

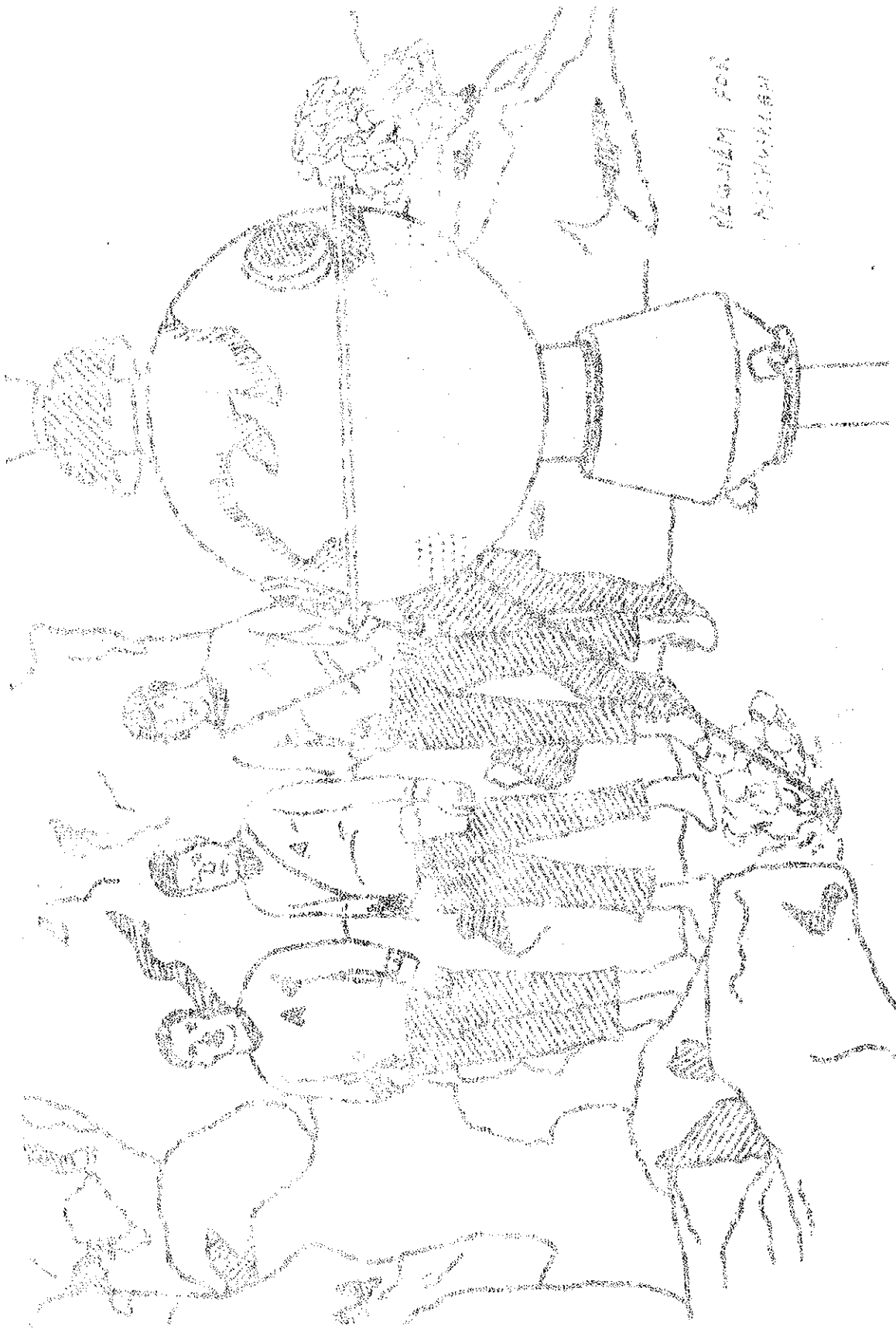
CONTENTS

UHURA'S DOWNFALL by Dorothy Bradley	P. 1
OUR OBJECTIVE by Chrissie Chrzan	P. 4
SPOCK'S SECRET QUEST by Chrissie Chrzan	P. 4
THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST by T.G.Z.C.	P. 5
I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD by Beth Hallam	P. 10
ENTERPRISE CRUSOE by Jinx	P. 11

Illustrations by Paul Dakeyne facing P.11.
Beth Hallam P.3, P.5, P.8, P.9.
Robin Hill P.10.
Helen McCarthy P.19.

A STAG publication.
Log Entries 5, price 55p, is put out by the STAR TREK ACTION
GROUP and is available from
Beth Hallam
Flat 3
36 Clapham Rd.
Bedford
England.

All rights are reserved to the individual authors and artists.
Anyone wishing to reprint any of the material herein is asked to
obtain permission in writing before doing so. It is understood that
no attempt is made to supercede any copyrights held by Paramount,
NBC, BBC, or any other holders of copyright in STAR TREK material.



MUSCUM FOR
MUSCUM

UHURA'S DOWNFALL by Dorothy Bradley

It was the end of a week of diplomatic bickerings on Babel. Everyone involved was awaiting departure on the morrow, but there was one last function to be performed.

"Hopefully," thought Kirk, as he ran the comb through his hair, "the diplomats will be diplomatic for the banquet. They certainly haven't been in the least civil during the entire conference." He laid down the comb and started to leave his quarters. Just as the door softly hissed open, he heard the echoes of wolf whistles down the corridor. "I wonder what she's wearing tonight," he thought as he turned toward the direction of the quarters of his communications officer. "Certainly not regulation."

Around the corner, Lt. Uhura was just stepping out to meet her escort. She was wearing a very optional, close-fitting gown of softly draped material printed in a pattern of old Terran Africa, that left just enough to the imagination to be totally tantalizing. The tall, handsome negro who had been patiently waiting, whispered softly, "If I weren't your brother, I'd sure make a pass."

Kirk rounded the corner just in time to see Uhura smile coyly at Furaha. "I'm not sure the Galaxy is ready for... ah... this," he said, looking admiringly at his 'fellow' officer, "but shall we go? We shouldn't be late."

By the time they reached the transporter room, the trio had become a party of more than twenty officers and security guards. After beaming to the planet's surface, the group scattered - the security personnel assuming inconspicuous positions from which to watch the goings-on and the officers mingling with the other guests. Many a table was heavily laden with delicacies from all the worlds represented and even from some which weren't. Seemingly from all directions came the soft strains of music from many lands and the babel of many tongues rose and fell as conversations began and ended.

The evening was passing pleasantly for Uhura. Her brother had spotted friends from the freighter Mark VII and had convinced Uhura it would be worth her while to meet these stalwart souls. The conversation was mostly an exchange of adventures and escapades since Furaha's journey aboard the freighter two plus years earlier. Always, too, there were the inevitable jests and jibes of life in Starfleet. But, judging from their narratives, Uhura was glad she wasn't elsewhere in the Federation services. However, the Captain of the Mark VII, one Captain Bwatu, sounded like a cross between superman and a Starship Captain. "I wonder what he's really like," she thought. "Probably another staid, stick-to-the-schedule bore."

Suddenly, Uhura felt as though she were being rather closely watched. From behind her came a gentle, mellow voice. "The least you scamps could do is introduce me to this lovely lady." To Furaha, "This wouldn't per chance be the sister of whom you often spoke?"

"None other," came the obviously proud reply.

"Miss Uhura, the pleasure is mine. I feel I almost know you. I would certainly be proud if I had a sister like yourself."

"Thank you... Captain Bwatu?" She was guessing from the stripes;

on the sleeves. To herself, Uhura said, "This just turned into a most promising evening." NO)ONE had even hinted that the Captain was also of African ancestry, and not unpleasant of look, either.

The conversation turned again to the banter common among space travellers; but, one by one, the others drifted away until Uhura was left only Captain Bwatu for company. The pair wandered outside and the next couple of hours passed rapidly as they strolled slowly about the formal gardens.

The time was almost late enough, thought Kirk, he could exit unnoticed from this bland evening. He almost wished something would happen just to relieve the boredom. Just then came a loud crash from one of the doorways. Kirk's gaze, along with most others in the hall, turned to see a tray, a myriad of glasses, and an attendant scattered over the floor... and in the center... No! Couldn't be! Uhura??! Well, he thought, he'd seen everything. Like someone once said, "You never know what will happen next in Starfleet."

To the tittering and snickering of the crowd, Uhura picked herself up from the floor as best she could, ignoring the offer of assistance from Bwatu. She had never been so totally embarrassed or humiliated. She apologised profusely to the unfortunate attendant and fled the scene before anyone could say a word.

The attendant turned to the bemused officer. "I'm sorry, Captain. I guess I didn't see her. I do hope she isn't injured."

"Think nothing of it. We did not see you, either, and these steps are certainly smooth. No harm done except one wounded ego."

No-one saw Lt. Uhura until she reported for duty next day. She hoped she wouldn't be noticed as she slipped into her seat, but that was too much to ask for.

"Have a pleasant evening, Uhura," taunted Chekov.

"Very few get that much attention. You're practically famous," added Sulu.

"Bet I still had a better evening than you two," retorted Uhura.

Sulu and Chekov looked chagrined and said nothing.

"Message coming in, Captain."

"Put it on the screen, Lieutenant."

"Captain Kirk. Captain Bwatu here. The cargo has been transferred and we are ready to depart."

"Good. Good. Have a pleasant trip."

"Thank you. ...I understand you have a communications officer by the name of Uhura."

Kirk glanced over his shoulder. "I do."

"She left last night without saying goodbye. I would appreciate very much you relaying my thanks for a wonderful evening. If we should meet again, tell her she has a date if she will accept. She's very special. You're very lucky, Captain. Out."



OUR OBJECTIVE by Chrissie Chrzan

We are the officers and crew of the U.S.S. Enterprise.
 Four hundred men and women, all told.
 We are on a five year mission, roaming the starry skies,
 Like brave adventurers of old.

We seek out new life forms, any civilisation,
 Whether they are an alien or humanoid race.
 They are shown the benefits of joining the Federation,
 And of being our allies across the voids of space.

For the Federation has its enemies, Romulans and Klingons,
 Who do not wish to let hostilities cease.
 Earth sends a promise - let bygones be bygones,
 And forever in the Galaxy, let there be PEACE.

SPOCK'S SECRET QUEST by Chrissie Chrzan

Spock is my name.

I am second-in-command of the U.S.S. Enterprise.

I am one Vulcan.

One Vulcan, amongst many Humans.

I am alone, and my heart cries

To be understood by my comrades.

I must never show any emotion.

Yet, when my friends are in danger, I realise

That I fear for their safety.

These emotions are disturbing for me,

For to be a true Vulcan, I must centralise

My thinking towards logical Vulcan thoughts,

And expel any illogical Human ones.

Love is an example - strangely my being lies

Heavy within me - knowing that Nurse Chapel

Loves me - me! Yet I cannot return that love.

Someday, somewhere under alien skies,

I may find someone to care for,

And not be afraid to show that I care.

Until then, I roam the galaxies without any ties,

To find the answer to my quest.

Which is the stronger in me - Human or Vulcan.

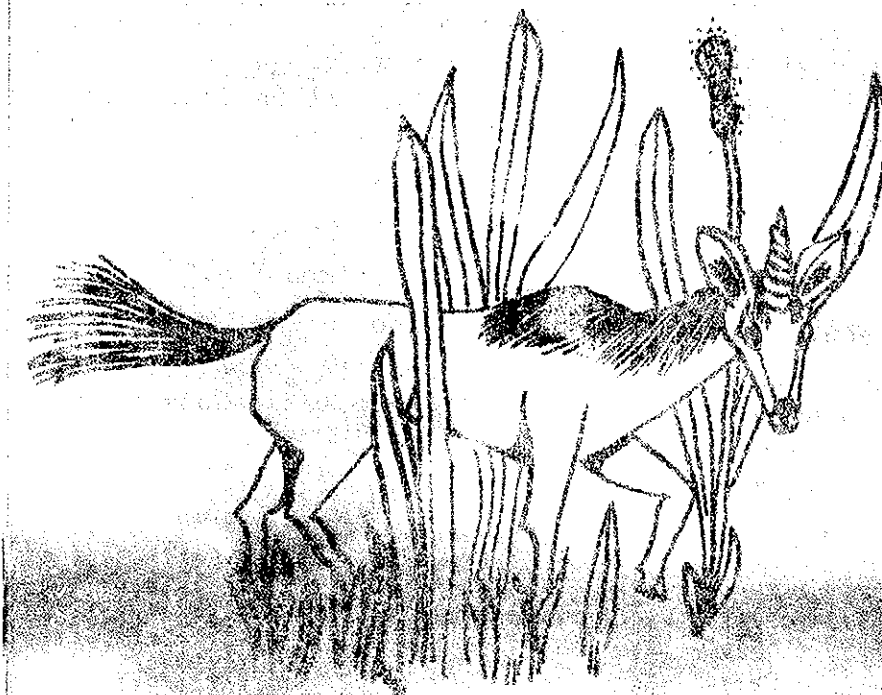
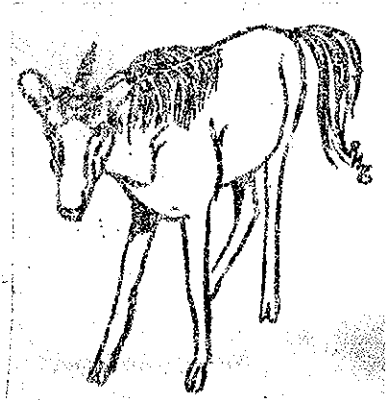
When my question has been answered, then I will rest.

THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST by T.S.Z.C.

The girl strode along confidently, all senses automatically alert as she watched and listened for any indication of inimical animal life. The great scattered herd of unicorns she had seen yesterday should be not far away, for unicorns were notoriously slow movers. She eased the quiver of arrows on her shoulder, wishing it were possible to pad the narrow strap a little to stop it cutting into her shoulder, but their little colony was too lacking in resources to permit that luxury.

She should be in sight of the unicorns by now. Even if many of them were lying down, and so hidden from her sight by the tall grasses, some should be standing, their long, single horns in full view! But there was not a horn in sight. Where were they? Unless - it would be exceptionally bad luck if, now of all times, the area was to be cursed by a pack of smilodons!

She swung herself lithely into a tree and stared around her. No. Definitely no unicorn horn. Nor any of the long-necked cameleopards. She cursed softly to herself as she dropped back to the ground. Now she must search for small game, a much more strenuous occupation, for she must not go home empty-handed. It was always unfortunate when a hunter failed to catch enough to feed his family, and to-day - and for many days in the future - she would have to support her half-brother, his current mate, already eight months pregnant and therefore wholly dependant on others for her food, and the women's four other children; for her brother was lying helpless with a leg broken by a buffalo he had unwarily attacked, his first arrow having merely wounded it without disabling it. The girl did not in the least mind her status as unsuitable breeding material, but she did find herself resenting the custom that decreed that she should be responsible for the family of her injured brother as well as her two idiot siblings. It wasn't even as if the four children were his! Under these circumstances, why shouldn't their fathers take them?



Certainly, the rest of their people wouldn't leave them to starve, but life was too difficult, with too many congenitally disabled through inbreeding for any hunter's failure to support his/her family to be accepted with equanimity. Sometimes she wondered which of the original seven survivors of the crash that colonised this world had been less than perfect, genetically speaking; perhaps more than one had been.

The weakness hadn't shown up until the fourth generation - and then the results had been almost fatal. So many of that generation had been born disabled! Now, no-one had more than one child by the same mate; and any parent producing two imperfect children could not breed again, nor could his perfect offspring for fear they carried the weakness as a recessive gene. The girl herself was fit, strong and intelligent - but her two idiot paternal diblings, neither of whom had any imperfect maternal siblings, damned her. Yet, when she compared her life as a hunter with the lives of the women who were allowed to breed, she realised how fortunate she really was. She did not have to worry herself into an early grave, eternally pregnant and burdened with young children, always afraid that this one would be less than perfect, undesirable - and if it was, whose fault was it? Which parent carried the genes of destruction?

But even as her mind considered the history and problems of her race, she remained watchful. A movement not far away caught her eye. She froze, then moved again as another hunter came into view. Their paths converged.

"No luck, Rena?"

The girl shook her head. "There was a herd of unicorns here yesterday, Pedro. The only thing that could have moved them so quickly is a pack of smilodons. Be careful."

Pedro grunted acknowledgement of the warning, privately considering it unnecessary. Younger than Rena, he could not remember the last time a pack of smilodons had migrated into the area. He considered that the tales about the beasts had lost nothing in the telling over the intervening fifteen years, but when he had once dared to suggest that the beasts couldn't be as ferocious as the tales depicted, he had been assured that they were. Now it seemed that he would find out for himself. Oh, he would be careful, he knew. Unwary hunters never lasted long. He would be as careful as he was when facing - say a wolf, or a dragon - but he was far from convinced of the extent of their ferocity. Strange, though, if Rena were right about the unicorns - and she was a most reliable hunter - wolves or dragons didn't panic unicorns badly, so something more vicious must have shifted them.

"But am I encroaching on your planned route?" Rena was asking now, in obedience to the hunter's code of conduct.

"Not at all," he replied. "I was travelling at random. Perhaps I encroach on yours, since you knew of the unicorns?"

"No longer, since the beasts have moved."

"You are going on?"

"I must. Had you not heard? Brian has a broken leg."

Pedro made a face. "Unfortunate. When does Silver re-mate?"

"Not for at least two months, unless the child is early." Rena shrugged. "At least no-one will expect Brian to take another wife until his leg is mended and he can hunt again."

"I marry next month," Pedro said gloomily.

Rena chuckled. "Don't sound so pleased about it!"

"I don't mind marrying. I object to supporting another man's children. Their fathers should have to support them."

"I was thinking much the same about Silver's four. But a year from now, remember, another man will be supporting your first child."

"I would prefer to support my own," Pedro said slowly.

"Do you believe in monogamy, then?"

"Yes, I do!"

"It's bad for the gene pool."

"This way is simply spreading the bad genes. It's why the fourth generation was so badly affected, even though the third instituted monogamy - the women of the first two generations having children to as many men as possible, supposedly to help the gene pool. Of course everyone ended up with the faulty genes!"

"The doctor of the survivors approved."

"The doctor of the survivors was one of five women who had only two men between them. Of course she approved! It was one way to get a man!"

It also increased the second generation faster. And the trouble didn't arise until the fourth - and that was the generation that was the result of a return to monogamy, as you pointed out."

Pedro looked unconvinced.

"It is not, however, a problem that we need consider," Rena added. "Even if you asked to have only one wife, the Elders would never approve."

She glanced round. As the older of the two hunters, she had the right to choose first the direction in which she wanted to go. "I will go this way, Pedro. Good hunting!"

"Good hunting." He watched her stride away, quickly vanishing from sight in the long grass as she dropped into a slight dip in the ground. Then he selected his direction, and moved on.

"Class M planet, Captain," Spock reported from his library computer sensors. "Distribution of land and water approximately the same as on Earth. Oxygen content of atmosphere slightly higher. Life form readings. Intelligence is indicated, but not extensively so; possibly a species is just beginning to evolve into a sapient life form, for the reading is extremely localised, intermixed with non-sapient readings. Humanoid."

The landing party materialised on a grassy plain. Most of the grass was about chest high, but Spock's eyebrows shot upwards as he realised that some of the blades of grass were taller than he. It limited visibility quite severely.

"Fertile," Kirk commented, unnecessarily.

Spock swung his tricorder round. "Life form reading, Captain. One intelligent, a large number of non-sapient readings, feline characteristics..."

He broke off as a scream of agony intermixed with terror rang out, to be cut off short.

"This way!" Kirk pulled out his phaser and ran. The others followed close at his heels. The grass was not tangled at all, and



ported easily to let them through to a scene of utter horror. Two beasts that looked like great sabre-toothed tigers had hold of a limp humanoid body. They were pulling at it in a grisly tug-of-war. There was clearly nothing that could be done to aid the victim. Several more of the great cats were watching hungrily, but it was impossible to see how many. However, although nothing could help the victim, the instinct to do something was irrepressible. Kirk moved forward a few steps.

One of the watching cats leaped towards him. He fired his phaser, still set to stun force. Nothing happened. The great beast landed lightly, and bounded forward again.

From behind the landing party an arrow hissed, to catch the beast squarely between the ribs. It gave a snarling squalling sound, twisted in mid-air and fell heavily. At once several of its fellows pounced on it. It gave one more vicious snarl, then fell silent. Another arrow hissed, and another, before the men could turn, and each arrow hit one of the great cats squarely. The two fresh casualties were in their turn attacked by their unhurt packmates.

Kirk turned in time to see a girl fire off a fourth arrow. Without even waiting to see if it hit its target, she drew another from the quiver, and fired it while its predecessor was still in the air.

She beckoned with her head, then, and waited, another arrow notched while the men joined her, then indicated that they should move away. She backed after them, watching intently as long as she could see the beasts, then watching even more intently for movement in the grass that might indicate that one or even more of the smilodons was coming after them; though she privately considered that the surviving beasts had enough to think about, in the form of their grisly cannibalistic meal.

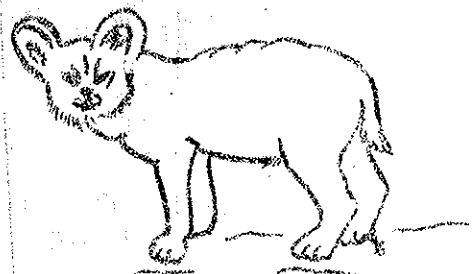
Kirk pulled out his communicator. This girl was obviously a member of a civilised culture, no matter how primitive; but it would not be possible to speak to her while they had to keep a sharp lookout for those sabre-tooths.

"Kirk to Enterprise." He noted with relief that she didn't look startled.

"Enterprise. Scott here."

"Four to beam up, Scotty."

The girl turned to him as soon as they materialised.



"Captain, you must send me down again. I must warn my people about the smilodons."

"Warn?"

"The smilodons are a migrant species. There have been none in our vicinity for fifteen years. I suspected their presence earlier to-day, but had no proof. Now, however, I know. I must warn my people."

"I see," Kirk said. "That's easily done. Miss - ?"

"Rene."

"Rene - how did you know I'm a Captain? And how is it you speak excellent English?"

"We're the descendants of a crash almost two hundred planet years ago. Our legends indicate that our years are rather shorter than the years our original ancestors knew, so I don't know how long ago it would be by your reckoning."

Kirk nodded, and turned to his First Officer. "Mr. Spock," he said. "What are the co-ordinates for the main concentration of Human life forms you found?"

Spock moved to the console and set the co-ordinates himself. "Ready, sir,"

Kirk joined Rene on the transporter. "What was the name of the crashed ship?" he asked.

"The Venturer."

"Check it out, Mr. Spock."

"Yes, sir."

"Emergise." They shimmered out of sight.

Kirk beamed back alone. "They went to stay," he said.

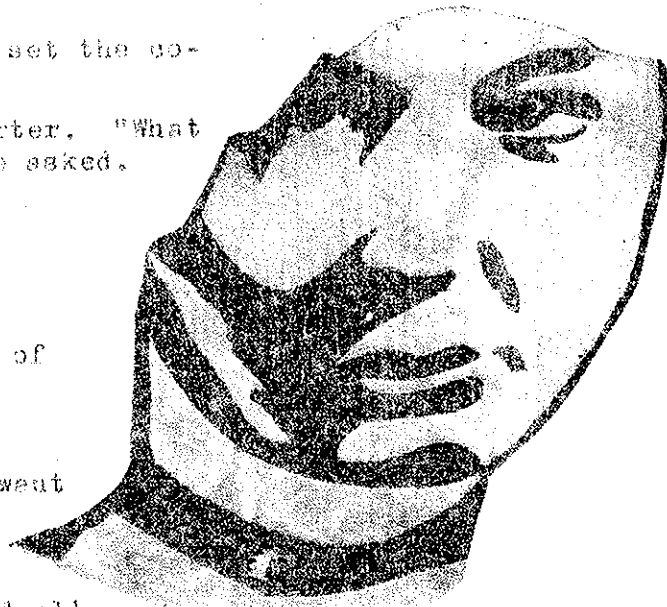
"Indeed," Spock commented.

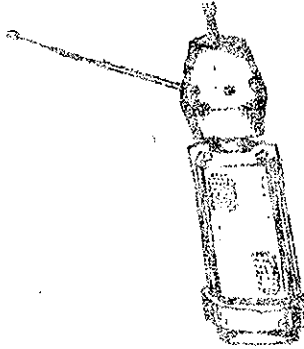
"It's their home. Smilodons and all. But apart from the smilodons, it's a good planet. I'm recommending it for settlement. They do badly need some fresh blood - almost half their population is badly mentally handicapped as a result of inbreeding, and one or two of the others are physically handicapped. Have you found out about the Venturer?"

"Yes, Captain. It was a colonising vessel some hundred and seventy standard years ago. It disappeared without trace... but its intended target was many light years away here."

"If it went out of control they were more than lucky to find somewhere at all, even if they did crash," Kirk commented. "Anyway, I've told them our medical crew will check them out, and find out which ones are liable to have defective offspring. It's the only direct help they'll accept apart from one or two items to help their hunting and farming."

He punched the intercom. "Kirk to sickbay. Bones, get your medical gear ready - you've got routine physicia to attend to on the colony below."





NUMERO
6875

'I wandered lonely as a cloud,'

Illogical; why do I quote verse?
I might as profitably curse!
Yet these very lines speak,
Saying things I do not know but feel.
Telling those very words my selectors vainly seek,
Ideas less than tangible - more than real.

Illogical - I have no herding drive to sate.
I was not designed for a mate,
Yet - I am 'two in one flesh'!
Mechanical changeling - I and he together,
Joined forever by a metal mesh,
Tied by necessity - our tether.

Illogical - I cannot experience aloneness;
A machine - I have not known a caress;
Why do I search for a friend?
What have I to give to man?
Towards his destruction is my trend,
More logic if from me he ran!

Illogical - what have I to give?
I that merely exist not live,
Condemned, immortal, the universe to range;
Seeking, selecting, judging, destroying!
Is it not time for another change -
To seeking, living, loving, enjoying?

Beth Mallon

KIRK: Bones, did you hear about the horse that jumped over the moon?
McCoy: No, what about it?
KIRK: It was a nightmare.

ENTERPRISE CRUSOE by Jinx

The three men relaxed contentedly in the lounge of the liner that was taking them back to Starbase 17, and the Enterprise.

Starfleet had finally discovered that the senior officers of ships nevertook their full leave, and some civil cervant with imagination, almost a sontradiction in terms, had suggested that they be sent on leave together at the first opportunity.

When the Enterprise came to the base for R & R, as well as some modifications to the engineroom, Kirk, Spock and McCoy were told firmly that they were now on leave. Furthermore, they were sent to Vaslis, Admiral Lucien being well aware that it was impossible for senior officers to really relax in the proximity of their juniors.

They had spent a happy three weeks hiking through the mountains, even Spock enjoying himself in investigating the small social animals that abounded there, and in sparring with McCoy, who returned it with interest.

They were all tanned, leaner, after their drastic exercise, and McCoy sat back with satisfaction as he watched his friends playing chess.

Suddenly the lights dimmed, went up again, then out altogether, to the accompaniment of a serier of grinding crashes. The Enterprise men were on their feet at once, as the Abandon Ship warning shrilled out above their heads. They obeyed it, passing out into a corridor lit only by a few emergency lights. They had attended lifeboat drill, of course, and turned to their station, moving rapidly despite the failing gravity.

Ahead of them the airtight door slammed shut; evidently the section beyond was impassible, and Kirk led them away, across the ship diagonally, then up a ladder to the next level. Here they came across a bunch of men milling around in panic. By their accents Kirk recognised the bunch of miners from Curus, who had been busily engaged in spending a year's wages in a few days.

"Come on," he said authoritatively. "Follow us, quickly."

They reached the emergency station in a few yards, to find it deserted, but the boat was there. Kirk and Spock between them heaved up the emergency door, which should have opened automatically, then thrust the men inside, one by one.

Finally they plunged in themselves, and went to the controls. All around them was noise, and McCoy set himself to get everyone in a seat while Kirk and Spock checked the boards.

By the time that he had everyone sitting, with safety belts fastened, the others were ready. Kirk nodded briskly, and Spock reached out to press the emergency button. The whole section of the hull blew out as the emergency charges took effect, and the ship fell out into vacuum. Kirk allowed them to get a safe distance away, then cut in the engines, banking slightly to get their first view of the stricken ship.

Evidently there had been trouble in the engineroom; as they watched, the entire bottom of the ship glowed briefly, and Kirk headed away at full speed.

They were hit by a few fragments of the ship, but the deflectors pushed most of them away in time, although the little boat was tossed

around for some moments.

At last Kirk felt the turbulence calm, and turned to see what was left of their liner, but it was gone completely, together with any other boats that had managed to launch themselves. Kirk shouted over the furious comments, "Quiet! All of you. Sit down again, and wait."

The men grumbled, but quietened, as Kirk turned to his own men.

"Spock, try to find out where we are. McCoy, investigate the stores, please."

He turned to check out the panel in front of him. There was silence for a few seconds, then a big man, not the biggest but apparently the miners' natural leader, stumbled forward.

"We'll be O.K., won't we?"

"I should think so," Kirk answered. "We're in the shipping lanes, and maybe the ship got off a Mayday. Why don't you men go to sleep, while you have the chance?"

"Bossy Starfleet bastards," someone muttered, but Kirk ignored him, and most of the men were half-drunk, at least, and settled down easily.

Kirk was worried. Most of the instruments in front of him were damaged, and judging by McCoy's carefully neutral expression, the stores were not satisfactory. He glanced across at Spock, at the co-pilot's board, who was carefully checking the screen for recognizable features, and simultaneously calling on each channel of the communications device at his station. Soon McCoy came across, to stand between their chairs.

"We've got a few gallons of water, a little food; the rest of the lockers are empty except for someone's private stock of brandy."

"No medical kit?"

"None. I've got a few bits and pieces with me, but that's all."

Kirk grinned at him. They all knew that McCoy was reputed to sleep with his medical pouch under his pillow, but then the grin faded, and he looked across at Spock hopefully.

"We are somewhere in Indus 49, Captain. I suggest that orange sun two light years away, there is at least one semi-habitable planet in that system," he said quietly. "Radio is out for the moment, our life support is faulty, and we are low on fuel."

Kirk nodded. "Half my board is out, and part of it was out when we started. I don't think that the Aurora line is very efficient. We'll put in an official complaint when we get back."

"If we get back," Spock observed.

"We'll get back," McCoy said firmly. "The Enterprise can't do without us, for a start. Jim, can we reach this system?"

"Just, Bones, if we keep life support to a minimum. If we can land safely, we should be able to repair the radio, probably the outside antennae have been burned off. Both of you try to get some sleep for now."

They both sat down and relaxed; soon there was silence. Kirk kept himself awake by plotting the most economical course, then

trying to make such small repairs as he could to the vital sensors. After a few hours, Spock got up and came over, settling in the co-pilot's chair.

"I am quite rested, sir. I submit that you need some sleep now."

Kirk nodded, smothering a yawn.

"You're right, Mr. Spock. Wake me if you need me." He switched over the dual controls to the Vulcan, and lay back in his chair.

He was wakened some hours later by an argument.

"To hell with you, I'm thirsty."

Spock had his attention fully held by his controls and sensors. Kirk got up at once, to find a confrontation between McCoy and a huge man with the pelt and build of a grizzly bear. Kirk felt for his belt. Of course, they had no phasers, but his hunting knife was still slung at his hip. He moved smoothly into the foreground, his hand on the sheath.

"That's enough! You'll have to do without water until we know what kind of world we can find. Go back to your seat, and shut up."

The miner glared at him, then obeyed reluctantly. Several murmurs of resentment came from the others, but Kirk ignored them as he went back to the pilot's seat.

Spock spared him a quick glance. "I was just going to call you, Captain. We are on the outskirts of this system."

"I'll take over, Spock, while you run what tests you can."

After a few moments, Spock looked up. "These sensors are faulty, in many cases - also old-fashioned, but I would suggest the fourth planet, Captain. It is hot, but it has a breathable atmosphere, a limited amount of surface water, some plant life, and a very little unintelligent animal life. The third planet lacks atmosphere, the fifth is a frozen waste."

"Very well, Mr. Spock," Kirk answered briskly, and laid in the course Spock gave him. Luckily they were on the same side of the system as the planet, as their fuel was dangerously low. Kirk watched the fuel gauge anxiously as they began to dip into the atmosphere, and saw it flicker, then fall to rest against the empty mark. His task was harder now, to bring the ship down without power, in the knowledge that half her atmospheric shields were stripped from her, and the outer hull was already damaged.

Spock began to read the height and skin temperatures aloud, to give Kirk freedom to wrestle with the controls as they dipped into a more turbulent layer. Suddenly half the control board in front of Kirk exploded. He flung up his hands to save his face instinctively, but was hit on the temple. They were only a few hundred yards from the ground, and Spock took over the controls to his position, and began firmly to fight down into a safe landing.

McCoy slipped his belt, and came forward, but Spock said sharply, "No, Doctor. The Captain must wait, get back to your seat."

He was too late, the panel before him suddenly failed entirely, as the ground appeared to their left. Spock banked sharply, but the rear gyros had gone, and a moment later the ship was completely out of control. They turned over several times, hitting the ground fiercely, then bouncing again, and rolling over and over, before they

finally came to rest in an upright position. Spock was on his feet at once, opening the hatch in the side.

"Outside, everyone, quickly!"

McCoy was struggling with Kirk's seat belt. Spock turned to assist him, noted that the man in the seat behind Kirk was still, and bent over him. McCoy said quietly, "Spock, we're on fire."

Spock picked Kirk up bodily, and pushed him and McCoy out of the door, then turned back for the other man. The whole interior was filling with smoke now, but he took a moment to secure the water tanks, then almost fell out of the door. He slung Kirk over his shoulder, and said to McCoy, "Assist me with the other one, please."

McCoy bent to him, then gave a cry of surprise and pain. Spock saw that his right arm hung limp, and bent down to grasp the other's head and shoulders. McCoy managed to grasp his feet with his good hand, and together they moved down the slope to where the others waited.

They heard a series of small explosions behind them, but moved calmly on. They both knew that they couldn't move any faster, and soon they reached the others and turned to survey the burning wreck. Evidently the fire had started among the broken rear controls, but there was little to burn in the lifeboat, except the padding of the chairs, and soon it had burned itself out.

Spock went back to retrieve what little he could, while McCoy attended to the injured men. There was little enough, the beacon, and an assortment of fittings that might be used to repair it, some mugs, a few food packs, and an empty water tank. He took a last look round, then hurried out when he heard a call from McCoy.

He was struggling with the huge man that had been arguing with him earlier, while the others tried to open one of the water tanks. Spock slid the knife from Kirk's belt, and edged between them.

"You can all do without water a little longer. There is little surface water here, and we must ration it as much as we can."

"It's all right for you, Vulcan, you like this sort of weather. We're dying of thirst."

"It takes two or three days to die of thirst," McCoy injected. Spock turned on him swiftly.

"Attend to your patients, Doctor, please."

The miners' earlier leader stepped forward, a big man, handsome, florid, but with a clear streak of cruelty.

"We don't need them two, they'll only hold us up, and we need water bad."

Spock stiffened. "If you wish, you may take your water, and what food there is, and try your luck elsewhere. I saw a patch of scrubland over to your right. We will tend to the others, and repair the beacon."

The men conferred together, then the big man stepped forward, grinning a little.

"We'll fight you for the water, Vulcan. Winner takes all. Just put that knife down."

Spock looked at him, then nodded, tossing the knife to McCoy.

As the big man rushed towards him, Spock stepped aside, and caught him with a skilful neck pinch, letting him subside to the ground. The others stopped, uncertainly, and Spock bent to the water cans.

"There are eight of you, four of us. Take these two tins, and go. Leave us alone."

"You promised us the food, too," someone whined.

"Yes, you may take - " Spock broke off as two of the men rushed him suddenly. He caught the first with a kick to the solar plexus, the second with a nerve pinch, then pivoted to meet two more. McCoy stood ready with the knife in his uninjured hand, but there was no need. The two were down. The original fighter had come round. He flung himself on Spock's back as the other three came forward, but McCoy cried a warning, and Spock threw him over his back straight at the others. They fell together, and after a moment, the three underneath wriggled free, but the big man lay still. McCoy bent over him, then looked up at Spock. "Neck broken," he reported. The other men moved back to a safe distance, as Spock said quietly,

"I regret his death."

McCoy spared a moment to be thankful that none of the men could know a Vulcan well enough to recognise the grief in Spock's face, then moved forward to stand shoulder to shoulder with Spock, the knife still ready, but there was no further spirit in the men.

Two of them came forward to take the food and water, then they trailed away. Spock watched them until they were out of sight, then sighed, and turned to McCoy.

"I suggest that we treat your arm first, Doctor. What do you have in your kit?"

"A few painkillers, and some antiseptic. But Jim is in need of help, and the other guy is seriously hurt."

"It is necessary that you be treated first, Doctor. Hold still."

McCoy opened his mouth to protest, then saw the pain in the Vulcan's eyes, and stood quietly while Spock slit his sleeve and ran his long fingers gently down the broken arm. McCoy winced, but shook his head as Spock reached for the hypo.

"No, Spock, we'll need them for that chap, he had a slug of metal through his liver."

The Vulcan nodded, and McCoy marvelled at his tender touch as he pulled the bone straight, then bound the arm to McCoy's side, padding it efficiently, before they both turned to Kirk.

The Captain was still unconscious, bleeding from a gash on his temple, and a long cut across his cheek, as well as a dozen small chest wounds.

"We'll have to clear those bits of shrapnel from him, Spock," McCoy said. "In fact, you'll have to. Apart from that, he's fine. It's lucky that he still had his knife, I've got no scalpel at all."

Spock nodded as they turned their attention to the other man. He was not bleeding any more, but McCoy shook his head over him.

"Jim was lucky, this chap got the full force of the metal, and I doubt if he'll live. I gave him one of the painkillers, but I've only four left. Jim has three broken ribs, as well as the metal, but he'll have to put up with it. You can put him out with a nerve pinch,

can't you?"

Spock nodded, as he carefully cleaned the knife with the anti-septic spray; then wiped the spray over Kirk's chest. McCoy glanced at him curiously. It was unlike the Vulcan to be so silent, then he saw the dead man, and realised what was troubling Spock.

"You didn't mean to kill that man, Spock. It was an accident."

Spock seemed intent on Kirk's injuries, but McCoy caught the note of distress in his voice.

"He is dead, Doctor."

McCoy frowned, and turned the subject.

"I'm sorry about my arm, too. You were right, I should have stayed in my seat. Now I'm just a burden to you."

Spock glanced up at him. "It is done, Doctor. Now please give me your guidance. I am not a surgeon."

He reached up and applied a nerve pinch firmly to Kirk, as McCoy bent over them both. He occasionally offered advice, but despite his disclaimer, Spock worked steadily and efficiently, as he picked out each fragment of metal. McCoy mused on the Vulcan's sympathy, rarely shown, except for someone's need, while Spock picked up the scanner and ran it over Kirk's chest.

"That is all the metal removed, but the Captain will be in some pain when he revives. I suggest that we move out, to find shelter."

"Where are you proposing to go?"

"There is a small patch of scrubland two miles away, in the other direction from our companions. We must find shelter from this sun before noon, and the further we are from the others, the safer we will be. I will leave you, and the knife, with the Captain, and take the other first."

He moved off, carrying the other man carefully, and McCoy sat down by Kirk. He was very thirsty by now, as well as hungry, but he knew he could do without water for some hours.

After a long while, Kirk moved, winced, then opened his eyes.

"How do you feel, Jim?" McCoy asked anxiously.

"Lousy," he answered simply, attempting to sit up. McCoy firmly held him down.

"Just lie there. You've three broken ribs, for a start, and some bad cuts, although none of them are deep."

Kirk sank back. "Where's Spock, and the others?" he asked anxiously.

"Eight of them have gone off by themselves, Spock's taken one of the others, who was badly hurt by the explosion that knocked you out, and gone to find shelter. He should be back soon."

By now Kirk had taken in the splinted arm.

"You're hurt, Bones."

"Just a clean break. It was my own fault. The lifeboat is useless, but Spock hopes to mend the beacon."

"Spock, is he hurt?"

"Quite undamaged." Kirk stared at him, recognising the slight doubt in his friend's voice. He struggled up, and saw the dead man lying a few yards away. Spock sighed.

"The others attacked us. Spock killed that one, accidentally."

"He must be pretty upset."

"Yes. The man that Spock took with him is badly damaged; I'd give you a painkiller, but I think that he'll need them all, for now."

"Don't worry. I'm fine, Bones. Why did the others attack you?"

"They wanted a ll the water. You know, having a Vulcan around is lucky, at times, if Spock hadn't been there, you'd probably have had your throat slit with your own knife."

"Bet you wouldn't say that to his face, Bones." Kirk lay back, and McCoy surveyed him covertly. He was pale under the streaks of blood, and his chest was badly bruised as well as cut. McCoy poured out a mugful of water, and offered it to him. Kirk shook his head.

"I'm not thirsty, Bones."

"Don't be a fool, Jim. You need a blood transfusion really, but this will have to do for now."

Kirk took the mug obediently, and sipped half of the contents, then gave it back to McCoy. "You drink the rest."

McCoy hesitated, then gave in. He had finished about a quarter when Spock came back. McCoy offered him the mug, but he refused, until Kirk said sharply, "Drink it, Spock. That's an order. Did you find any shelter?"

They both saw that he had to moisten his mouth before he could speak, then he said, "Yes, sir. About three miles away. I left the injured miner in comparative security, and I can carry you on my back easily, but I am doubtful if the doctor can walk so far. Yet we have only one knife. I do not wish to leave either of you alone without defence."

"Rubbish, Spock," McCoy said. "It's my arm that's broken, not my legs. Of course I can walk so far, and we'd better get going, the sun's pretty hot."

"I can walk too," Kirk said gamely.

"No, Jim. You've lost too much blood to walk far in this heat." McCoy answered firmly, as Spock pulled him to his feet. The effort of standing was almost too much for him, and Kirk protested no more, as Spock carefully hoisted him on his back, upright so that his injured ribs were comparatively comfortable, and Kirk could hold on with his arms and legs. Spock took the other tin of water in one hand, and the beacon in the other, while McCoy insisted on carrying the spare components, and they set off together.

Although they walked steadily on, the trip took them over two hours, and they were all exhausted by the time that they reached the patch of scrub and woodland that Spock had found.

Kirk and McCoy went to sleep straight away, and woke after some hours, to find that the Vulcan had disappeared, although the knife lay by Kirk's hand. McCoy examined the other man carefully; he was still unconscious, but had begun to move a little and moan under

his breath.

"How is he, Bones?"

"Bad, we'll need to be found in less than a day to save him. I'll give him another painkiller now, but I've only got enough to last for sixteen hours, and the beacon isn't working."

He stopped as Spock appeared between the nearly trees. He was stripped to the waist, and Kirk realised that the sun was shaded from them by the blue shirt, tied between two shrubs."

"You'll burn in this sun, Spock," McCoy said anxiously, seeing the marks of dried sweat that streaked the sand and dirt on his chest. The Vulcan shook his head.

"No, Doctor, this world is *my* home - if anything, a trifle cooler. I am becoming accustomed to it rapidly."

He sat down, and reported formally, "Captain, the beacon is functioning. I have set it up at the top of one of the taller trees, so that it is in the shade, yet away from any obstructions. I have seen some signs of small animals in the scrublands, something resembling a Terran rabbit, and have set some snares at likely points. I have also succeeded in finding a small spring, not much, but it seems quite pure. Evidently the lower strata here is limestone and granite, and it should give us two or three pints of water a day. I have also - " he hesitated for a second, and both the men looked up sharply, but he went on quietly, " - buried the man I killed."

"In that case, you must be exhausted, Spock. We'll have some water each, then you'll sleep for a few hours, please."

The Vulcan reached over to the water cans, left in the shade of some green leafy bush, and poured out a full mug for Kirk, who drank it gratefully. He was conscious of a dull ache at his side all the time, and he was very hot, even in the shade he felt uncomfortable, cold one moment then sweating the next. He handed the empty mug back to Spock, who filled it again, and handed it to McCoy, who saw that it was only half full. He exchanged a silent message with Spock in one glance, and drank half the contents, then handed the mug back to Spock, who pretended to fill it again while McCoy distracted the Captain by examining him.

McCoy was anxious about him. He was obviously running a temperature, but he had nothing to give him. He inspected the cuts on Kirk's chest. They were slightly inflamed, he fancied. He carefully wiped them over with his disinfectant, then turned to Spock, who was on his feet again.

"I have prepared some kind of a shelter, Doctor, a little was away. If you could help the Captain, I will bring the other."

He led them through a series of small bushes and saplings to a spot where two or three larger trees stood. Despite the stabbing pains in his side as he walked, Kirk saw that it was late afternoon, he and McCoy had slept for some time, evidently. The sun was quite low, striking off the blackened trunks of the trees in front of them. Spock had fixed a shelter by bending two saplings over and tying them with wire to a larger tree, then interleaving other branches, until there was a sunproof and waterproof covering big enough for three people, maybe four, to lie under. To one side was a bare piece of ground, with a pile of wood ready for a fire.

"How the hell did you get this done, Spock?" McCoy asked as he

and Kirk made their painful way behind the Vulcan, who was walking steadily, as he carried the unconscious miner.

"I have had some hours, Doctor, and the heat does not trouble me greatly," Spock answered, in apparent surprise, as he gently laid down his burden on a pile of leaves. Kirk sat down rather heavily.

"You've done miracles, as usual, Spock. I never get used to it. Now lie down and get some sleep. We'll watch for a while."

Spock nodded, and climbed into the shelter. The others stayed silent for a while, then McCoy slipped in to look at him, and came out smiling.

"He's fast asleep, Jim, exhausted, I should think. Why don't you lie down, and I'll watch for a bit?"

"Frankly, I'm more comfortable sitting up, Bones, and I'm rather nice in the sun. I was getting cold."

McCoy looked at him sharply, then slipped back along their trail, and brought back the split remnant of Spock's shirt, and put it around Kirk's shoulders. He watched Kirk's eyes droop, then gently put an arm round him. Kirk relaxed against him, and slept again.

It was almost dark when Spock crawled out of the shelter. No yawning and stretching for him, he was completely in control of himself from the moment he opened his eyes.

"How is the Captain, Doctor?"

"Not good, he needs food, decent covering, medical attention, the ship. That other poor devil is dying. We don't even know his name."

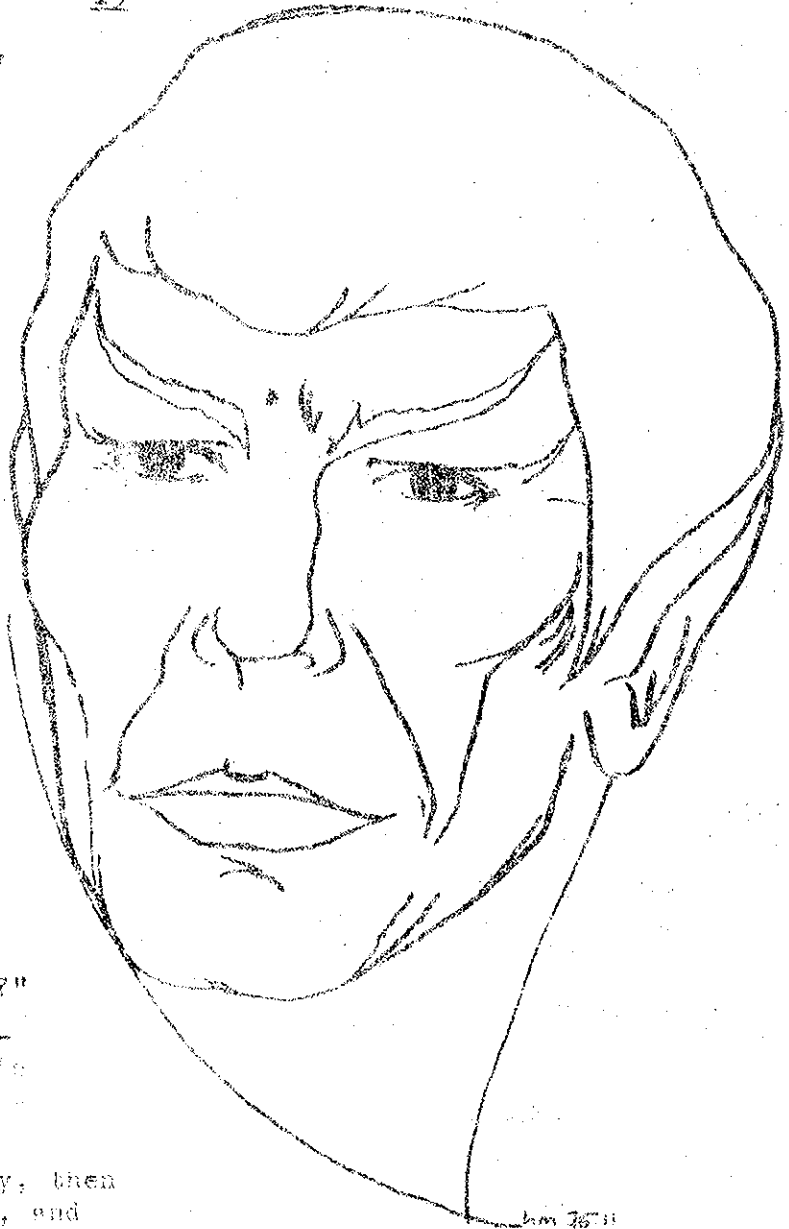
"It is Jason Akopolodyes, Doctor. I read his identity disc."

McCoy looked over at him in surprise. "You know, sometimes I think that you are getting almost Human, Mr. Spock."

"I trust that you are mistaken, Doctor. I think that it is time to light the fire. If we keep it small, no-one will find us here."

"Do you think that we are really in danger, Spock?"

"Yes. They are miners, Doctor. They hold loyalty only to their own gang,



and death is cheap. Their food will last barely a day, and their water not much more, at a guess. They have no skill in survival techniques, and they would not listen to us. We are lucky to have the knife. I would rate our chances low without it."

As he spoke, he was deftly building a small pile of dry grass, and inducing a shower of sparks from the knife blade and a small jagged stone. As the grass caught, he blew on it, and soon had a real fire going.

"That's clever, Spock," McCoy said. The Vulcan raised an eyebrow.

"I do take the survival courses, Doctor. I am going for a short stroll, keep the fire alight, please."

McCoy grinned at his back. Carefully he laid Kirk down, and set about feeding the fire with small sticks, then bigger ones. Then he could handle, he'd camped out many times in the woods as a boy, but he kept the knife close to his left hand, and listened often. Just the same, Spock's silent approach startled him badly. The Vulcan carried a mug in one hand, and two or three small animals in the other. He dropped the animals in the doctor's lap, then bent down to show him the contents of the mug. It was barely half full.

"How long?"

"Six hours, Doctor. But I will not need any more water, I am fully acclimatized now that I have stopped sweating. I can go fifty or sixty hours without water."

McCoy looked up at him. "No, we'll share half of what Jim has. We need your strength. Both of us are wounded. I know that you can do without water, but it takes it out of you. We can't afford that."

He jumped suddenly, as one of the animals on his lap wriggled, and looked down. All three of them were stirring. Spock raised an eyebrow.

"I brought them to you to kill, Doctor. It is your specialty." Angri-ly McCoy snapped their necks.

"I can't see much difference between the executioner and the man who brings them to the block, Spock."

The Vulcan looked up at him from his seat across the fire.

"I could not kill them, Doctor." He took the animals and the knife, and began to skin and joint them, then wrapped them in green leaves, and put them in the ashes.

"Why didn't you have a packet of the iron rations yourself, Spock? The miners would not have missed one."

"They will need all the food to survive, Doctor. Our first duty is to the Captain and Akopodulyes, but we do have a duty to them."

McCoy snorted indignantly, then grew thoughtful, looking up at Spock and noting his condition. He was gaunt already, dirty and bloody, his chest and back grazed from the fighting, as well as all he had accomplished. McCoy noted the tiny thread of sweat along his collarbones, the lines down his cheeks, that only showed when he was too tired to control his face, the dry lips, the dull eyes.

Spock looked up from the embers, and McCoy held his gaze. The Vulcan spoke slowly.

"I agree, Doctor, I should have killed them. I set the traps, and brought them back for you and the Captain, but I - "

McCoy swept the matter aside, then leaned to check Kirk, to make sure he was asleep, before he returned to Spock.

"We need you, and your strength, Spock. If it hadn't been for you, we would be dead by now. How long do you think it will be before the beacon is answered?"

"Eight days, perhaps ten; we will be missed within a day, but it will take them some time to check back along our route."

McCoy felt his heart aching for the Vulcan, but he spoke calmly.

"Spock, you can't go without food and water for eight days in this heat. You know that as well as I do."

"I have looked for food that I can eat, but there is none."

"You can assimilate - animal flesh."

"I am a Vulcan, Doctor. I cannot eat it."

"O.K., Spock. I understand, and so will Jim."

Spock hooked the packages out of the fire with a stick. He hesitated, then passed some over, and kept two for himself.

"You are right, Doctor. My first duty is to the Captain. I will try to eat it, if you will excuse me."

He got up, and walked away into the night. McCoy found that he was too dazzled with tears to see him go. He wiped his eyes with his sleeve, and woke Kirk to share the food while it was hot.

Spock came back in a little while. He nodded shortly to McCoy, but made no comment, dropping to sit by Kirk as he lay supporting himself on an elbow, sipping a little water.

"How do you feel, sir?"

Kirk glanced at him, then looked again, wondering why Spock looked so drawn.

"Better, thanks to you, Mr. Spock. I didn't realise that I felt so hungry."

"My duty, sir," Spock answered. "I suggest that you and Dr. McCoy try to sleep again. I will watch for a while."

"O.K., but not all night, Spock. Call me or Bones after two hours."

Kirk wearily dragged himself back into the shelter, and McCoy followed after, pausing to say to Spock, "Call me, Spock. I'll need to have a look at my other patient. I've tried giving him a little water, but he can't take it. He'll probably start to grow restless soon. Wake me then, please."

As he passed, he dared to lay a hand on Spock's arm. The Vulcan's face didn't alter, but for a moment he laid his hand over McCoy's.

McCoy woke, to find Spock kneeling over the Captain, who was tossing restlessly.

"What is it, Spock?"

"He is running a fever, Doctor. I will take him out into the light."

Spock quickly picked up the Captain in his arms, and crawled out of the shelter backwards, then kicked up the fire into a blaze. McCoy followed at once, his scanner at the ready, but one glance at Kirk's chest showed him that the wounds that Spock had so carefully disinfected that morning were inflamed to an angry red now. Some micro-organism unknown to the scanners had not responded to the disinfectant.

Kirk was conscious, barely, drifting in and out of delirium. McCoy looked across at Spock.

"They'll have to be burned out, Spock. We can't take any chances. I'll have to give him one of the painkillers, we can't risk the nerve pinch while he's in this state. It tends to push up temperatures as well as blood pressure and we can't leave him conscious. It's going to hurt like hell."

"No, Bones," Kirk said clearly. "Don't waste any painkillers on me. That other guy needs them."

McCoy looked across at Spock, who was placing the knife blade at the edge of the fire, his head bent.

"We can't risk the nerve pinch, Jim. You've lost too much blood; the shock could send you into a coma. I've got two painkillers left. We can spare one of them."

"No, Bones. That's an order."

"Jim, you can't expect us to hurt you like that. Especially Spock."

Kirk looked across at his First Officer, who felt the gaze, and looked up to meet his eyes. All the affection and trust in the world was in the Captain's voice as he answered, "Spock can do anything that needs to be done, and you know it, Bones."

Spock nodded slowly. "Very well, Captain. When you are ready."

McCoy moved to support Kirk against his shoulder, cursing his useless arm once again. Kirk took a firm grip on two tufts of grass.

"Ready now, Spock," he said quietly.

The next few minutes passed like hours for all of them. Kirk had turned his face away, staring into the darkness as he bit into his lower lip. McCoy held him firmly with one hand, and Spock carefully and thoroughly burnt out each inflamed cut with the knife, his face calm, his hands steady.

Four times he returned the knife to the fire. McCoy felt Kirk's muscles tighten at each application, but Kirk made no sound or movement. At last, on the last cut, he relaxed, and McCoy sighed, hearing a faint echo from Spock as he methodically cauterised the last open wound, then took Kirk from McCoy and laid him down by the fire.

Spock walked away into the darkness, to return with a brimming mug of water. "The spring is evidently intermittent, Doctor. Maybe we can spare a little."

He dipped a corner of his torn shirt into the mug, and gently wiped away the blood that ran from Kirk's lip, where he had bitten it through.

"How do you mean, Spock?"

"The Captain is in need of blood. Could you arrange a transfusion?"

"Yes, if we had anyone with the right blood. I've got a couple of needles, and there is a piece of plastic piping in the oddments we brought from the life boat, but my blood will kill him as surely as yours would."

"There are eight others, Doctor, and the Captain has a fairly common blood group. If we offered to exchange a pint of water for a pint of blood?"

"Yes, of course. I'll go over and see them in the morning."

"No, Doctor. I will go. You will stay and guard the Captain."

"I'm not much good to him with only one arm, Spock. I'm sorry. I should have been the one to hurt Jim."

"His pain hurts us all, Doctor. It had to be done."

Kirk stirred, and Spock lifted his head, and placed the mug of water to his lips as he opened his eyes.

He drank a little, then moved his head away. "Thanks, Spock. You did a fine job on me. Maybe when we get back, you and Bones should change places."

"That's right, Jim. I'll be glad of a chance to come into sickbay and make suggestions to improve efficiency," McCoy said, seizing his chance.

"Unfortunately, no-one heeds my suggestions, Doctor. That is why you are still with us," Spock answered.

Kirk chuckled. "You really walked into that one, Bones." He yawned, and took another sip of water, then leaned his head against the Vulcan, and closed his eyes. A moment later, he was asleep. Spock handed the mug over to McCoy, who handed it back firmly.

"Go ahead, Spock, drink it. You need it more than me, especially if you're going to traipse all over Creation in that sun tomorrow. Shall I take Jim while you get some sleep?"

"There is no need, Doctor. He is far more comfortable sitting up. You sleep now, so that you are fresh for guard duty tomorrow."

He handed over the mug, still a quarter full, and McCoy tried to give a little to his unconscious patient, but failed, so he drank it himself. He took one last look outside the shelter. Spock was cradling Kirk in one arm, as he dropped a couple of sticks on the fire. The Captain's head rested against his cheek, and the Vulcan raised a hand to shift it to a steadier position. McCoy looked at him anxiously. He was very worried about Spock, but the Vulcan seemed more relaxed than he had been since he had choked down the meat that he abhorred. As McCoy closed his own eyes, he realised that Kirk's perfect trust had healed the trauma for Spock.

He woke a little before dawn. Spock had put out the fire, scattering the ashes, and was carefully passing the medical scanner over Kirk. He looked up as McCoy crawled out of the leanto.

"The Captain has broken that fever, but he is still very weak."

"Just because I've let you administer a couple of treatments it doesn't mean that you're a full-blooded doctor, Spock," McCoy said

severely, making his own scan. "But in this case, you're right. How long do you think you'll be?"

"Perhaps half a day, Doctor. If I find a donor, I intend to bring him back blindfolded, so we will be some time. If you care to hold the Captain, I will see what my traps have caught this morning."

He came back with another two animals, and some kind of bird, and McCoy despatched them without any comments.

"I'll get them ready now, and we'll cook them later, shall I?"

"Yes, please, Doctor. I will be back as quickly as possible. Keep the knife to your hand the whole time, please."

Spock left their camp in the grey before dawn, and broke into a trot as soon as he reached the sand. He stopped by the lifeboat, as he caught sight of several footprints round it. It was empty, but his keen eyes saw a fresh disturbance a little way away. He felt distaste well up in him, then went over to where he had scooped the sand away to make a grave for his victim. All that was left was an empty hole. He stood up, angry as well as sickened, and his nostrils caught a familiar smell. He followed it cautiously, until he heard voices, then he made a circle, and came across their late shipmates as they sat feasting round a fire. One look at the carcass roasting told them that his fears were correct. They were eating their former comrade. He fought his nausea down, and listened intently to their talk, but learned nothing except that they meant mischief to the others. Finally the men lay down where they were to sleep, all scattered under various trees that gave a little shade. Spock went from one to another, and carefully pulled out their identity discs. Like all imperial citizens, they not only gave details of their names and home planets, but their blood group.

The third man he searched had the right group. Spock gave him a nerve pinch, then carried the unconscious body away.

He was halfway across the sand when the man began to stir. Spock put him down and crouched beside him, checking that they had not been followed.

The man gave a cry of terror when he saw the Vulcan, cringing away.

"Not me, it wasn't me," he said.

Spock raised an eyebrow. "I was not accusing you of anything. I propose a bargain with you."

"What kind of bargain?"

"We need some of your blood. We will give you a pint of water in exchange."

The man licked his dry lips feverishly. "How do I know you'll let me go?"

"Why should we want to keep you?"

"You've got no food, and we've eaten all ours."

"There is food here for the taking, if you open your eyes and look about you."

The man shrank back. "Why did you pick on me, and not one of the others?"

"You have the correct blood group. Do you agree?"

"I've got nothing to lose, I suppose. But -- "

Before he could ask anything else, Spock gave him another nerve pinch. He was determined not to take chances with his friends' lives, and he picked up the man, flung him over his shoulder, and carried him into the hidden camp rapidly.

McCoy was ready; cursing his own clumsiness with his left hand, he nevertheless managed to place the needles firmly in the vein in each man's arm as Spock held their arms for him, then watched to make sure that all went well. Finally, it was done, and Spock supplied the man with his promised pint of water, before putting him out again, and taking him back to his camp.

By the time he got back, he was tired, although he refused to admit it to the others. McCoy and Kirk between them had managed to prepare the food, and after a moment's hesitation, Spock sat down by them and accepted his portion. He ate it grimly, the others carefully not watching him but talking between themselves, to give him the illusion of privacy.

Finally, he wiped his greasy fingers on the grass, and asked, "How is the other patient, Doctor?"

McCoy's face fell. "He died just after you left with our donor friend. It was just as well. I had no more painkillers, we would have had to keep on giving him the nerve pinch. I thought that tonight we'd go and bury him with his friend."

"No!" Spock said, for one moment showing an emotion they couldn't catch.

"Why, Spock?" McCoy asked. He didn't answer, and Kirk leaned forward a little.

"You must have a reason, Mr. Spock."

The Vulcan spoke without looking up from the fire.

"He - is no longer there, Captain." He continued after a moment's hesitation. "The others - they - have finished their food - "

"Cannibalism?"

"Yes, sir."

Kirk grimaced with disgust. "There's plenty of food here. They won't starve in a few days, anyway, and we shouldn't have more than a week to wait."

McCoy chimed in. "Is that why you put that man out before you got here? You didn't want him to have any idea of where we are?"

Spock nodded without looking up. Kirk eyed him uneasily.

"It's not your fault, Spock."

"You do not understand, Captain," the Vulcan answered, his eyes fixed on the fire. "I have done worse, far worse, than they."

"What are you talking about, Spock?" McCoy demanded roughly.

"They have only eaten flesh that another killed. I have both killed and eaten flesh."

"But not a man, Spock, just animals," Kirk said anxiously.

"Flesh is flesh."

They sat silent for a while, then McCoy got up.

"It's too hot out here, let's go into the shade. Can you remove our late friend from the shelter, please, Spock."

"I will bury him now, Doctor."

"I'll come with you."

"No, Doctor. You will stay and guard the Captain."

Without further words he pulled out the stiffening figure of the dead man and strode off with him in his arms.

The other two looked after his rigid back uneasily.

"You think he'll be all right, Jim? Maybe I shouldn't have - "

Kirk put an arm round his shoulders. "You were right, Bones. We wouldn't have survived this long without him, and he must eat. He can go without food for a day or two, I know, but not in this heat and keep his strength."

McCoy nodded miserably. "Come on, let's go in the shelter, in the cool."

They both crawled in painfully, each too worried about the other, and Spock to realise just how bad they felt. Kirk's ribs and chest, and McCoy's arm, were both varying from a steady ache to actual pain, but they had got used to bearing their injuries without complaint.

Kirk soon went to sleep. McCoy sat up for a while, the knife in his hand, but soon his head drooped, and the knife dropped from his fingers, as he fell asleep.

Kirk woke, and stirred restlessly, as his ribs suddenly stabbed at him, to find a figure with a club bending over McCoy. Kirk forgot his ribs; jumping forward with a shout, he grabbed the knife and menaced the figure. The startled man shot outside, and Kirk followed him, hauling himself up by a tree, and facing him with the knife ready. There were three of them outside, shouting at each other, more in fright than actual menace, Kirk thought until he saw their eyes.

Spock was returning from his unpleasant task. He heard the shouts, and crashed through the bushes, just as they plucked up enough courage to attack. He ploughed through them as they rushed, rage building in him, and took the knife from Kirk, then attacked the attackers. Two fled, but the other, the leader, turned, raising his club menacingly, and the others came back to join him.

"Careful, Spock," Kirk called anxiously. The Vulcan for once was not in a logical mood. He feinted with the knife towards the nearest, caught the second with a chop across the neck, then took on both the others at once. There was a flurry, a rough and tumble, then one of the men was up, running for the woods, while Spock crouched over the other. He looked up at Kirk, who came running towards him, only to see that their knife was buried between the leader's ribs. Kirk rested a brief hand on Spock's shoulder.

"It was an accident, Spock. You didn't intend to kill him."

The Vulcan got up, retrieving the knife with a twist of his wrist, and wiping it on the grass.

"He is dead, Captain." He looked towards the shelter. "Dr. McCoy?"

Kirk turned back. He'd almost forgotten him in the sudden attack. Spock got there before him. He crawled in carefully, then backed out, carrying the doctor.

"A blow on the head, sir. He is regaining consciousness already."

Sure enough, McCoy looked at them both a moment later, wincing slightly as he moved his head. One hand went up to his temple.

"What happened?"

"You were knocked unconscious, Doctor."

"You don't say?" McCoy said. "How about some real information? No, I remember now, you were away. I must have fallen asleep on guard. I'm sorry, Spock."

"Forget it, Bones," Kirk said hastily. "None of us has had much sleep. I suggest that we sleep now, they won't be back for a while at least. Maybe we'd better move on tonight, somewhere else."

"There is nowhere else for some miles, Captain. I surveyed the area when I set up the beason, and there are no other patches of green in sight."

"In the t case, I'll watch for a while. I've had some sleep already. I'll wake one of you as soon as I get sleepy, but I'm glad of a chance to sit up for a while."

Both the others looked at him anxiously. He grinned. "No, I'm fine, but my ribs seem to catch me when I lie down. Both of you, go to sleep. That's an order."

Before they could obey it, a sudden discharge signalled the return of their visitors. A man shouted from the edge of the clearing, "We want to talk to you. No tricks, we just want to talk."

Kirk motioned to Spock to tag along, and walked across the clearing, to stand just clear of the trees.

"Come out here if you want to talk," he invited.

After a moment, and some muttering, one of the men appeared.

"We want Kivort's body back," he said nervously.

Kirk looked at him distastefully. "Don't worry, we'll bury it nice and neatly."

The men shifted uneasily from foot to foot. After a moment, three more men sidled out from the bushes. Their spokesman seemed more confident now, as they trailed their clubs behind them.

"You've got that other one, Akopodulyes. We need Kivort."

"There's plenty of food around. Why don't you try trapping some?"

"It's all right for you big tough Starfleet men, we don't know nothing about all that backwoods stuff. We need Kivort, and we need water."

Kirk glanced at Spock.

"See if there are any more caught in your snares, Mr. Spock, then check how much water we have left."

The Vulcan hesitated for a moment, then at Kirk's look left without a word, after handing over the knife.

The four men exchanged glances, as McCoy came up with the club left by Kivort to guard Kirk's back, and began to spread out wider.

"Spock!" McCoy shouted. None too soon the First Officer was in their midst. He cleared two men out of his path with a shrug of his shoulders, and McCoy attended to a third, with a backswing that took his victim in the stomach.

The fourth man was straddling Kirk, but Spock picked him up in one hand and pulled him off, to disclose Kirk lying with his eyes shut, and the knife buried in his shoulder.

McCoy was bending over him at once, as Spock menaced the others. They took one look at him, and turned and ran. Spock turned back at once to his friends.

"He's alive, Spock," McCoy said. "Just a muscle affected." A thought occurred to him, an unpleasant one. He looked up at Spock almost guardedly.

"We'll have to cauterise the wound, though. No sense in taking chances."

"The nerve pinch?" Spock suggested evenly.

McCoy hesitated, his eyes on Kirk. "No, Spock. We just can't take the chance. I'll blow up the fire. We'll get it done now, before he comes round."

Spock bent and picked up his unconscious friend, and carried him over to the shelter, then laid the knife blade in the ashes to heat. McCoy looked up at him as he packed the sluggishly bleeding wound with a piece of Spock's maltreated shirt, until Spock was ready.

"I'm sorry, Spock." His voice trembled, in spite of his best attempts to keep it steady. "If I hadn't fallen asleep, after you trusted me to look after Jim, if I had obeyed you in the first place, I wouldn't have broken my arm. And you and Jim are paying for my -"

"It is illogical to lose heart, Doctor," the Vulcan interrupted in a most illogical way. "You had no time to obey me in the lifeboat; you fell asleep because you are exhausted by the pain of your broken arm. Only you could have given Jim the blood transfusion he needed, your medical kit gave Akopolodyes a quiet, painless death. Do not disturb yourself with imaginary sins, Doctor."

McCoy glanced at him again with a warm flush of gratitude, then turned to business as Spock picked up the knife again, holding the warm hilt in a piece of rag. McCoy whipped away the dressing, and Spock held the blade lightly against the wound for a few instants. Kirk convulsed, screamed, then subsided into unconsciousness again. McCoy inspected the wound then sighed in relief.

"A perfect job, Spock. Maybe you ought to be the surgeon instead of me. I'll watch him, while you sleep, and I promise that I'll stay awake this time."

Spock nodded, looked at the dead man sprawled at the end of the clearing, then crawled into the shelter. It was already dusk, there was little to be done that night.

Kirk stirred after a half hour of quiet. He groaned, and McCoy moved to grasp his hand.

"It's O.K., Jim."

Kirk put a hand to his shoulder, but McCoy said firmly, "Leave your shoulder alone. You got a knife in it, and we had to get it out."

Kirk nodded. "Spock?"

"He's fine, and asleep. Go back to sleep yourself. I'll wake you in a few hours, I promise."

Kirk woke by himself in an hour, at a sudden movement, just in time to see Spock bending over McCoy, inspecting him keenly. Apparently satisfied, he left the knife at the doctor's side, and began to move off through the trees, in a manner that somehow made Kirk suspicious. He dragged himself to his feet and followed after.

Spock turned once or twice, but he could see nothing in the shade of the trees, and went on until they came to the scrub that lay between the small copse and the sandy desert. Kirk was moving as silently as he could, but it was easy to tread from tree to tree. Once he had no support he began to waver, and finally fell. Spock was at his side in an instant, it seemed, and he gently propped Kirk up against a solitary tree, in a small clearing.

"Are you all right, sir?" Spock asked.

"I'm fine, thanks, Spock. Where are you going?"

He didn't get an answer, which confirmed his suspicion that Spock had some logical, and here-brained, idea in his Vulcan head.

"I suppose that you've decided that you have no chance of survival as long as we're a burden to you, so you're leaving us," Kirk said deliberately. The Vulcan's head swung round, but he didn't rise to the bait.

"I have - left you a note, Captain, for the morning. Let me take you back to the camp. You should be asleep."

Kirk settled back against the trunk, trying to see Spock's face in the darkness.

"No, Spock. I want an explanation now. Sit down here, and tell me."

Reluctantly, Spock sat down a few feet away, and Kirk waited. After a moment, Spock began to speak.

"Sir, I doubt if we will be found in less than a week, and we will find it increasingly difficult to hold off the others. I have decided that I should go to the others, offer to find food for them. You and Dr. McCoy will be able to manage by yourselves."

Kirk leaned forward. "But they won't listen to you, Spock, and you know it. They've already got through all their food and water, and you couldn't manage to find enough for all of them. They'll kill you."

"Yes," was all Spock said. The silence lengthened. Finally Kirk said quietly, "Explain."

"Sir, they will not attack either of you while I am there, and they would not waste my body. Anyone who eats me would regret it. It is the only way I can think of, to provide safety for you and the Doctor."

Kirk laughed suddenly, and as suddenly stopped, cursing his ribs.

"I'd never really thought of Vulcans as being inedible, Spock. But you're not going."

"You do not have the strength to stop me, sir."

"I can follow after you, and I will, and as soon as Bones wakes up, he'll come after both of us. Did you put him out with the nerve pinch?"

"Yes, sir. Please, let me go. It is the logical answer to our problem. And I - I am happy - that I can be of service to you. I am - no longer fit to be a Vulcan, I would rather - "

"What do you mean, about not being fit to be a Vulcan?" Kirk interrupted.

"Sir, I have killed. I have eaten flesh, and killed for food, as well as in self defence. No Vulcan would do that."

"If we had been Vulcans, we'd have starved to death, I presume," Kirk said.

"Yes, sir."

"That seems most illogical to me, Spock."

"Reverence for life, all life, is a basic part of our beliefs, sir, illogical or not."

They heard McCoy call, "Jim! Spock!" and then heard him crashing through the bushes.

"We're here, Bones," Kirk called to him, and he presently stumbled into the clearing, breathless, and mad at both of them.

"You didn't ask me if I wanted a midnight stroll, and even if you wanted a tete-a-tete, you could just have mentioned it, there was no need to give me a neck pinch, Spock."

Kirk grinned in the darkness. "Spock has some crazy idea of giving himself up to the others, so that when they eat him, they get poisoned, Bones."

McCoy snorted in amusement. "I'd have to be damned hungry to eat anyone with green blood, I tell you."

"I fail to see anything amusing in the situation," Spock said stiffly.

"No, there isn't really. But it doesn't matter, because we're not going to let you go, Spock," Kirk told him.

"You cannot stop me, sir."

"Maybe not, but we'll come with you," McCoy answered.

"I've already told him that," Kirk said, an undercurrent of amusement in his voice.

Spock stayed silent for a long time; neither of them pressed him, they were content to give him time to consider. Finally he said with resignation, "Very well, sir. I will come back with you."

"We do need you, Spock," Kirk answered quietly. "Both here, and on the ship. We would have been dead days ago if it hadn't been for you, and we will only survive now because of you. I'm sorry for the others, but they would not listen, they go their own way. They haven't got either the discipline or the restraint to survive, and we are too few to make them restrain themselves. I think I'll need your arm to get back to the shelter."

Spock silently lifted him to his feet, then held out his other arm to McCoy, who was glad to take it. They made their way back slowly, but somehow they enjoyed their companionship.

The next few days passed quietly. Three times the others tried to attack, but each time none of them was prepared to face the Vulcan. Probably if they had banded together, they could have beaten him, but no one was prepared to risk his life for the others.

At last, rescue came, the Enterprise herself. Scott was frankly glad to see them. Their new systems were working fine, and when they had heard that the liner was missing, they had been one of the first in the field. They picked up the miners too; there were only five of them by now, and they were all suffering badly from hunger, thirst and sunburn, but they revived on board the ship and were quietly dropped off at the Starbase.

Nothing was said between the three for some months, they were content to let the episode fade, until they were putting in at Vhalial, a world with a large Vulcan colony.

"Are you going to stay with your cousins again, Spock?" McCoy asked.

"No," the Vulcan said shortly.

"You always do."

"I - am no longer Vulcan, Doctor," Spock said. "Excuse me, please."

He left the room, and McCoy swung round to Kirk, who was sitting in the lounge with them.

Kirk glanced round, the room was fairly full, he asked quietly, "Care to come and have a coffee in my quarters, Bones?"

McCoy nodded, but said nothing until they were sitting down in private.

"What's up, Jim? What did Spock mean?"

Kirk chose his words carefully. "Spock doesn't think that he's a Vulcan any more. I'd hoped that he would get over it, but apparently he hasn't. I don't quite know what to do."

"Why, Jim?"

"Don't you remember when we were all shipwrecked? Spock both killed and ate meat. Apparently that is so non-Vulcan he is automatically disbarred, or something."

McCoy gazed at him in horror. "He didn't say so, at the time."

"That was why he wanted to give himself up to the others."

"Why didn't you tell me? I would never have asked him to do it if I'd known."

"I thought that he might get over it, and you were right, we wouldn't have survived without him, and he wouldn't have survived without eating. He knew what it entailed when he agreed to it, Bones. Don't blame yourself."

McCoy got up and began to pace the room.

"Of course I blame myself. If it hadn't been for me - "

"Stop it!" Kirk told him sharply. "You didn't know, and he could have refused. I wondered if he would have absolved himself after a period of not eating meat, he has acted the same as ever aboard. He still doesn't eat meat, so he is carrying on as a Vulcan. There must be some way to get round it."

McCoy nodded, and went to the door.

"I'm going off ship, Jim. You won't need me today, will you?"

"Where are you going?"

"There's a Vulcan embassy here, isn't there? I'm going to see someone as high up as I can."

"But Bones!" Kirk sank back with a sigh, it was too late. He sat there for a while, considering. He was very sure that Spock would resent any interference, but on the other hand, McCoy was determined to do something. And he could hardly make matters worse. Kirk decided to let the matter go, and see what happened.

McCoy changed to dress uniform, then beamed down determinedly. He hired a car, and ordered the driver to take him to the Vulcan Embassy before he changed his mind and got cold feet. He had no idea what he was going to say, but he was going to say quite a lot.

At the door, he gave his name, and rank, and asked if he could see as high an official as possible, on the matter of a Vulcan national. After a short wait, he was shown into a large, plain room, occupied by the last two people that he expected, or wanted, to see. Ambassador Sarek, and T'Pol herself.

He looked at them in silence for a moment. Then T'Pol spoke.

"Welcome to our Embassy, Doctor. I presume that the Vulcan national that you wish to discuss is Spock?"

McCoy found his tongue. "Yes, M'am."

"We have heard from him that he is taking Earth nationality. Sit down, and tell us of your reasons for coming here."

McCoy swallowed, but obeyed her.

"Is Captain Kirk not with you?" Sarek asked. This threw McCoy into more confusion, remembering the last occasion on which he saw T'Pol, but he forced himself to speak calmly and logically.

"Spock thinks that he is - disgraced as a Vulcan. The fault was mine, so I thought that I should repair it, if it is possible."

He began to tell them what had happened. It was extremely difficult, they showed no reaction to anything, of course, but he explained the circumstances, his and Kirk's helplessness, and their dependence on Spock.

At last he had finished. T'Pol and Sarek glanced at each other, then back at McCoy.

"What do you want of us, Doctor?" Sarek asked.

"Isn't there some form of dispensation, or some thing? Some way in which he can be forgiven?" McCoy said desperately.

T'Pol shook her head. "No, Doctor. We cannot interfere in Spock's decision. If he feels that he is no longer a Vulcan, he is no longer a Vulcan."

McCoy stared at her, turning this over in his mind. "You mean that he is the one who has cut himself off. You would still accept him as one of you?"

Sarek answered slowly. "Doctor, we accept that Spock acted in a logical manner. Some of us have a stronger aversion to taking like than others. If he feels that he has acted in an unforgivable manner, we must accept the logic of his decision."

T'Pol nodded, then said, "Doctor, I would ask thee a personal question. You need not answer, unless you wish. Do thee think of Spock as Human, or Vulcan?"

"As Vulcan," McCoy answered without hesitating.

"Would you prefer him to be Human?"

McCoy thought about it seriously. He jibed at Spock, it was true, but would he really like it if Spock changed in any way?

He met T'Pol's gaze firmly. "No, I - and Captain Kirk - like him - love him, as he is."

T'Pol nodded. "I see, it is well. Would your Captain invite Sarek and myself for dinner tonight?"

"I'm sure that he would, M'am." McCoy was puzzled, but still hopeful.

"Very well, expect us at twenty hours. If your Captain gives permission for us to visit your ship, we will undoubtedly see Spock for ourselves."

It was left at that. McCoy went straight back and told Kirk all that had happened. Kirk gazed at him in horror.

"You know that she thinks I'm dead, Bones. What happens if she decides that I've got no right to be alive?"

McCoy grinned. "She knew that you were alive, Jim, and they don't want Spock to give up being a Vulcan, either. How are you going to get Spock to appear at dinner?"

Kirk thought about it. "I'm not. He'll be doing the standby watch on the bridge, and we'll take them up there. We're docked, so he'll be by himself, then they can cope with getting him to dine with us. I'll send Chekov up to relieve him at twenty-thirty."

It went as they had planned. Kirk himself took them up to the bridge, and left the three Vulcans together, then went back to change into evening dress for dinner. Both he and McCoy were waiting impatiently, but at last they came in. None of them showed any sign of emotion, of course, but after they had sat down together, Sarek said smoothly, "Captain, she that is my wife is staying with our cousins at this time. Perhaps my son can be granted leave for this purpose, Captain?"

"Yes, of course, Ambassador. We have strict instructions that all senior officers must take leave when it is due."

"I wondered also if you and Dr. McCoy would care to accompany him. It is the festival of Kaholin, and there will be interesting events for those who have some understanding of our way of life."

Kirk and McCoy both looked at Spock, not certain whether they should accept or even if Spock had apparently forgiven himself.

He nodded to them solemnly. "I think that you would both enjoy it."

Kirk addressed Sarek. "Thank you, Ambassador, we would be honoured."

He looked at McCoy, who was oblivious of everything, except his own thoughts, just looking down at the table, and grinning. Sarek followed Kirk's glance.

"Indeed, Captain, the honour will be ours."
