulcans spoke, knowing her history, but they were all male and preoccupied with their studies.

This day, when Spock went missing, Amanda had been sitting in the lounge, reading - trying to revise her knowledge of basic nuclear physics, so that her son's education would not suffer from the trip. It was one of the conditions Sarek had made when agreeing to her proposed visit home. She had a half-cold cup of coffee before her, Spock had wandered off somewhere around, he had been told not to leave the lounge and was usually an obedient, if argumentative, child.

The Eurasian woman had an interesting face, not beautiful, but arresting; she was about six years older than the Lady Amanda herself. She came and stood beside Amanda, looking down at her, after a moment Amanda looked up, startled.

"Excuse me," said the woman, "I would like to check out something. Do you mind?" Amanda wasn't sure, she was a little wary of the human passengers. She had caught snatches of conversation concerning herself and her child, not much of it complimentary. She knew that there had been some speculation about her racial origins, especially as she often effected the high-collared Vulcan cloak, which effectively hid her ears.

"Well?" she questioned, cautiously.

"Aren't you Amanda Grayson?" The question was a shock, she had indeed been Amanda Grayson, before she married Sarek of Vulcan, that was.

"Yes, but...?" Amanda's tone was puzzled, she did not know



this woman.

The girl smiled, sunlight on water. "You don't know me, but I've seen your school-photo, that's how I recognised you. I'm Maggie Donovan's little sister!"

Amanda smiled, and the girl relaxed, she had obviously been unsure of her welcome. Maggie had been at school with Amanda; they had not been 'best' friends, but had made up part of the same clique.

"Why," Amanda exclaimed. "Now I see the likeness."

"Well, we're only half-sisters really, my name's Kali Kalomi, awful, isn't it?" She peused and sat down opposite Amanda. "You're with the little Vulcan boy, aren't you?"

"My son, yes," Amanda nodded calmly, not a single tremor gave evidence of her wildly beating heart. This was the first time she had had to face human reaction to her interspecies marriage, she was ashamed how much she dreaded it.

"Your son? But..." The girl hesitated, her skin took on a rosy hue, "Excuse me, I didn't mean to be rude, but, have you adopted him?"

"No." Amanda spoke carefully, with Vulcan precision, "My husband is Sarek of Vulcan; Spock is our son."

"Oh!" Kali looked genuinely pleased. "Isn't that wonderful? I hope you're very happy; do you like living on Vulcan?" The words tumbled over each other in eager interest.

"Thank you." Amanda began to relax, "I have grown used to Vulcan, though it has not always been...!" She was interrupted by an urgent tugging at her sleeve. She looked down at her dark, diminutive son. Many people had commented on the pointy-eared child, Vulcan children rarely travelled with their parents, indeed were seldom born off their home planet. His eyes were large with wonder as he regarded his mother's companion.

"Spock," Amanda smiled lovingly as she addressed him, "This is Miss Kalomi, she is related to an old friend of mine."

The child raised his hand in the Vulcan salute, then looked at his mother in question, unsure if this was the correct way to greet a guest. Kali smiled at him, and held out her hand; Spock glanced at Amanda who nodded reassuringly, he rested his hand briefly on the one offered him, but he did not smile. Flashed into Kali's mind was a fleeting view of herself, olive-skinned, vital and very large. She opened her eyes wide in surprise and heard Amanda chuckle, then caution, "No, Spock!" The vision dissipated as the small hand was withdrawn.

The child settled beside them for a while listening to their conversation, but it was of places and people he did not know, and he began to get restless. Amanda turned to him as soon as she noticed.

"Sit still," she ordered quietly, he obeyed her but was not content with mere obedience.

"Can I go and use the...?" He made a gesture with his hands, bringing them together, then moving them up and down, the gesture was instantly recognisable.

"The turbo-lift?" Kali asked.

"The tur-bo-lift," he repeated solemnly after her, enunciating carefully. His English was completely without accent, despite his

extreme youth.

"Yes...but!" replied Amanda, as he made to go, "do not make a nuisance of yourself, and do not get out at any other floor than this. Do you understand?"

"Of course, mother, what is there not to understand?" The question was asked with an air of ponderous puzzlement, in almost exact imitation of his father, although Kali did not, of course, recognise the model.

"You are a cheeky boy," scolded his mother, "and if you aren't very careful, we'll repeat the Calculus lesson you messed up yesterday!" The threat worked, he quit the room without another word.

Left alone the two women continued their chatter, reminiscing about their childhood. It was over an hour before they realised the small boy had not returned. Amanda became agitated and Kali suggested they check her friend's stateroom. It was empty. A search of his favourite haunts did not reveal Spock, the only information they gained was that one of the turbo-lifts was broken, stuck mysteriously between floors. After a fruitless search lasting two hours, the women decided to report the matter to the purser. Within another hour the ship was on internal alert status, the little boy had not been found.

Dr. Samur was attempting to rest in his cabin, he was a poor space-traveller and had kept on his feet so far by sustained use of Vulcan mental disciplines. He had arrived at the stage where he could feel his barriers slipping, the mental strain had reached its limit. He made the decision to lower all barriers for a short time, allowing the unpleasant feeling to flood into him.

Making sure the door was locked and that he would remain completely undisturbed, he lay down on his bed, closed his eyes and one by one lowered his defences. His stomach heaved, he was uncomfortably aware of an acute dizziness, he gave it free rein, hoping that, when re-established, his control would prove stronger. He had lain still like this for some while, his mind completely defenceless, he had warned the other Vulcans of his intention so that they would avoid inadvertent mind-link with him, there were no other telepathic races aboard.

The cry for help came slicing through his unprotected brain, like a sharpened arrow. It was a piercing echoing scream, compounded of fear and frustration. Samur sat up straight on the bed, unable to account for the experience, but aware that someone was trying to establish contact, and that person was very frightened. Samur opened his mind for broadcast, and sent a wave of calming reassurance at the terrified contact. After a few minutes of this the chaotic thoughts began to clear. Samur was not able to read exactly who was sending, but a coherent picture was forming.

He seemed close to the floor in a large, enclosed space; way above his head a control panel which he was striving, unsuccessfully, to reach. Samur sent an impulse, trying to get his contact to turn around, to give him some idea of where he was, and why he was so scared. It took time and effort, but eventually Samur received a view all around the room. As soon as he saw the closed double doors looming over him, he realised where his contact was. Someone was trapped in a huge turbo-lift. That was illogical, a turbo-lift was a turbo-lift, neither large nor small. He thought for a moment; unless of course, the observer were very small. It came to him in

a flash, a very small person was trapped in a turbo-lift, a child was trapped!

Still broadcasting soothing thoughts, he unlocked his door and made his way unsteadily to the purser's office. He had no energy to spare for controlling the space-sickness, every bit of mental control he possessed was bent to preventing the child panicking. Samur felt very, very ill.

It was a strange party that stood staring down the open lift-shaft. The ship's Captain and Doctor, two human females, one very close to tears, and a pale shaking Vulcan. A maintenance engineer had gone down in a safety harness, and lifted the trap-door into the car, he could see Spock, but was too large himself to go through the trap to rescue the child. The only way was to lower a harness in, and trust that he would be able to fasten the buckles safely himself, no mean feat for a five-year-old. But monitored through the mind-link by Samur, each buckle was carefully fastened and tested, in order and without faltering. The watching engineer was fascinated by the serious concentration the child brought to the task.

Finally Spock was hauled out and stood, surrounded by adults; he showed no sign of fear, except to hold firmly onto his mother's skirt, for a moment. He looked at Samur, then held out a hand to him, fingers outspread. The older Vulcan touched the fingers of his larger hand to those of the child, they stood thus for a moment then released.

"You would show more logic, Spock," the physicist reminded gently, "if before entering an area, you checked that you were able to gain egress."

"Yes, sir," the child answered respectfully. "I am sorry you are unwell, can I help you?"

"Thank you, but already I am recovering." This was obviously true, now his strength was not needed elsewhere, Samur was regaining control of his body. "I will complete my rest, if you will allow it, you have a surprisingly tenacious mind; I am sure you will live long and prosper."

"Live long and prosper, Samur," was the solemn reply.

Amade politely thanked her son's rescuers, then turned her attention to the prodigal. "You!... Supper!...then bed! And no arguments!...TOMORROW you can explain how you managed to break the lift half-way between floors!"

He opened his mouth to protest his innocence, but one look at her face warned against it. He shut his mouth again, and took her hand to be led to supper, he was very hungry and very sleepy. Tomorrow... tomorrow he would find out how the intercom system worked!

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THIS STORY IS DEDICATED TO THE ADULT SPOCK BECAUSE, BUT ALSO TO GARETH LOOKER, WHO IS NINE YEARS OLD, AND THE INSPIRATION FOR THE YOUNG SPOCK.

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NATURAL RESOURCES ARE USEFUL... by Alison Glover.

It was bitterly cold at the foot of the ice-cliff. A biting wind howled round the stark rocks, the drifting snow dunes... and also round the shuttlecraft Galileo. Inside, the heating was making little impression on the arctic conditions.

"How long have they been gone now?" Sulu exclaimed, flinging himself out of his seat and peering out into the snow.

"Three hours, forty-six minutes and - um - ten seconds," Chekov replied in a bored monotone. "Approximately, of course."

"Is there nothing we can do?" Sulu demanded of the air in general. "Before I die of boredom or the heating packs up?"

Henderson, the security guard, gave the heating panel a dismal stare. "Either way that doesn't give us much time to think of something."

They looked reflectively at the impressive ice-cliff, behind which the Captain, Spock and a crewman had disappeared, while searching for some alien artifacts. Federation historians believed that a highly advanced but now non-existent race had had an outpost on this planet, and that their technology, particularly with regard to highly unstable radioactive materials, would benefit the Federation. Personally, Sulu wasn't convinced that that was a good reason to be freezing and stagnating in this deserted wasteland, but orders are orders...

Chekov leaned back in his seat and sighed. "Our phasers won't cut through the cliff, and the shuttlecraft is stuck in a snowdrift, so we can't try bulldozing it. The ship is round the other side of the planet, hiding from the Klingons, so we can't yell for help. Which means that we'll have to wait until the Captain and Mr. Spock manage to come back."

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Sulu.

"Well," Henderson said, "we've played dominoes, noughts and crosses, two-a-side football until the paper cup collapsed, and told every ancient joke we could think of... which is probably why Yeoman Coleman is still hiding aft - after that last gem of yours, Sulu."

Norton, the other security guard, now came forward from behind the bulkhead where he had been having a quiet snooze.

"What're you complaining about, Henderson? Think of poor Brown, dragged off to face possible torture and death with Captain Kirk."

Henderson sighed. "I'm not sure I wouldn't prefer torture and death to that coffee that Coleman made -" he broke off hastily as Yeoman Coleman returned.

"Do you think," Chekov said thoughtfully, "that something terrible really HAS happened to them?"

Sulu considered the matter. "Well, at a guess, Brown has either been frozen, caved-in upon or fallen down a bottomless pit. The Captain and Spock have probably stumbled on Eden, Atlantis or some other long-lost civilisation. Which will, of course, have a beautiful queen who has fallen in love with Captain Kirk...or perhaps she's trying to seduce Spock, which is why they're taking so long..."

"Really, Mr. Sulu," protested the Yeoman. "Isn't that a little

disrespectful?"

"He's just jealous," Chekov explained helpfully. "Thinking of those three, surrounded by warmth and luxury, banquets, wine, women and probably song..."

"Aergh! Shut up!" Sulu flung a paper cup at Chekov who promptly ducked. "You're making our situation seem almost as bad as it is!"

Chekov flung the cup back. "It's a Federation offence to assault a fellow officer."

"Officer? You? Assistant deck-scrubber, more like..." Sulu was looking around for further ammunition, but suddenly he stopped dead. "Look! There's something moving out there!"

Everyone turned and stared out the window. Sure enough, a dim shape could be made out lumbering off into the blizzard. Whatever it was, it bore no resemblance to Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, or Crewman Brown. There was a long silence.

"Nobody told us anything about this planet being inhabited," Sulu grumbled. Chekov was trying to get the sensors to work. Not surprisingly, they weren't very helpful. All they told him was that there was a blizzard outside, which he had known already.

"Well, it certainly isn't Winnie the Pooh," Norton said helpfully.

"And I think we can safely assume it isn't our missing landing party," Sulu added. "Captain Kirk never looked like that even after his largest dinner - even borrowing Uhura's sheepskin coat."

"Then what IS it?" Coleman said in a panicky squeak. "I'm scared!"

"Ah, yes..." Henderson, who was standing next to her, supposed that this was the point where he ought to take her comfortingly in his arms. Instead, he patted her gingerly on the shoulder. "There, there. We don't KNOW if it bites..."

"You don't think," Norton said hopefully, "that we might all be so bored we're hallucinating?"

"Unfortunately, I doubt it," Sulu said. "No, we must be serious about this. We should go out and see if it's left any traces of any sort."

No-one moved. Sulu looked around, assessed the fact that he out-ranked everyone else, and went on. "Come on, Pavel, old friend, you should be used to Siberian conditions. You go and look."

"Me?" Chekov protested. "Sorry, I'm just an inexperienced Ensign. I don't know about such things..."

"Would you rather stay and look after our nervous Yeoman?" Sulu asked sweetly.

"Oh, all right...I suppose it would be too much to ask for some warmer clothing?"

Norton spoke up. "Well, I don't want to surprise you too much, but see what I found..." Behind the bulkhead was a pile of thermal jackets, slightly crumpled from where he had been sleeping on them. Yeoman Coleman had all this time been edging closer to Henderson, who now decided it was time to do something about it.

"Er... Mr. Sulu, perhaps it would be better if someone went with Mr. Chekov, just in case..."

And so, five minutes later, Chekov and Henderson were staggering out of the Galileo into the howling blizzard. A few hundred metres from the ship, they decided that conditions were so bad it was stupid to go on - little though they relished returning to Coleman's company so soon. They turned to go back, but after they had taken a few steps, they became aware of Sulu at the shuttle window, waving hysterically.

"What's he so upset about?" Henderson bawled. Chekov shrugged. Then an idea struck both of them simultaneously. Very slowly, Chekov and Henderson turned round. From its eight-foot height the creature looked impassively down at them.

In the shuttle, Sulu was becoming slightly agitated. "What the hell are we going to do?" he yelled. "Why doesn't this thing come fitted with phasers or something?" He slammed his fist down on the control panel - and promptly gave a yell because he'd nearly broken his fingers.

It was one of those moments which seem to drag on for an eternity. The giant and the two Enterprise dwarfs looked at each other helplessly, and the spectators in the shuttle watched them even more helplessly. No-one seemed quite sure what to do next.

Chekov and Henderson noticed, however, that the creature was in fact wearing a sort of tunic fastened with a green metalwork badge. At last the humanoid made a move. Holding both its hands out in front of it, it spoke in a deep rumbling voice. "No harm you," it said. "Must talk." The language was, surprisingly enough, not English, but a barely recognisable Interstellar Basic.

"Yes, we talk," Chekov agreed, nodding vigorously. "You come with us." He pointed back to the shuttle. The humanoid drew back, shaking its head.

"Talk here."

Henderson tried. "We cannot stay out here. Too cold." The sooner they got back to the Galileo the better. His toes had already seemingly deserted him. The creature looked at them, rather sadly.

"I come," it replied at last.

Sulu and the others watched, puzzled, as it strode after Chekov and Henderson to the shuttle. Once inside, the universal translator solved the language problem. The creature did not seem unduly perturbed.

"We did not believe this planet to be inhabited," Sulu said. "Is this your native planet?"

The giant nodded, nearly banging his head off the roof. "But we are a nomadic people. This is a wide land, and we are few. It is only recently that people from off-world have contacted us. My people are wary of change." He sat forward in his seat, which was distinctly too small for him. "But that matter can wait. I have been sent here to warn you."

Sulu and Chekov exchanged glances. "Of what?" Sulu asked quickly.

"You must leave this place as fast as possible." The creature took in the expressions on their faces. "You seem dismayed. I do not mean the entire planet, simply this immediate area."

"Why, is it dangerous?" Sulu demanded.

"In a word, yes." As it spoke, the being looked behind it through the window to the mountain, as if scared by its own words. In the silence which followed, those words hung heavily.



"But our friends..." Sulu began.

"You won't do them much good dead," the humanoid pointed out. "Please, come with me."

Sulu wasn't sure what he should do. But they certainly weren't giving the Captain any help staying where they were. And it would be slightly less boring, even if they were walking into a trap. This was not, he knew, a very logical or sensible way to work it out, but after all, he had joined Starfleet to do something vaguely interesting if not exactly exciting...

"All right," he said finally. "We'll come."

Meanwhile, Kirk, Spock and Crewman Brown had not stumbled on a long-lost Atlantis. In fact, they had stumbled over nothing except each other's rather numb feet. It would probably have been more interesting if some alien enchantress had been trying to seduce Mr. Spock, but so far no-one, masculine, feminine or even neuter had appeared to trouble them. It appeared, however, that at some point someone had been in the caverns behind the ice cliff, since they were now wandering through a maze of obviously artificial tunnels. The walls were coated with a dull, matt black substance, giving an effect more monotonous than awe-inspiring. "What is it, Mr. Spock?" Kirk had asked, though not really hopeful of an answer.

"It is a long chain molecule compound of carbon and fluorine," Spock replied. "It has been known on Earth since the 1960's, when it was produced as a byproduct of the American space programme." This sounded vaguely familiar to Kirk. "It was known as poly-tetra-fluoro-ethylene," Spock continued helpfully.

"Oh, yes!" Kirk remembered now. "Non-stick frying pans!"

"Mr, yes," Spock said. "I do believe it was used for that purpose."

It didn't take them long to realize that they were slightly lost; Spock's tricorder was not happy with the similarity of the tunnels; like Kirk, Spock and Brown, it had the impression that they were going round in circles, but equally like them, it wasn't sure. Apart from that, it had kept on picking up odd readings, mere flickers that weren't quite on the scale. Nor were the three surprised to find that all attempts at communication with the outside world had proved totally unsuccessful. If it hadn't been so cold, Kirk would have been tempted to sit down and wait for something to happen. So far, however, nothing catastrophic - or even very interesting - had happened. But it was continually getting colder, and although the supply of air in the tunnels appeared quite adequate, Kirk was growing more and more concerned over the absence of certain important commodities - food and water, for instance. In fact, he thought rather sadly, his stomach was already beginning to feel rather empty...

The Klingon commander was beginning to feel slightly antagonistic. Reports had definitely placed a Federation vessel of Starship size in this system, but try as he might, he could not detect it. Now in orbit around a thoroughly unpleasant, useless, glaciated little planet, the occasional faint trace on the sensors convinced him that somewhere round the other side of the planet, a ship was lurking. But every time that faint trace appeared, he had just time to try and trace it, when it was gone, the planet between blocking it out. Grudgingly, he had to admit that whoever was

piloting that ship was doing a very good job of it. It was then that a half formed suspicion at the back of his mind began to take shape, because if any ship was likely to be wandering around this deserted quadrant of the galaxy, and yet appear to be on a mission of some importance, and have the ability to dodge his sensors so easily, it could only be the galactically famous U.S.S. Enterprise. And where the Enterprise was, so was the equally famous, but much less beautiful, Captain James T. Kirk. Like most of his colleagues, the commander had a sneaking ambition to have the pleasure of being the one responsible for the disposal of the afore-mentioned captain. The commander swung on his Science Officer.

"Have you completed the scan of the planet surface yet?"

"Yes, sir, but we have picked up nothing unusual."

The commander snorted. "If the Enterprise is skulking around up here, I'm willing to bet that Kirk is down there somewhere. Run the scan again; there could be a landing party or a shuttle down there."

"Yes, Commander." The Science Officer knew better than to point out how difficult it would be to find one small craft in the weather conditions below. Refraining from sighing, he reset his controls.

On the Klingon bridge, work continued in silence while the commander permitted himself to consider the possibility of capturing the Enterprise. It was possible, of course, that he was wrong, that his sensor ghost was just one of the myriad pieces of junk and debris floating around the system, but on the other hand...

"Commander!" The Science Officer swung round eagerly. "There is something! I'm picking up a small vessel on the surface!"....

On the Enterprise herself, Lieutenant-commander Scott was sitting quite unconcerned in the rec room, tucking into a plate of heggis and chips with great enthusiasm. The presence of the Klingon did not bother him; he knew that he and Uhura could continue to run rings round it, till Doomsday, if necessary. As usual, Kirk's orders had left Scotty with little opportunity for intervention. So he continued with his lunch, blissfully unaware of the events about to occur on the planet below...

Far below, the blizzard was still raging, seemingly with even greater intensity. Sulu and his companions were still slipping and sliding through the snow. Ahead of them, the humanoid - they had discovered that his name was Karn - was trudging on with the same steady pace. Norton and Henderson were half-carrying the collapsing Yeomen Coleman. It was evident that she at least was not going to go much further. Norton and Henderson had the impression that, with the combined effects of wind, weather and Coleman's not inconsiderable weight, they weren't going to either. Beside Sulu, Chekov was trudging on with dogged Russian determination, dragging a makeshift sled on which Sulu had thoughtfully dumped the translator equipment from the shuttlecraft.

Karn turned. "We are nearly there," he shouted. Sulu grinned with relief, and even felt motivated to relieve Norton of one side of the deep-frozen Yeomen. They staggered round the base of a snow-covered outcrop, and there, in the shelter of a high gully, was an untidy circle of skin tents. Karn was calling out to announce their arrival, and one by one curious faces appeared at the tent flaps.

Cautiously at first, Karn's people approached these strangers. But it was obvious that the landing party, drenched and freezing, would prove no threat to them, and soon they surrounded the Enterprise party, all talking at once.

Karn held up his hand for silence. "Wait, wait! Explanations can wait. I think these people need shelter more than questions."

And so the landing party found themselves ushered into a large circular tent. Inside, it was surprisingly light and warm. Sulu sank with relief onto a large pile of furs and held out his hands to the fire, even before he took off his thermal jacket, which had long since been soaked through by the snow.

"I fear," Karn said, "that we have little replacement clothing to offer you,"

Sulu, beginning to feel slightly thawed, gave a rueful grin as he tried to wring the jacket out. "I suppose it will dry," he said doubtfully.

The others came and joined him round the fire. "I will call the Council," Karn was saying. "I think you would agree that we have much to discuss."

"Yes," Sulu replied. "Perhaps we... Anything wrong?" He turned to Chekov, who was anxiously peering into the translator unit. "That thing isn't going to peck up when we most need it, is it?"

"I don't think so...it's supposed to work all right in sub-zero temperatures, but the snow got in and it's rather damp in there," Chekov said, inspecting a piece of wire.

"That's all right," Sulu objected. "It's insulated."

He was interrupted by a yell from Chekov and an exclamation in Russian which the unit fortunately did not translate. Chekov looked sadly at his finger. "It is, is it?" Cautiously, he tipped the box over. A large, soggy lump of slush slithered out. "I suppose we'll just have to keep hoping."

The tent flap opened and four of Karn's people entered, looking with interest at their visitors. Karn introduced them all. One of them turned out to be his wife, Trebitha. He spoke her name with evident pride - presumably she was considered beautiful to her own people, although to Sulu she looked a little like a woolly rug.

Everyone bowed politely. "And you are?" Karn prompted.

"My name is Sulu," the young man began. "I'm from the U.S.S. Enterprise, a starship of the United Federation of Planets." He noticed that there was a reaction to this, but went on. "This is Ensign Chekov, Yeoman Coleman and Crewmen Henderson and Norton."

"You are welcome among us," Karn said. Trebitha was holding a cup of something that steamed slightly. Karn took a mouthful and passed it on to Sulu. The gesture was obvious, but Sulu felt rather dubious about these frothing contents. It would be all very well for him to take one sip and fall dead. On the other hand, some races were very particular about the observance of such customs, and not drinking it might render him just as dead. Beside him, Chekov was as inconspicuously as possible pressing buttons on his tricorder. Sulu glanced at him. Chekov nodded.

"Should be all right. Nothing more deadly than caffeine in it," he whispered. Cautiously, Sulu took a sip. To his surprise, it did not taste exotic, spicy or intoxicating. In fact, it had a strong resemblance to cocoa. After the weather outside, it left a warm comfortable feeling in his stomach. He passed the cup on,

and one by one everyone drank. Fortunately, McCoy wasn't there to complain about the lack of hygiene.

"We have heard of your Federation," Karn resumed.

"Then I hope what you heard wasn't bad," Sulu replied.

"It varied," Karn said, "with whom one asked, yet in general it was favourable. Rather more favourable than reports of the Klingon Empire."

Sulu suddenly remembered the Klingon ship in orbit. "I have a suspicion you may have some first-hand information about them, too," he said slowly. There was a silence. Now, Sulu thought, is the cue for a Klingon landing party to walk in. But nothing happened. So Sulu explained about the Klingons, and also about the disappearance of Captain Kirk and the others. Karn looked very serious when he heard exactly where they had disappeared to.

"Why," he said, "did they want to go into the mountain anyway?"

Sulu explained about the ancient artifacts as simply as he could. It suddenly occurred to him that perhaps the radioactivity was why Karn thought the mountain was so dangerous. "Karn," he said. "Just why do you fear the mountain so much? You seem too civilised for stories about ghosts and hobgoblins to scare you."

Karn laughed. "Perhaps I was a little over-dramatic. No, I admit the place has an eerie atmosphere, but its danger is quite factual. The mountain is a volcano."

"What?!" Sulu was momentarily silenced.

Chekov spoke instead. "And the Captain and Mr. Spock are inside it."

"I'm afraid you may have to give up your friends for lost," Karn continued, "because the volcano is due to erupt in the very near future."

This was beginning to sound distinctly disturbing. "How do you know?" Sulu demanded.

"It does so quite regularly," Karn said. "It seems that many small eruptions prevent a catastrophic big one. That is why we have not moved further away. We will be quite safe here. But for someone right under the mountain - as you were - and certainly for someone inside the mountain - well, I don't see much hope for your friends."

"There's no way we can get them out?" Sulu was rapidly going through the possibilities.

"I do not know," Karn said, "but I do not think you should be too optimistic."

"At least we'll have to try," Chekov interrupted.

Trebitha shook her head. "But what can you do? Even if you could get inside, how would you find your friends? And how long could you stay out there - you are not accustomed to our weather."

They all knew that what she said was perfectly true. But equally, Sulu knew that being a Starship officer requires the impossible more often than the reasonable.

Sulu did not know that help was, in a roundabout way, coming from a rather unexpected direction. The Klingon commander and his landing party had discovered the shuttlecraft. And they had come

with enough heavy equipment to blast their way right through the mountain if necessary. The commander wanted to be absolutely certain of capturing Kirk - though how many pieces Kirk would be in by that time was a debatable point.

"The shuttle is empty, Commander," one of his officers reported. The commander nodded and signalled to two of his men to attempt to open the door. It was not even locked. There was no booby trap to blow them to kingdom come if they pressed the wrong button either. How disappointing - just another example of Federation inefficiency.

Inside, they found a great many paper cups, half a deck of cards, a piece of paper with what looked like a simple binary code - consisting of a string of O's and X's in a lattice work - and a section of one of the communications panels missing. Stuck to the panel was a note.

"Dear Captain," it said. "Just in case you find your way out, have gone visiting with a large and hairy friend. Took the translator with us. Back soon - I hope. Sulu. P.S. Don't touch the coffee."

The commander was not quite sure what to make of this. He had always found English difficult, and it must be admitted that Sulu's writing left much to be desired. He concluded that it must be a code of some sort - surely no-one in his right mind would write such a message to his superior officer? The commander puzzled over the meaning of it for a while. Where, he wondered, had Captain Kirk got to find his way out of? In this situation there wasn't really much choice, and when they found phaser marks on the ice-cliff, he put two and two together to make a rather satisfactory four. Smiling quietly, the commander ordered his men to set up their heavy duty laser cannon.

The first bolt did not quite cut through the wall, but it did produce a rather sizeable jolt - which was picked up very easily by Mr. Spock's tricorder inside the mountain.

When the dust had settled and they had got up from the ground, Kirk said, "I don't think that was natural, Mr. Spock?"

Spock agreed. "I suggest, Captain, that it may offer us a chance of vacating this locus," he said. And so the three of them set off at full pelt down the tunnel towards the location of the disturbance.

"Look," Kirk shouted. "Light!"

"We can get out!" added Brown.

At the foot of the tunnel was a jagged gap, still glowing slightly at the edges. Suddenly Kirk stopped dead. "Ah," he remarked. "Mr. Spock, I think perhaps we should go back...quickly!"

But it was already too late. Three Klingons were scrambling through the gap, rifles levelled at the Captain and his companions.

The commander's head appeared at the opening. "I need hardly tell you, Captain, that you are all prisoners of the Klingon Empire."

Outside, Kirk was surprised to find the Galileo completely intact. There were no signs of violence, no bodies, no other prisoners... so what had happened to Sulu and Chekov?

Actually, the pair of them were watching the whole business from a ridge above the Klingons. They were sure the Klingons

couldn't see them - the white furs Karn had lent them, while being a great deal too big and getting in the way rather a lot, both kept them warm and gave them a considerable resemblance to the scenery in general. Obviously, it was up to them to save the situation. The only problem was - with what? They had used up their phaser power packs in their unsuccessful attempts to getting into the mountain. And there was a slight lack of raw materials, except for ... Sulu and Chekov looked at each other and saw that the other had had exactly the same idea. They grinned wickedly.

"I haven't done this in years," Sulu said. "Never had much use for it on the Enterprise."

Down below, the Klingon commander had either forgotten or not understood that there were other Federation personnel on the planet. Kirk had decided that it might be a very good idea not to remind him. He just wished that the commander would stop making speeches and let them out of the cold.

It was, of course, Mr. Spock who noticed the movement first, but he gave no sign of it, didn't even raise an eyebrow. By the time Kirk had realised what was happening, his look of surprise came too late to save the commander.

Whumph!

With a dull thud, a considerable mass of wet snow descended right on top of him.

"What was that?" shouted one of the Klingons, whipping out his gun.

"I believe," Spock said innocently, "it was what is on Earth termed a snowball. Quite a large one, too."

Up on their ridge, Sulu and Chekov were cheerfully rolling three foot snowballs off the edge as fast as they could. One of the klingons had turned the laser cannon round, but surprisingly enough, its only effect was to melt the snow, resulting in the Klingons being drenched in a shower of uncomfortably hot water. Kirk, Spock and Brown didn't wait to be soaked. Leaving the Klingons shooting madly at the world in general - and bringing more snow down on top of themselves - the three turned and ran.

Sulu and Chekov decided that it was about time they left - one of the Klingons having just hit the ledge they were standing on. This decision was promptly justified by a shaking, a trembling, a rumbling and a dull thundering noise...

"The volcano!" Sulu shouted. "Come on, Chekov, run!" And he grabbed Chekov's arm and dragged him away from where he hadn't been able to resist taking another pot shot at the commander.

Kirk, Spock and Brown stopped dead in their tracks, took one look behind them, and stumbled on with redoubled speed. The very bewildered Klingons picked themselves up and floundered towards safety. Chekov and Sulu bumped and slipped and slid down from the ridge and thundered after everyone else.

Behind them, the mountain, emitting clouds of ash and dust, was groaning, the ground shaking, streams of lava were melting the snow, thick smoke was blocking out the light. Ash fell with the snow, and the air was thick with sulphurous fumes.

Panting and gasping, Sulu and Chekov caught up with the Captain.

"This way," Sulu shouted. "...camp... safe..."



He was not able to say more. Kirk looked rather confused, but followed him

Karn was waiting for them at the entrance to the gully. He looked mildly surprised. "I see you found your friends," he said.

"Yes," Chekov managed to reply. "And some other people as well." He waved a hand to where a dejected group of Klingons was staggering up the gully towards them. Spock - the only one with the foresight to think of such things in these circumstances - handed Kirk the Klingon firlie he had acquired.

"Ah, thank you, Mr. Spock," Kirk said. "Commander, you are now a prisoner of the United Federation of Planets. Have you anything to say?"

"Yes, Kirk," the commander, stepping forward face blazing with rage, began. "I... I...AAAATCHOOOO!!!"

Back on the ship, Kirk was again dictating the log. "...and in conclusion, although the artifacts we were dearching for were destroyed, the mission was successful in that Karn's people will become members of the Federation, and in the confiscation of the Klingon battle cruiser 'Relentless', much of this success having been due to the commendable initiative and resourcefulness of Lt. Sulu and Ensign Chekov."

at their stations, Sulu and Chekov were looking rather pleased with themselves. "All right, you two," Kirk said. "Take those smug smiles off your faces and get back to work."

"Aye, sir," they chorused, but continued grinning just as broadly.

at that moment, McCoy came onto the bridge.

"How's the commander?" Kirk asked.

"Still as bad." McCoy shook his head sadly. "That's why I came up here. Another snuffle and I'd have screamed. Seems to have a worse effect on their metabolisms than on humans."

Spock was looking rather reflective. "Well, Spock," McCoy said. "You seem to have reservations. Or are you embarrassed because yet another member of the crew has saved you from torture and death?"

Spock raised an eyebrow with dignity. "Not at all, Doctor, I am only too grateful to Mr. Chekov and Mr. Sulu. But, Captain, there is one thing..."

"Yes, Spock?"

"Has anyone remembered to collect the shuttlecraft?" Spock said without the faintest trace of amusement.

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KIRK: Want to hear a space joke, Bones?

McCoy: Oh, go on then.

KIRK: No, I'd better not - there's nothing in it.

\*\*\*\*\*

SPOCK: With a naked eye, you can see 3000 stars on a clear night from the surface of any planet, Doctor.

McCoy: And with a clothed eye, you can't see a thing!

\*\*\*\*\*

ARA by Janet Quarton.

The U.S.S. Enterprise entered orbit around Auriga 3 and Kirk sat in his command chair studying the planet's surface on the main viewing screen. He turned to Mr. Spock, who was at his console analysing data on the planet.

"Analysis, Mr. Spock."

"The planet is class M," Spock said. "I get humanoid life form readings. They seem to be in fairly small groups, no indications of large cities. Civilisation rates about G, similar to that in the United States of America, Earth, in the mid-eighteen hundreds."

Kirk considered the information for a moment. "Spock, do you think we can conduct our survey without coming into contact with the planet's inhabitants?"

"It should be possible to do so, Captain. The planet's surface is not very densely populated."

Kirk nodded and turned to Uhura.

"Lieutenant Uhura, contact Dr. McCoy and that new ensign, Ensign Freeman. Tell them both to report to the Transporter Room in ten minutes for landing party duty. Tell Mr. Scott to report to the bridge immediately."

"Aye, eye, sir." Uhura acknowledged the order and set about obeying it. Kirk got up and made his way over to Spock.

"Spock, do we have any information on this planet?"

"No, sir, we are the first ship to enter this Solar System. There are no records of any other ship being in this area."

"As I thought. In that case the 'Prime Directive' is in full force." Kirk stopped speaking and turned, having heard the elevator doors. Scott entered the bridge and joined Kirk and Spock.

"Ah, Scotty," Kirk said, smiling at his engineer. "Spock and I are taking a landing party down to the planet's surface. While we're away I want you to take the Enterprise and survey this planet's two moons. We're due at Starbase 11 in two weeks and I'd rather not be late; this will save us a couple of days. What is it, Spock?" he asked, seeing a query on Spock's face.

"It will mean that we will be beyond communicator range of the ship, sir."

"We'll take an emergency beacon with us. Scotty, if you pick up a signal from it head straight back and contact us. If you don't hear from us, we'll contact you in forty-eight hours; be back by then. You have the con, Scotty."

"Aye, eye, sir."

"C'mon, Mr. Chekov. You can join the landing party."

"Yes, sir." Chekov was elated at the thought of a change from routine duties. He left his station and entered the turbo-lift with Kirk and Spock. Scott signalled another crewman to take over the navigation console.

Kirk entered the transporter room to find the rest of the landing party waiting for him, already equipped. Spock and Chekov had tricorders, McCoy had his medical tricorder and emergency medical kit, Ensign Freeman carried a couple of packs of food rations. Knowing that Spock would have made sure they had every-

thing necessary, Kirk picked up the emergency beacon that was sitting by the console and spoke to the transporter chief.

"Prepare to beam us down, Mr. Kyle."

"Aye, sir," Kyle replied and set the controls. The landing party entered the transporter chamber and when everyone was in position, Kirk gave the order.

"Energize."

The transporter chief operated the controls and the landing party shimmered and dematerialised.

The group materialised near the bank of a fast flowing river. It was hilly, barren country and some of the hills sloped right down to the edge of the river. The sides of the hills were strewn with rocks of all sizes.

After having a quick look round, Kirk took out his communicator and flipped it open.

"Kirk to Enterprise. Kirk to Enterprise."

"Enterprise. Scott here, sir."

"We have beamed down safely, Scotty. We will rendezvous with you in forth-eight hours. Contact us as soon as you return."

"Aye, sir. Good luck. Scott out."

Kirk put away his communicator and went over to Spock who was taking tricorder readings.

"Are you picking up anything, Spock?" he asked.

"There's a village about three miles away, across the river, but I don't pick up any signs of humanoids closer to us."

"Good, with any luck they won't come down to the river. Keep a check on readings, just in case."

"Yes, sir."

Kirk went over to Chekov and Freeman and told them to go up the hillside and see what they could find. He cautioned them, saying,

"Be careful where you are walking. Some of those rocks look loose."

They acknowledged and set off up the hill. Kirk walked along the river bank to where McCoy was standing. His medical kit and all their supplies were sitting on a rock next to him. The hill sloped steeply up behind him. McCoy smiled at Kirk.

"This place isn't bad, is it, Jim. It's nice to see the blue sky and hear the sound of the river."

"Are you feeling homesick, Bones?"

"Not exactly, but it's nice to be off the ship for a while. It's a shame we couldn't send the whole crew down, we've had a rough time of it lately and they could do with a rest."

"We'll be at Starbase 11 in a couple of weeks, the crew will get shore leave there. They certainly deserve it."

"Well, I suggest you try to relax while we're here, Jim. You're looking all in."

"Don't worry so much, Bones, I'll relax with the crew on Starbase 11," Kirk replied cheerfully, but he thought that McCoy

was more right than he knew. They had had a hard time lately and he was feeling all in. He was looking forward to that shore leave very much.

While Kirk and McCoy were talking, Chekov and Freeman were climbing the hillside behind them. Freeman was being a bit reckless and Chekov spoke to him about it.

"You'd better be careful, Freeman. You'll trip over some of those rocks."

"Don't worry about me, I used to play on hills like this as a kid. Just watch me."

With that he ran across the hillside. He was passing directly behind Kirk and McCoy when his foot turned on a stone and he fell flat. The stone rolled down the hillside taking more and more with it, and started a landslide.

Down below, Kirk and McCoy were talking when they heard the rubble; they looked round but were too late to run to safety. They were both knocked from their feet by rocks and the supplies and McCoy's medical kit were knocked into the river and carried away down stream.

McCoy struggled to his feet, feeling a bit bruised. He found, to his dismay, that the supplies and his kit were gone, and his medical tricorder was smashed. He turned angrily to Kirk.

"Jim, what the devil... Jim!"

Suddenly he saw Kirk lying still, face down on the ground. He ran to him.

"Jim!" he called anxiously, but Kirk didn't stir. McCoy quickly bent down beside him and felt for his pulse. To his relief, he found it weak but steady. He gently turned Kirk over and found that he was bleeding from a nasty cut on the side of his head. Just then Spock appeared and hurried over to them.

"I heard rocks falling, Doctor. What happened?"

"Something started a landslide. We were caught in its path."

Spock looked down at Kirk and saw the cut.

"How is he, Doctor?"

"He seems to be just knocked out. I can't check him properly because my tricorder is smashed, my medical kit and the supplies have been swept away by the river. To be on the safe side, I think you'd better activate that beacon and bring the Enterprise back."

"I can't, Doctor. It was with the supplies. Look after the Captain as best you can, I'll send Chekov and Freeman to see if they can find any food and shelter."

McCoy nodded worriedly and Spock went off. McCoy took off his undershirt and tore a strip off it. He wet the strip in the river and then, making it into a pad, bathed Kirk's head.

Kirk came to slowly. His head was aching viciously and for a moment he didn't know where he was. He struggled to sit up and felt himself being gently pushed back.

"Easy, Jim. Just lie quiet for a few minutes." It was McCoy's voice.

Kirk obeyed - he hadn't the strength to do otherwise. Recollection flooded back to him and he remembered the landslide. He tried to open his eyes, then shut them quickly as the glare of light sent a searing pain through his head.

McCoy, seeing the grime of pain on Kirk's face, wished he had his medical kit so that he could do something to help. Still, he hadn't, so he would have to do his best with what he had. He took hold of Kirk's wrist, feeling for his pulse. It was still rather weak and McCoy wasn't happy. How he wished that he had his medical tricorder so that he could examine Kirk properly. That was the disadvantage of using machines for everything, you began to rely on them.

Kirk tried opening his eyes again, being careful to do it very slowly this time. It was quite a fight and he screwed up his face against the pain. Eventually he managed it and after a few seconds his vision cleared and he looked up into the concerned face of Dr. McCoy. Kirk tried to speak.

"Bones..."

"Just keep still, Jim."

"I'm all right, Bones, I..."

Kirk tried to sit up. Suddenly his stomach turned and he rolled over and was violently sick. When the spasm passed he sank back to the ground exhausted, his head pounding. McCoy went down to the river and wet the cloth, he then went back to Kirk and wiped his face.

Feeling the damp cloth on his face, Kirk opened his eyes. McCoy smiled down at him.

"Now maybe you'll do as you're told and lie still."

"What happened, Bones?"

McCoy told him about the landslide and how the supplies were all lost. Kirk frowned. Just then Spock came running up. He was pleased to see Kirk conscious but hid it.

"Captain, there are a group of humanoids heading this way. If we are going to remain out of their sight we will have to move inland."

"Where are Chekov and Freeman?" Kirk asked.

"They are scouting around to see if they can find some food."

"Get them back here, quick."

"Yes, sir." Spock took out his communicator and flipped it open. "Chekov, this is Spock. Come in."

"Chekov here, sir."

"Have you found anything?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Report back here immediately, with Freeman."

"On our way, sir."

Spock put the communicator away and looked at McCoy.

"Is the Captain fit to travel, Doctor?"

"No, he isn't, Spock. Can we hang on here for another couple of hours to give him a chance to recover?"

"Sorry, Doctor, the aliens will be here within half an hour..."

"We've got to get out of here, Bones," Kirk interrupted. "Don't worry, I'll be O.K. Give me a hand up."

Both Spock and McCoy helped Kirk to his feet where he stood swaying. If they had let go he would have fallen down. They helped him over to a rock and set him on it. The exertion had increased the pounding in Kirk's head and his stomach was churning. He gritted his teeth, fighting it down and trying to hide his discomfort, but he was not fooling them. They stood beside him, supporting him, till he began to recover. McCoy frowned at Spock.

"It's no use, Spock, this isn't going to work. Jim just isn't going to make it."

The pounding in Kirk's head was beginning to ease and his stomach was settling.

"I'll be all right, Bones," he whispered. It was a lie, of course, but he wasn't going to risk the others getting caught just because of his weakness.

"Sure you will. Just getting to your feet was almost too much for you. You might as well face the fact that you're as weak as a kitten and in no condition to go anywhere."

"Bones, we've got to move inland. We can't take the chance of those humanoids seeing us. Starfleet orders are quite specific on that point. We would be in direct violation of the 'Prime Directive'."

"The Captain is quite right, Doctor," agreed Spock. "We can't stay here. These are primitive people and primitive people tend to fear strangers. It is quite possible that they would attack us and we can't use the phasers to defend ourselves. We must get out of here. Here come Chekov and Freeman."

Chekov and Freeman came running up to them, slightly out of breath. Freeman saw Kirk sitting on the rock looking very pale and ill. He noticed the long gash on the side of Kirk's head and felt uneasy, guilty. He knew that all this was his fault but he didn't know what to say. He hung back and let Chekov do the talking.

"Sir, we've just seen a party of aliens heading this way. We were careful that they didn't see us but they'll be here in about ten minutes."

"That settles it, Bones," Kirk said as firmly as he could manage. "We've got to leave."

Kirk stood up and took a step forward. Spock was there to catch him as he fell. He gently laid the Captain on the ground. McCoy bent down and took Kirk's pulse; he frowned and pulled back Kirk's eyelid then turned to Spock.

"It's no use, he's out cold again."

Spock stood deep in thought for a moment, then he bent down and picked Kirk up in his arms.

"Let's get out of here," he said.

Spock, carrying Kirk's limp body, started walking away from the river; the others followed. Chekov took continuous tricorder readings to make sure that they were not being followed or heading towards more aliens.

As they headed away from the river they were surrounded by barren, rocky hills with no sign of any greenery. The going under-



foot was very rough. After they'd walked for about an hour, Spock came to a halt and carefully laid Kirk on the ground. The Captain was beginning to stir and to moan. McCoy was quickly at his side. He took Kirk's wrist and felt his pulse; he found it still weak and rather rapid. Standing up, he indicated to Spock that he wanted to speak with him. Spock acknowledged with a nod and turned to Chekov.

"Mr. Chekov, take Freeman and have a scout round. Don't go too far."

"Aye, sir."

As Chekov and Freeman left, Spock went over to McCoy.

"How is he, Doctor?"

"He's beginning to come round, Spock. Can we stay here a while to give him a chance to rest? That was a bad blow he had and he's suffering from concussion and slight shock. He needs rest."

"We'll stay here till nightfall and then head back to the river. We need water and we've nothing to carry it in. The humanoids are unlikely to be abroad at night."

"Isn't there a chance that there might be water nearer here?"

"An unlikely probability in view of the barrenness of the landscape."

Consciousness was returning to Kirk and he gradually became aware of the voices of Spock and McCoy. He turned his head towards the sound and slowly opened his eyes, trying to focus on them standing near him. The movement forced an involuntary groan out of him, and his head resumed its pounding. McCoy, hearing the sound, came quickly to him, and knelt at his side.

"Jim..."

"I know, I must lie still," Kirk cut in, managing a small smile.

"Yes, you must, and be sure you do. How do you feel?"

"Better, Bones. I just wish my head would stop beating like a drum. For once I wish you had some of those green pills on you."

"I'll remind you of that the next time you complain about them. Try and get some sleep and the pain should ease off."

"Easier said than done."

"Well, just lie there. Close your eyes and try to relax."

Kirk did as he was told and he soon drifted off to sleep. McCoy, who had been watching him, saw his even breathing and was satisfied.

Kirk woke up a few hours later feeling slightly better; at least the pounding in his head had receded to a dull ache. He looked round at the barren landscape and saw McCoy and Spock in the distance, standing with their backs to him. He decided to join them. He eased himself into a sitting position, wincing in pain. Raising his hand to the source, he gently felt the long gash on the side of his head. It was decidedly tender. He sat still for a minute until the pain eased off and then pulled himself to his feet with the aid of a large boulder. Once on his feet he was overcome by an attack of dizziness and leant on the rock, shaking. Kirk was beginning to wonder if this was a good idea, but he didn't

want to be a handicap to the others. He must prove to them that he was O.K. now.

After a few moments the dizziness eased and he was able to stand unsupported. He made his way slowly and unsteadily to where McCoy and Spock were standing. He felt weak and dizzy but he was determined to make it.

McCoy heard the footsteps and turned, horrified to see Kirk on his feet. He took the Captain's arm and guided him to a rock, where Kirk sat down, grateful for the rest. McCoy was angry.

"What the devil do you think you're doing?"

"I felt better, Bones."

"Well, if you don't take it easy, you won't be feeling better much longer. How's the head?"

"Not too bad, it just aches a bit," Kirk said, deciding to change the subject. "Spock, what is the situation at the moment?"

"My tricorder readings indicate that the aliens have left the river and returned to the village. Since we have no water I suggest we make our way back to the river when darkness falls."

"Have you found any food?"

"Negative, sir. There seems to be no vegetation or animal life on this side of the river. The humanoids seem to get their food from the other side of the river where the land is more fertile."

"How long have we got till the Enterprise is due back?"

"Thirty six point nine hours, sir."

"Well, I guess we'll have to do without food till then. I don't want to risk crossing the river and running into any of the aliens. That shouldn't be any problem, should it, Bones?"

"No, we can go for quite a while without food, so long as we've got a good supply of water."

Kirk nodded, regretted the motion, then turned to Spock.

"Contact Chekov and Freeman and tell them to report back here, Spock. As soon as it is dark we'll head for the river."

Spock took out his communicator, flipped it open and contacted Chekov. Meanwhile, McCoy took charge of Kirk.

"Come on and sit under the shade of this rock, you'll be more comfortable. Get some more rest till it's time to go."

Kirk allowed McCoy to lead him to the rock; he hadn't the strength to argue. He sat in the shade and leaned back against the rock, thankful for somewhere to rest his aching head. Eventually he closed his eyes and was soon asleep.

When Kirk woke again it was getting dark. He felt very thirsty. He sat up and winced as his head resumed its aching - would it never stop? McCoy had seen him move and came over to him.

"How do you feel now, Jim?"

"I'm fine, Bones. Where's Spock?"

"He's just checking with his tricorder to make sure there's no-one close. Are you sure you feel fit enough to walk back to the river? It's pretty rough going."

"Don't worry so much, Bones. I'm O.K."

Spock arrived with Chekov and Freeman. He came straight up to Kirk.

"There is no-one within a three mile radius, sir."

"All right, Spock. It's time we got on our way."

Kirk got to his feet carefully, aware that all eyes were on him. He had to stand still for a moment, fighting down waves of dizziness and nausea. He kept a straight face, determined not to let the others see how weak he was. This time, with the help of the darkness, he was successful, although McCoy wasn't completely convinced. After a few moments Kirk felt a bit better and called to Spock.

"Which way, Spock?"

"This way, Captain. If you prefer, I'll lead the way."

"Lead on."

Spock led the way slowly back towards the river. He deliberately walked slowly for Kirk's sake, but even at this pace the Captain was finding the going rather rough. He was getting used to the continuous ache in his head but the dizziness was hard to cope with. He couldn't understand why it was getting so warm. On most planets the temperature dropped at night, but here it seemed to be getting warmer. He began to feel the sweat running down his back. He forced himself to concentrate on just putting one foot in front of the other.

After what seemed an interminable time to Kirk, Spock stopped.

"The river is just ahead of us, Captain."

Kirk's throat was too dry for him to answer; he just felt his way to the river bank, knelt down and took a long drink of the ice cold water. After he had had his fill he could not resist ducking his head into the river, the cold water felt so cooling on his hot, sweaty face and it eased his aching head. He held his head under as long as he could and then took another long drink. After this he felt a bit fresher and climbed unsteadily to his feet. He could just make out McCoy's form approaching him out of the darkness.

"What do we do now, Jim?" McCoy asked.

Although Kirk felt a bit better he didn't think he could walk any further. It was all he could do to stand on his feet.

"We'll stay close to the river and try to get some sleep. We can take turns at keeping watch. If the aliens decide to come back we'll move inland tomorrow, if not we'll stay here. We want to be near here when the Enterprise returns. We'd better work out a watch rota, Spock."

"You'd better not stand a watch, Jim," McCoy intervened. "You need all the sleep you can get."

"Agreed, Doctor," said Spock before Kirk could get a word in. "Four of us will be enough to stand watches, you can take the last one."

"That's fine with me, Spock. I think there's a place close to those rocks where we might be comfortable enough to get some sleep. Are you coming, Jim?"

Kirk went with McCoy over to the rocks, leaving Spock to arrange the night watches. He found a clear space on the ground where he

was able to lie down and at least be partially comfortable. By the time McCoy came over to him he was asleep, so McCoy left him in peace.

Kirk woke up some time later shivering with the cold and with his head aching intolerably. He rolled himself into a ball trying to get warm, but it was no use. He couldn't stop shaking. He tried to get back to sleep but his head throbbed and he ached all over. The night passed slowly and he began to wonder if morning would ever come. He was vaguely aware of Spock's voice as Spock woke McCoy to stand his watch.

McCoy woke as soon as he was called. It was still dark and wouldn't be light for a couple of hours yet. Spock lay down and told McCoy to call everyone as soon as it began to get light.

McCoy sat on a rock for a while, trying to make out detail in the blackness. He felt uneasy; something was wrong. Suddenly he heard a moan and quickly going to the source of the sound he found Kirk, shivering and huddled on the ground. He knelt down beside him and laid a hand on Kirk's brow. It was burning hot.

Kirk, feeling the Doctor's touch, opened his eyes, trying to make out the form in the inky blackness.

"Bon-es..." he croaked.

"Take it easy, Jim," McCoy said gently. "Don't try to speak." McCoy felt for his pulse.

"So... so... cold," Kirk stuttered and then he broke into a spasm of coughing. It passed quickly but left him gasping with pain and holding his chest. He shivered uncontrollably.

Spock, wakened by the sound of Kirk's coughing, joined McCoy. He didn't need to ask what was wrong, he could see for himself.

"Spock, we've got to find a way to keep Jim warm. But we've got nothing to cover him with," McCoy said, trying to think of an answer. He suddenly had an idea. "Give me a hand to get these wet clothes off him."

Together they took off Kirk's clothes, which had been soaked by his sweat. McCoy then took off his own clothes and they put them on Kirk. He called Chekov and told him to lie down beside the Captain and hold him close; he then lay down on the other side and they tried to keep Kirk warm with the heat of their bodies.

Meanwhile, Spock and Freeman crossed the river at a narrow spot and made their way to the village that Spock had picked up on his tricorder. They sneaked in and managed to grab some blankets. They took as many as they could carry and hurried back to the river. They just made it as the sun came up.

McCoy heard them coming and got to his feet. Seeing the blankets, he and Chekov stripped off the Captain's clothing, which was again soaked with his sweat. The warmth of their bodies had helped, but Kirk was in a bad way. The coughing spells had become frequent and he was finding breathing painful and difficult. He was still shivering and the sweat poured off him; he was burning with fever.

They quickly wrapped him in blankets and made him as comfortable as possible. Freeman had found a crude cup so McCoy filled it with water and gave Kirk a drink. Kirk took a couple of mouthfuls but then gagged on it and broke into a spasm of coughing. It was a severe one and he was in great pain. McCoy put an arm under his shoulders and lifted him slightly, trying to help.

"Easy, Jim." Meaningless words, the Doctor knew even as he spoke them. But he was helpless to do anything but try and calm his friend.

Gradually the spasm passed; exhausted by it, and wrenched with pain, Kirk lay back on McCoy's arm, his face white against the rough homespun blanket. Gently the Doctor eased him down to the ground again, tucking the blanket around, then straightened up.

A chilly wind had sprung up and ominous dark clouds were hurrying across the sky. McCoy felt a sudden spot of rain on his cheek and glanced anxiously at his patient. Despite the blankets, Kirk was shuddering as if with cold; and from time to time a faint moan escaped him. He was clearly only semi-conscious now.

"Spock," the Doctor said in an undertone, as if afraid that Kirk might overhear him. "It won't do. We've got to find a shelter for him somehow - you can see that for yourself."

"Agreed, Doctor." Spock's expression was as near concern as was possible for him. "But this empty hillside does not look promising. There is insufficient vegetation even to cover the Captain adequately."

Chekov, discretely not listening, was busy crawling the blankets closer around the Captain; they had been disturbed by Kirk's feverish movements and the light drizzle was beginning to sprinkle his head and shoulders. But Freeman, aware of his own partial responsibility for the Captain's condition, had been listening anxiously and now broke in.

"Mr. Spock! Sir! That ruined hut we passed at the edge of the village, couldn't we take the Captain there? It looked as if no-one ever used it now."

"Thank you, Ensign." Spock's tone was a dismissal and Freeman retreated to help Chekov. The rain was coming down heavily now and a wind had sprung up; it was blowing the rain across the landscape in sheets. Chekov and Freeman sat with their backs to the wind, trying to shelter Kirk a bit from the driving rain.

The First Officer moved away a little towards the river, tricorder swinging thoughtfully. McCoy followed him urgently.

"Well, Spock, what about it?"

"The village is three miles from here and the risk of encountering the humanoids is very great; the non-interference directive, as you know..."

McCoy opened his mouth to say, "Blast the non-interference directive," but changed his mind. They were all bound by their oaths to uphold it, and cursing it wouldn't help. Instead he said, with as much calmness as he could;

"It's Jim's life we're talking about, Spock. Another day out here, without food, warmth or shelter from this rain will kill him. He won't stand a chance."

Spock had been staring into his tricorder screen as if the answer were written there, but at this unaccustomed quietness in the Doctor's tone he lifted his head and glanced back towards the others. Kirk was lying huddled in blankets on the wet ground; Chekov and Freeman were sitting anxiously beside him, trying to shelter him a bit. Spock moved back towards them, with McCoy at his heels.

"Mr. Freeman - take your tricorder and scout ahead of us to the

point where we crossed the river last night. Mr. Chekov, give me a hand with the Captain."

McCoy let out a breath he didn't realise he'd been holding and hurried forward to help.

The rain was coming down even harder now and the going underfoot was treacherous. Spock was handicapped, carrying the unconscious Captain in his arms; it took them a while to reach the crossing place.

Freeman was waiting for them when they arrived, a worried look on his face. The river had risen since they'd last crossed, and it was flowing very fast. Crossing it wasn't going to be easy.

"Well, Spock, what do we do now?" McCoy asked rather dejectedly. Spock thought for a moment and then answered.

"You say that the Captain will die if we don't get him to a shelter. It won't be easy getting across this river - but there is shelter on the other side. Logically then, if we are not going to let Jim die, we must get across the river."

McCoy glanced sharply at the Vulcan. Spock's use of the Captain's first name indicated his worry and concern far more than his impassive face ever could. McCoy understood how close Kirk and Spock were, that very special relationship that they had between them - he probably understood it even better than they did. It wasn't a relationship you could describe with mere words, there was an empathy between them; they were like two twins, but even closer.

Spock decided that the safest way to get Kirk across the river was for him to carry the Captain across his shoulders. They wrapped Kirk tightly in a blanket to try and keep him dry and Chekov helped Spock to hoist him onto his shoulders.

They started to wade across the raging river, Freeman taking the lead followed by Spock with Kirk, McCoy and Chekov bringing up the rear. They were nearing the other side when McCoy looked upstream and was horrified to see a tree being swept down straight towards Spock. He yelled a warning, but it was too late. Spock was knocked from his feet and he and Kirk were carried off down the river. Spock managed to grab hold of Kirk and started swimming strongly towards the shore. Eventually he got close to the bank and managed to grab hold of an overhanging branch.

The sudden immersion into the cold water brought Kirk back to consciousness. He found himself choking and struggling, trying to get his head above water, but he couldn't get his arms free. They seemed to be tied to his sides. Not understanding what was happening he panicked, swallowing even more water. Suddenly he felt himself grabbed by the arm and pulled up till his head was clear of the water. He couldn't make out who had grabbed him but he dimly realised they were in a river and making for the bank. After a while they stopped moving forward and Kirk realised that they must have reached the bank. He felt the water sweeping past him, trying to drag him out of the grip of his rescuer. Kirk started to struggle again, trying to free his arms, but all he succeeded in doing was to swallow more water. He choked on it and broke into a fit of coughing, fighting for breath. The pain across his chest was like a band of fire. Suddenly he heard a familiar voice speaking to him.

"Don't struggle, Jim. Help will be here soon."

Realising that it was Spock who held him, Kirk tried to relax. The fit of coughing passed and he lay in the water as still as he could, trusting in Spock completely.

McCoy had watched horrified as Spock and Kirk were swept down the river and out of sight round a bend. He got ashore as quickly as he could and with Chekov and Freeman he headed along the bank of the river, fearing the worst. They had almost given up hope when, ahead of them, they saw Spock holding onto a tree branch with one hand and hanging onto Kirk with the other. They ran to the edge of the river bank, McCoy shouting to Spock to let him know they were coming.

Kirk had lost track of time. The cold was creeping over him like a thick blanket and he was letting it. He knew that he should try to fight it but he hadn't the strength left to do so. The warm darkness was enveloping. It was a welcome release from the pain. Just before he lost consciousness, Kirk thought he heard McCoy's voice.

Freeman and Chekov managed to reach Spock and pull him nearer the shore. Then they got hold of Kirk and dragged him up onto the bank. They then helped Spock onto the bank and Freeman handed him a blanket. Spock was grateful for it as he was shivering from the cold and wet.

McCoy quickly checked Kirk and realised that the Captain was hardly breathing. He immediately started to give him artificial respiration. For a while there was no reaction, then Kirk started choking and coughed up a fair amount of water. McCoy picked up a blanket and began to rub Kirk down and to massage him, trying to restore his circulation. Eventually Kirk began to stir. He slowly opened his eyes and looked up at McCoy, trying to get him in focus. McCoy smiled down at him.

"Welcome back to the land of the living, Jim." McCoy hoped he sounded more cheerful than he felt.

Kirk struggled to speak but broke into another spasm of coughing, the pain slicing like a knife through his chest. When the bout of coughing passed he was totally exhausted by it and slipped back into the welcome escape of unconsciousness.

McCoy frowned and wrapped Kirk in the blankets, which were rather wet now. Then he went over to Spock.

"How are you feeling, Spock?"

"I've felt warmer, Doctor. I suggest we start making our way to the hut and get the Captain in out of this rain."

McCoy agreed with this completely, so they started out towards the village. Chekov and Freeman carried Kirk between them this time, and Spock led the way with a blanket round his shoulders. McCoy brought up the rear. They had a good way to go as they had to make their way back up the river first, and it was mid-afternoon by the time they reached the hut. It was still raining hard and the wind was very strong.

Making sure that the hut was still empty, Chekov and Freeman carried Kirk into the hut and laid him gently on the floor. The trampled straw underfoot and the smell suggested that it had served as some sort of byre, but it was at least fairly wind and water proof inside. Their greatest worry, that of being overheard, was quieted to some extent: the nearest house was some distance away, and the strong wind was blowing towards them, drowning the sound of the Captain's fevered mutterings even inside the hut.

McCoy, assisted by Chekov, again stripped off the Captain's shirt and the rest of his clothes as they were all soaking wet.

McCoy had managed to keep a couple of blankets dry by wrapping them in another one, so he wrapped these around Kirk.

Despite the protection of the blankets and the woven hut walls, Kirk was shivering with cold and fever. His breathing came in racking gasps interspersed with painfully dry coughing, his face flushed with the effort.

The Doctor, checking his pulse, was concerned to find it very weak and irregular. Looking up, his eyes met Spock's in the gloom, and he shook his head slightly.

"He needs warmth, liquids, drugs - everything we can't give him here. There's nothing more I can do for him without proper medical facilities."

"We can get water from the river again," suggested Spock.

"That's not..." McCoy began, but broke off, startled, as the grey light from the doorway was suddenly blocked off. He and Freeman just had time to drag Kirk clear before the hut was invaded by two huge shaggy beasts, built something on the lines of Highland cattle, but standing almost six feet at the shoulder. Heads swinging, eyes rolling in mild astonishment at finding the shelter already occupied, they advanced into the centre of the open space and stood, their breath steaming in the chilly air. Evidently satisfied, they subsided with heavy grunts to the ground, their damp, shaggy black coats flapping around them.

"That's great," muttered McCoy, though not so loudly as to alarm them - he didn't know their temper and wasn't for taking chances. "And just where are we supposed to sit?" For much of the floor-space was now filled by the sprawling creatures, and most of the rest by Kirk.

"What... what are they?" asked Chekov stupidly; he still hadn't recovered from the shock of their sudden appearance.

"Domestic animals, almost certainly..." Spock began, but he was interrupted by a small voice.

"Simba and Bonni," the small voice cut in.

Startled, their heads whipped round towards the doorway. Framed in it against the grey light was a humanoid - a child, judging by Earth standards. A little girl, perhaps three years old, with long black hair.

"Who are you? Why are you here? Are you bad men?" It was a child, evidently - but how unafraid she was! McCoy took it upon himself to answer.

"We're strangers. From a distant place. We're just sheltering here from the rain. We mean no harm to your people."

Did she understand? Above all, she mustn't be frightened into calling for help. Curiosity and suspicion were in her face as she stood poised for flight. McCoy went on desperately.

"We're good people, not bad men! And our Captain is hurt..."

Spock glanced at him; if the child repeated this information there could be trouble ahead.

"Captain?" she asked in a puzzled voice. The word was obviously unfamiliar to her.

"Our - leader, Chieftain," supplied Chekov helpfully.

"Him," said the girl excitedly, pointing to Spock.



"No," replied Spock gravely. "This is our leader." He drew aside to show her Kirk, huddled in his blankets on the floor.

The girl came closer, picking her way among the feet of the beasts, obviously unconcerned by their presence.

"He is - sick? My mother was sick last Spring. We gave her lana' cala. She is well now."

"Lana' cala?" queried Spock.

"You know," she said, with an impatient stamp. "From the geranas." The faces around her were still puzzled. "Like these. Simba and Bonni. Bonni has lana' cala still, because she has a baby. But Simba does not have any."

"Milk!" exclaimed McCoy, the light suddenly breaking. Then, with growing excitement, "Can you...er...how do you get lana' cala? May we have some?" But the child had lost interest and was looking at Kirk now.

"He does not have the right ears, but his hair is a funny colour - like gold! Is that why he is your king?"

"Never mind that now," said McCoy impatiently. "The lana' cala. Have you seen anyone getting it from the geranas? How is it done?"

The child merely looked bewildered and a little frightened at the Doctor's abrupt tone.

"I don't understand," she said, backing away slightly.

"Maybe I could try," volunteered Freeman diffidently. "If it's anything like milking a cow - I was raised on a farm and I used to be a good hand at it."

At Spock's nod he cautiously approached the nearest beast, clutching the cup in one hand. With a snuffle it rose to its feet and stood blowing gently, eyeing his advances dubiously. Freeman ran his empty hand along its side, but it started nervously from his touch.

"Watch out for its feet," warned Chekov. "The Captain's not far away from it."

"What are you doing?" asked the child, puzzled.

"We need lana' cala - for the king," explained Spock.

"Oh, that. Give me the cup and I will show you. My father taught me," said the child proudly, and took the cup from Freeman's eager hand. As she ducked down beside the huge beast for a few moments her voice was muffled.

"Haven't you got any geranas?" she asked. Then straightening, she held out the cup. "Here you are." It was brimming with lana' cala - warm, new milk.

Carefully McCoy took it from her, fearful of spilling any, and carried it across to Kirk. With Chekov's help, he propped the Captain up, steadying him against one arm and holding the cup close to his lips.

"C'mon, Jim."

Kirk opened glazed eyes, looking vaguely at the cup. "Whe..?" he croaked.

"Lana' cala. Try it - Doctor's orders."

Wearily, Kirk closed his eyes again. Understanding was too much effort.

"Jim!" the voice persisted. A smell, vaguely familiar, was coming to him now, and the rim of a cup was pressing against his lips, tilting - not water again, this was warm. Reluctantly he sipped, then sipped again as the soothing warm milk reached his parched mouth and dry throat. He tried to gulp it and choked, coughing violently. McCoy drew the cup back and waited, concerned, till the fit of coughing passed. Then he brought the cup to Kirk's lips again.

"Take it slowly, Jim. Slowly - that's the way."

The cup was emptied, filled again by the wondering child, then drained once more. Satisfied, Kirk sank back against McCoy's arm.

"Wish all your remedies were more like that, Bones," he whispered, hoarsely, managing a glimmer of a smile. "That was..." the sentence finished in a sigh. The Captain was asleep.

McCoy lowered him gently to the ground, made him comfortable, and then stood up. "Thank you, Miss ...?"

"My name is Ara."

"Thank you, Ara. You have helped him get well. We are very grateful."

"Yes, he will be well soon. Like my mother." As if this was a reminder, Ara wandered towards the door. "It has stopped raining. I shall go home and tell her..."

"Why don't you stay here a while and talk to us?" intervened McCoy hastily. "We'd like to hear about your family."

Freeman approached the little girl. "Could you show me how to get the lana' cels from Bonni?"

"Yes," said Ara proudly. "Watch how I do it."

Freeman watched carefully and then had a go himself. Since he was used to milking a cow he soon got the knack. He tried a cup and found it very pleasant and warming, so he offered it around to the others. They all felt a bit cold and the milk warmed them up.

The afternoon wore away. Ara, alternately chattering about herself, her family and her pets, and listening to the stories spun by her new friends, seemed happy enough, but for the Enterprise party it seemed to last an eternity. Every sound outside seemed to be the approach of one of the humanoids from the village and imminent discovery. And there was the problem of Ara - how long before she was missed? Dared they let her go back and lead others to them? Even if she promised to say nothing, there was little hope they could depend on her, she was so young. But what alternative was there?

McCoy chewed these ideas over as he sat beside Kirk, holding a damp cloth on Kirk's hot forehead. Kirk was delirious and muttering unintelligibly. Sweat was dripping off him. McCoy asked Freeman to get another cup of milk and he then tried to get Kirk to drink some of it. Supporting the Captain he held the cup to his lips.

"Jim, try some more milk."

Kirk was only semi-conscious but when he smelt the warm milk he instinctively sipped it. McCoy made sure he didn't take it too fast. When the cup was empty McCoy gently laid Kirk down and pulled the blankets up closer round him. He frowned as he looked down at his friend, wishing there was more he could do. Then he resumed his seat beside the Captain, and placed the damp cloth on

his forehead; he looked over at Ara.

Spock had her on his knee at the moment, telling her some tale of Vulcan's legendary past, carefully adapted for his present audience. Ara sat rapt, asking questions, darting from idea to idea, trying to guess how the story would end. In spite of his worry, McCoy couldn't help smiling at the sight of Spock in this unusual role, almost relaxed for once, evidently living his own childhood again. The words couldn't be heard over here on the other side of the hut, for the wind was still blowing strongly, but McCoy's smile spread to a grin as he saw Chekov leaning closer, anxious not to miss anything. The story wound to its conclusion and Spock sat silent, Ara's head against his shoulder. In the sudden hush, Chekov's voice came clearly.

"But what happened to...?"

With a save, Spock quietened him, indicating the child in his lap. Ara was asleep.

Carefully, so as not to wake her, Spock passed her across to Freeman and rose, stretching himself, then joined McCoy.

McCoy looked sideways at him, and said banteringly, "Vulcan lost a good nursemaid when you joined Starfleet, Spock." But Spock chose to ignore this one.

"How is the Captain, Doctor?"

McCoy's face lost its grin and he became suddenly serious. "His fever's coming to a peak. We'll know one way or the other soon, Spock."

Spock looked down at Kirk's fever flushed face. Only he knew what thoughts were going through his mind; McCoy could read nothing on that poker straight face.

Suddenly, they were both startled by a distant voice calling.

"Ara! Ara!"

Ara woke abruptly, looked round in sleepy bewilderment, sailed up at Freeman, then paddled across to Spock and the others.

"I must go. Thank you for the story, Sir," she said politely, as if making her goodbyes at a party. She looked down at the unconscious Captain. "Your king will soon be well. The lane's cala will cure him, as it did my mother."

"Thank you, Ara," said McCoy. "Would you do something else for us?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you not tell about us being here for a while? Of course," he added hastily, seeing her eyes widening, "you shouldn't tell lies if they ask you, but if they don't ask you..."

"Oh, they won't," said the child confidently. "They never do."

"Thank you, Ara. Goodnight."

"Goodnight, Sir." A pause, then, as she looked down at Kirk again, "His ears aren't like his," she said, indicating Spock. "Like in the stories. But his hair is gold, isn't it?" Then she was gone, ducking out into the darkness.

Outside, a scolding voice said, "Ara, where have you been? It's long past your bedtime." The men held their breath for a moment.

"Only inside the old hut with Simba and Bonni." The footsteps

died away and McCoy let out a sigh of relief.

"Bon-es," a voice suddenly croaked and McCoy looked down at Kirk in surprise. Kirk's eyes were open and his face had lost the flushed look. He was pale and drawn. McCoy quickly knelt beside him.

"Easy, Jim. Don't try to talk." McCoy put his arm under Kirk's shoulders and eased him into a sitting position. He took the cup of warm milk that Freeman handed him and let Kirk sip it slowly. Kirk drained the cup, then his eyes closed and he became a dead-weight on McCoy's arm. McCoy took a quick check of his pulse, then, reasonably satisfied, wrapped the blankets closely round the Captain, making him as comfortable as possible. He looked up as Spock came across to him.

"How is he, Doctor?"

"Well, the fever's broken, his pulse is stronger, and he's breathing easier. He's sleeping now and that's the best thing for him."

Spock nodded, then said, "We'd all better try and get some sleep. The Enterprise won't be back till morning. We'll set watches."

"No, Spock," McCoy interrupted. "I'd rather stay awake and keep an eye on Jim. You three can get some sleep."

Spock decided that it would be better if McCoy stay up with Kirk, so he, Chekov and Freeman lay down where they could and were soon asleep.

The night slowly passed and McCoy kept his lonely vigil beside Kirk. The Captain slept peacefully.

Dawn was just breaking when McCoy was startled by the beeping of one of the communicators. He took it out and flipped it open, to hear -

"Enterprise to Captain Kirk." It was Scotty's voice.

Spock joined McCoy and took the communicator from him.

"Enterprise, this is Spock. Sock onto my signal and prepare to beam up five. Have a medical team in the transporter room; we have a casualty."

"Affirmative, Mr. Spock. Standing by."

McCoy and Spock lifted Kirk and held him, supported between them. They were joined by Chekov and Freeman. Spock spoke into the communicator.

"Energize."

The landing party dematerialised and the garenas looked slightly startled as the men vanished. Then the hut was empty, except for the two animals, the blankets and the crude cup.

Later that morning, at breakfast, Ara's mother was complaining.

"I don't know where those blankets have got to. I'm sure I left them in the back room."

"I know where they are," Ara said importantly. "The Good People took them. One of them had pointed ears, just like in the stories. They were for the king - he was sick. But he didn't have pointed ears."

"What on earth are you talking about?" exclaimed her mother.

"In the old hut, yesterday, there were five of them. But I expect they've gone now."

Ara's father smiled indulgently, but her mother looked a little alarmed.

"Kanor, you don't suppose... There have been bad men around recently."

"If it makes you happy, we'll go and look."

The hut was quite empty, of course - though the blankets were there.

Kanor smiled at Ara. "'Fraid they've flown away, eh, Ara?"

"Yes. But he did have gold hair," said Ara thoughtfully.

Unbeknown to Ara, her golden-haired king was, at that precise moment, regaining consciousness in the sickbay of a starship, which was already a couple of light years from her planet and speeding further away every second.

Kirk gradually became aware of his surroundings and of McCoy's voice.

"He's going to be very weak for a while and it'll be two or three weeks before he's fit for duty, but we've a lot to thank Ara for, that milk saved his life. Without it he would never have survived long enough for us to get him back on board."

"She was an interesting child," agreed Spock.

"Ara?" asked Kirk hoarsely.

Both Spock and McCoy spun round at the sound of Kirk's voice and went to him.

"How are you feeling, Jim?" asked McCoy.

"A bit like someone's been using me for a punch bag. Who is Ara?"

"A very nice little girl who saved your life. Don't you remember anything?"

"Everything's rather hazy...like a dream." Kirk's voice began to sound strained. "I can't..."

"Easy, Jim. Don't try to force it." McCoy laid a hand gently on Kirk's arm and smiled down at him. "You were pretty sick, it's not surprising that you don't remember."

"Ara was one of the natives, Captain," supplied Spock. "I made an error in thinking we would remain undisturbed in the hut."

"Look, if anyone's to blame, Spock, I am..." cut in McCoy.

"The responsibility..."

"Gentlemen," interrupted Kirk with an effort, "there's no point in arguing about it now. The question is, how much damage was done? Does anyone else know about us?"

"I think it unlikely, Captain. The girl was very young and she had no idea who we really were."

"Fine. What's happening now?" asked Kirk.

"We are on course for Starbase 11, sir. We'll be there in eleven point five six days."

Kirk was becoming drowsy again. His eyes were getting heavy and he was having a job to keep them open. McCoy saw this.

"That's enough talking for now, Jim. You need to get some rest. If you behave and do as you're told, I might even let you up in time to go on shore leave."

Kirk felt that he ought to answer that but he just didn't have the energy. His eyes closed and he drifted off to sleep.

McCoy looked down at the sleeping figure and smiled. "He'll be fine, Spock."

Spock nodded and left, silently, to get on with the business of running the ship.

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THE ORIGINAL UHURA JOKE by R.H.

"Open hailing frequencies, Lieutenant."

"Captain?"

"I said, Open hailing frequencies."

"Yes, I heard you. But I don't understand."

"What?"

"I'm sorry, sir, I just don't..."

"I heard you the first time, Lieutenant."

"Yes, sir."

"The hailing frequencies. The radio. You know what the radio is?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Then turn it on."

"Sir?"

"The radio. Turn the radio on."

"Oh, of course, sir." (Pause.) "Hey, li'l ol' radio? I love you..."

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